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Small Arms Distribution Survey

THE FOLLOWING TABLE gives estimated figures for the total number of SALW in Albania. The data has been compiled using a number of sources including official documents, interviews, and opinion poll data. These figures should therefore be treated with caution, with the ranges for estimates testifying to the difficulty of achieving satisfactory levels of accuracy.

Table 10: Estimated number of SALW in Albania

Holder of SALW	Approximate no of units
Active and reserve military holdings	35,000 ¹⁸⁷
MOD surplus	88,742–138,742 ¹⁸⁸
MOPO police	23,930 ¹⁸⁹
Guard of the republic	2,112–3,696 ¹⁹⁰
Other ministerial police	983 ¹⁹¹
Private security companies (PSCs)	938 ¹⁹²
Legal civilian possession	65,747 ¹⁹³
Illegal weapons in Albania	Approximately 200,000 or 150,000–250,000
Estimated total SALW in Albania	440,000¹⁹⁴

In addition, it is very approximately estimated that 117,875 looted SALW have been trafficked from Albania since 1997.

3.1 MOD holdings

The figure of 35,000 for military SALW holdings was given by MOD officials, who stated that there are 10,000 active army personnel, with an average of 3.5 weapons per soldier.¹⁹⁵ Figures for navy and air force were not gathered, so this total figure is almost

¹⁸⁷ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Sources and methodology as in section 3.1 'MOD holdings' below.

¹⁸⁹ Methodology as below in Section 3.2 'MOPO holdings'. Sources: MOPO, The 2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Order, (Tirana, 2005), p 20; Interview, MOPO official, 19 July 2005.

¹⁹⁰ The estimate for the Guard of the Republic SALW holdings is based on the figure of 1,056 employees, with figures given for multipliers of two and 3.5. Source: op cit MOPO, p 20.

¹⁹¹ This figure is taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.191 Unfortunately, it does not provide for a more detailed breakdown by different ministries. Source: draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW, the Republic of Albania, 2004 (hereafter Draft National SALW Strategy).

¹⁹² Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Based on the sum of the above figures using averages and rounding down from a total of 443,244.

¹⁹⁵ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

certainly an underestimate.

The estimate of surplus is based upon adding together the total number of collected SALW and estimates of SALW that were not looted in 1997. From these initial estimates, one should subtract those SALW that have been destroyed or given to the military, police, other state services, exhibitions, businessmen or border inhabitants.

Table 11: Estimated number of surplus SALW held by the Albanian military.

Total of collected SALW	222,918 ¹⁹⁶
Estimates of SALW that were not looted from depots in 1997	50,000 ¹⁹⁷ –100,000 ¹⁹⁸
Initial estimate of SALW surplus	272,918–322,918
Total SALW destroyed (2000–2004)	– 141,000 ¹⁹⁹
Collected SALW taken by MOD for active and reserve service	– 35,000 ²⁰⁰
Collected SALW given to MOI police, exhibits, businessmen and border inhabitants	– 8,178 ²⁰¹
Transferred SALW	– ?
Total SALW surplus	88,742–138,742

These figures are also relatively close to estimates suggested by two different sources. Firstly, a figure of around 80,000 SALW was suggested to the research team by the US consultancy company SAIC, which is advising the Albanian military on its restructuring.²⁰² Secondly, a figure of 126,039 could also be arrived at by subtracting the 25,000 SALW destroyed in 2004 from the 151,039 surplus SALW recorded in the Government Order on SALW Decommission, which provided a comprehensive list of surplus SALW based upon an inventory of Albanian stores in 2002.²⁰³ Of course, both of these figures are several thousand SALW lower than the estimates reached above, but could suggest that the surplus is within a range of 80,000–140,000.

It is possible that transfers of surplus SALW may have reduced levels of state surpluses. Although we were informed that the collected SALW that were not in use by the MOD, MOPO, businessmen and border inhabitants were destined for destruction, according to figures published by MEICO, US\$3,258,917 worth of SALW were sold between 2000 and 2004.²⁰⁴ In addition, in 2002, Albania donated 600 assault rifles and an unknown number of machine guns to Afghanistan.²⁰⁵ The source for these sales is likely to have been MOD stores, but it is unclear how many SALW have been sold or earmarked for sale. The total of transferred surplus should also take into account the documented cases of transfer to sensitive destinations not acknowledged in the MEICO figures – in the case of transfers to Rwanda which allegedly reached Congo in 2003, this may have reduced surplus holdings of weapons and ammunition by up to 400 tonnes.²⁰⁶ One source has suggested that MEICO is able to offer for sale more units of SALW than the upper surplus figure of 138,742 suggested above.²⁰⁷ Neither the information which is publicly available detailing transfers of Albanian SALW, nor the allegations of transfers of concern, provide a solid basis for estimating how far holdings may have been reduced in this respect. Greater transparency regarding the type and quantity of transferred goods would enable more accurate estimations of state holdings to be made and

¹⁹⁶ Source: MOPO weapons collection data, July 2005.

¹⁹⁷ Interview, NGO representative, 23 July 2005.

¹⁹⁸ This figure is based upon the fact that the initial official estimates of looted SALW made in 1997 were 650,000, which was reduced to around 550,000 following a national inventory. It is assumed that the initial estimate assumed that all depots had been looted. However, this could still be a conservative estimate.

¹⁹⁹ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

²⁰⁰ Interview, MOD officials, 18 July 2005.

²⁰¹ Source: MOPO weapons collection data, July 2005.

²⁰² Telephone interview, SAIC, 20 July 2005.

²⁰³ Interview, MOD officials, 14 April 2005.

²⁰⁴ See table of MEICO transfers in Appendix 1.

²⁰⁵ 'Albanian Defense Ministry confirms donating assault rifles to Afghan army', AFP (Paris), 28 November 2002. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²⁰⁶ See section 5.1.1.5 'Transfers of concern' and Amnesty International, 'Democratic Republic of Congo: arming the east', AFR 62/006/2005, available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf620062005>

²⁰⁷ Interview, international official, 23 July 2005.

more open discussion to be held on appropriate solutions to difficulties related to stockpile management.

The military reforms currently underway will continue to create surplus SALW in the coming years through the reduction of active military personnel. Further, military spending is expected to rise from 1.3 percent of GDP in 2005 to 2.0 percent of GDP in 2010.²⁰⁸ New equipment has been targeted as one of the areas in which the increased budget will be spent. Therefore, one can expect more surplus SALW to be generated as the Albanian military re-equips.

In terms of ammunition, MOD officials indicate that having already destroyed around 32,000 tonnes, as of 2005 over 85,000 tonnes of Albanian, Chinese and Soviet produced ammunition still remain in stores. They further estimate that some 70 percent of this stock is over 35 years old. These figures should be approached with some caution given the poor organisation and record-keeping at many stores, discussed further below in section 5.1.1.2 – ‘Stockpile management’. An alternative estimate by a former NAMSA official was that stocks of ammunition are in fact around 150,000 tonnes, of which 2,000 tonnes is loose ammunition.²⁰⁹

3.2 MOI holdings

The estimate for the MOI police SALW holdings is based on the figure of 11,965 police officers of all ranks,²¹⁰ to which a multiplier of two weapons per officer is applied. This multiplier is based on the fact that the head of the MOI armoury stated that each police officer is issued with a pistol and assault rifle.²¹¹ Thus, the estimate of MOI police holdings is 23,930 SALW. However, the head of the armoury stated also that most of the working pistols collected by police officers and weapons collection teams are re-distributed to the police after they have been tested.²¹² In general, however, the numbers of recovered pistols are very few, with an even smaller number deemed fit for use. According to the head of the MOI armoury, they have been reliant upon international donations of equipment, and still require more modern equipment, SALW and specialised training in the use of firearms. He could not remember the last time that an order was placed for SALW for the police. Therefore, the figure of 23,930 SALW for MOI police could be slightly higher than the actual holdings.

3.3 Private security companies (PSCs)²¹³

The figure for PSC SALW holdings is taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.²¹⁴ The breakdown of the different types of SALW that Albanian PSCs had registered in 2004 is contained in the following table:

Table 12: Registered Private Security Company SALW holdings

Type of SALW	No of units
Pistols	162
Automatic weapons	767
Rifles	9
Total	938

²⁰⁸ Jazbec M, Defence Reform in the Western Balkans: The Way Ahead, (DCAF, April 2005), p 8.

²⁰⁹ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005.

²¹⁰ This figure excludes civil servants and administrative staff. Source: MOPO, The 2004 Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Order, (Tirana, 2005), p 20.

²¹¹ Interview, MOPO official, 19 July 2005.

²¹² Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

²¹³ Information in this section has been taken from: Page M, Rynn S, Taylor Z and Wood D, ‘SALW and Private Security Companies in South Eastern Europe: A Cause or Effect of Insecurity?’ (Belgrade, SEESAC/Saferworld/International Alert, 2005).

²¹⁴ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

In 2004, the MOI estimated that there were 269 registered PSCs in Albania, employing 4,093 security guards. This gives an average of 3.5 registered SALW per registered PSC, and suggests that a maximum of 6.5 percent of PSC guards can be armed at the same time. However, one source has reported that around 60 SALW are registered to one PSC in Shkodër,²¹⁵ which suggests that holdings of SALW differ widely between PSCs. It is reportedly common practice for PSC to equip only rapid response squads with firearms, although guards that protect banks or individuals also tend to carry firearms.

The general practice is for weapons and ammunition to be stored together on the company premises and a register to be kept. Some companies also have internal regulations on storage, and the larger companies are generally thought to maintain good storage standards. However, it has also been reported that weapons are often handed over to the next guard at the end of a shift and without going into storage. In other cases, guards are reported as taking pistols home with them.²¹⁶ Therefore, not all companies follow the regulations and norms on safe firearm and ammunition storage contained in the police manual. Thus, there is a danger that weapons issued to guards for security work are not always used for company work.

3.4 Estimates of SALW trafficked

As noted in the introduction to this report, the trafficking of SALW has been a serious problem both for Albania and the wider SEE region in the past, and the problem continues today on a smaller scale. A common estimate is that in total between 100,000 and 150,000 SALW were smuggled out of Albania between 1997 and 2002. An article from 2002 quotes a statement by the head of the UN Development Programme Country Office in Tirana, Ana Stjarnerklint, in which this figure is suggested.²¹⁷ Another report from 2003 suggests that this figure is a Government estimate,²¹⁸ and it was certainly the most commonly cited figure that the research team came across. The former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala, announced during a trip to Albania in June 1998 that “anywhere between 25 and 30 percent of the weapons not handed over to the Government may have been moved out of the country either by individuals or groups engaged in contraband activities”,²¹⁹ A report on his visit stated that Dhanapala suggested that almost 200,000 SALW had been smuggled to Kosovo, Macedonia and other unnamed destinations.²²⁰ However, in our interviews with members of the Albanian anti-trafficking forces, border police and customs, estimates were not given. Respondents in these fields did not feel that enough detailed analysis had been carried out to make a credible estimate.

Table 13: Estimated number of weapons trafficked to various destinations 1997–2002

Destination	Estimate of Weapons Trafficked
Ethnic Albanian rebel groups	40,000
Refugees from Kosovo crisis	39,375
Greece	38,500
Total	117,875

It is of course almost impossible to state exactly how many of the looted SALW have been trafficked out of Albania since 1997, let alone the total number of SALW trafficked from, to and through Albania since 1991. At first glance, the figure of 150,000 units trafficked out of the country since 1997 warrants further scrutiny for a number of

²¹⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 14 June 2005.

²¹⁶ Only 3.1 percent of respondents to an opinion poll carried out by ISO for Saferworld thought that PSC guards should be allowed to take their SALW home.

²¹⁷ Bala A, ‘Balkans weapons roundup’, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Newsline, 6(70), 15 April 2002.

²¹⁸ Op cit Quin D et al.

