

Final Comparative Report of the Project  
*SPEAK OUT!* Empowering Migrant, Refugee  
and Ethnic Minority Women  
against Gender Violence in Europe

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edited by  
**FRANCA BIMBI**



Agency of Migrant Women  
against Gender Violence

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# Agency of Migrant Women against Gender Violence

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Franca Bimbi



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*Franca Bimbi*

The project *SPEAK OUT! Empowering Migrant, Refugee and Ethnic Minority Women against Gender Violence in Europe*, financially supported by the Daphne Programme of the European Union, represents the construction of a path whose aim is giving voice to migrant, refugee and (ethnic) minority (MREM) women in Europe to prevent and stop gender violence.

The project worked with different groups of MREM women in five different areas – Padua (Italy), Madrid (Spain), Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), Helsinki (Finland) and the Netherlands – to give voice to women from the grassroots of society, using self-empowerment methods and implementing resources for gender agency in the local contexts.

The Project comes from the need to develop *intermediate bodies* having the capability of opening and maintaining the transcultural debate on VAW (the international acronym for violence against women) and the ability of exercising social pressure to find the most suitable VAW politics from the grassroots of the European civil society. Soliciting the need for new tools for gender active citizenship is necessary to improve two most widespread policies against violence: the normative and institutional policy and the protection of the victims.

The project *SPEAK OUT!* relates to the improvement of self-empowerment and agency on VAW issues especially for MREM, but it could be considered as a general model to improve an active citizenship of European women.

Especially in this new multicultural Europe, it is necessary for women to delve into the debate about «symptoms of gender inequality that become manifest as distinct forms of violence to look at structural and ideological causes that underlie the problem beyond the injury caused» (The United Nations Special Rapporteur 2009, 33).

The agenda against gender violence wants a new development of the individual and a collective agency of women against the institutional and social forms of male domination that to overcome gender stratification among natives and migrants with the scope to limit the victimization approaches.

The project originated from one concern: in the European public debate MRM women do not have a voice, because of the fact that discussions allow only the expression of men's and "native" women's points of views. Especially on VAW issues, the lack of a public debate on the points of view of the MREM women about what standard rights to guarantee, the meanings of violence, the tools to prevent the causes might increase MREM women's vulnerability. MREM women are more vulnerable to gender violence for three main reasons:

1. discriminated access to a life without aggression, because of a set of obstacles which stand in the plans of action for care, protection and justice. Human rights violation could be very closely linked to discrimination, not only as far as gender issues are concerned, but also regarding legislation on immigration. The growth of migrant women in all European countries did not entail egalitarian family policies for them;
2. MREM women are particularly exposed to the *victim's victimization* when the injuries received are considered part of the whole cultural system of their country of origin, or they are considered “normal” for women belonging to some ethnic or “racial” group. This specific *victim's victimization* suffered by MREM women split and superordinate native women or women with full citizenship from migrant women, and the minorities considered “adequate” from the one that can be considered as barely integrated;
3. on gender violence issues, MREM women are exposed to a double loyalty challenge: to their communities of origin and to the system of rights that guarantee the protection from violence in the immigration countries. The two systems are represented as internally homogenous. Nevertheless, the migrant's communities of origin have highly differentiated features of patriarchy in the European context. At the same time the equality and anti-discrimination standards about gender appear highly differentiated in different E. U. countries, according to a normative and cultural perspective and particularly regarding family issues, marriage issues and the consideration of the body of women. The persistence of violence against women even in the most egalitarian European countries highlights how patriarchal forms still exist in “gender regimes” causing women self-determination.

MREM and native women are victims of a double static representation of the European society fuelled by the supposed traditional patriarchy of migrants and the western conception of human rights in a post-patriarchy society. This ideological representation limits especially MREM women in the use of an important resource guaranteed for all people by the European Union in its Fundamental Charter: the rights of the cultural pluralism and the recognition of the differences.

Our project is very innovative. This is why we can state without a doubt that we are pioneers. The project brought together awareness-raising and prevention workshops, with a training course for migrant women and self-help groups, where the group of women involved could design their own workshops to prevent violence against women. This experiment not only raised awareness on the phenomenon of gender violence, but encouraged a deep understanding of the origin and causes of violence, as well as a general view on how to lead groups and promote prevention.

From a practical standpoint, the meeting of women, who are citizens on different degrees and ways, permitted to face some common roots regarding vio-

lence, taking into account that both in the country of origin and the receiving country, gender violence means violence against women acted by men and violence depends on the asymmetric relationship among women and men.

Our activities did not avoid the main controversial issues relating to the different, “modern” or “traditional” patriarchal regimes and our aim was to find tools to reinterpret, debate and negotiate cultural practices considered as unchallenged communitarian values. In this way, we worked also on the reciprocal cultural prejudices among migrant women with different origin and among migrant and no-migrant.

During the initial part of the project we developed a preliminary research in the local welfare system with a survey and some focus group. The survey involved professionals working in social and health services, associations and NGOs and it was focused on training and work method on VAW, on risks perception related to VAW on migrant and non-migrant women, and on the different meanings of violence. Focus groups were conducted both with professionals and with MREM women especially on the VAW meanings (Madrid addressed focus group also to men of different migrant origin). This research aimed at knowing a) the relations between the professional styles and the interpretation of the migrant women presence as “clients”, their demands, the meanings on VAW in different cultures and in different professional groups; b) if migrant women and professionals share almost or in part the same expectations regarding the reciprocal behaviour and similar meanings relating to VAW.

Considering the training methodology as crucial for our purposes, during the second part of the project, we worked with a peer-to-peer approach, to support the self-empowerment processes, to be self-critical compared to the traditional pedagogy up-bottom, to avoid the idea that universal and human rights could be considered only from “our” point of view. Starting from personal experiences, *SPEAK OUT!* Laboratories aimed at giving voice to different discourses of MREM women about migration experiences and intimate, familiar, institutional and racial violence.

We tried to build transcultural vocabularies, considering diversities and creating dynamics of encounter and mutual comprehension. We tried to confront a transcultural vocabulary especially relating to the universal words recognized by all the women working with us as opposed to violence: *reciprocity, dignity, respect*. In all cultural definitions on VAW considered by women or groups of women, we discovered some common roots of the male domination being critical on the hegemonic cultural aspects especially on the field of the time organization, family division of labour and sexuality.

In the five local projects, after the end of *SPEAK OUT!* experience, some of the women involved have begun to develop multicultural or specific groups, which can act as a “bridge” among others MREM women, their community and the local networks. These groups of women will promote awareness actions and information related to violence against women issues.

In Padua, the group of women attending *SPEAK OUT!* training defined a new profile, the Community Mentor. They drafted the *Community Mentor Charter on Violence against Women* that contains the guidelines for an *active citizenship* in the territory.

Considering the aim of the project, the trainers perspective and the MRM women's efforts to end VAW in gender relationships and in the whole complex of social and interpersonal relations, we could summarize as the success of our training, the activities following three achievements:

- a) the implementation of the participants' capabilities to put together their differences, their multiple positions and belongings and to find some practical common approach to work against violence;
- b) the possibility to give birth to some form of *intermediate bodies* acting for MREM women self-support in the territory;
- c) the increasing self-consciousness of the attendees at the project and of the five teams about the importance of recognition of differences as well as the implementation of the gender rights to enlarge the substantial citizenship of MREM women, giving them the possibility to have different autonomous voices on VAW in the public European arena.

Women from *SPEAK OUT!* will continue to search effective links with women associations, migrant associations, institutions, public and private professionals, schools, in order to develop a network of people that work at different levels to combat violence against women.

Mentor, the Mentor networks, and the others similar experiences developed by *SPEAK OUT!* project, constitute important resources to contrast violence against women, to implement peer-to-peer approaches and to give voice to the different cultural standpoints. In this perspective they could be a tool to improve a multicultural and gender sensitive European citizenship, where women and men of different origins, languages, ideals and nationality could work together for a better European future.

For the future perspectives it is important to underline also some challenges of the project:

- a) *the refugees issue*: because the minor attendance by refugee women, the focus of the project was especially on migrant women. We need specific consideration on the different typologies of refugee women for improving our approach to their demands;
- b) *the minorities issue*: minority women were modestly involved in the project. The Helsinki team and The Netherlands team were successful in involving minority groups, partially for the previous work with them and partially because the team was made up of minorities. Independently from objective reasons, it would be necessary to delve into the correspondence between the label and the target of the minority groups. We tried to involve "ethnic minorities" in the project, but "ethnic" is not a neutral word. Very often the label "ethnic"

could not be used for the historical minorities living in the EU countries, and in the present time some of the supposed “ethnic minorities” are labeled as *ethnic* for many social and political reasons. The topic requires a better understanding of the links between social exclusion processes and racialization ones, in today’s Europe. The Italian team did not opt for the word “ethnic” as referred to minorities in its project. The Dutch team opted for “ethnic” referring to the self-assigned identity by different groups of MRM women;

- c) *the different interpretation of the cultural pluralism* within the five areas. As we can read in this Report, the five teams showed their different assumptions on meanings referred to “the other” and understanding of VAW, family, and women’s body issues, depending by the stress on the national normative system of rights (supposed as universal) or on the rights to the difference (supposed as universal principle too). In the first case, cultural relativism is considered as moral relativism. In the second the two are distinguishable and the cultural relativism perspective could be the first option for a non-colonial encounter with MRM women. On this subject we can find also different feminist principles and practices considered in the project.

The construction of a common European transcultural agenda against violence on women is far to be completed.

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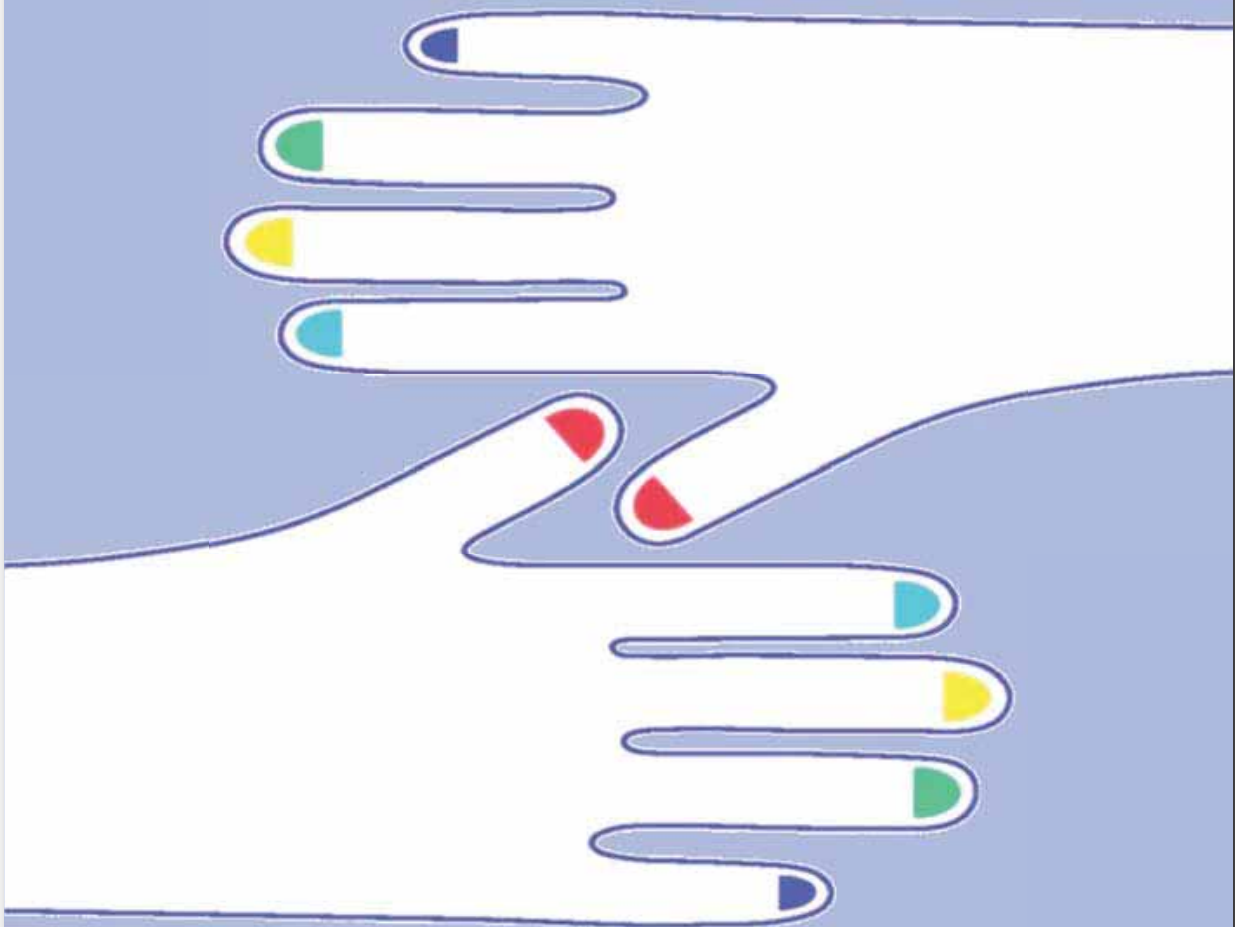
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**Part 1**

**Preliminary Research  
in the Local Welfare System:  
Opinions, Representations  
and Interpretations**





## 1.1. Defining Questionnaires and Focus Groups

*SPEAK OUT!* project aimed at promoting the MRM women's capabilities to get involved in peer-to-peer activities in their territory, in order to build networks with community groups and with the local welfare system to in this way improve their active citizenship.

For this reason the preliminary research has been developed in the local welfare system with the objective to get in touch with the network of volunteers and professionals working with immigrant women. They can recognize the *SPEAK OUT!* project participants as partners for future common actions in the prevention and support on VAW issues, particularly related to MR(E)M women.

The possibility that the project gave birth to intermediate bodies, who could express the agency of MREM women on VAW issues in the territory, should be prepared with the antiviolence centres, the health and social services and the associations of the territory. The only way for the construction of a real network was the comparison of the different points of view on gender issues, on the meanings of violence and on the positive presence of migrant professionals.

We are aware that the professional styles and ways to receive users in the social and health services, and by anti-violence professionals or volunteers, could be influenced by the objective knowledge of the characteristics of users as well as by the social representations and prejudices relating to them. Thus we considered important to analyse the representations, perceptions and knowledge related to gender, migration and VAW through a survey among professionals of the local welfare system, in order to value the existence or persistence of gender, "race", or other kinds of prejudices or stereotypes, which can constitute a negative cultural background towards MRM women or conversely to identify the professional's friendly attitudes towards them that give space at the raising voice of these groups. It appeared of particular importance to understand if and how the local welfare system is prepared to contrast symbolic violence, which consists in forms of direct or indirect exclusion of the MREM discourses and of the local social dialogue.

The persistence of prejudices and stereotypes in institutional or other services contexts can entail forms of secondary victimization, which is strictly connected to the continuity and efficacy of training on VAW received by professionals.

The preliminary research was based on the assumption that if we know better the different meanings on gender and migration issues embedded in the professional practices and in social practices of different groups of women and men, professionals and volunteers, migrants and natives, it is possible to achieve a better understanding among all of us, as permanent or temporary citizens and people living in the same country and in the UE.

We used two tools: a survey and some focus groups. The questionnaire was basically the same in all the five contexts, even if each partner chose to adapt some questions at the local debate. On the other side the focus groups were built in relation to the specific group of participants involved. The questionnaire issues and areas are:

- the typologies of MREM women as users of the specific local service;
- the requests received by the MREM women;
- the VAW training received and considered as the most suitable by respondents;
- the professional and organizational patterns for anti-VAW services considered as the most suitable by respondents;
- the VAW visibility in the Country and their reasons;
- the violence against women considered as the most widespread and the most dangerous in the Country;
- the causes of VAW;
- the increased risks to become victims in the intimate relationships, and the risk differences for women and men;
- the exposition to VAW following the different rules relating to marriage, intimate partnership and family formation;
- risks of violence for MREM women in the Country;
- VAW and controversial issues in the European debate as “honour”, veils, female genitals modifications;
- VAW and prostitution(s);
- definitions of VAW and definition of a life free from violence.

The preparation of the questionnaire required a very intense exchange between the five partners, particularly regarding some crucial aspects: the definition of migrant people, of minority and of violence. The definition of migrant doesn't refer only to normative-legislative aspects, but also to other kinds of definitions that are commonly used in the public debate.

The Finland team wrote: «we acknowledge that the term “migrant” is very problematic and that many people who have lived in Finland for a long time do not necessarily consider themselves as “migrants” anymore». TIYE International wrote: «in the Netherlands migrants are the former labour market immigrants from the sixties and their children, of Morocco and Turkey. The term is not used for the member states in the EU, who also came here with labour market migra-

tion in the sixties». TIYE is defining people from the former colonies as black, «a proactive political terminology (...) and the lessons learned is that racism cannot be swept under the carpet (...) we use ethnic minorities versus the white dominant ethnic majority». As we said the Italian team in its work did not adopt the word “ethnic” referred to minorities.

The whole debate during the questionnaire’s creation about the most advisable expressions to identify violence would be very fascinating to rebuild, because it highlights the non-homogenous national culture between the partners and the differences in the approaches related to different feminist models. “Violence against women” was chosen because it was considered more descriptive and clear than “gender violence” or “gender based violence”.

Since the project dealt mainly with violence by men against women in the interpersonal relations, it appeared necessary sometimes to clarify “heterosexual relations” or other kinds of violence: “domestic violence or “family violence” or “intimate violence”.

In relation at the focus groups they were focused on the meanings of violence and in the comparison between the vocabularies of migrants and professionals of the social and health services and of the anti-violence centres. The Madrid team decided to use the focus groups to delve into the meanings of violence in the migrant communities and comparing women and men. Focus groups permitted to highlight, better than the survey, the difference between explicit and implicit stereotypes and to catch the deep resistance between different understandings on the personal and family life.

## 1.2. The Survey among Professionals

### Some Preliminary Remarks

The common guidelines for this survey foresaw a common questionnaire to be addressed to professionals (at least 100 women) working in VAW-related social services, or that could get in touch with VAW cases, and having also MREM women among their users.

In order to interpret the results, it is necessary to show how the partners performed this survey in different ways, and with different sample composition, using an adapted translated version of the questionnaire (and therefore not perfectly equivalent), or adding questions addressing particular topics of interest at local level.

The questionnaire was first designed by Padua’s teamwork and then discussed among the partners in order to achieve a common model. All the partners adopted the “large version” questionnaire (three versions were proposed: short, medium or large).

The Dutch and the Finnish research groups used the common model without any sensible modification other than the translation, and adaptation for the

local context. The Italian research group also used the common version, adding one more question, in order to explore the perceived link between religious belonging (not further specified) and civic sense. The Spanish and Catalan research teams, although adopting the same common “large version” questionnaire, made also some minor changes: Madrid’s team, for example, added one item referred to as “cultural relativism” and gender definitions of VAW, while Barcelona’s researchers asked the professionals and were concerned with the definition of “sexist violence” (*violencia masculista*) used by the new Catalan law; or with the necessity to implement further positive policies to achieve gender equality, or to recognize freely chosen “sex work” as a job, and more.

## Surveys Characteristics

In Table 1 are presented the main features of the different surveys (sample characteristics, administration method, questionnaire adopted).

Table 1: The surveys with professionals

	Padua (Italian Team)	Madrid (CEPAIM)	Barcelona (SURT)	Netherlands (TYIE)	Helsinki (Monika)
<b>Number of questionnaires</b>	206	101	108 (+ 53 abandoned)	95	88
<b>Collection</b>	By hand/ in person	Online	Online (2000 sent)	By hand/e-mail	By hand/ in person
<b>Type of questionnaire</b>	Large version with minor changes	Large version with minor changes	Large version with minor changes	Large version virtually unchanged	Large version virtually unchanged
<b>Professionals and services involved</b>	36% Professionals of the Hospital of Padua; 33% NGOs and private social association; 22% Public authorities; 9% Local Police. Public sector = 68% of the sample	20% Social services; 11% Migrant services; 9% Women associations. Public services = 50% of the sample; NGOs = 37%.	24% Service managers; 15% Social workers; 11% Teachers; 10% Psychologists; 9% Educators. Public org. = 57% of the sample; NGO/Ass. = 36%	42% Volunteers with BMR women; 25% Non-profit organisations; 9% Private org; 16% Work for the government; 8% Work for public service sector	41% Public sector (authorities); 45% NGOs; 11% Private sector; 2% Finnish Lutheran Church
<b>Native/migrant among professional</b>	93% Italian citizens (91% born in Italy)	96% Spanish citizens(88% born in Spain)	84% born in Spain	80% Different national origins	86% Finnish citizens(78% born in Finland)
<b>Gender</b>	75% Women	85% Women	88% Women	—	100% Women
<b>Education</b>	23% High school; 55% Graduate or University education; 20% Post-graduate education	94% Graduate education	54% Graduate education	25% High school; 35% HBO; 25% MBO;9% Graduate; 9% Post-graduate education	40% Graduate education

	Padua (Italian Team)	Madrid (CEPAIM)	Barcelona (SURT)	Netherlands (TYIE)	Helsinki (Monika)
<b>Clients typologies considering the migration context</b>	71% have “many” or “all” migrant women; 97% have “none”, “few” or “very few” refugees or asylum seekers; 20% have “many” minority women	81% have “many” or “all” migrant women; 92% have “none”, “few” or “very few” refugees or asylum seekers; 39% have “many” minority women	All VAW services except one served “few” or “very few” migrant women. 70% have “none” refugee or asylum seeker women	43% have “many” “black women”: 31% are migrant women, while only 5% are refugee women	59% have “many” migrant women; 49% have refugee women; 17% have “many” ethnic minority
<b>Training on VAW in the last three years</b>	24% received specific VAW training	63% had training on VAW	60% had specific VAW training	—	Little over half of the respondents received training on VAW

There are several aspects to highlight. Starting from the samples: the partners collected different amounts of questionnaires, and had variable capacities to select their respondents (for example promoting the survey “in person” and being able to get into different institutions).

The degree of “self-selection” is a significant aspect to consider in order to interpret results. It possibly affects, for example, the rates of people that received previous VAW training in the different sample, the composition of the services involved, but certainly the overall results. In all partners’ samples the broad majority of respondents are women (in some cases the sample is composed only by women, as required by the common guidelines).

Except for the Dutch survey, the respondents are mainly “native-origin” professionals working in public and private social services. The Dutch sample is the most heterogeneous by national origin and the survey is also characterized more for being delivered in a network of professionals working in particular with BMR women, with a greater amount of volunteers (42%) compared to the other samples.

Education levels are not easily comparable when considering the different Degrees and School titles at national levels. In any case, they can be considered as all relatively “high”, demonstrating that the survey has been directed to generally well-trained professionals. This is a very important point if we consider that the questionnaire, for its complexity and difficulty, was addressed specifically to professionals with an expected high level of expertise.

The five surveys results are able to give a synthetic view on five European regional contexts of local welfare networks in relation to VAW.

They all have in common the engagement with VAW issues considering the intercultural context where heterogeneous networks of welfare services are fac-

<sup>1</sup> This self-assigned label was used considering the context and aims of the TYIE organization.

ing the challenge to work with different publics, and different cultural perspectives.

Even if results are not statistically comparable, thanks to this survey we are able to trace the different hegemonic discourses, tracing a map of the “common sense” that is shared by service professionals in the different contexts.

### 1.3. Similarities and Differences between Partners in the Focus Groups

Preliminary research activities foresaw the realization of at least three focus groups that aimed at investigating the representations of violence against women and the meanings of that in the experience of MREM women, moreover through the focus groups partners could analyze the different interpretations of professionals working with violence against women issues.

Each partner organised the focus groups following different applications in order to respect its operational context.

Some considerations concern methodological aspects. All partners realized focus groups with MREM women, professionals working in social and health services, associations and NGOs and mixed focus groups both with professionals and with MREM women. Only CEPAIM decided to create focus groups only with migrants, excluding professionals, two of them with women and two with men.

Some partners also aimed at involving ethnic minorities, in particular the University of Helsinki and the Padua team tried to involve Roma people and actually the University of Helsinki achieved that organizing a focus group with Roma professionals and another one with Roma people; on the other hand the Padua team could create a focus group with Roma and Sinti professionals, but did not organize a focus group with Roma people due to the difficulties to get in touch and explain to them the project’s goals. Table 2 summarizes the main features of the focus groups realized by partners.

As the location is very important for the success of a focus group, all partners paid attention to create a comfortable and safe environment for the meetings. Each partner chose a specific way to conduct the focus groups adapting it at the local context. In general, all partners made a track of questions or statements on the topics they wanted to debate, but they did not use it as a rigid schedule, rather as a flexible tool to adapt to the focus group participants.