²¹⁹ ‘Kosovo: UN Estimates 200,000 Weapons Smuggled From Albania’, Paris AFP (North European Service), in English, 2056 GMT, 14 July 1998. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²²⁰ Ibid.

reasons: firstly, the terrain across which trafficking is said to have taken place would have made the trafficking of so many units of weapons very difficult logistically;²²¹ secondly, the best estimates of the holdings of the ethnic Albanian rebel groups who are known to have received illicitly held Albanian weapons suggests that their combined stocks never attained a size of greater than 63,520 weapons at the most.²²² Their actual combined weapons holdings at peak strength are likely to have been considerably lower, and many of these weapons were not of Albanian origin. Moreover, the total weapons trafficked from Albania to supply the groups cannot be simply aggregated from the estimated Albanian-sourced holdings of each group, as there is evidence of the NLA, UCPMB and other ethnic Albanian rebel groups having received weapons formerly held by the KLA.²²³ It is therefore calculated that no more than 40,000 weapons were ever trafficked out of Albania to supply ethnic Albanian rebel movements after 1997. Most commentators are of the view that large-scale and frequent arms trafficking from or through Albania is contingent on conflicts within SEE,²²⁴ with Kosovo and Macedonia considered to be the main destinations for arms shipments emanating from or passing through Albania.²²⁵ Interviewees informed the research team that since 2003 there have been no major interceptions of arms at the Albania-Kosovo and Albania-Macedonia border.²²⁶

How many weapons were trafficked to ethnic Albanian rebel groups after 1997?

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is ultimately believed to have been armed from a variety of sources, including Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Serbia and some NATO countries, while at least one weapons delivery from Croatia was seized by the Yugoslav authorities.²²⁷ However, the types of weapons collected in disarmament initiatives and seizures, as well as interviews with former combatants, suggest that despite acquisition of weapons from a variety of other countries, looted Albanian weapons constituted at least 50% of the weapons used by the KLA, the NLA and the UCPMB.²²⁸ At their peak, the KLA's holdings would have been

- 221 The logistical difficulty of trafficking 150,000 weapons over mountainous terrain to clandestine groups engaged in low-level insurgency without detection becomes clear if one considers that each AK Type weapon weighs approximately 3 kg. Assuming this as the mean weight per unit, over 450 Tonnes of weapons have been moved across the borders if the estimate of 150,000 trafficked weapons is right. Moreover, density of steel is approximately 7900 Kg/m³, therefore using $D = M/V$ ($V = MD$), over 56.96 m³ have been shipped. Once air gaps and packaging have been included it would be fair to estimate that the real cubic metreage is four times this = 228 m³. A standard ISO container has a volume of 38.5 m³, therefore the bulk transit of 150,000 weapons would require in the region of 6 standard ISO Containers as a minimum. The export of ammunition for these weapons would present similar difficulties.
- 222 'The most conservative estimates of Albanians' stocks now start at 25,000 hidden AK assault rifles. Also available are anti-tank weapons, rifle and hand grenades and even small-calibre mortars and anti-aircraft guns.' Zoran Kusovac, 'Another Balkans bloodbath? – Part Two', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 1 1998.
- 223 'There is little doubt that the NLA has been supplied from Kosovo, hence the (so far apparently successful) KFOR operation to reinforce the border and prevent supplies reaching the NLA.' Barnett N, 'KFOR tracks evolution of Albanian radicals', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 May 2001.
- 224 Interviews, MOP official 20 April 2005; MoPo official, 20 April 2005; MoPo official, 25 April 2005; MoPo official, 20 April 2005. This would suggest that an increase in trafficking activities from or through Albania could be used as a good guide for anticipating an increase in insurgency activities in the region. The problem, of course, is that such an early warning system is highly unreliable. It depends upon interceptions of arms being trafficked, which are liable to send false signals if the final destination of intercepted arms shipments is not known.
- 225 Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp 27–28.
- 226 Interview, MoPo official, 25 April 2005; Quin, 2003.
- 227 Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 13
- 228 Of fifteen former KLA interviewees 'nine of them indicated that Albania was the most important channel for weapons after 1997', meanwhile 'weapons bought from sources in Serbia amounted to 5–25 percent of total KLA weapons'. Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), pp 13, 14. Ripley T, 'The UCK's Arsenal', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 November 2000 outlines the diversity of the KLA's sources of weapons but supports the consensus position that looted Albanian stocks were 'the most significant'; Davis I, 'Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', (London, Saferworld, 2002), p 56 cites among other evidence an indication by KFOR that the majority of the weapons they had seized since 1999 in the province were of Chinese (i.e. Albanian) origin. Cf: 'Although large weapons caches may not be as common as they once were in Kosovo, KFOR troops still find some hidden caches. In a search operation on 30 September, members of KFOR's 5th Czech-Slovak Battalion discovered a weapons cache containing a significant quantity of military weapons in the village of Barovce. [...] While it is difficult to trace the origin of the weapons, the Chinese ammunition probably originated from Albanian government stockpiles looted in 1997.' Risser H, 'Disarmament in Kosovo stymied by future security fears', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 December 2004. That the Albanian-sourced weapons were the major element in the UCPMB's firepower is supported by the statement of Yugoslav officials who claim that these weapons constitute the majority of seizures in South Serbia since 1997: see Davis I, 'Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', (London, Saferworld, 2002), p 57. 'In three separate incidents on 18 September, 9 August and 17 June, Serbian army and police units uncovered weapons caches near the towns of Presevo and Bujanovac in Southern Serbia. [...] As with KFOR's discovery in Barovce, all of the material in the weapons caches in southern Serbia were of Chinese origin and had probably been buried by ethnic Albanian insurgents of the UCPMB after the end of fighting in 2001.' (Risser H, 'Disarmament in Kosovo stymied by future security fears', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 December 2004.) 'The NLA's arsenal is based primarily on AK-47 assault rifles, the majority of which were acquired during the collapse of the Albanian Army in 1997'. Ripley T, 'The UCK's Arsenal', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 November 2000. In accordance with this assessment, IWPR journalists note that 'It was well known that the bulk of the weapons used by the rebels were AK-47 Kalashnikovs, automatic rifles produced in China and Yugoslavia.' IWPR, *Ohrid and Beyond*, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 63; They also state that on the first day of NATO's 'Essential Harvest' the NLA surrendered 300 Chinese Kalashnikovs. IWPR, *Ohrid and Beyond*, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 95; it is further stated that, after the first phase of operation Essential Harvest, most of the weapons collected were 'light

more or less sufficient to arm approximately 20,000 combatants.²²⁹ Although estimates of their holdings have reached as high as 100,000 SALW, the statement that numbers of weapons remained 'poor and insufficient' suggests that total peak small arms holdings by the KLA may have been less than the 32,000–40,000 estimated by the Small Arms Survey.²³⁰

In 2001 Zoran Kusovac estimated that the National Liberation Army (NLA) in Macedonia held between 10,570 and 14,050 units of SALW (including 5,000 mines),²³¹ while SEESAC, Small Arms Survey and BICC's SALW survey of Macedonia estimated their holdings as between 8,210 (high confidence) and 20,000 (low confidence).²³²

The UCPMB's membership has been estimated at 2,200 at its peak, which using the Small Arms Survey weapons-per-insurgent multiplier of 1.6 meant that it would have held up to 3,520 weapons, many of which, again, would have been weapons passed on from the KLA total rather than freshly acquired from Albania.²³³ As other Albanian rebel movements (such as the ANA, UCPG, and UCK-L) are thought to have armed their estimated 4,900 members from KLA stocks,²³⁴ their holdings are not further added to the estimate of weapons trafficked from Albania since 1997. The estimated combined peak holdings of the KLA, NLA and UCPMB are therefore 63,520, of which a maximum of 40,000 are assumed to have come from Albania (given the other known sources of weaponry, and the fact that many of the same weapons were used by more than one group).

However, there were other recipients for trafficked Albanian weapons after 1997, who may have encountered fewer difficulties in transporting looted stocks: individuals, such as refugees, also took weapons out of the country for personal protection. There are no verifiable methods for calculating how many such weapons there were. However, it is known that approximately 450,000 refugees entered Albania fleeing the Kosovo conflict.²³⁵ A key informant suggests that as many as 70% of family groupings would have taken weapons with them on their way out of Albania, and that refugees typically moved in family groups of eight people. This would give a very rough estimate of numbers departing with the returning refugees of 39,375 weapons.²³⁶

infantry weapons of Chinese and Yugoslav provenance', *Ibid*, p 96. NATO refused to release details of the types of weapons surrendered by the NLA in Macedonia. UNDP SACIM has supplied information regarding the proportion of weapons originating from Albania in recent destruction events: 'during the destruction events some of the weapons confiscated are Kalashnikovs that bear Chinese inscriptions and thus come from Albania. For example on the destruction of 08 July 2005: out of 32 machine-guns, 27 bore Chinese inscriptions, out of 248 automatic rifles, 243 bore Chinese inscriptions, and out of 10 semi-automatic rifles, 9 bore Chinese inscriptions. However, it should be said that the greater part of confiscated weapons are handguns (pistols and revolvers).' Interviews with combatants in Macedonia suggest other sources for weapons must have been available to the NLA, as Macedonian forces remarked that they were sometimes outgunned by NLA fighters. (Information supplied by Hans Rissler). The same observation is made in IWPR, Ohrid and Beyond, (London, IWPR, 2002), p 38.) This is unlikely to have been possible under fire from fighters armed solely with weaponry looted from Albanian stocks in 1997. Corroborating this are statements of NLA commanders and combatants that their weaponry included Bulgarian, Bosnian and Serbian stocks as well as Albanian-sourced weaponry. (Information supplied by Hans Rissler.) Reporting at the time also pointed to the ability of the rebels to arm themselves from former Soviet stockpiles, (Ripley T, 'Insurgency in Macedonia drives Balkans arms trade', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 July 2001.) Bulgaria and Serbia. (Ripley T, 'Intentions unclear as NLA hands over arms', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 01 October 2001.)

- ²²⁹ 'It is impossible to give a definite troop strength at the end of the conflict in June 1999. Most observers, including Agim Ceku, estimated the number of KLA fighters to have been about 20,000. However, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) received 25,723 applications for reintegration assistance, when it started to register KLA combatants later in 1999.' Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 14. It is unclear whether the estimate of 20,000 includes the 600 to 4,000 fighters of the FARK, many of whom fought under KLA insignia.
- ²³⁰ 32,000 is derived by applying the 'conservative Small Arms Survey "insurgent multiplier" of 1.6 weapons per combatant' to the estimate of 20,000 combatants. Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 13. But cf: 'Estimates of the number of weapons available vary widely. While Reuter[...] puts the number at 100,000 weapons, others argue that the KLA's armament "remained poor and insufficient" [...]. The latter position is supported by the accounts of former fighters and by General Agim Ceku, the KLA's Chief-of-Staff from May 1999.' Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 13, citing: Reuter, Jens, 'Zur Geschichte der UCK', in Reuter, Jens and Clewing, Konrad eds, *Der Kosovo Konflikt – Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven*, (Klagenfurt, Wieser Verlag, 2000) p 172; Troebst, local government official, 'The Kosovo War, Round One: 1998', *Sudosteuropa*, vol 48, no 3/4, pp 156–190, p 167; Kusovac, Zoran, 'Interview with General Agim Ceku', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 October 1999.
- ²³¹ Grillot S, Stoneman S, Rissler H and Paes W-C, 'A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia', (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 21, citing Kusovac, Zoran, 'How many weapons in Macedonia', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 August 2001. The breakdown of the total by weapon type is: rifles, 5,000–8,000; heavy machine guns (mostly .50-calibre) 150–250; sniper rifles (incl some .50-calibre anti materiel rifles) 100–200; MANPADs 20–50; shoulder-launched anti-tank launchers, 200–350; Mortars (60, 80 and 120 mm), 100–200; anti-tank/anti-personnel landmines, 5,000+.
- ²³² Grillot S, Stoneman S, Rissler H and Paes W-C, 'A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia', (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 24.
- ²³³ 'Some of the KLA weapons were no doubt transferred to the UCPMB (a splinter group from the KLA fighting Serb police in southern Serbia), which had approximately 2,200 members in 2000,46 when the fighting in southern Serbia was at its peak. Today, the number of fighters is probably slightly lower, perhaps around 1,000 (hence holding an estimated 1,600 to 2,000 weapons).' Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 15.
- ²³⁴ Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 15.
- ²³⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Evaluation and policy analysis unit, 'The Kosovo refugee crisis: An independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response', February 2005, p 117.
- ²³⁶ Interview: Kosovan NGO Representative, 26 October 2005.