During the focus groups almost all partners approached the violence against women topics through general and delicate questions, using queries or statements from the questionnaire, using drawings and sketches; only CEPAIM decided to invite participants and to start the discussion not talking directly about violence against women, but preferring gender equality issues and letting violence issues come out from the participants’ words.



Table 2: Participants to focus group discussions in the five countries

	Types of focus group (FG)	Number and origin of participants
<b>Padua (Italian Team)</b>	1 FG with women (both native and of migrant origin) working in social and health services, associations and NGO in the territory of Padua	7 women (3 of migrant origin, from Albania and Rwanda)
	1 FG with migrant women living in Padua	5 migrant women (Moldavia, Romania, Ukraine and Morocco)
	1 FG with women working with Roma people	6 native women
	1 FG with women professionals (both native and of migrant origin) and migrant women	2 native women and 5 women of migrant origin (Rwanda, Albania and Romania)
<b>Madrid (CEPAIM)</b>	2 FG with migrant women	12 migrant women (Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Nigeria, Syria, El Salvador, Nicaragua)
	1 FG with migrant men	8 migrant men (Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Congo, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador)
	1 FG with migrant men	10 migrant men (Guinea Conakry, Venezuela, Morocco, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, Cameroon, Ecuador)
<b>Barcelona (SURT)</b>	1 FG with professionals	15 participants (Spanish and Moroccan)
	1 FG with migrant women	7 migrant women from Latin America
	1 FG with professionals and members of migrant women associations	7 migrant women (Spanish, Latin American and Moroccan)
<b>Netherlands (TYIE)</b>	1 FG with counselors	7 women (Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch; Moroccan-Dutch; Dutch Antilleans)
	1 FG with BMR women	13 women and 3 counselors (some of them from India, Africa, Equador, Suriname, Somalia, Ethiopia and Philippine)
	1 FG with counselors and BMR women	14 women (from different countries of origin) and 4 counselors in Den Hague (NL)
<b>Helsinki (Monika)</b>	1 FG with women (both native and of migrant origin) working in NGOs	3 women (2 of migrant origin)
	1 FG with Roma women working in NGOs	2 women
	1 FG with Roma women	3 women of Finnish Roma minority
	1 FG with Russian women	2 (1 returnee, 1 migrant)
	1 FG with Somali woman	1 (refugee)
	1 FG with minority and majority professionals and activists	3 women (1 migrant, 1 Finnish Roma minority, 1 Finnish majority)

In the five areas at the focus groups woman who had suffered violence also participated, even if during the meetings the moderator did not ask for personal experience, participants started to talk about their personal life to better explain what they consider violence.

About the topics prevalently debated, there are similarities and differences. The Italian team, CEPAIM and SURT discussed mainly about meanings and definitions of violence, types of violence against women, causes of gender violence, and risks of violence for MREM women. The University of Helsinki engaged the same topics paying particular attention to some specific situations (isolation, discrimination, prejudices) suffered by some MREM group of women

living in Finland: Roma women, Russian women and Somali women. TIYE focused its meetings on the violence suffered by BMR women.

The results of the focus groups with professionals have many similarities among the partners: MREM women are considered by professionals mainly vulnerable, because of their legal and social brittleness, the absence of social and friendship network and the absence of knowledge about legislation and welfare resources. The University of Padua, SURT and TIYE researches highlighted the forms of control exercised to the MREM women from partner/husband, family or origin community.

Another topic chose by all partners concerned gender equality and the roles of women and men. During the focus groups with MREM women; participants, who came from different countries, expressed their opinion on gender equality, social rules and normative patterns in their origin country, but they also compared them with the situation in the migration country.

In all the focus groups organized in the different contexts emerged symbolic violence as a heavy form of violence; participants discussed about the difficulties to recognize and identify it.

Similarities and differences in the data from all the European partners' research raise one last reflection on the situation of Roma people, the cultural – linguistic group which was explored through some focus groups in part by the Italian team, and more broadly by the Finnish researchers. In both researches, it was related that Roma people (“travelling EU Roma”) in most cases are not recognized as political refugees or asylum seekers, instead they are considered as “tourists”, mentioning the word used in a Finnish focus group.

Roma women are exposed to multiples types of violence: participants of Italian and Finnish focus groups in particular mentioned intimate violence, domestic violence, and violence between the families or by the whole Roma community, the forms of control exerted by partners/husbands on the woman's sexual and reproductive health.

Another similarity among Italian and Finnish results was that for Roma women it is very difficult to get in touch with social and health services because of a lack of trust in institutions and authorities. It emerged that Roma women are also subjects of discriminatory attitudes, experienced in different public spaces (the Italian focus group reported the case of hospitals, particularly obstetrics and gynaecology departments; Finnish researchers cited the discrimination that Roma women face in bars, restaurants, shops), also due to the typical dresses of these women (“long skirt”).

**2.1. Tools and Limits for a Comprehensive Insight**

Preliminary research on social perceptions and representations of violence against women was designed considering an intercultural context of migration. The results presented two distinguishing activities, addressing different types of people, as part of this work: a) the survey addressed specifically to professionals working in the social service network; b) four focus groups involving women, both professional and citizens, native or migrant. The survey collects mainly representations of professional working in Padua and Valdagno. Most of them resulted to be “native” Italian (over 90%). The discourse that emerges is therefore the result of a privileged standpoint, in a context of services where the categories “migrant” and “native” often overlaps with the categories “operator” and “client”.

A questionnaire is not usually considered the best methodological instrument for exploring partially unknown meanings/vocabularies regarding a rather hidden social phenomenon, because it is considered a “closed” instrument, predetermined and rigid. However, assuming a certain level of expertise by professionals with respect to VAW, this instrument proved to be appropriate in order to sum up the main perceptions/opinions/positions. Therefore, the survey technique is qualitatively only a second-best, imposed by the need to obtain a good deal of comparable information, but losing the chance to get a more “comprehensive” insight. This is the reason why the survey was coupled by the technique of focus groups, where this insight was successfully achievable.

**2.2. Survey on Social Perception of VAW among Services’ Professionals and Volunteers Considering a Multicultural Context**

During the survey administration, we got in touch with 27 different locations of services: associations for migrant, Hospital and health services, local police, trade unions, NGO’s, social services, schools, etc. Services are both public (68%) and private, and public health service professionals are the main group of respondents (36%). Requirement for the inclusion of services in the survey was the presence of migrant women among clients (even indirectly, as in the case of schools). Seven out of ten respondents said that they have a good number (“somewhat” or “all”) of migrant women among the service users.

The construction of many links to a network of services, for the questionnaires' collection, was a basic step in order to draw a "virtual" map of services working or possibly collaborating on this issue, even when their institutional tasks would not be explicitly such. This "connection" effect is a significant success of the survey work. The heterogeneity of the services contacted is another important point to consider.

The active collaboration of services was essential, considering that questionnaires were delivered and collected face-to-face, and administered thanks to one referent in each service, specifically trained for this purpose. The results were presented in three different occasions to the project partners, to people taking part in "mentorship" training course, and to broader public.

## **Designing an Intercultural Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was first designed by Padua research group, and then discussed among the project partners in order to achieve a common model (written in English and with three version: large, medium, small), then translated and adapted to the different local contexts.

Padua's group used the common large questionnaire, translated to fit the Italian linguistic-discursive and institutional context, with one more question regarding "religiousness" and "civic sense".

The preliminary work of questionnaire designing and the debate between the partners significantly made clear what it means to have different vocabularies to name violence against/on women, making the concept of "interculturality" work inside the imagined community of Europe.

## **How to Read Results**

In presenting the results the percentages are always rounded off because the numbers are too small to make decimal points significant: the use of percentage in the results presentation is due to the need of clarity and simplicity more than to statistic precision. Sometimes the percentage representation is virtually meaningless (groups of 6-15 cases), but was held as a synthetic way to return results.

## **Description of Professionals Involved**

We collected 206 questionnaires (out of 250 that were distributed) in 27 different services: 152 by female and 54 by male professionals, mainly in the municipality of Padua and with the participation of the City of Valdagno.

The questionnaires were delivered in person, in order to select the respondents with respect to our objectives. Despite the time required to fill out the questionnaire, and the cognitive effort (47 questions, some with 16-18 answer choices, or with batteries of a number of statements which express their agree-

ment / disagreement), only a few respondents have abandoned before reaching the end (5-6 cases out of 206).

The questionnaire, as mentioned, collected mainly representations of Italian born professionals (91%), with Italian citizenship (93%): only 3% of them have a different nationality, and another 3% dual citizenship. The professionals that represent the Italian sample are otherwise significantly heterogeneous in terms of age, types of service, professional profile and seniority.

As requested by the project general framework, the survey was addressed in particular to women (75% of the sample). The majority, 80% of the overall sample work for more than two years in the service where they were reached by the survey; of them, 20% were working for 15 years, 36% for 6-15 years. Obviously majority is strictly related to age.

Regarding the year of birth of the professionals involved, the range goes from people born in 1930 to people born in 1990. Around 29% of the respondents were born before 1960, 21% in the 1960's, 25% in the 1970's, and 21%, from 1981 onwards. Age and seniority distribution show how the sample represents different generations and experiences.

Respondents to this survey present a relatively high level of education: 74% of respondents had university degrees or higher grades of education (55% a Bachelor, Master degree or Diploma; 19% Post-graduate degrees). All respondents have at least High School degrees.

## **Description of Services**

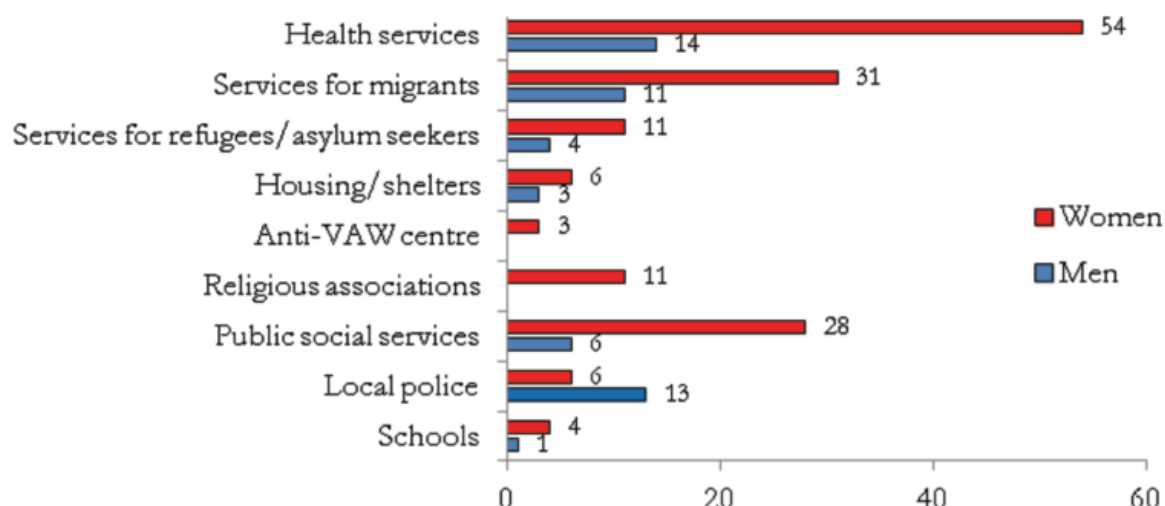
Figure 1 presents the sample composition by service vocation/function. For analytic purposes, service typologies have been aggregated forming four broad groups: about one third of the sample (36%) is made up of health professionals working at the Hospital (medics, psychologists, nurses, in “sensitive” departments such as first aid and family counselling), and by social workers and cultural mediators also working at the Hospital.

Another 30% of the sample represents the reality of private associations and NGO's, and includes secular and religious organizations (Catholic Church) that perform various activities for migrants or generally for socially disadvantaged groups (housing, schools of Italian language, orientation services, legal advice, etc.). This group also includes Trade Union professionals working specifically with migrants (CGIL and CISL).

The area defined approximately as “local welfare authorities”, picks up the remaining 33% of cases, and is made up by professionals working for the social services of the municipality, in helpdesks for migrants and refugees / asylum seekers managed by the municipality (e.g. CISI), in schools (teachers and directors) or as local police officers.

However, in many cases it makes more sense to separate the local police from the rest of the “local welfare authorities”, for the rather different tasks they per-

Figure 1: Number of respondents (total: 206) by type of service involved



form. Local police alone represents 9% of the overall sample (19 cases), but they are 25% of male respondents.

Gender subsamples are in fact rather different: among women 38% are working in health services, 32% in Ngo' or associations, 26% in public welfare services and only 4% are police officers. Among men, workers in health services are still the majority 31%, police officers are 25%, whereas 25% work in Ngo's/associations and 19% work in the public welfare services.

Consequently the subsample results are to be interpreted as rough indications considering all the different characteristics of sub-samples.

We already mentioned that the basic requirement to include a service in the survey was the presence of women migrants among the service users. Seven professionals out of ten said they have "a lot" (64%) or "all" (7%) migrant women as clients, while almost all the remaining cases (around 27%) declared to have "few" (18%) or "very few" (9%) migrant women among service users.

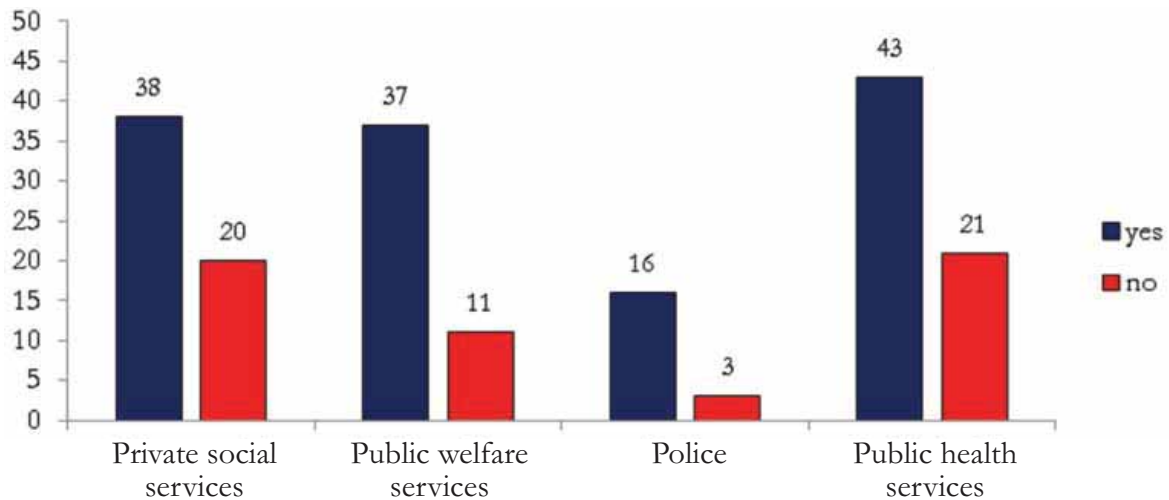
The Services involved are much less likely to have, as users, refugee women (only 3% of respondents declared to have "a lot" of refugee, while 40% said to have "none" of them), asylum seekers (3% of "a lot", 45% of "none"), or "ethnic minority" women (23% "a lot", 27% "none"). Only one person (a police officer) declared to have any MRM woman among its everyday work "clients".

## **Demands to the Services and Services' Demands**

Professionals consider the social basic needs of "housing" (23% of valid), "economic support" (20% of valid) and "job placement" (20% of valid) as the most difficult demands to meet, also in services who are not usually devoted to this kind of demands. Poverty and social disadvantage, also related to the economic crisis, are therefore very visible from their standpoint.

Considering an intercultural context, professionals were asked whether they were aware of cases of MRM women asking to be attended/assisted by a

Figure 2: Perception of VAW increasing into different services. Frequencies and percentages on overall sample



woman. Only 27% of professionals answered in affirmative terms. 92% of them (who said “yes”) think that this type of request should be met.

Only 23% of the professionals involved have been trained on VAW over the last three years. The percentage is lower among local welfare authorities such as police and public social services (16% each).

It must be considered that the low self-selection of the sample can be related to this result.

About topics that professionals in Padua’s context consider more important to achieve a basic training on VAW and MRM women, prevailed those referred to normative framework: “national and EU legislation regarding MREM rights and status in relation to VAW issues” (19%), “national legislation, EU, European Council and International Institutions Documents relating to VAW” (18%). Only as the third option “VAW effect on women’s health” (14%). This result shows the general preference of respondents for topics related to everyday practices, but also a surprisingly lack of normative orientation, a sort of “anomy” experienced by professionals in respect with the legal frames they are operating within.

Among VAW typologies that professionals consider important to be trained on are: “domestic/family violence” (40%, by large the most common choice) followed by “psychological violence” (10%).

The “anomic” aspect, and the consequent requests of pragmatic indication for everyday action, is evident also by the preferences regarding the most effective patterns to face VAW: “shared protocols” (36% of valid values) and “common guidelines” (23% of valid) are in Padua’s context preferred to items referring to “networks” of public/private service experts (12%), managed by natives and MREM women (16%), or coordinated by women from different backgrounds (12%).

## Risks of Violence, Definitions of Violence

Among professionals there is also a widespread perception of VAW increase (71%). This perception is particularly strong among police officers (84%). Those born from 1981 onwards are less pessimistic: only 55% thinks that violence has increased.

The majority of the professionals (67%) believe also that VAW is more visible than in the past, primarily because “mass media talk more about VAW” (83% agree, 29% “totally”), and “women report more about violence” (78% agree, 18% “totally”), but also because “institutions are engaged in campaigns against VAW” (65% agree, 11% “totally”). It seems that professionals recognize a positive change in the public discourse: VAW is more present in public debate, but concrete actions are still unsatisfactory.

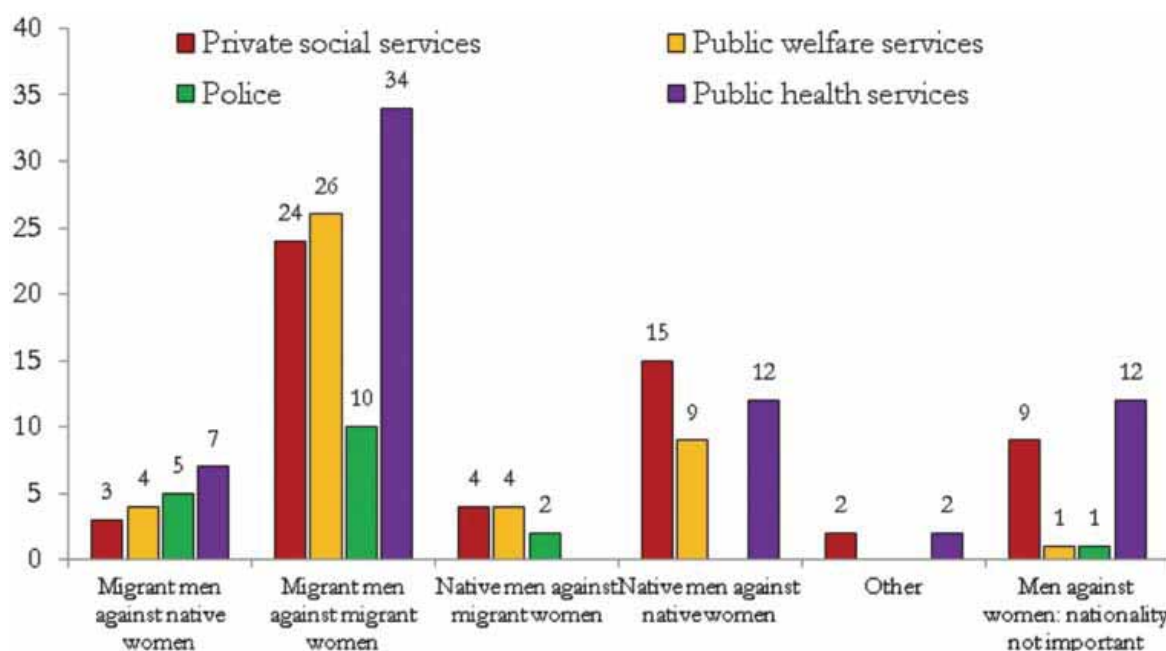
We asked to professionals what they think are the most frequent acts of violence in relation to the migration and intercultural context, meaning the presence of natives and migrants as victims and authors.

Italian professionals consider VAW to be much more frequently perpetrated by “migrant men against migrant women” (50% as first choice and 31% as second choice) and then by “native men against native women” (19% as first and 40% as second choice).

Service professionals consider violence existing in all communities, but in migrant communities more than in native community. Violence is not perceived as significantly crossing the virtual borders of communities: “native against migrant” and “migrant against native” are much less chosen options.

Although it is not clear whether the perception is related to relative or absolute VAW rates, the perception of migrants as much more prone to VAW

Figure 3: Perception of VAW in migration context among services





(both as victims and perpetrators) can be read as a possible overestimation of migrants' VAW, considering the available data at national and local level.

Moreover, the perception was considered in their services, who are the most engaged in social disadvantage situations, where migrants are relatively more present.

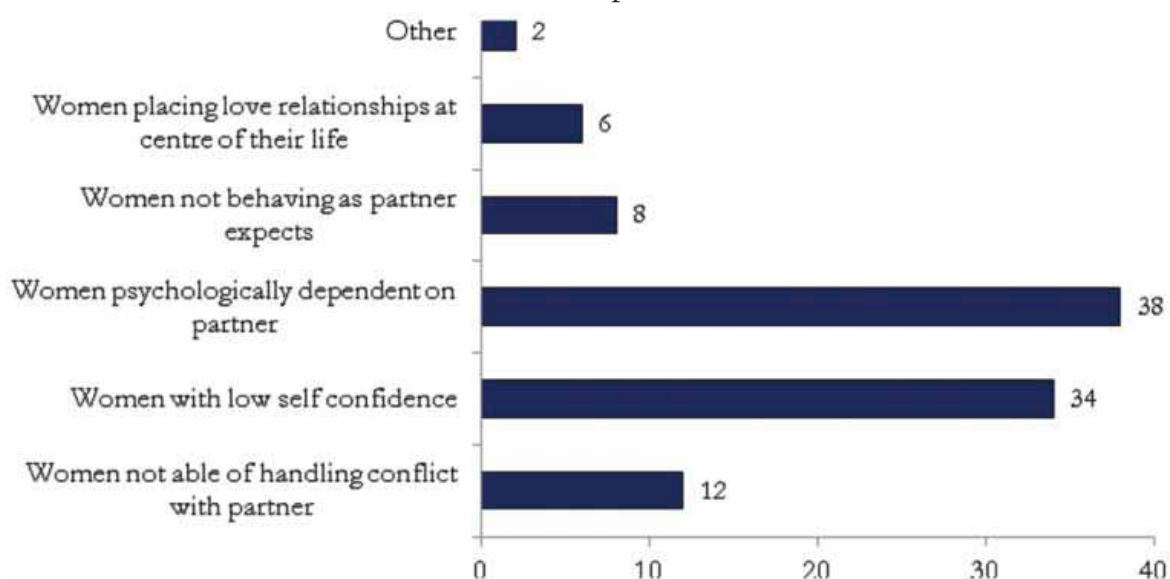
About the typologies and situations relating to VAW and their diffusion, professionals chose "domestic violence" as the most widespread (59%) typology of VAW. "Domestic violence" is also considered the most dangerous type of VAW for society (49%). Other dangerous kinds of VAW, but less highlighted, are: "marginalization of women in decision making places" (13%) and "trafficking of women and forced prostitution" (8%).

Regarding the explanation of VAW, professionals consider "society support men's supremacy" (27%) as the best definition to explain the diffusion of VAW in society. This could be defined as "common sense feminist" understanding and is more easily expressed by women than by men. More specific statements that stand out are: "men consider natural that women are dependent" (14%), and "women's autonomy and reproductive rights not acceptable to their partners" (14%).

Two different questions were addressed to consider which kinds of women are more at risk of VAW in intimate relationship, respectively regarding individual characteristics and social situations.

The controversial question on women's profiles gave unexpected results: "women psychologically dependent of partner" (38%) and "women with low self-confidence" (34%) were the most chosen statements, whereas "women not behaving as partner expects" (8%) received very few preferences. We can interpret this result as a description of women's "weakness" in its ambivalent signifi-

Figure 4: Perception of risk of VAW for women in a relationship. Percentages on overall sample



cance. Even if masculine domination is generally recognized in other responses, this result put a different point. In other words, “low self-confidence” and “psychological dependence” could be considered as the elements that expose women to “symbolic violence”.

The psychological labelling of victims made clear the risk of “second victimization”: the “blaming the victim” attitude against victims of violence. We are aware that the question was itself “essentialist” about women, describing them as victims and reified in fixed characteristics.

About the situations that are able to increase the risks of VAW in heterosexual relationships, professionals think that “lacking of social networks” (37%) is the most dangerous, followed by “economic dependency” (19%) and “living in multi-problematic families” (19%).