Although this estimate is provided with low confidence, the flow of weapons that potentially accompanied the refugees cannot be factored out of the calculations of trafficked weapons.

Estimating the number of weapons that were trafficked across the Greek border for sale to criminals is likewise a challenging topic. In 1999, a Greek newspaper reported that Greek officials estimated that 150,000 SALW had entered Greece from Albania during the preceding 18 months.²³⁷ The article also suggested that the then Albanian Public Order Minister, Tseka, had estimated that around 100,000 SALW had been smuggled to Greece from Albania since the 1997 looting, with perhaps thousands of these destined for third countries. Sizeable caches of arms have also been recently discovered hidden in caves along the Albanian-Greek border.²³⁸ A number of interceptions of trafficked SALW at border crossing points with Greece have also been made and the methods used for smuggling arms across the Greek border are thought to be similar to those used in the north and east.²³⁹ 2,100 weapons were confiscated by Greek police in the 18-month period to July 1999.²⁴⁰ In 1999 Greek police confiscated a total of 1,242 illegal weapons, while in 2000 the figure was 1,243.²⁴¹ Given that in 1995 the same figure was just 680, and slightly less in 1990,²⁴² and ascribing the difference of 550 per year to the increase in supply from Albania from 1997 looted stocks, it can be projected that assuming that only one in ten trafficked weapons were detected,²⁴³ an average of 5,500 weapons entered Greece per year from 1997 until this activity fell away because supplies diminished or because the Greek Government stepped up border security in 2002.²⁴⁴ As 1999 and 2000 are the middle years of the period in which trafficking will have gradually diminished from a peak in 1997, this total is multiplied by the seven years up to and including 2002, to give 38,500 as the estimate of SALW trafficked to Greece since 1997. Although this figure is inexact, because there is no reliable basis for projecting the numbers trafficked over a longer period from seizures in single years, it is again preferable to providing no estimate of these figures at all.

An account of the current distribution of SALW in the country also needs to take into account that weapons may have continued to enter Albania since 1997. As already stated, it is plausible to suggest that ethnic Albanian rebel groups may have brought weapons back within Albanian borders to avoid their detection and confiscation in Kosovo, Macedonia or Southern Serbia, although no estimates of the quantity are available.²⁴⁵ It was argued by local experts that the looted Albanian weapons are of poor quality and of limited use for most terrorist/criminal organisations. Nevertheless, it was stated that if tensions rise in SEE, then large-scale arms trafficking from Albania could become a major concern as the looted weapons were suitable for conflicts in the area.²⁴⁶ Large quantities of weapons may well be hidden in numerous small caches along Albania's eastern border.²⁴⁷ It is similarly plausible to suppose that volunteer combatants from Northern Albania may have returned subsequently to

237 '150,000 Albanian Arms Believed To Be in Greece', Athens Enevtherotipia in Greek, 24 July 1999, p 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

238 'Heavy weapons arsenal found in cave on Greek border', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 5–11 March 2005.

239 For example see: 'Greek police find, confiscate 300 Kalashnikovs', Athens News Agency, in English, 1815 GMT, 20 February 1998, <<http://www.ana.gr>>. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

240 '150,000 Albanian Arms Believed To Be in Greece', Athens Enevtherotipia in Greek, 24 July 1999, p 3. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

241 'Report Details Increase in Circulation of Illegal Weapons in Greece', *Athens To Vima*, [in Greek], 19 Apr 2001.

242 Sombolos Y, '2.5 Billion Drachmas Annual Turnover From Arms Trafficking' *Imerisia* [in Greek] 22 December 2001.

243 Conservative estimate based on an interview with: Sojati, 26 October 2005.

244 European Commission, 'Third Annual Report on the implementation of the EU Joint Action of 12 July 2002 on the European Union's contribution to combating the destabilising accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons (2002/589/CFSP)' (2003/C 312/01), *Official Journal of the European Union*, 22 December 2003, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/source_documents/Regional%20fora/European%20Union/EUJointAction%20Report%202003.pdf, p 4.

245 Discussed as a plausible hypothesis in: Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 14 (with reference to potentially very large storage sites in Bucaj and Krumë); Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army', BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 22; Ripley, Tim, 'The UCK's Arsenal,' *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 2000. Interview, international official, 21 April 2005.

246 Interview, MOPO official, 25 April 2005.

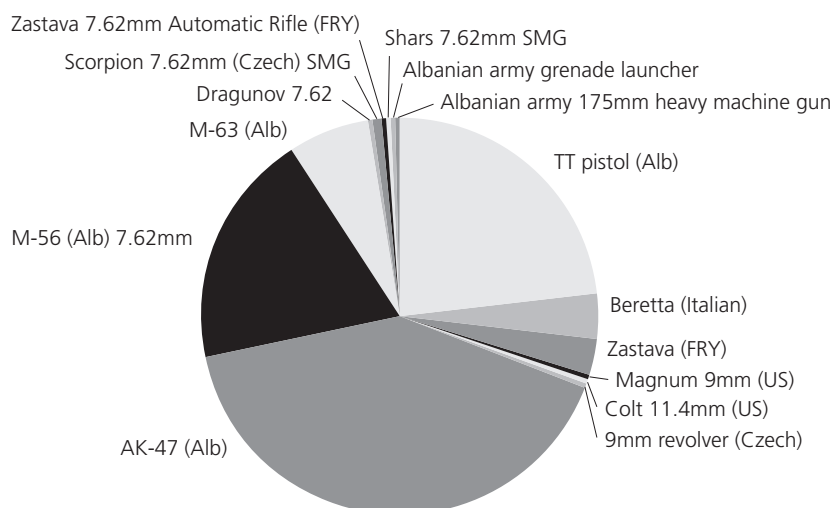
247 Interview, international official, 21 April 2005; Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' (BICC, 2001), pp 20–1; op cit International Crisis Group, 2003, p 10.

248 Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W-C, 'Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army' BICC brief 20, (BICC, Bonn, 2001), p 14.

Albania bringing weapons with them. BICC refers to these combatants in the hundreds rather than thousands, which might suggest a maximum figure of weapons brought back by such individuals of 1,000.²⁴⁸

With regard to weapons entering illicit circulation in Albania after import by individuals or organised crime gangs, evidence suggests that such transfers have been limited to small numbers of high-specification weapons. A MOPO interviewee stated that many of those they arrest for illegal SALW possession nowadays actually tend to have weapons newly trafficked from abroad rather than old Albanian stocks.²⁴⁹ This points to the hypothesis that there is among Albania's criminal fraternity, a continuing trade in higher specification weapons than are generally on offer inside the country. Statistics from the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative (SECI) on seizures by Albanian Police from November 2002 to December 2003 indicate low levels of trafficking activity, such as would not significantly alter the projections of illicit weapons in the country: as the chart shows, the longer-barrelled weapons seized seem in large part to be Albanian, while a greater proportion of the handguns were sourced from abroad.²⁵⁰ Of these, three were known to have been trafficked: one Beretta, which came from Italy to Albania in November 2002; one Zastava, which entered the country from Montenegro; and a pen-pistol, which came from Switzerland to Macedonia in December 2002. The low numbers of seizures, particularly trafficking seizures, suggest either low levels of control or of trafficking – probably both.

Weapons seizures in Albania reported by SECI (November 2002–May 2003)



According to the Head of Sector for Illegal Trafficking, Edmond Bahiti, the increased and improved police presence, changes to organisational structures, the introduction of specific trafficking articles into the Penal Code and the improved economic situation in Albania have helped to diminish the volume of trafficking from, to and through Albania. In his opinion, trafficking in arms has significantly decreased since 2000 and the end of the Kosovo conflict. It was stated that on a smaller scale, individual weapons and small shipments of arms are thought to be smuggled into Greece and Italy from Albania. In these instances, the weapons are thought to be destined for Albanian émigrés, Greek or Italian citizens who desire firearms for their protection or to arms dealers who wish to sell the weapons further afield.²⁵¹ The Albanian police and border police have seized a number of pistols that have been brought into Albania in recent years, with an average of between ten and a dozen pistols seized each month in 2005. Amongst this year's haul, there have been Berettas, Browning and Colt handguns and Yugoslav-made TT pistols. In these latter cases, Albania is thus a transit route rather

²⁴⁹ Interview, MOPO official, 26 April 2005.

²⁵⁰ SECI Task Force Combating Trafficking in Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosives, 'Analysis Report – Operation Ploughshares' (May 2003).

²⁵¹ Interview, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p. 25

than a supplier.²⁵² However, according to MOI sources, of 777 instances of trafficking uncovered at the border in 2004, only three related to trafficking in arms. Therefore, one must assume that the majority of the foreign-made pistols were seized during other police operations.

Arms trafficking into Italy across the Adriatic from Albania since 1997 is not thought to have been widespread, and the net figure would also reflect that Italian guns seem to have entered criminal hands in Albania in small numbers in the same period. Arms traffic from Albania was reportedly not considered a major priority for Italian police authorities in the late 1990s, with limited evidence suggesting that around 20 SALW were crossing the straits from east to west per week.²⁵³ In the main, arms were seized in limited quantities when drug traffickers were caught at land borders or attempting to cross by sea, with the arms believed to be for either self-protection or as 'gifts' for recipients.²⁵⁴ Moreover, the majority of the weapons being trafficked from Albania that are uncovered by customs and police officials in Greece and Italy are not of Chinese or Albanian origin, but are mainly of Yugoslav origin.²⁵⁵

For our purposes in estimating net trafficking since 1997, evidence of weapons entering the country on a small scale leads the Survey team to project a balance between the number of weapons departing to Italy and destinations other than Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia and Southern Serbia with those weapons which may have entered the country for the variety of reasons outlined since 1997. It is acknowledged that such a projection is made based largely on lack of evidence to the contrary. In conclusion, if it is assumed that other smuggling to global end users since 1997 from civilian stocks did not exceed weapons entering Albania and pre-1997 illicit holdings, the final estimate of net trafficking since 1997 is that approximately 117,875 weapons have left the country.

Recent examples of trafficking in Albania

In December 2004 three surface-to-air missiles were seized by Albanian authorities, with the suspected traffickers caught thanks to a change in the law allowing evidence to be gathered through bugging and recording suspects' telephone calls for use in trial. Interviewees were unable to give concrete details on the suspected end-users,²⁵⁶ although the media speculated that they were destined for Macedonia.²⁵⁷ One report suggested that Albanian extremist groups in Macedonia had been actively seeking Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADs) from several sources in the second half of 2004.²⁵⁸ However, Albanian authorities were fairly confident that the Albanian dealers had purchased the missiles from Montenegrins, with the origins of the missiles thought to be either Bosnia or Serbia. It has been argued that this route for smuggling arms into Albania was first established in 1991, with varying quantities of arms passing through the border.²⁵⁹

In March 2005, a sting operation resulted in the seizure of six remote-detonation explosive devices designed to be triggered by mobile phones. Again, the Albanian arms dealers had purchased their illicit explosives from Montenegro.²⁶⁰ Interviewees were happy to state that this operation was successfully conducted thanks to new legislation on combating organised crime and trafficking and good co-operation with counterparts in Montenegro. It remains to be seen if these examples are just isolated instances in the continued use of the Montenegro-Albania arms and military equipment trafficking channel, or represent warning signs of an impending increase in ANA or NLA activities in Macedonia or elsewhere.