Coming to potential perpetrators of violence, men are considered more likely to commit VAW when they live in social context where “gender inequality is considered a social rule” (25%), when they are “alcohol or drug addicted” (19%) and when they are “predisposed to violent behaviour” (19%). Those items express a mix of cultural and psycho-biological sets of explanations that should be considered in the natives-migrants dialectics in order to be more deeply interpreted (e.g. when a cultural explanation is preferred? When the psycho-biological elements are considered more salient?). It is also important whether some interpretations risk to “naturalize” violence making perpetrators less and victims more responsible for violence. A risk that emerges also from the broad agreement with statements such as: “In the modern equalitarian society women and men share the same social responsibility for their violent relationships” (58% agree, 26% “totally”); “Women are able to use the same violence than men, especially in their intimate relationships” (52% agree, 13% “totally”). This dimension is explored in the next paragraph.

## **Gender and “Capacity” to Commit Violence**

In this section we consider the results of five items related to the consideration of gendered social habitus with respect to the capacity to use violence. As just mentioned, slightly more than half of respondents agree with the statement that considers women as much able as men to use violence in intimate relationships, without significant differences between the two subsamples by gender.

Among the services, the local police agree more with this statement than the others (61%), while, on the contrary, the health professionals are the only group of respondents where disagreement prevails (46%).

The statement that it is the habit of caring that could explain the lower inclination of women to violence is rejected by the majority (44% agree). In this case women are more likely to agree (46% W, 38% M). Professionals that stand out are local police officers, only 22% agree: they are the most convinced supporters of a substantial “gender equality” in the capacities to use violence.

The majority of professionals also believe that men and women have the same responsibility for their abusive relationships (58% of valid cases), and this is the case especially among men (64% M, 56% W).

Moreover professionals do not think that structural gender asymmetry of power brings to a generalized risk of violence for all the women (60% disagree with this hypothesis, considering valid cases).

At least, respondents express a strong disagreement (22% the rate of agreement, considering only valid) with the statement that men and women generally suffer the same risk of violence from partners.

The passage from general statements, as the last, where a “feminist common sense” prevails, to more specific statements, where a more gender-neutral approach is widespread, constitute a critical point to be investigated in order to understand whether there’s the risk of “blaming the victim” attitude.

## **Family Formation Models and Risk of VAW**

In this part we take into account the agreement / disagreement with some statements subject to significant debate in a context of migration and intercultural relations, with respect to issues of family and relationship formation socially and culturally desirable.

Professionals of local services mostly agree on considering forced marriages as a “consequence of the custom of arranged marriages” (72% of valid values). It’s not clear which meaning is given to “consequence”: the “arrangement” is considered a sufficient condition to define the marriage as “forced”? In any case, here we find our first possible controversial aspect with respect to different practices of family formation in a cross-cultural debate.

The controversial aspect is much clearer in the statement that conceives the “arranged marriage” as a social violence that affects mainly women, even when they agree: a statement that collects 89% (considering only valid values) of agreement. This consensus, which can be attributed to an understanding of the phenomenon of arranged marriages as inscribed in the patriarchal order, becomes a more complex issue when considered in a context where this family formation typology is recognized, widespread and legitimate among some of the MRM women users of the services. The recognition, by professionals, of a kind of “symbolic violence” that regards mainly migrants, could possibly bring to a “stigma” effect on migrant users, considered culturally “backward” and treated, consequently, with forms of institutional paternalism that risk to reproduce a neo-colonial approach into our society and welfare system.

The statement that relates the socially recognized right for husbands / partners “to claim a sexual intercourse” to the risk of sexual and intimate violence for women is generally accepted (83% of valid, 47% “totally”). Women agree more than men (W: 84%; M: 80%), while among service sectors only the local

police present a lower agreement (70% of valid cases), compared to an average of 83-85% agreement within the other groups.

“Jealousy” is also recognized as a potential risk factor for violence in a couple. Women agree significantly more than men: 71% compared to 54%. In NGOs and associations the gender gap is even larger (W: 81% women; M: 46%). The lower overall agreement is among public local authorities and police, where 62% of women and 43% of men agree with this statement.

Significant consensus (78% of valid values) in considering as forms of social violence the prohibition of marriage for homosexuals or the lack of rights for same-sex couples. This “liberal” attitude is prevalent, albeit with different percentages, among gender subsamples and among all services. This majority is very significant if we consider that same-sex marriages are not allowed by the Italian law.

### **Risk of Violence for MRM Women**

Service professionals generally recognize a greater risk of violence for migrant women (as we already observed in the question on types of gender violence in intercultural context), with some ambiguities and not always as much as one would expect.

The majority of the sample agree (59%, but only 9% “totally”), with the statement considering MRM women as suffering more than native women for harassment in the workplace. Only among local police disagreement is prevailing (41% of agreement). Among other sectors the agreement, although in variable degrees, is generally prevailing.

Similar results for the recognition of “economic violence” on migrant women, expressed in an item the claims that highly educated migrants being forced to accept low-level jobs are subject to a form of social violence. The recognition of this form of social discrimination is rather broad in all sectors (between 73-83%) but police (35% of agreement).

Also the claim that migrant women legal status and the administrative rules could bring to risk of violence for women obtained a somehow similar result: services generally agree (53-61%) but police (18%). This result is overlapping with gender differences: 58% (valid cases) the agreement among women, 37% among men.

The overall sample is split almost in half on family reunification rules and risk of VAW. Observing differences among service sectors, it emerges how all service sectors (40-48% of agreement) except for public health services (58% of agreement) do not consider legal frames related to family reunification as factors of women vulnerability. This is an important issue, considering the special remarks made by the UN Rapporteur (Manjoo 2012) about Italian regulations, that tighten the condition of dependency of re-joined women to the husband, in terms of their legal stay in the country, even when the relationship happens to be violent or oppressive.

Very broad agreement on considering practices that restrict mobility outside home for women family members as increasing the risk of VAW, without significant variations between genders and sectors of the respondents. Finally, the obligation to learn Italian, albeit expressed in ambiguous terms (what does “obligation” mean: to take part in courses, or to overcome linguistic exams?) collects a broad consensus (67% valid cases).

Vulnerability is more strongly and generally recognized if associated to “lack of integration” of migrants in the “rights” they should be able to achieve (language is considered the sine qua non condition for integration), than with respect to their status in a multi-layered citizenship society. Police officers in particular seem very far from recognizing the social vulnerability of migrant women.

## Social Constructions of “Honour” for Men and Women in Relation to VAW Risks

We tried to explore the ambivalence of some concepts such as “honour” or “dignity” in their social meaning and use, in relation to “honour killing”.

Table 3: Main results regarding statements about VAW

	Totally agree	Somehow agree	Somehow disagree	Totally disagree	Missing
<b>Family forms and VAW:</b>					
1. Forced-marriages are a direct consequence of the arranged marriage custom	18% (19%)	50% (53%)	24% (25%)	3% (4%)	5%
2. Family arranged-marriage is a type of social violence affecting mostly women, even when women consent to it	43% (44%)	44% (45%)	10% (10%)	1% (1%)	2%
3. Prohibiting same-sex marriages is a form of social violence	35% (37%)	39% (41%)	14% (14%)	8% (8%)	3%
<b>MREM women and risks of VAW:</b>					
1. MREM women are more vulnerable to VAW because of their legal status and administrative rules	17% (18%)	34% (35%)	33% (35%)	12% (12%)	4%
2. MREM women coming through family reunification dispose to violence more often because of their status	13% (13%)	34% (36%)	36% (39%)	12% (12%)	5%
3. Rules obliging MREM people to learn host country’s language make women less vulnerable to VAW	31% (31%)	35% (36%)	23% (23%)	9% (10%)	2%

	Totally agree	Somehow agree	Somehow disagree	Totally disagree	Missing
<b>Limits of body regulation in public spaces:</b>					
1. When it is her choice, hampering a woman to veil herself is social	29% (30%)	49% (50%)	14% (14%)	6% (6%)	2%
2. Laws prohibiting burqa constitute social violence	8% (8%)	25% (26%)	41% (43%)	22% (23%)	4%
3. Having a separate swimming pool for women could be accepted for cultural rights and to protect women's privacy	1% (1%)	18% (19%)	29% (30%)	48% (50%)	4%
<b>Gender and violence risks:</b>					
1. Women and men have the same risks of suffering from their partner's violent behaviour	2% (2%)	20% (21%)	46% (48%)	28% (29%)	4%
2. Women are able to use the same amount of violence as men, especially in intimate relationships	13% (14%)	37% (38%)	38% (39%)	9% (9%)	3%
3. In modern egalitarian society women and men share the same responsibility for their violent relationships	25% (26%)	32% (33%)	34% (35%)	6% (6%)	3%
<b>Prostitution and VAW:</b>					
1. Even as a personal choice, prostitution is a type of VAW	34% (35%)	33% (33%)	18% (19%)	13% (13%)	2%
2. Prohibiting voluntary prostitution is a form of VAW	4% (5%)	20% (21%)	37% (38%)	34% (36%)	5%
<b>"Honour" and VAW:</b>					
1. In all societies sense of honour is important for people's personal self-esteem"	22% (24%)	32% (35%)	28% (31%)	10% (10%)	8%
2. The social relevance of honour entails risks of VAW	15% (15%)	43% (45%)	30% (32%)	7% (8%)	5%

The majority of the sample disagrees with the equivalence between the traditional meaning of "honour" and the modern term "dignity", although men tend to agree more (51%) than women (36%). However, analysing the results among sectors, it emerges the ambivalence of the interpretations. It's possible that these

results (both by gender, and sectors) are due to two different ways of conceiving the couple honour/dignity, especially whether, to the word “honour”, is given a positive or negative connotation.

Four-fifths of the sample disagree (79% valid cases) and recognize male control of family honour as opposite to gender equality. Women agree (84%) more often than men (65%). Among the services, local police officers are less likely to agree than the others (50%), while in private social services (Ngo’s and associations) the agreement is pretty widespread (88%). That’s a clear indication of the different meanings given to the term honour (more positive for the police, more negative for associations). When referred to “self-respect of men and women”, “honour” is generally evaluated in positive terms (59% agree with considering it important in all society). The men agree more (62%) than women (57%) with this representation.

The agreement is prevailing among women but not among men with the statement that the importance of the honour of men and women in society involves substantial risk of violence for women (overall sample: 60% of agreement; 64% W; 48% M): a rather contradictory result compared to the previous one. Again, results can be interpreted as related to the evaluation in more positive, negative or cautious terms of the social meaning of the word “honour.”

Turning to “honour” specifically related to the intercultural context: the majority disagree with the statement that “honour killing” is a term used to discriminate against certain groups of migrants in describing certain types of violence (31% of agreement among valid values). This statement presents also a higher rate of non-responses (10%).

Finally, the vast majority disagrees with the statement that “honour killings” concern only Muslim women. Even though 87% disagree. It is interesting to point out the differences among the various services: private associations/Ngo’s and public social services have “only” 8% of the agreement, while the local police (22%) and health services (17%) are much more likely to agree. Considering this statement as heavily stigmatizing “Muslim culture” in essentialist terms, and given the frequent murders by partners or ex-partners in the last years and months (also covered by media), the percentage of agreement is to be considered significant.

## **Regulation of Bodies in the Public Sphere**

Here we consider the position of professionals with respect to the regulation of legitimate and non-hegemonic uses of bodies in public spaces.

There is large agreement in considering a form of social violence the forced impediment, for a woman, to cover her head and body (80% of valid values). Agreement is larger among women (82%, only valid) than among men (72%). This gender gap can be attributed to differences between sectors aligned gradually from a virtually complete agreement to a less strong, but still prevalent,

agreement: 90% among Ngo's and association, 85% among public social services, 72% among health services, 61% among local police officers.

Considering a more specific statement that refers to burqa prohibition by law as a form of social violence, agreement drops to 34% (of valid values). On this second statement the services differ in an important way: Ngo's, associations and public social services are more likely to agree (around 47-48%), while local police (22%) and health services (19%) are clearly more prone to disagree. Confronting these two results, on the one hand we can draw the line of what is considered the "acceptable Islam" and, on the other, we could argue that passing from general statement to more specific ones, the attitude towards the non-hegemonic practices of the body finds a greater legitimacy of prohibition by law.

Finally, the statement that refers to the possibility of having separate swimming pools by gender as a way to protect cultural rights and women's privacy, female gets only 21% of agreement. There are not substantial differences either by gender, or by type of service. Here it is possible to trace another dimension of an hegemonic discourse, a "taken for granted" that does not justify the recognition of cultural differences to "shape" the use of public spaces (through the naturalization of "our" cultural horizon), even if these considerations go far beyond the possibilities of interpretation provided by this item, considering swimming pools as a rather peculiar public place.