²⁵² Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; international official, 21 April 2005; op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp. 27–8.

²⁵³ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005. See also: op cit Smith and Sagramoso, p. 28.

²⁵⁴ Interview, international official, 19 April 2005. See also: 'Expatriate caught trafficking heroin to Greece', Albania Crime and Corruption Issues, 18–24 December 2004; 'Greek police arrest Albanian smugglers, seize drugs', Athens News Agency, in English, 1334 GMT, 11 April 1998, <<http://www.ana.gr>>; 'Police arrest 90 mobsters for drug smuggling, arms trafficking', AP, 9 June 1998; 'Italy: Arms, drugs seized in port of Bari', FBIS-WEU-2000-0316, Rome ANSA (Ansaservice database version), in Italian, 1138 GMT, 16 March 2000 [FBIS Translated Text]. Source: NISAT Black Market Archive Database, <<http://www.nisat.org/>>, 17 May 2005.

²⁵⁵ Op cit Smith and Sagramoso, pp. 27–8.

²⁵⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

²⁵⁷ 'Ministry of Interior: Surface-to-Air missiles seized in Albania not destined for Macedonia', <http://www.realitymacedonia.org.mk/web/news_page.asp?nid=3999>, MIA – Macedonian Information Agency, 14 December 2004; Mahmutaj F, 'Prison tapping reveals sellers', Gazeta Shqiptare, 18 December 2004. Source: Centre for South East European Studies website, <<http://www.csees.net>>, 7 April 2005.

²⁵⁸ Op cit Barnett, 2004.

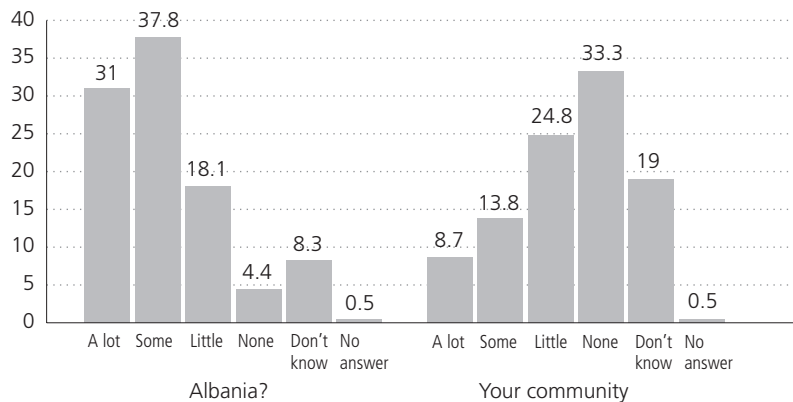
²⁵⁹ 'Albanian prosecutors say arms-smuggling chiefs in Montenegro', 2 March 2005, BBC Monitoring; 'Arms for Kosovo-Metohija through Podgorica', Blic, in Serbian, 28 October 2002. Source: Centre for South East European Studies website, <<http://www.csees.net>>, 7 April 2005.

²⁶⁰ Interviews, MOPO official, 20 April 2005; MOPO official, 20 April 2005.

3.4.1 Perceptions of trafficking

It is interesting to note that the majority of Survey respondents thought that illegal weapons trafficking is still a concern for Albania, with almost a third of respondents suggesting that it remains a serious problem.

To what extent is illegal weapons trafficking a concern in...



Although only 4.4 percent of respondents stated that they thought that illegal arms trafficking is not a problem for Albania, seven times as many thought it was not a problem in their local community. In Tirana, 39 percent of respondents stated that arms trafficking is a concern for Albania, but only 7.5 percent thought the same about their community, with 32 percent of respondents stating that it was simply not a problem there. In comparison, in the north of Albania, only 29 percent of respondents saw it as a big problem for Albania. However, this region had the highest number of respondents stating that it was a big problem for their community (13 percent) and also the largest number of respondents stating that there was no problem at all (35 percent). Similar responses were also given in interviews conducted with officials in case study regions, as they explained that arms trafficking was not considered to be a serious problem for their region.

3.5 Civilian SALW possession

3.5.1 Legal civilian possession

The figure of 65,747 for the total number of SALW registered to civilians in Albania has been taken from the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for the Control of SALW.²⁶¹ The document gives the following breakdown for SALW registered to civilians:

Table 14: Registered civilian SALW holdings

SALW type	No of units
Pistols	2,585
Automatic weapons	331
Rifles	230
Hunting rifles (single and twin barrel)	62,472
Weapons issued under licence by the republican guard	130
Total	65,747

However, this figure does not completely tally with figures gained from interviews. For example, between 1997 and 2002, businessmen with significant capital and inhabitants of border areas were permitted to register pistols and other weapons for protecting self, person and property, in accordance with Law No. 8388 'On SALWC', 25 August 1998. According to a member of the MOI weapons collection team, about 500 weapons were registered in accordance with this law,²⁶² whereas the draft National SALW

²⁶¹ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

²⁶² Interview, MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

Strategy document gives a figure of only 306 (268 pistols, 23 automatic weapons and 15 rifles).²⁶³

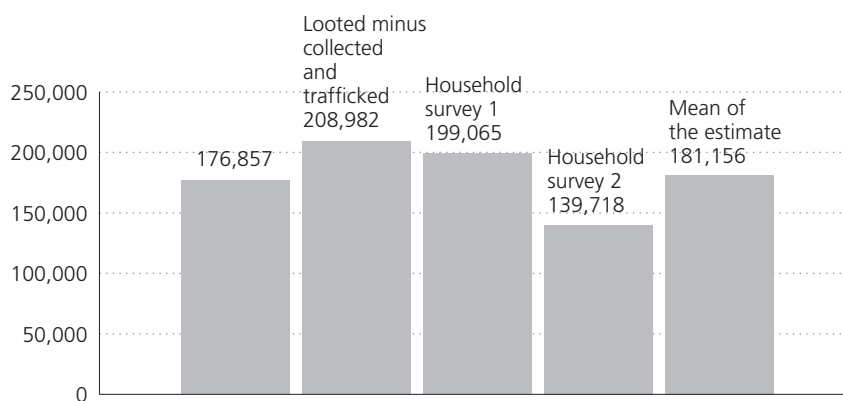
3.5.2 Illegally held weapons

Illicit weapons possession is a sensitive area about which concrete information is rarely available. It is difficult to make estimates with certainty for Albania, as proxies used in other contexts (such as the proportion of overall suicides or homicides which were committed with a firearm) were not available to the research team given the lack of relevant statistics for the country. Nor are such proxies apparently transferable between different cultural environments.²⁶⁴

When beginning calculations on this issue, an initial consideration is that until the amnesty law lapsed at the end of May 2005, an average of 800–1,000 weapons were being voluntarily handed in by civilians per month in Albania without concerted engagement in a high-profile collection initiative.²⁶⁵ Although this does not represent a basis for calculating the exact amount, this underlines the fact that there remains a large volume of illicitly held SALW in civilian hands.

The most widely used official estimate of illicit possession is 176,857. Whereas the highest confidence estimate produced by the research team suggests that there are at least 208,982 illicit SALW in circulation in Albania, although this figure is also not presented as definitive. Two further estimates, based on household survey responses, suggest illicit possession levels of 156,452–241,678 and 70,969–208,466. The fact that the household survey-based estimates are lower than the research team's estimate may indicate that the figure possessed by households or individuals does not account for all of the illicit weapons in circulation, with the remainder perhaps being held in bulk by criminals, traffickers or rebels. The estimates are shown in the chart below.

Estimates of illicit possession



Note: midpoints shown where the estimate is a range between upper and lower thresholds

The figures in the chart are not definitive and are subject to error margins, but have been provided with careful consideration of the contingent factors and evidence set out below. The methodology underlying each figure is presented and its strengths and weaknesses examined in the following section. Although each figure is subject to weaknesses, taking them together it is possible to develop a degree of certainty around the figure of 200,000 illicit weapons, with some of this number potentially held in bulk by criminals rather than by families or individuals.

²⁶³ Op cit Draft National SALW Strategy.

²⁶⁴ Cf Taylor Z, Phillips, C and Bogosavljevic, S, 'Living with the Legacy – SALW Survey, Republic of Serbia', (Belgrade, UNDP/Saferworld, April 2005), p 15.

²⁶⁵ The MoPO reported the collection of 11,307 weapons in 2005. See Rynn S et al, South Eastern Europe SALW Monitor 2005, (Saferworld/SEESAC, 2005), p 26.

Table 15: Differing estimates of numbers of illicit SALW in Albania

Illicit Circulation		
Method	Key problems	Estimate
1. Official figure	Ignores pre-1997 possession; Overestimates weapons trafficked out	176,857
2. Looted minus collected and trafficked	Ignores pre-1997 possession; No means to estimate trafficking to all recipients definitively; Does not account for weapons returning to/entering Albania; Relies on assumptions about insurgent holdings	208,982
Illicit Household Possession		
Method	Key problems	Estimate
3. Household survey		
Q1 – ‘What percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?’ applied to total HH with weapons-per-household multiplier	Doubts over public’s ability to estimate nationwide possession levels accurately; Uncertain basis for projecting weapons per household	156,452–241,678
Q2 – ‘Have you ever had a weapon at home?’ applied to total HH with weapons-per-household multiplier minus collected weapons	Total weapons known to have been illegally held exceeds survey findings	70,969–208,466
Q3 – ‘Do you have a weapon at home now?’ applied to total households with weapons per household multiplier	Underreporting among respondents; Rate of weapons collection to May 2005 and minimum numbers of looted weapons in circulation discredit this figure	26,425–61,664

Official Estimate

The most commonly quoted estimate for illegal SALW in civilian hands in Albania is 200,000, a figure reached by using the rounded-up total of 550,000 looted SALW and subtracting 200,000 collected SALW and the estimated 150,000 trafficked SALW. This total can be made more accurate by instead subtracting the latest available figure on weapons collected (222,918 as of June 2005) and the 150,000 trafficked weapons from the official figure of weapons looted (549,775), thereby resulting in a total of 176,857 illegal firearms. Few of the looted weapons are likely to have been legalised as the law has never provided for the ownership of military-style weaponry.

Table 16: Official estimate of number of illicit SALW in Albania

Method 1: Official figure	
Looted weapons	549,775
– Collected weapons	– 222,918
– Trafficked weapons	– 150,000
= Total	176,857

Refining the total derived from numbers looted

There are several problems with the official figure. To it should also be added the number of illicit weapons in civilian hands prior to 1997. There are few indications of how many such weapons existed, but the number may well have been low given the repressive social controls enforced under Hoxha’s rule. Another likely source for the collected weapons could be weapons that had been illegally possessed since World War II or even before. Although it has been claimed that the Albanian military had a large

number of trophy weapons within their stores,²⁶⁶ it is highly likely that the number of weapons collected of WWII vintage or even earlier is greater than the number held in Albanian military stores before 1997. Indeed, it has been argued that some of the weapons that have been voluntarily surrendered are actually being surrendered because weapons looted in 1997 have replaced older models, which have been illegally held for many years.²⁶⁷ The fact that the quality of collected weapons varied over time, beginning with unusable and rusty items and ending with higher quality units would seem to support this.²⁶⁸ With this in mind, it is clear that the unknown number of weapons illicitly held by civilians prior to the 1997 looting might well, if known, add significantly to the total derived from the number of weapons looted in 1997.