## **Prostitution and VAW**

In the debate on prostitution (or "sex work") it is possible to distinguish different approaches also into feminist debate: synthesizing the many and different positions, we could trace one pole of interpretation that tends to see prostitution, even when voluntary, as a form of institutionalized exchange that re-produce the structural dominion of men, the "users", on women, who are "traded". A quite opposite interpretation, ask for the recognition of "sex work" as a decent job, as any other form of workforce and body capacities selling on the labour market, not necessarily stigmatizing, but often more profitable and therefore able to empower women (or men), who choose this occupation without being forced.

The majority of professionals, men and women, considers prostitution as a form of violence against women (67% agree, 35% "totally agree"), even when it is freely chosen.

In this case, age of respondents holds a certain importance: the older the respondent the more likely he or she agrees with considering also voluntary prostitution as a form VAW. At the extreme poles: 74% of respondents born before 1960 agree, while only 56% of respondents born from 1981 onwards agree. This relationship between age and agreement is clearer among men, while it is less evident among women. It emerges a largely negative view towards sex work, which is considered a form of violence against women, even when it is freely chosen.



This result is confirmed by the very large disagreement expressed by respondents with the statement that suggests that prostitution, if freely chosen, may be able to increase the power of women (8% of agreement, considering only valid).

A different and not obvious consequent result regards the agreement with considering the prohibition by law of free choice prostitution as a form of social violence (only 26% of agreement among valid values).

Men agree generally more than women (32% compared to 24%). This result is very interesting because it describes a limit of acceptability of normative regulation by the State of body's uses, a limit that seems rather shared between professionals of services. Moreover, it should be considered that under the Italian regulation prostitution itself is legal, and only organized prostitution is subject to criminal prosecution.

Finally, the claim that "misery" is the main cause that drives women into prostitution collects a majority of agreement (68%, only valid), with no significant differences among genders. Among sectors, police officers are the only group that mainly disagrees (39% of agreement). Although not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that, among police officers, women are the least likely to agree compared to any other group of respondents (16%, valid only). Police officers responses police are rather relevant, given their everyday work facing the exploitation of prostitution. The downside of the former statements wording, is that they require that the respondent would admit a real "free choice" in prostitution, a condition that cannot be taken for granted in the respondents social representation of the phenomenon.

The ambiguity between a negative approach to sex work, because it constitutes a form of VAW, and the stigmatizations of prostitutes, it would be an important topic to explore further.

## 2.3. Conclusion

In the Italian context, violence against women is considered to be more visible and more widespread than in the past according to the service operators interviewed, and domestic violence/family is recognized as the main area of concern. In addition to the risk of violence in family contexts characterized by an asymmetry of power and unequal distribution of care work, the survey detected concerns regarding persisting forms of gender inequality and sexism in the public sphere, particularly referred to the marginalization of women from where decisions are made, and harassment/mobbing at work. A third concern is about the exploitation and trade of women's bodies, especially with respect to the phenomenon of trafficking and prostitution.

These three main aspects of VAW: domestic violence, public/work discriminations, and trade of women's bodies, with the predominance of the first aspect,

are perceived as the most widespread and dangerous for society. Violence is described mainly in terms of psychological and sexual abuse.

The domestic/family violence is also the topic about which professionals would like to receive specific training. From this “objective” account of the phenomenon comes the problem of interaction between family contexts and institutions, especially considering an intercultural society characterized by the presence of different couple and family favourite models, in part not socially recognized nor considered.

Professionals proved to be aware of structural violence against women in a society that “supports male supremacy”. At a general level, the VAW phenomenon is clearly interpreted by the services in terms of “common sense” feminism or gender-friendly understanding.

Some critical points must also be highlighted: the first concerns the passage from general abstract statements to more pragmatic categories of definition, possibly used in everyday practices. In some cases, at a “micro” level, respondents contradict what is recognized at the macro level. The risk, considering a professionals/users relation, is to run into forms of “secondary victimization” against people who are victims of violence, especially when they choose to stay in a potentially violent relationship. This risk, considering the widespread social perceptions, may relate in particular to migrant women, who may be stereotyped as “victims” in terms of cultural habits, for the social environment they live in, or for their alleged psychological traits.

The second critical point refers to the normative boundaries of acceptable practices. It should be noted a broad “liberal” consensus on “mainstream” women’s and LGBT rights, while professionals seem to be much less sensitive to other forms of recognition concerning non-hegemonic practices variously widespread among migrants (e.g. arranged marriage as not necessarily considerable as “forced”).

The risk is that, in the hegemonic public and political discourse, but also in the practices of the services, particular gender “sensitivity” could work and be used in order to discriminate migrants.

The survey shows the legitimate limits of women’s body regulations by the law. In the opinion of the majority of the respondents, on the one hand the burqa but not the veil, on the other hand voluntary prostitution, can be legally regulated by state law. Prostitution is considered by the majority in very negative terms, and is considered a form of social violence against women even when it is voluntary.

In sum, the discourse on VAW that seems to emerge from the data seems to rest on the idea that we are in a modern and egalitarian society where the areas of “backwardness”, related to “our” violence against women, are attributed to situations of social and psychological or cultural disadvantage. The social, symbolic and cultural violence implemented by the society at structural level is recognized only at an abstract level.

For example, this is related to the still weak recognition of MRM women structural conditions of vulnerability, both economically, socially, and in some cases for their residence status, which often makes them socially unable to seek forms of aid when victims of violence. Moreover they can be “stigmatized” and stereotyped in order to explain why they are victims of violence (“blaming the victim” attitude).

“Non-hegemonic” practices and discourses, although questionable and controversial, risk to be reduced misleadingly to social/cultural backwardness (e.g. the practice of arranged marriages, or the choice of covering the body or the head, when “freely” chosen).

Regarding the public debate that emerges in Padua’s context, the risk is that “difference” emerges only as “essentializing” category with a clear distinction between natives, generally considered as going toward more modern and egalitarian gender relations, and “them”, racialized and stereotyped, considered backward and inertial, or “accepted” only in “humanitarian” terms. The effect is that their discourses/practices are implicitly placed outside the boundaries of the “hegemonic” public and democratic debate, reproducing also their symbolic inferiority in the society.

Regarding the operative aspects, the risk of assuming only one model of empowerment and gender relations could run into paternalistic relations among professionals/users, making the encounter with the services a meeting of mutual stereotyping, although with uneven symbolic effectiveness.

It seems very important to develop projects as *SPEAK OUT!* where it is possible to produce a reflection on the reciprocal stereotypes with the aim to overcome them within the practices against gender based violence.

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## 2.4. Results from Focus Groups

### Objectives and methodology

The activities of Preliminary Research foresaw the implementation of three Focus groups that aimed at investigating the different ways to name and to define VAW and at comparing different meanings that violence can assume in migrant and native women. The Italian team organized four focus group between June and October 2011. Only women took part at the meetings. The first meeting involved a group of women professionals, who work in social and health services and associations in Padua. At the second focus group took part a group of migrant women. Women professionals working in “Opera Nomadi” took part at the third meeting, (“Opera Nomadi” is an association that deals with Roma people), and both professionals and migrant women took part at the fourth focus group.

The focus groups took place at the University of Padua, Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology Department and they lasted around two hours each. Franca Bimbi moderated over the discussions with the contribution of Francesca Alice Vianello.

The guidelines for the focus groups were built on the experiences of previous researches about violence against women and the scientific literature national and international about the subject.

We used some items of the survey during the first, second and third focus groups. Questions were connected to the most widespread types of violence existing in Italy and the most dangerous for society, the reason for the diffusion of violence and which women are more at risk to suffer violence.

We changed method in the fourth focus group and we suggested women 11 items on controversial issues concerning arranged marriage, homosexual marriage, honour crimes, abortion, accessibility to the contraceptive device, veil and burqa, prostitution, family reunification etc. Women had to express their views on some of the statements they prefer.

Table 4: Focus groups in Italy

First focus group 06.22. 2011	Women professionals (both native Italian and of migrant origin) working in social and health services, associations and NGOs in the territory of Padua	The group was formed by 7 women; three of them are of migrant origin, coming from Albania and Rwanda.
Second focus group 07.22. 2011	Migrant women living in Padua	The group was made up of 5 migrant women, coming from Moldavia, Romania, Ukraine and Morocco.
Third focus group	Women professionals working with Roma people.	The group was formed by 6 native Italian women.
Fourth focus group 10.05.2011	Women professionals (both native Italian and of migrant origin) + Migrant women	The group was formed by 7 women, who have taken part in the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> focus groups. Five women are of migrant origin, coming from Rwanda, Albania and Romania.

### Focus Group with Women Professionals

Seven women professionals took part at the first meeting, they worked in different services and associations that deal with migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women in Padua, some of them were migrants. Women introduced themselves and their job, then we began to discuss about violence against women using some items of the survey.

Professionals discussed about situations and types of violence against women met in their everyday work experience; the types of violence discussed by them reflected their professional specialization and the characteristics of the service or association they work for.

In the discussion participants highlighted some types of institutional violence against women and they stressed how institutional violence is very often acted implicitly at the general as well as at the individual level. Professionals considered that this kind of violence doesn't make feel women supported and sustained from institutions and this circumstance constitutes a difficulty to escape from violence.

Some participants talked about secondary victimization, which can be occurred in the institutions/services.

*Recently I worked with two migrant women, I think they came from Morocco. They were victims of violence and they denounced their husband, so we began a protection path and they moved in a protected community house, but then they retracted their denounces because living in the community were shameful for them and moreover they felt isolation (Italian social worker at social service of the city)*

Professionals noticed that, in their experience, migrant women have more difficulties to identify violence than Italian women. As a Rwandese professional in a community for victims of trafficking told us: «*I understood that women I'm working with in these days are not aware about violence*». Professionals think that migrant women are more vulnerable than Italian women.

*It's difficult with Italian women, but it is surely more difficult to support migrant women along a path to safe and independent life* (Italian psychologist at anti-violence centre).

One professional affirmed that migrant women are more vulnerable, because in their culture there are rules which pose women in subordination respect to men.

*I see that in migrant women, because they grew up with those rules. When migrant women arrived in Italy, some of them want to rebel to those schemas. When they begin to rebel, there start violence: they are beaten, they are shut at home, if they work they are obliged to give their pay to the husband* (Rwandese professional in a community for victims of trafficking).

Other professionals considered that all women are exposed to violence in the same way, because there exist a gender inequality that is fixed in the organization of society. A social worker at the hospital stated:

*in my opinion all women are exposed to violence, because in a so unequal society and world all women risk suffering violence.*

She underlines the importance to consider both women's exposition to the multiplicity form of gender violence and the social sufferance presents in our society depending by different form of social exclusion. Only by considering all the range of pain caused to people by the social exclusion, it is possible to focus on the interpersonal violent relations where women are especially exposed to the men's aggressive behaviour. The group discussion was involved equally on the individual cases relating to the professional experiences and on the general framework of gender based violence.

At the end of the focus group, participants expressed some words and statements to define violence against women. They used these words: "subjection", "supremacy", "control". They specified that "control" can be acted by a husband/partner or other relatives, but also by the community, institutions and it can be physical or psychological coercion.

## Focus Group with Migrant Women

The second focus group involved migrant women from Romania, Morocco, Ukraine and Moldova. They live in Padua, but they did not know each other. Franca Bimbi introduced *SPEAK OUT!* project and the objective of the focus group, and then participants introduced themselves.

The discussion began by analysing some items of the questionnaire. Participants started reflecting about gender inequality in their origin country and in Italy and about the gender roles in the organization of society. Comprehension of familiar violence or intimate violence was related to the existence of patterns and social rules.

Romanian health and social worker: *I grew up in seventies with Ceaușescu... I think it was right, because I grew up in that way. I don't know if it was right or wrong the respect for parents, for elder people.*

Moldovan student: *To live in a society where everybody... especially men impose women to stay at home with children. (...) you think is a normal way of life. Women there (in Moldova) are happy, because they think is normal to live in that way.*

Participants reflected about differences between their country of origin and Italy and they expressed opposite points of view. Two women think that the situation of women in Italy is much better than in their origin country.