Table 17: Estimated number of illicit SALW in Albania based using statistics for 1997 looting and subsequent trafficking

Method 2: Subtraction from looted stocks

Looted weapons	549,775
– Collected weapons	– 222,918
– Weapons to KLA/NLA/UCPMB	– 40,000
– Weapons to Greece	– 38,500
– Refugees' weapons	– 39,375
+ Pre 1997 weapons	+ ?
+ Other weapons entering/leaving Albania (net)	0
= Total	208,982

Another problem with the official figure is that the number of collected weapons which has habitually been subtracted from the total looted in 1997 includes barrels and weapons parts which did not constitute fully operable units of SALW (see section 6.4 'Results of the amnesty/weapons collection processes'). Therefore the total of collected weapons may be overly inflated. The further key problem with the official figure, however, is that it depends on a questionable estimate of net units trafficked in/out of the country since 1997. This Survey has compiled a revised estimate of trafficking since 1997 as outlined above in section 3.4 – 'Estimates of SALW trafficked'. If this revised estimate of 117,875 trafficked out of Albania since 1997 replaces the previous estimate of 100,000–150,000 SALW, the research team conservatively estimates that approximately 208,982 SALW remain in illicit circulation in Albania.

A final note of caution should be added in relation to this method of calculating illicit holdings: some of the weapons looted in 1997 will have become obsolete since entering illicit circulation, depending on the conditions in which they have been stored.

Calculating illicit household possession from the household survey

The household survey carried out for this research report provides another method for estimating the number of illegal SALW in Albanian households. Since a random sampling technique was used, findings from the survey can be generalised to the wider population. Two HHS questions provide the basis for credible estimates of illicit possession levels. The first of these is the question, 'In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?' responses to which are displayed in the following chart. Represented as a smooth line chart, a peak is generated at just over 27%.

²⁶⁶ Several interviewees involved in previous collection programmes were confident that many of the surrendered weapons were not in fact from the looted stocks but communist era – people replaced their old stocks. Interview, former MOD official, 18 April 2005 and MOPO official, 15 April 2005.

²⁶⁷ Interviews, international official, 29 April 2005; MOPO official 15 April 2005.

²⁶⁸ Interview, international official, 12 April 2005.

In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?

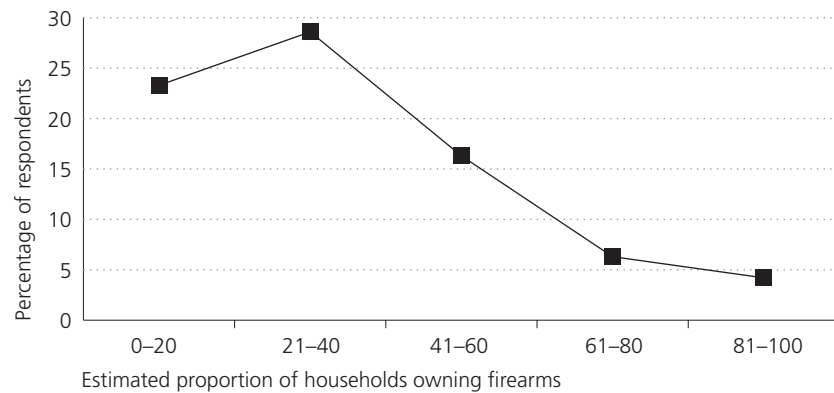


Table 18: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question 'How many households have weapons?'

Method 3: HHS 1 'How many households have weapons?'

27% of households estimated by the general public to have weapons	194,400	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons		– 65,747
= Total	156,452	241,678

Extrapolating this to Albania's 720,000 households gives an estimate of 194,400 households currently owning weapons. It must, however, be borne in mind that some households are likely to be in possession of more than one firearm. Projecting the actual number of weapons held by these households using weapons-per-household multipliers of 1.143²⁶⁹ and 1.58²⁷⁰ gives us an estimated total of 222,199–307,152 legal and illegal weapons in civilian possession. Subtracting legally registered guns from that total gives us an estimated 156,452–241,678 weapons in illicit circulation. This figure tallies well with the upward revision of the official figure suggested above. The reliability of this estimate is, however, compromised by the findings of focus group discussions in which participants' perceptions of levels of weapons ownership were widely divergent. This suggests that the public has no solid basis for estimating the overall level of weapons possession among the nation's households.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ In response to the question, 'In your opinion, how many guns are there in a typical Albanian household?' the majority of survey respondents stated that they did not know. However, a mean figure of 1.143 for weapons possession per household can be generated from the responses of those that gave an answer. This is used in the calculations which follow as the minimum multiplier to apply to estimated numbers of weapons-owning households to project the total of weapons possessed by them. The tendency for survey respondents to under-report on levels of ownership suggests that the correct multiplier would be higher. From a base of 1,200 the responses were: 'don't know' – 709 (59.1%); '1' – 359 (29.9%); no answer – 92 (7.7%); '2' – 26 (2.2%); '3' – 7 (0.6%); '4' – 6 (0.5%); '0' – 1 (0.1%).

²⁷⁰ If the average number of weapons held by each SALW-owning household in Albania is in fact closer to that seen in neighbouring countries, then an upper or medium-confidence Albanian multiplier can be estimated at 1.58. This is based on estimates for SEE countries as follows: Bosnia – 1.75 (This is the 'high confidence' guns-per-household multiplier for illicit possession in Bosnia. Small Arms and Light Weapons Survey (SAS): Bosnia and Herzegovina, (BICC, Bonn, 2004), p 24); Kosovo – 1.4–1.7 (Source: Khakee A, Florquin, N, 'Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo', (Geneva, Small Arms Survey/UNDP, June 2003), p 2); Macedonia – 1.61 (Derived from responses to the question 'What is the average number of weapons people have in their household?' shown in figure 3.1 in Grillot S, Stoneman S, Risser H and Paes W-C, 'A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-Conflict Macedonia', (SEESAC/SAS/BICC, Belgrade, 2004), p 19. The figure quoted is a mean where 29% responded 1, 16% responded 2, 4% responded up to 3, 1% responded 3–5 and 1% responded up to 5.); Moldova – 1.5 (In 2004 630 unregistered weapons were collected from 389 households in Moldova during inspections that are carried out by the authorities on a rolling 5-yearly basis across the country (not including police seizures on the streets). This yields a ratio of 1.62 weapons per weapons-owning household. Source: Department for Criminology, Ministry of Interior, Moldova. [This is matched by registered civilian possession figures which have 600,000 (approx.) firearms registered to 400,000 (approx.) households.] In terms of legal ownership, 44,028 individuals hold 49,780 weapons in Moldova, giving a ratio of 1.13 per licensed individual.); Montenegro – 1.55 (Derived by calculating a mean of the numbers of weapons respondents who admitted owning weapons claimed to have (1 gun – 19.5%, 2 – 3.3%, 3 – 1.3%, 4 – 0.7%, 5 – 1.6%); Florquin N, O'Neill Stoneman S, "A house isn't a home without a gun" SALW Survey – Republic of Montenegro', (SEESAC/Small Arms Survey, 2004), p 49. In relation to all households in Montenegro, 'The notion of one firearm per household came up repeatedly during most meetings held between the Small Arms Survey and a range of academic, NGO, private security and other civilian actors.' Ibid, p 4); Serbia – 1.5 (The figure applies to respondents who admitted to owning firearms and therefore probably primarily relates to legal owners. 'In the household survey, respondents were asked if either they or a member of their household owned a firearm and were then asked how many they owned. A total of 20% answered positively, and the average number of firearms per household was 1.5.' Taylor Z, Philips, C and Bogosavljevic, S, 'Living with the Legacy – SALW Survey, Republic of Serbia', (Belgrade, UNDP/Saferworld, April 2005), p 15).

²⁷¹ Cf the increasing uncertainty of respondents when asked the same question about their local community and family circle in section 3.5.4, 'Perceptions of civilian SALW possession'.

Table 19: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question 'Have you ever had a weapon?'

Method 3: HHS 2 'Have you ever had a weapon?'		
43.7% of households	314,640	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons	– 65,747	
– Collected weapons	– 222,918	
= Total	70,969	208,466

The second question from the household survey to offer a basis for a credible estimate of illicit possession is: 'Have you ever had a weapon at home?' This produced a positive response from 43.7 percent of respondents, suggesting that 314,640 households had at some time been in possession of a firearm. If on average each one possessed 1.143–1.58 weapons²⁷² this suggests that 359,633–497,131 SALW have been possessed by the Albanian population within living memory. After subtracting legally registered firearms, the remainder (293,887–431,384) again falls short of the minimum possible quantity which is known to have been illegally possessed at some stage (549,775 – the looted total from 1997). This may reflect the fact that particular individuals or groups took the remainder of the weapons in bulk. It probably also indicates a reluctance to admit to ownership of illegal military-style weapons at any stage. When the 222,918 weapons collected since 1997 are subtracted from the total, the remainder gives the second estimate derived from the household survey of 70,969–208,466 weapons currently in illicit circulation in Albania. Again, taken on its own this estimate should be treated with low confidence.

The household survey also gathered responses to the question 'Do you have a weapon at home now?', to which 11.2 percent of respondents answered positively.

Multiplying these responses by the total households in the country would suggest that 80,640 Albanian households possess weapons.

Table 20: Estimate of household SALW possession using based on household survey question 'Do you have a weapon?'

Method 3: HHS 3 'Do you have a weapon?' (discredited)		
11.2% of households	80,640	
x Weapons per household	x (low)	x (high)
	1.143	1.58
– Legally owned weapons	65,747	
= Total	26,425	61,664

Using the multipliers on the percentage of households admitting to owning weapons in the HHS yields an estimated total possession level of 92,172–127,411. Subtracting those which are legally registered (65,747), the responses to this question would yield a total of 26,425–61,664 illegal weapons. This figure is incompatible with both the numbers of weapons known to be unaccounted for since the looting of stockpiles and the rate at which weapons were being handed in before the amnesty law elapsed at the end of May 2005. Similar studies have also remarked on a tendency of households to deny ownership of firearms because they are unwilling to indicate that they are breaking the law, which would explain why the estimate derived from responses to this question is much lower than estimates produced by the other methods. This last estimate is therefore not treated as a plausible estimate by the research team.

Illicit possession: households or criminal groups?

Only 28.2 percent of respondents to the household survey thought that unregistered

²⁷² The multipliers should in fact be revised upwards in relation to the number of weapons possessed in living memory (as opposed to those currently possessed), to take into account the probable replacement over time of old guns which had become obsolete.

firearms were possessed by households in Albania, whereas 94.7 percent thought that criminal groups were in possession of SALW.²⁷³ This gives strength to the hypothesis that specific individuals or groups retain a significant proportion of the looted SALW in bulk, which may add several thousand weapons to the illicit total, and explain further why even the two more credible household survey-based estimates fall below the numbers which emerge from estimates based on subtraction from the total of weapons looted in 1997. The latter are presented as the more reliable estimates, as they relate to known numbers of weapons from a fixed point in time which can be assumed to remain in Albania if they cannot plausibly be accounted for elsewhere.

3.5.3 Acquisition of illegal weapons

Police officials in Berat, Fier, Gjirokaster, and Kukës stated that they had no black market in weapons in their areas.²⁷⁴ However, they all continued by stating that of course it was possible to acquire a firearm illegally in their area. For example, a police officer from Kukës stated that although there is no black market, one could still buy weapons illegally from poor families in places such as Tropoje, who would be willing to sell an automatic rifle for around €40. The confusion over what constitutes a ‘black market’ is perhaps dependent upon individual definitions. It may be true that there are no longer physical black markets for arms, comparable to the ‘illegal arms bazaars’ that were present in Bajram Curri and Tropoje in the late 1990s, but this officer was able to give an estimate for the price of an unregistered weapon. Interviewees from Berat, Gjirokastër, Kukës and Shkodër provided us with estimated prices for various SALW in their regions, as shown in the table below:

Table 21: Estimates for black market SALW prices in Albania

	Firearms	AK-47	TT-Pistol
Berat ²⁷⁵	€80–€160	–	–
Gjirokaster ²⁷⁶	–	€25–€40	€245–€570
Kukës ²⁷⁷	–	€15–€200	–
Shkodër ²⁷⁸	–	€110	€240–€400

The prices given in the table may provide a useful guide for the relative difference in prices for these types of weapons in different parts of Albania. It is generally believed that automatic and bolt-action rifles are much cheaper than pistols in Albania, which perhaps suggests that the demand for pistols is still high and/or supply is more complex. In contrast, one could presume that a large number of automatic and bolt-action rifles are still in illegal circulation, despite the fact that they also make up the majority of the SALW that have been seized and voluntarily surrendered. Of course, combat firearms such as AK-47s are also more difficult to hide than a pistol.

Nevertheless, there was a general consensus among respondents from formal and informal meetings that it was not difficult to get a gun in Albania. However, directly entering the black market would not necessarily be the first route taken. Most interviewees suggested that initial enquiries would be made within one’s extended family or circle of friends, with the assumption that it would not be difficult to acquire a weapon. In a survey conducted by the Centre for Rural Studies in 2002, 61 of the 569 respondents expressed views on how one could obtain a weapon in Albania. Of these 61 respondents, 90 percent stated that either members of the family and relatives, friends of neighbours would be the main method for acquiring a weapon.²⁷⁹ In the

²⁷³ Compare the chart in section 3.5.4 – ‘Perceptions of civilian SALW possession’ showing responses to the question ‘In your opinion, which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania?’

²⁷⁴ Interviews, MOPO official, 30 July 2005; MOPO official, 30 July 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005; MOPO official, 27 April 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005.

²⁷⁵ Interview, MOPO official, 30 July 2005.

²⁷⁶ Interviews, MOPO official, 6 August 2005; MOPO official, 6 August 2005.

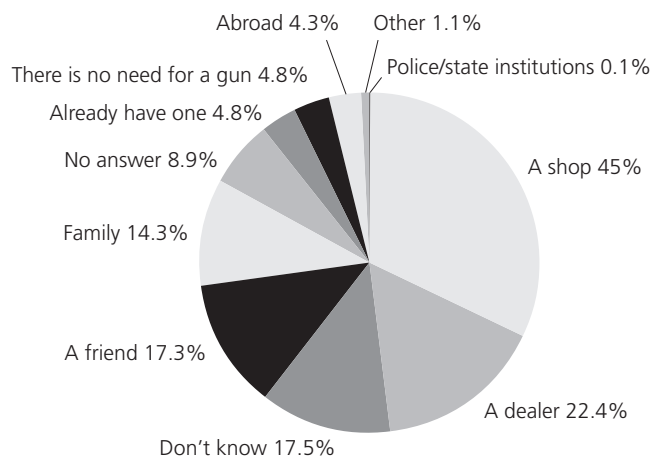
²⁷⁷ Interview, MOPO official, 27 April 2005

²⁷⁸ Interview, international organisation official, 13 June 2005.

²⁷⁹ The percentage was broken down thus: 19.7 percent stated members of the family; 26.2 percent said friends; 36.1 percent stated relatives and 8.2 percent gave the response neighbours. Source: op cit Center for Rural Studies, Table 36.

research for this survey conducted by ISO in 2005, 17.3 percent of respondents stated ‘a friend’ and 14.3 percent said ‘family’ would be the first people that they would turn to if they needed a weapon.

If you needed a gun for any reason, where is the first place you would go?



While the most popular options in the Survey were ‘shop’ and ‘dealer’, one of the focus group discussions produced the following, not atypical, response:

Yes, it is not so difficult [to get a gun in Albania]. If you want, you can find it. You just have to have the money. Go to the black market, and they will bring it to you immediately.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Female, August 2005.

3.5.4 Perceptions of civilian SALW possession

As with the responses to other SEESAC surveys on perceptions of SALW possession, higher estimates were given when respondents were asked to assess the percentage of households in Albania with a firearm, compared to estimates for neighbourhood and family and friends. At the same time, there was also a tendency for the number of ‘don’t know’ responses to increase as the estimates got closer to home. Thus, 20.1 percent of respondents answered ‘don’t know’ when asked to estimate how many households in Albania had a working firearm, while 40.5 percent of respondents gave the same answer when asked to make the estimate for their friends and family.

Table 22: In your opinion, what percentage of households in Albanian society have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	23.5%	28.9%	26.2%	9.0%	23.3%
21–40%	27.6%	22.0%	29.6%	35.0%	28.6%
41–60%	18.4%	14.7%	12.5%	25.0%	16.3%
61–80%	7.7%	14.2%	0.8%	9.0%	6.3%
80%+	5.9%	11.2%	0.6%	2.5%	4.2%
Don't know	15.4%	9.1%	28.6%	18.0%	20.1%
No answer	1.5%	0.0%	1.6%	1.5%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 23: In your opinion, what percentage of households in your neighbourhood have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	39.3%	53.4%	45.8%	36.0%	44.2%
21–40%	12.9%	15.5%	11.9%	10.5%	12.6%
41–60%	13.6%	6.0%	2.4%	4.5%	6.0%
61–80%	5.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	1.3%
80%+	1.8%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%
Don't know	26.1%	22.8%	35.5%	45.0%	32.5%
No answer	1.1%	2.2%	4.0%	3.5%	2.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 24: In your opinion, what percentage of your friends and family's households have at least one working firearm?

Estimate	Region				Total
	North	Centre	South	Tirana	
Less than 20%	41.9%	43.1%	38.3%	25.5%	37.9%
21–40%	11.4%	6.5%	6.3%	0.5%	6.5%
41–60%	6.3%	3.0%	2.0%	1.0%	3.0%
61–80%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
80%+	1.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
Don't know	31.6%	37.1%	41.9%	53.0%	40.5%
No answer	3.3%	10.3%	11.3%	20.0%	10.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

For all levels, the respondents located in the north of Albania gave the higher estimates for the numbers of households with at least one working firearm, with the lowest estimates always given by respondents from Tirana. However, in total, more than half of the respondents believed that less than forty percent of households in their neighbourhood and Albania had a firearm.

Most intriguing was the fact that when asked to estimate the percentage of family and friend households with at least one working firearm, more than forty percent of respondents stated 'don't know'.²⁸⁰ While respondents from the south had the highest percentage of 'don't knows' for estimates of the percentage of households nationally with a firearm, Tirana had the highest percentage of 'don't know' respondents for the neighbourhood, friends and family. These high 'don't know' counts could be due to the fact that the respondents were answering the questionnaire honestly by expressing that such an estimate was very difficult to make. Although one would perhaps be more sceptical of the large number of 'don't knows' for friends and family, estimates in focus groups for firearms possession in their region also varied wildly suggesting that 'don't know' is really probably the most honest response.

When asked about the level of guns in their neighbourhood, 36.8 percent again responded that they did not know, while 45.4 percent of respondents believed that the number of guns in their neighbourhood was 'very few', 11.8 percent thought that the level was acceptable and 3.4 percent thought that there were too many.²⁸¹

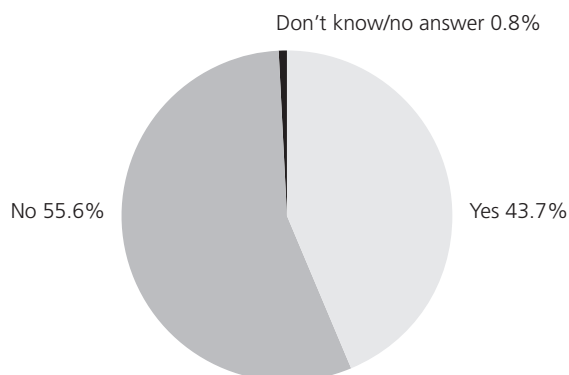
Although only 11.2 percent of respondents confessed to having a weapon at home, 43.7 percent of respondents declared that they had had a weapon at home at some time in

²⁸⁰ In another question, respondents were asked if they thought that their neighbour had a weapon. In response, 44.4 percent of those polled stated that they did not know if their neighbour had a weapon or not, while 15.6 percent stated 'yes' and 38 percent stated 'no'. Two percent of respondents did not answer this question.

²⁸¹ Sixty six percent of respondents from the centre of Albania thought that there were very few weapons in their neighbourhood, with twenty two percent of respondents from this area stating that they did not know. Fifty one percent of respondents based in Tirana stated that they did not know how many guns were in their neighbourhood.

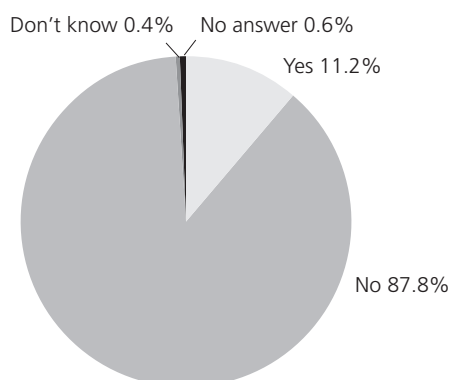
the past (as shown in the chart below). Fifty percent of rural respondents stated that they had at some point had a weapon at home compared to 31.5 percent of urban respondents.

Have you ever had a weapon at home?



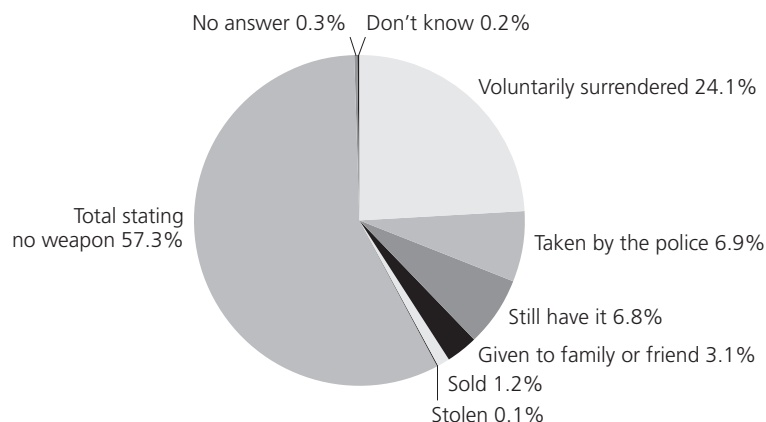
Fourteen percent of rural respondents stated that they had a gun at home now, while seven percent of urban respondents made such a declaration.

Do you have a weapon at home now?



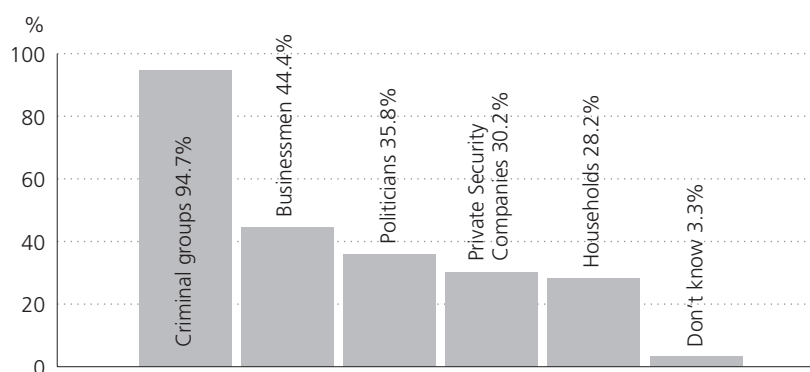
When asked what had happened to their weapon, most respondents who reported having had a weapon stated that they had voluntarily surrendered it or it had been taken by the police. Of those aged over 61, 36 percent stated that the police had taken their weapon, compared to only 18 percent of the 18–30 age group. Respondents aged over 61 had the lowest number of respondents stating that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon with 43 percent, while 64 percent of the 41–50 age group stated that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon. In the north of Albania, 54.5 percent stated that they had voluntarily surrendered their weapon, twenty four percent claimed that they still had it, eight percent had sold it and four percent of respondents stated that the police had taken it. The region with the highest percentage of respondents claiming to have voluntarily surrendered their weapon was in the south of Albania (65 percent), followed by the north (54.5 percent), then Tirana (49 percent) and then the centre (47 percent). The responses can be compared to the percentages of leaked weapons recovered by region using the statistics from the table included in section 6.4 – ‘Results of the amnesty/weapons collection processes’. These figures corroborate the household survey responses in indicating that the greatest proportion of weapons were indeed recovered in the south (72.8 percent), but also shows that success was in fact also much greater in the centre (35.6 percent recovered), than in the north (23.3 percent recovered).²⁸² There was also considerable regional variation in the proportion of respondents reporting that the police had taken the weapon they previously owned: the proportion was highest in the centre of Albania (38 percent), followed by the South (15 percent) and Tirana (six percent).