*Here in Italy women suffered less violence than in my country, because it's true men are different, but women here want to work, to study, they do not want to rest with men (Moldovan student).*

Other participants considered that gender inequality exists everywhere and inequality depends on characteristics of women and by they will:

*The Italian society more open... no, I do not believe it... It depends on the relationship between man and woman. Women remain always in a low position related to men; maybe they think is a way to be respectful, so I think that depend on women to overcome this limit (Moroccan student).*

Participants discussed about domestic violence, intimate violence and they stressed that perpetrators of violence are not only husbands or partners, but also other relatives as mothers, mothers-in-law, or other women members of the same community.

*A friend of mine suffered violence from her husband and when she talked with her mother about this, her mother said that it was normal (Moroccan student).*

Participants discussed also about types of violence, in particular about institutional violence:

*It exists a taboo in the society, there's a lack of training in the professionals or maybe it lacks the will to understand the new dynamics (Ukrainian cultural mediator).*

Participants stressed how it is more difficult for migrant women to get in touch with institutions and services. Regarding situations that expose women to the risk of suffering violence, migrant women considered more at risk women that depend on their husband/partner economically and women that do not have a social, family and community network.

### **Focus Group with Women Working with Roma People**

The third group was made up of six native Italian professional women, collaborating with Padua's Opera Nomadi, a particular NGO taking care of Roma people questions. All participants knew each other and we noted that this homogeneity facilitated the discussion and the in-depth examination of the topics.

Much of discussion was focused on types of violence that Roma women were likely to suffer; professionals distinguished different practices between different groups living in the territory of Padua, and specified that these differences also depending on the countries they come from.

In general, professionals recognized that Roma and Sinti women are exposed to many forms of violence acted by partners. Professionals expressed their understanding of familiar violence or intimate violence, relating to the existence of patriarchal norms that legitimize forms of control over women autonomy and many kinds of violence against them.

*Opera Nomadi President: The problem is that we come in contact with people who have a different conception of violence ... violence is part of the culture. It's culture.*

*Opera Nomadi professional: It's much complicated to keep in contact with these women, because of the man image with his authority is strongly present.*

In the description of the patriarchal dynamics involved in these communities, professionals named some violent practices perpetrated against women, such as intimate violence, physical coercion, negation of right to abortion, lack in sexual and reproductive health care and arranged and forced marriages.

Symbolic violence also emerged the, because men's superiority is accepted by women. Some professionals reflected in particular on the fact that for these women is extremely difficult to recognize and identified the forms of violence they suffer: some behaviors seem to be "normal" to them.



Opera Nomadi President: *At the beginning, women said us that we are wrong and they are in agreement with this pattern; they want to hand it on their daughters.*

Opera Nomadi professional: *Because of some cultural aspects, it's also improbable the community women justify if other women rise up and escape.*

Institutional violence against Roma and Sinti women was the central point of the second part of the discussion. Professional woman, with many examples from their personal experience, highlighted the inadequate training of the services in order to understand and deal with Roma and Sinti cultures, health services in particular.

Professional women underlined the importance of the role of the cultural mediators because they know how and are able to establish a trust relationship with Roma and Sinti women, understanding their needs and accompanying them in the difficult relationship to the services.

### **Professionals from the Local Welfare System Compared with Migrant Women**

The last focus group was a “mixed” focus, involving both women professionals and migrant women. There were seven women, five of them were migrant women, coming from three different countries, Rwanda, Albania and Romania.

For this group, a different line of conduction was used: we distributed a paper with eleven topics, taken out from the questionnaire on VAW, and invited women to choose that/those they wanted to comment upon and express their agreement/disagreement. It was a further occasion, for the researchers and for the women too, to explore and share the different perspectives that could exist on the same controversial issues about VAW.

The discussion developed wasn't on all the topics we proposed: women focused their attention just on some topics concerning VAW in the family arranged-marriages, the sense of honour, the acceptance of low-level jobs for migrant women and family reunification.

As a first step, professionals both native Italian and of migrant origin expressed some comments on this topic: if women are more exposed to intimate partner violence in love marriages than in family arranged-marriages. A native Italian professional seemed to agree with this statement. On this question, professionals of migrant origin (especially from Albania) said that in some cultures the control exerted on women decisions by the family is perceived as a form of protection and not as a violence against women. They also stressed that it's extremely difficult for women, coming from some specific cultures, to recognize violence, including in arranged-marriages, because of the cultural and social rules in the country of origin.

The second point debated was on the sense of honour: women reflected on the meaning of honour in the organization of the society and on the differences between their countries of origin and Italy.

Especially migrant women talked about the topic concerning educational qualifications and low-level jobs for migrant women. Some of them talked about it as a *consimți* violence (in Rumanian language means “with consent”): this expression “the allowed violence” was used in this focus group to indicate the self-debasement using for accepting a low level work. Especially more adult women recognised the difference between the use of the compliance for negotiating on their subaltern position and the acceptance of it.

## 2.5. Final Remarks

The preliminary research carried out through the questionnaire and the focus groups was very important to identify the necessity of a concrete development of an anti-violence network in the Padua’s territory.

The survey highlighted mainly three aspects: the need of in-depth trainings about VAW issues, the need of a reflexive approach on ethnocentrism that characterizes the implicit approach on the cultural differences present in the territory, the need to create occasions where migrant women and professionals could understand the reciprocal point of view relating to the caring demands.

As some items of the questionnaire could very far from practical cases especially in health services, we could consider the ethnocentrism as a general attitude with a specific typology of users: the immigrants, more than a real point of view on gender, migration and VAW. The increasing possibility to meet MRM women working on VAW with a good preparation could represent for professionals a way to change some unfriendly attitudes with migrants.

Focus groups stressed a different complexity related to the approach on VAW by professionals, volunteers and MRM women. The discussion dealt mainly with cases and general perceptions referred to real experiences. We could affirm that some professionals and volunteers handle VAW with a victimization point of view rather than a resolving point of view. Professionals assert that the weakness of local networks compromises their ability to give effective answers. Some cultural mediators, who work daily with refugees and asylum seekers, appear discouraged from the weakness of their users. The focus groups highlighted some dramatic needs: the development of networks between gender friendly professionals, the development of migrant networks able to support prevention and way out from violence paths, the implementation of the public resources devoted to contrast violence against women.

The specific theme of Roma and Sinti women underlined the limits of the mediation work and its difficulties to propose a peer-to-peer path.

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## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and VAW in the Project's Territory

#### Migrant People in Italy, Veneto Region and Padua

At the 1st January 2011, there were 4.570.317 non-Italian residents in Italy, 7,5% of the total number of resident; Romanian citizens represent the largest community (21,2% of the total). In the Veneto Region there are 504.677 non-Italian residents, 253.563 are women and 251.114 are men.

In the entire province of Padua the total number of non-Italian citizens reaches 91.649 (9,8% of the resident population), in which the women again outnumber the men (46.901 to 44.748). Romanian citizens represent the largest community (for 30,4% of the total number of non-Italians), followed by Moroccans (11,6%), and Moldavians (11,5%). In the city of Padua there are 30.933 non-Italian residents (16.138 women and 14.795 men).

Main communities of non-Italian residents in the city of Padua are the following:

Country of origin	Number of residents
Romania	8.533
Moldova	5.165
Nigeria	2.287
Morocco	2.051
Albania	1.858
China	1.805
Philippines	1.798

Source: Municipality of Padua, Department of Planning Control and Statistics, available at: [www.padovanet.it/allegati/C\\_1\\_Allegati\\_14714\\_Allegato.pdf](http://www.padovanet.it/allegati/C_1_Allegati_14714_Allegato.pdf).

## Violence against Women: Italy

In 2006 the national Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) conducted a survey on violence against women funded by the Ministry for equal opportunities. The sample included 25.000 women, from 16 to 70 years old. Although this was the most comprehensive and systematic survey available at the time, it did not include non-Italian women. Results are as follows:

- 6.743.000 women between the ages of 16 and 70 are victims of physical or sexual assault in their lifetime;
- more than the 96 % of women, who suffered violence, did not report it;
- 5 million women were subjected to sexual abuse;
- 3.961.000 to physical abuse;
- 1 million women were victims of rape or attempted rape;
- 2.938.000 women suffered physical or sexual violence by their partner or ex-partner;
- more than 7 million women are or have been victims of psychological violence (isolation, control, intimidation);
- 2.077.000 women have suffered persecutory behaviors (stalking).

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in Italy is as follow (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	31,9	14,3	24,7
Physical violence	18,8	12,0	9,8
Sexual violence	23,7	6,1	20,4
Rape or attempted rape	4,8	2,4	2,9
Rape	2,3	1,6	0,8
Attempted rape	3,3	1,3	2,3

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006, available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in Italy, but did not report it is as follows (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or an ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	93,8	92,5	95,6
Physical violence	90,1	92,3	88,1
Sexual violence	97,8	94,9	98,0
Rape or attempted rape	93,3	94,3	92,9
Rape	91,6	94,8	87,4
Attempted rape	94,2	95,0	94,1

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006, available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

The percentage of women who suffered violence by a partner in their lifetime in Italy is as follows (by type of author and type of violence):

	By present partner or ex-partner	Present partner	Ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex-fiancé
Physical violence	6,7	9,2	6,8	9,5	7,7	5,0	7,8
Sexual violence	2,4	2,7	4,3	1,9	6,9	1,2	6,1
Physical and sexual violence	0,4	0,3	0,8	0,3	–	0,4	1,0
Physical and psychological violence	50,4	56,4	46,9	55,9	58,8	46,1	47,3
Sexual and psychological violence	13,4	15,7	11,5	15,5	16,9	6,9	14,2
Physical, sexual and psychological violence	26,8	15,7	29,8	16,8	9,7	40,5	23,6

Source: Istat, National Survey 2006., available at: [www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati /non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati /non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

## VAW in Veneto Region

The Commission for Equal Opportunities of the Veneto region has developed, in collaboration with the Statistical System of the region, an analysis at the regional level on VAW from the data of the 'National Survey Istat 2006 already mentioned in this study. The results came out in March 2008.

- 34.3% women experienced violence in the Veneto (19.6% of women victims of physical violence and 26% sexual);
- most common form of sexual violence is the physical harassment for sexual purposes, which covers 91% of the episodes suffered by non-partner;
- the great majority of violence are not reported and reach 95,6% when a man other than a partner is involved and 93,9 % when the partner is involved

The percentage of women who suffered violence in their lifetime in the Veneto is the following (by type of violence and type of author):

	By any author	By the partner or ex-partner	By a man, not the partner
Physical or sexual violence	34,3	13,3	28,0
Physical violence	19,6	10,8	11,3
Sexual violence	26,0	5,1	23,0
Rape or attempted rape	5,7	2,2	3,9

Source: Processing Veneto Region – Direction of Regional Statistical System on Istat data, Commission for Equal Opportunities of Veneto.

The percentage of women who suffered violence by a partner in their lifetime in the Veneto is as follows (by type of author and type of violence):

	By present partner or ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex- fiancé
Physical violence	5,3	10,0	—	8,2	7,8
Sexual violence	3,4	2,3	20,5	—	4,2
Physical and sexual violence	—	—	—	—	—
Physical and psychological violence	56,0	52,0	69,5	52,7	50,1
Sexual and psychological violence	15,5	21,1	6,7	8,8	17,6

	By present partner or ex-partner	Husband or Live-in partner	Fiancé	Ex-husband or ex live-in partner	Ex- fiancé
Physical, sexual and psychological violence	19,9	14,6	3,3	30,2	20,4

Source: Processing Veneto Region – Direction of Regional Statistical System on Istat data, Commission for Equal Opportunities of Veneto.

## The Anti-Violence Centre of Padua

The Centro Veneto Projects Women – AUSER is an association of women (voluntary, independent and non-profit organizations) established in March 1990, and it is responsible for preventing and solving the various forms of deprivation of women and families with special attention to situations of violence and abuse. These data refer to the users registered in the last three years, 2009 – 2011.

Year	Total users	Italian women	Non-Italian women (nationality)	Request	Type of violence
2009	215	153 (71%)	62 (29%) Romania, Moldova, Morocco, Russia	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (190 women, 88%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence
2010	230	155 (67%)	75 (33%) Romania, Morocco, Moldova,	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (202 women, 88%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence only increase in cases of stalking
2011	236	170 (72%)	66 (28%) Romania, Morocco, Moldova,	High prevalence of situations of violence in intimate relationships (211 women, 89%) than in cases of non domestic violence	Prevalence of cases of physical violence, followed by cases of psychological violence





### 3.1. Survey for Professionals on VAW, Migration and Cultural Differences

#### Objectives and Methodology of the Survey

In Catalonia, the survey shared the objectives of the common partnership survey. However, some minor changes were introduced to the survey questionnaire agreed by the partnership. These changes referred to the types of organisations and professional profiles of respondents, which were adapted to the reality of organisations and professionals active in Catalonia, while some new content was added to cover the local social situation and legal framework, as well as the current topics under the public eye. In this sense, some items were added in connection to the Catalan law against sexist violence (e.g. “Do you think sexist violence is an adequate term?”). Similarly, more items were added on the question discussing the different types of Muslim veil, taking into account the Catalan controversy over recent local regulations forbidding integral veil in public premises.