²⁸² The percentage for: the centre is derived from General District Directory totals for Berat, Diber, Durres, Elbasan, Fier, and Tirana; the north is derived from GDD totals in Kukës, Lezhë and Shkodër; the south is derived from GDD totals for Gjirokastrë, Korçë and Vlorë.

What happened to the weapon that you previously owned?

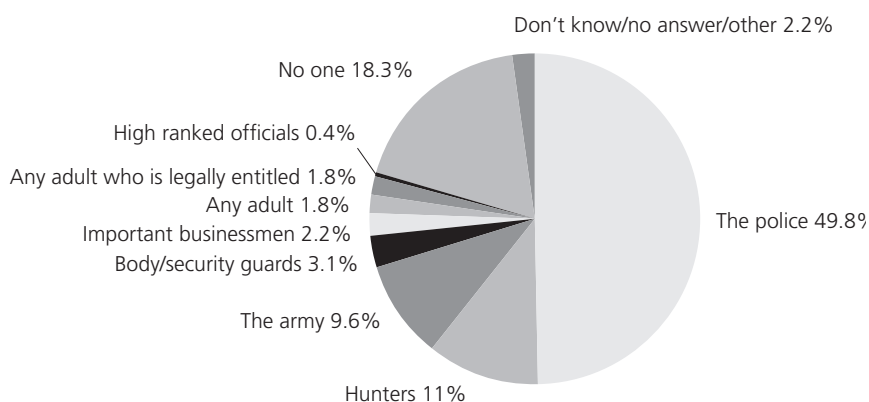
It is interesting to note that if the proportion of households claiming that their weapon was surrendered or seized (31.0 percent) is used to project a total of weapons collected or seized based on the number of households in the country (720,000) this would suggest that a minimum of 223,200 weapons had been collected or seized from households in Albania within living memory, Although each household surrendering a weapon may have handed in more than one weapon on average, while weapons collections before 1997 would be expected to form a proportion of the collections/ seizures reported by respondents for this question, this figure would appear to accord well with the official figure of 222,918 SALW collected since 1997.

When it came to asking in which parts of Albanian society firearms were most likely to be held outside the police and armed forces, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated 'in the hands of criminals'. However, almost half of respondents suggested businessmen, while more than a quarter of respondents thought that households possessed SALW. The following chart shows the results of a question asking which groups are thought to possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania:

In your opinion, which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania?

When asked which groups possess registered and unregistered firearms in Albania, 39 percent of respondents from the centre of the country named households as one of these groups, compared to only 18.5 percent of respondents from the south of Albania. When asked who should be allowed to keep firearms at home, almost half of respondents supported the idea of the police being allowed to do so, while the percentage fell to 9.6 in relation to the army (although 27 percent of respondents in central Albania supported this option).

Who should be allowed to keep firearms at home?



In surveys in 2002 and 2004 by the Centre for Rural Studies the 'police' option was not included with the result that in 2002 77.2 percent and in 2004 73 percent of respondents stated that nobody should have weapons at home.²⁸³ In the 2005 survey carried out by ISO for this report, 17.5 percent of males and 20 percent of females thought that no-one should be allowed to keep a firearm at home. On average, 28 percent of urban and 16 percent of rural respondents supported this idea.

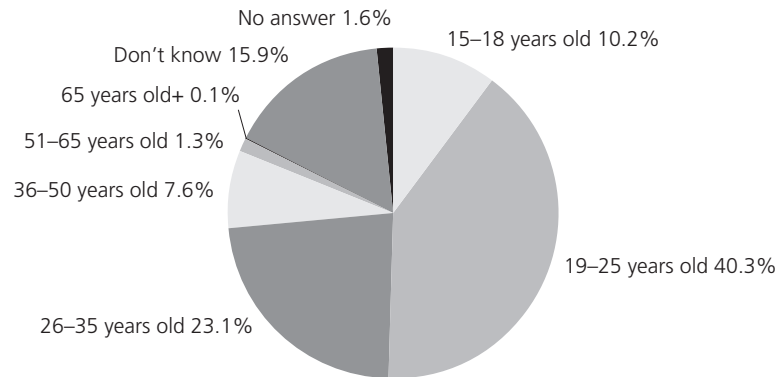
In 2002, an average of ten percent thought that only businessmen should be permitted to carry weapons, with this statement most strongly supported in Durres (17.9 percent), Shkodër (16.7 percent) and Gjirokaster (14 percent), with no respondents in Kukës agreeing with this view. In the 2004 survey, support for this option had risen to an average of twenty percent of respondents, with its strongest supporters now in Vlorë (34.8 percent) and Tirana (25.2 percent). The level of support for this option in Durres had dropped to 11.9 percent, while a similar percentage of respondents in Gjirokaster (14 percent) and Shkodër (17.9 percent) continued to support this option. The idea that each family should have a weapon received an average of 11.1 percent in 2002, with almost a third of respondents in Lezhe agreeing with this idea (30.4 percent) and a fifth in Durres (19 percent). All other areas had responses below this average. In 2004, the overall level of support for this option had dropped to 5.1 percent, with support in Lezhe dropping to 6.6 percent and rising to 20.5 percent from 5 percent in Kukës. One interpretation of these apparently large vacillations in the public's views is that the opinions expressed are not strongly held, and can potentially be altered positively through public awareness activities; a second is that they reflect rapidly fluctuating perceptions among respondents of the security of their immediate environment.

The mayor of Fier spoke of the possibility that different ethnic groups in the area could have different attitudes to weapons and hence different numbers of weapons.²⁸⁴ However, in general, weapons possession in Albania is seen being more prevalent amongst the male gender rather than amongst any particular ethnicity. Many interviewees stated that the main problem group are young men in their teens and twenties, who are engaged in conflicts that were exacerbated by the easy availability of weapons.²⁸⁵ In the 2005 ISO survey, people aged between 19 and 25 years old age group were regarded as the age group most likely to possess firearms.

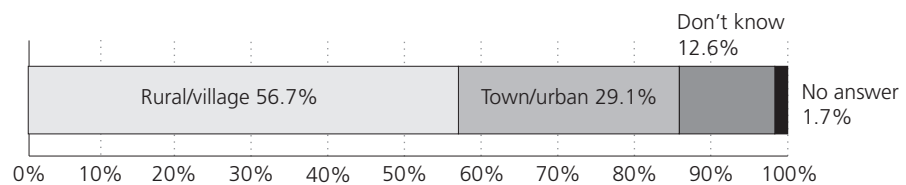
²⁸³ Despite this apparent consistency the regional distribution of those who giving this response shifted markedly from Kukës and Vlore in 2002 to Durres and Lezhe in 2004, suggesting that impressions on this issue are mutable despite the overt consistency in the overall response to the two surveys. Those under 18 and over 60 most strongly supported the idea that no-one should possess firearms in the 2002 poll with 92.3 percent and 80.6 percent respectively. Sources: op cit Center for Rural Studies, table 44; op cit Center for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, p. 35.

²⁸⁴ Interview, local government official, 12 May 2005.

²⁸⁵ Interviews, former MOD official 27 April 2005; MOD official, 13 June 2005. This was also a common response in all focus group interviews, irrespective of gender.

People from which age group are most likely to have firearms?

However, a number of interviewees also argued that many middle-aged and older men were thought to hold unregistered weapons, as the head of the household, and sometimes the eldest son, traditionally possessed weapons. In general, however, most interviewees spoke of differences between gun ownership in city, urban and rural areas, with rural areas thought to have a higher number of guns per capita than urban areas. This was also the case in the 2005 ISO survey:

In which parts of Albania are firearms most abundant (except in the police, the army, the gendarmerie, etc)?

The higher levels of gun ownership in rural areas are generally thought to be driven by the fact that a lesser police presence serves a more isolated population, which consequently believes in the need for self-protection. The other main reason given for higher levels of rural gun ownership was tradition. Yet, it was also argued that it is not just gun ownership in general that is higher in the rural areas, but unregistered illegal gun ownership. Differences were also mentioned in relation to the types of weapons that one should expect to find in the urban and rural areas. For example, one would expect there to be mainly pistols in the city, whereas in the villages one would expect to find more rifles and machine guns.

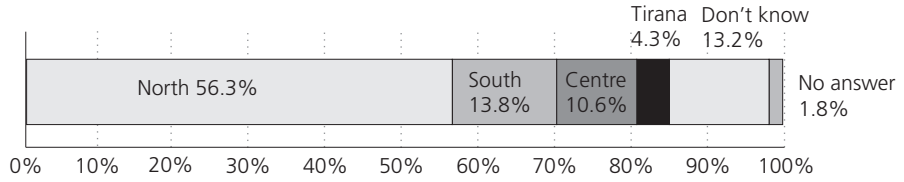
Some respondents even suggested that illegal gun ownership in the major cities of Albania is a problem that rural Albanians bring with them when they move to urban areas.²⁸⁶ Others preferred to highlight certain cities as having more of a gun problem than their own. Thus, for example, one respondent favourably compared his city of Fier with Vlorë, arguing that Fier did not have a gun problem while Vlorë did.²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, according to one prosecutor for the district of Fier, the area has a higher per capita rate of murder and illegal weapons possession than Durres, with a number of interviewees suggesting that illegal weapons possession is actually widespread in the area as cases of illegal weapons possession have been amongst the most frequent cases taken to court in the area.²⁸⁸ In general, however, most interviewees and survey respondents stated that northern Albania has the most firearms in Albania.

²⁸⁶ Interview, MOI official, 15 May 2005.

²⁸⁷ Interview, Ministry of Education official, 14 May 2005. Most respondents from Fier were adamant that there is not a gun culture in Fier, and no real tradition of holding weapons. Interviews, Ministry of Education official, 14 May 2005; MOI official, 14 May 2005; NGO representative, 15 May 2005; local government official, 12 May 2005.

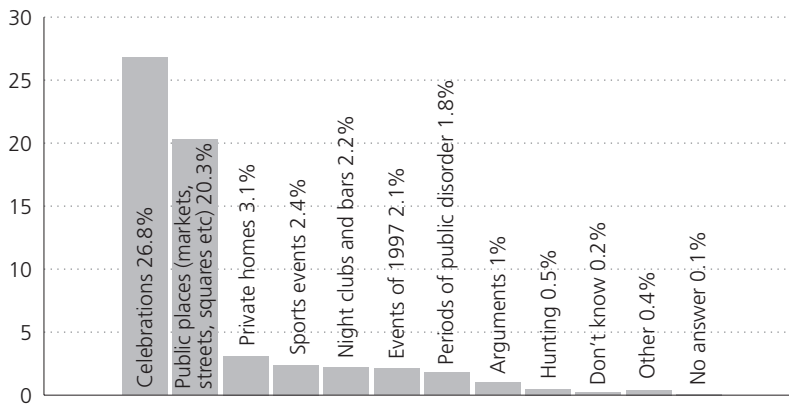
²⁸⁸ Interviews, MOI official, 15 May 2005; MOI official, 16 May 2005.

In which parts of Albania are firearms most abundant?



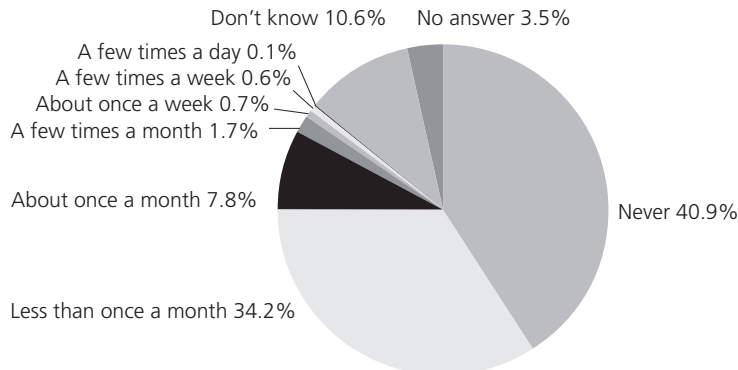
According to the 2005 ISO survey conducted for this report, the most common place to see firearms being used in the community in Albania is during celebrations. Although 19.9 percent of respondents stated that one can never see people carrying firearms in Albania (excluding police or army officers), 41.3 percent of respondents claimed to have personally witnessed firearms being used (47.5 percent of male respondents and 35 percent of female respondents). There were no significant regional differences for this, which may belie the perception that there are more firearms in the North of the country. A greater percentage of older respondents admitted to having witnessed a situation involving firearms – on average, 50 percent of over 65s had witnessed a firearm being used compared to 41.5 percent of 18–30 year olds. The survey also suggested that one is more likely to see a firearm used in a rural rather than an urban area, with 46 percent of rural respondents claiming to have witnessed a firearm being used compared to 36 percent of urban respondents.

What kind of situations where firearms were used have you personally witnessed?



The frequency with which firearms are seen in public is also fairly low considering the estimates of unregistered firearms at large in Albania. This may support the thesis that a significant proportion of illicit holdings are held in bulk rather than by individual households, or it may equally suggest that many weapons are held covertly in case of emergency rather than for frequent use or overt display.

How often do you see people (excluding police or army officers) carrying firearms in your neighbourhood?



Focus group participants added distinctions to the data collected by the survey. They suggested a marked difference between the visibility of firearms in Shkodër and

Tirana, with firearms a more common sight in the former. One of the most interesting insights, however, came from a participant in a focus group in Tirana who stated that:

We are maybe not used to seeing [SALW] but we are used to their presence. Even if people hear a gunshot, they run for two seconds but then they return soon. We're curious but still indifferent. We don't like the law, because if we did, we would tell the police if we saw someone killing with a gun. We never do such a thing, because we are really scared of the person holding the gun. Or, I would say we are also scared of the police themselves.

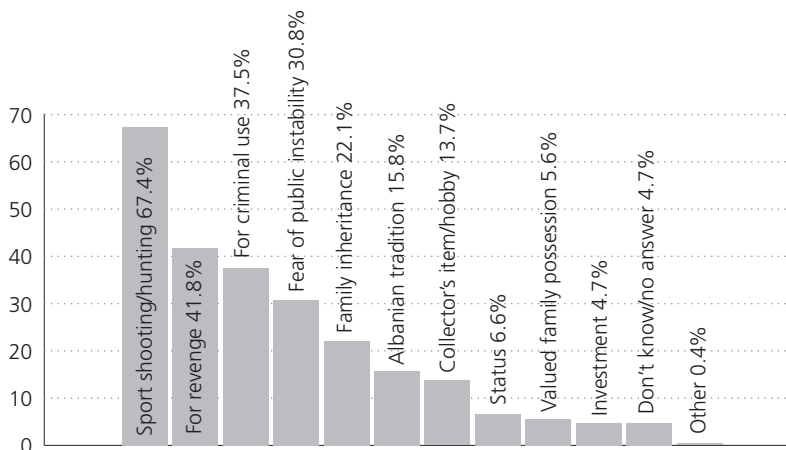
Focus Group, Tirana, Male, August 2005.

3.5.5 Reasons for SALW possession

Two interviewees from the MOI noted protection of self and family as a key motive for firearm possession in Albania.²⁸⁹ One of these officials made the further comment that it would be hard to envisage punishing such people with imprisonment.²⁹⁰ The other, a key figure in the process of collecting weapons, stated that those who were aware that their neighbours retained weapons were therefore unwilling to disarm themselves.²⁹¹ He also pointed out that for some Albanians proximity to a recent conflict zone was a motivating factor for retention of weapons, as the weapons may come to be lucrative assets should conflict-driven demand for guns re-emerge in the future.²⁹² He further drew attention to heightened levels of insecurity (and therefore of illicit weapons possession) among immigrants residing in the north of the country.²⁹³ A third MOI official highlighted the role of tradition as a motive for weapons possession.²⁹⁴

The key household survey question mapping the reasons for SALW possession asked people to select the three main reasons for possessing firearms. The research team omitted the option of 'protecting self, family and property' from the household survey questionnaire, as it was felt that these were already the main reasons that would be given for possessing firearms.²⁹⁵ The options chosen are displayed in the following chart:

Aside from protection for self, family and property, what are the three main reasons for people to keep firearms?



²⁸⁹ Interviews, MOI official, 23 April 2005; MOI official, 14 April 2005.

²⁹⁰ Interview, MOI official, 23 April 2005.

²⁹¹ Interview, MOI official, 14 April 2005.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Interview, MOI official, 21 April 2005.

²⁹⁵ For example, in surveys carried out by the Centre for Rural Studies in 2002, 73.7 percent of the 377 respondents who gave a reason for possessing weapons stated that the main reason for having a gun would be for protecting self and family. This response was most popular in Shkodër (82.3 percent), Gjirokaster (82.6 percent) and Lezhe (83.3 percent) in 2002. Although support for this option had dropped in 2004, these 3 areas still had the highest support for this option too – Shkodër (82 percent), Gjirokaster (68.2 percent) and Lezhe (78.3 percent). It is worth highlighting the fact that support for this option dropped dramatically in Kukes (from 71.9 percent to 53.7 percent) and Tirana (67.6 percent to 39.6 percent). The second most popular reason given was to protect one's business, with 8.2 percent of respondents choosing this option in 2002, with support strongest in Gjirokaster (13 percent) and Vlore (15.9 percent). By 2004, this option had gained more support in all areas, with five of the seven regions in the study returning double the support of the 2002 average – Durres (19 percent), Gjirokaster (22.7 percent), Kukes (16.7 percent), Shkodër (17.7 percent), and Vlore (17.3 percent). Sources: op cit Center for Rural Studies, table 38; op cit Center for Rural Studies and Sustainable Development, p. 33.

It is interesting to note that legally acceptable reasons for gun possession (i.e. sport shooting and hunting) were the most popular choices for respondents, followed by 'revenge' and 'criminal use'. It is unclear if the impact of 1997, the July 2005 parliamentary elections (shortly before which the HHS was conducted) or a combination of the two factors could perhaps have pushed almost a third of respondents to choose 'fear of political instability'. As expected, in the focus group interviews, protecting self, family (in particular among females) and property were most frequently mentioned as reasons for possessing firearms. The following reasons were given in interviews and focus groups for registered and illegal weapons possession in Albania:

- To protect self, family, property or business (because the state is unable to do this);
- To protect livestock and property in rural areas;
- To protect oneself in a conflict between families, including blood feuds;
- To 'solve problems' such as property disputes (a common reason for people living in rural areas);
- To commit crimes;
- 'The curse of tradition';²⁹⁶
- Poor education;
- As an investment (to sell on the black market or to a state-organised buy-back scheme).

Of course, not all of these options were popular with interviewees and focus group participants, and many questioned ideas such as an Albanian gun culture or people's need to have weapons for self-protection. In most cases the focus group interviewees stated that the weakness of state agencies in apprehending criminals and bringing them to justice was a major concern, with one focus group exchange literally justifying the use of firearms for bringing 'justice' when the state cannot:

– A person in Albania is often forced to use the gun and to kill, because the state doesn't provide him with the necessary protection. Especially after 1997, the state takes no responsibility and no credibility that it will protect its people, so the people are forced to take this responsibility and protect themselves and their properties. Of course there are special cases.

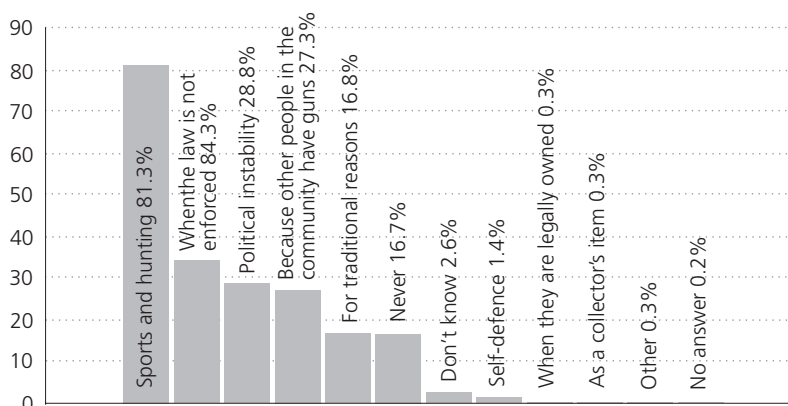
– So the lack of responsibility by the state, in combination with the high number of guns in the hands of the people, has caused the actual situation.

[...] When there is no state authority, no security, you have to provide yourself with self-defence. You always hear in the news, the criminal escaped, or the police caught the criminal, but then he was set free by the court.

Focus Group, Shkodër, Male, August 2005

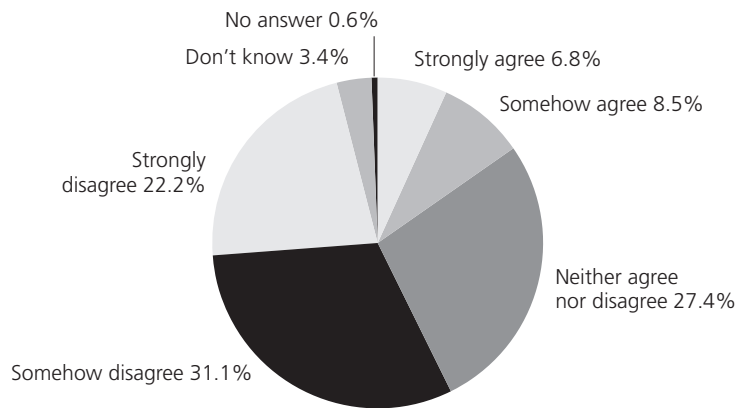
The ISO poll for this Survey also asked respondents to suggest when it was acceptable for people to possess a gun, with most respondents again selecting the legally acceptable reasons of 'sports and hunting'. Poor law enforcement, political instability and fear of neighbours were also deemed acceptable by between a quarter and a third of respondents. Again, traditional reasons were chosen by less than a fifth of respondents.

In your opinion, under what circumstances is it acceptable for people to have a gun?



A set of interesting responses were captured when respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement – ‘a house is not safe without a firearm.’

**To what degree do you agree with the statement
‘A house is not safe without a firearm’?**



In contrast to the nationwide figures shown in the chart above, sixteen percent of respondents from northern Albania strongly agreed with this statement, while eighteen percent of respondents from northern Albania strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that possession of weapons for the protection of the household is more accepted and widespread in the north of the country. This perception was shared by interviewees from MOI, who explain it in terms of lower faith in the rule of law, higher insecurity among immigrant populations and a greater attachment to ‘gun culture’ in the north of the country.²⁹⁷ The lowest number of respondents who strongly agreed with this statement came from Tirana with only two percent. Tirana had the largest percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement, around 46.5 percent of respondents. Gender differences were also recorded in responses with five percent of females and nine percent of males overall strongly agreeing, and 19.5 percent of males and 25 percent of females strongly disagreeing with this statement.