To facilitate responses, the questionnaire was translated into Catalan (the official language for public administration) and also Spanish (the most widespread language among migrants).

Methodologically speaking, it should be taken into account that many options in some of the questions may make it difficult to interpret the results.

The questionnaire was distributed through an online platform to 2000 professionals in Catalonia. A total of 108 respondents reached the final questions, while another 53 respondents abandoned the survey. The selection of professionals to whom sending the questionnaire was made according to three inclusion criteria: widely known experts on VAW and female migration; random sample of professionals from diverse backgrounds and services (health, education, welfare services...); and civil society organisations, mainly associations of migrants, migrant women, and women’s associations and groups.

#### Results: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The majority of the responses were received from professionals working in the city of Barcelona (62%), while only a minority of respondents worked in several cities and towns mostly of the Barcelona province. The overwhelming majority

of respondents were women (88%, 95 respondents) and were Spanish-born (84%), with a diverse sample of different countries of origin, mostly South American and just only 1 respondent for each of the rest of countries: Morocco, Romania, Senegal, Italy, Cuba, Peru, Portugal, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Most respondents had a college degree: 28% of them had post graduate studies (*licenciatura*) and 26% had a graduate degree (*diplomatura*). The age distribution of respondents was not even, with two major groups in two extremes: those born in 1960 or earlier (28.8%) and those born in 1981 or later (18.3%).

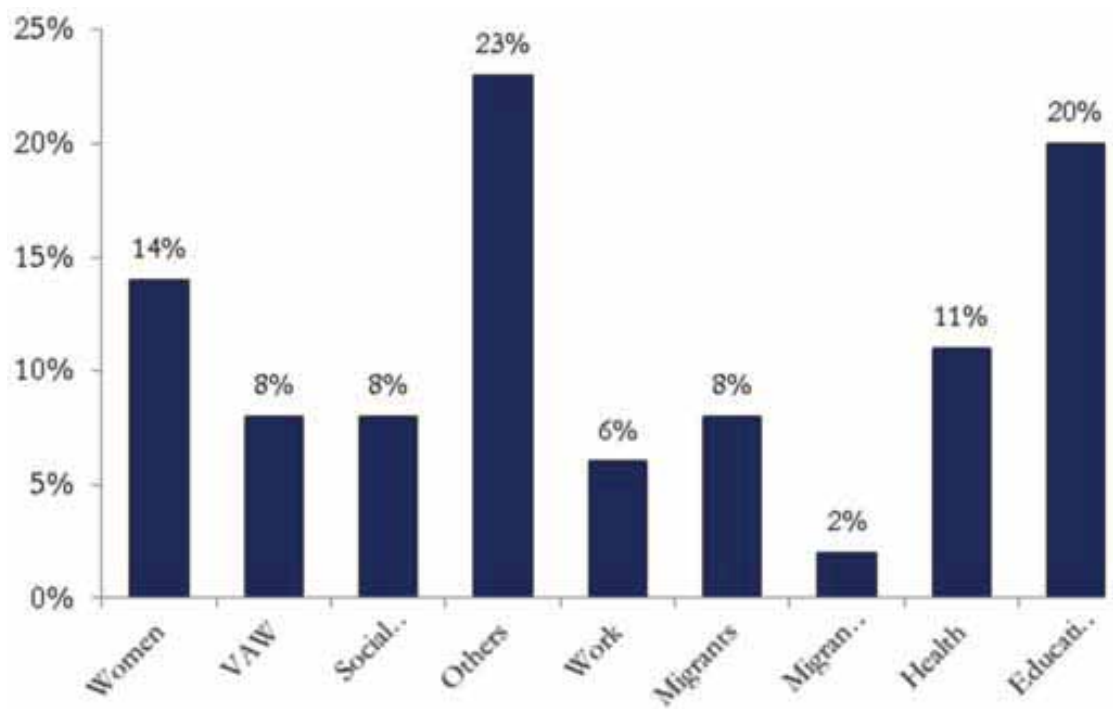
A great variety of organisations replied to the survey, grouped in the graph below according to their main focus. 23% of respondents classified their organisations under the category “others” (mainly NGOs with several purposes).

57% of the respondents worked in a public organisation and 36% said that they worked in non-profit private organisations (as NGOs or associations).

As regards the types of professionals who answered the questionnaires, 24% of the respondents worked as directors or coordinators of the service, 15% as social workers and 18% chose the option “others” (including a variety of very specific professional tasks). Other significant responses were teachers (11%), psychologists (10%) and educators (9%). We think that a methodological difficulty may have arisen in this question due to the heterogeneity of the answers (including professions but also positions in organisation) and the partial overlapping of some items.

Regarding the numbers and characteristics of the women using their services, most professionals said that their organisation served “few” migrant women,

Figure 5:  
Respondents according to the main purpose of the organisation they work for.



taking into account the total number of users. Quantities were distributed across the different types of organisations; it stands out, however, that all VAW services, except one, served few or very few migrant women. However, the results gathered should be taken with caution, because they are merely indicators of the perceptions of professionals and not based on actual data of the organisations.

The main areas of origin of the migrant or refugee women served by organisations were Latin America and Morocco (both 41%). The number of refugee women was insignificant; 70% said that they had none in their services. 8% of the professionals said that their organisations only served “few” Roma women, while 29% served none. Significantly 34% did not answer the question of the origin of Roma women, but answers collected on this issue reflect a majority of Spanish Roma women (53%) and smaller numbers of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma women.

Regarding the requests of migrant/refugee/Roma women, the most frequent requests were economic support (17%), professional guidance or occupational integration (14%) and Catalanian and Spanish languages courses (13%), three requests which have clearly increased in Catalonia due to the economic crisis (Rubio *et al.* 2011). Legal advice, social services and housing information were also often mentioned. The most frequent requests were obviously related to the types of organisations and their objectives (e.g. health services received mainly health support requests).

As for the demands that were more difficult to meet, the most frequent response was economic support (23%), followed by professional guidance or occupational integration (16%) and finally housing information (14%), again three requests which are clearly related to the economic crisis. The difficulties to meet these needs may be a consequence of higher demands associated to the crisis and rising poverty, and lower investment in public services.

77% of the professionals said that they were not aware of any cases of migrant/refugee/Roma women asking to be seen by female professionals. Of the 23% who had such a request, 85% believed that this demand should be met. Qualitative information provided by respondents is especially interesting to better understand the situation: many professionals said this was not an issue because, in the service, all or almost all professionals were women (this was especially common among support services for women). Others said that those who asked were not women, but their husbands. Two mentioned that women requested not only female professionals, but also professionals of migrant origin.

The reasons provided to meet this demand were that it was their will and it should be respected and that it provided a space of confidence. Other professionals said that the specific issue of violence or FGM required a support where they felt more comfortable, and that such support was especially advisable in the first phase. A few professionals mentioned that this request was associated to a cultural/religious group (Moroccan Muslims).

## Training of Professionals and Work Methodology

A high percentage of professionals (60%) said they had specific VAW training in the last 3 years. It should be taken into account that having a basic training (and hence, an informed understanding) on VAW may have been a motivation to answer the full questionnaire, making the sample of the survey biased in this respect. This is confirmed by the fact that, out of the professionals who did not answer the whole questionnaire but answered to this question, 50% did not receive specific VAW training.

Out of the professionals with training on VAW, 51% said they had been trained between 2 and 5 times and 31% said that they had received “continuous and periodic training”. According to the types of organisation, a significant majority of those who received training worked at services for women, health services and VAW services.

The main training priority for the professionals working with migrant/refugees/Roma women on their job was “periodic training to understand and tackle with cultural diversity” (42%), followed by “periodic training in a gender perspective and in migrant/refugee/Roma women rights” (19%). This may seem to point out that it is generally considered more valuable to be trained on cultural diversity than on the intersection of gender and cultural diversity. In any case, training was favoured over “intercultural mediators support” (only mentioned as first priority by 16% of professionals, mainly at health and education services).

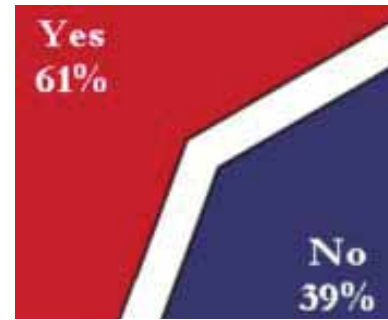
Regarding the first priority on basic training on VAW and migrant/refugee/Roma women, the most chosen options were “Global marginalization of women” (13%), “VAW relating to life and work experiences of migrant, refugee or Roma women in Catalonia/Spain” (11%), and with a 10% percentage for both: “Typologies of family conflicts in different types of households in Catalonia/Spain” and “VAW, cultural differences and reproductive rights in Catalonia/Spain”.

When asked about their priority topics to improve their training on VAW, and regardless of the long list of options, professionals had a clearer preference over “domestic and family violence”, with 31% of the responses, followed by “psychological violence” with 14% and finally “intimate partner violence” with 12%. These options point out the main concern for professionals (as referred to in other questions).

## Violence against Women

81% of professionals found that the visibility of violence against women had increased in Catalonia. This is the most common answer among all types of organisations except educational centres, where 52% of professionals thought that VAW was not becoming more and more visible over time.

Figure 6: Responses of professionals to the question “Is violence against women increasing?”



As for the reasons for visibility, respondents generally described an increased presence of VAW in public debate, even though they were unsure or critical about the extension of this presence: only one statement had a majority of “totally agree” responses (and only 47%: “mass media talk more about VAW”), while most other statements were given between 50 and 62% of “moderately agree” answers regarding issues such as women reporting more about violence, the engagement of institutions against VAW and the spreading of associations and services, better informed professionals.

Regarding the potential increasing trend of VAW in Catalonia, 61% of the professionals agreed that VAW was in fact increasing. This opinion was unanimous among migrant services and migrant women services. By contrast, professionals working in VAW services were mostly of the opinion that it is not increasing (67%).

Professionals also showed a huge support to the statement that the economic crisis may increase the VAW cases: 56% totally agreed and 35% moderately agreed to the statement.

The most widespread types and spheres of violence against women in Catalonia are, according to respondents, violence in the domestic sphere/family violence and intimate partner violence, both with a 33% of answers each, highlighting again the importance given to these items by professionals. Another 14% highlighted psychological violence and inequality in the gender division of care work within the couple. All other answers had much smaller percentages. The formulation of the question makes it difficult to evaluate the extent to which professionals are concerned about specific forms violence migrant women are most exposed to (such as violence and discrimination against foreigners), because they have to compete with more generally defined and less cultural-associated forms of violence.

A similar concern about the central role of violence in the domestic sphere/family violence and intimate partnerships is shown when professionals identify the sphere of VAW that they find the most dangerous for the whole society: the 29% thought that it is violence in the domestic sphere/family violence, followed by murders by spouse/partner or former spouse/partner, with an 18% of the responses, and finally psychological violence (11%).

## Definitions, Explanations and Risks

Professionals were also asked about the factors that better explain the extension of the VAW in Catalonia and the majority response was the cultural support, explicit or implicit, to male domination, with a 34% of the responses. This shows a strong or “hard” feminist understanding of violence against women. Most of them (73%) had received training on VAW. None of them worked in services for migrants or migrants women.

A “soft” gender-based understanding of VAW (not so much based on structural male domination, but on individual attitudes related to gender roles) is evident in the majority of responses, such as “many men consider ‘natural’ women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions”, with 23% of the responses or “many women do not behave anymore in accordance with their partners expectations”, with 11%.

5% of professionals identified the main explanatory factor of increasing violence to an increased migration, supporting the statement “There are more migrants and foreigners supporting cultures disrespectful of gender equality”. 80% of them had not received specific VAW training in the last three years.

Regarding women more at risk of suffering VAW in intimate heterosexual relationships, the main responses clearly described dependence on partner as the most important risk (40%), which points to an understanding of VAW as an instrumental means of power and control. However, the second most common response was psychological (with no power analysis): “women with a low self-confidence” (34%). This second view is more prevalent among those who have not received VAW training (64%) and professionals of the educational sector (18% of responses).

Biases and monolithic cultural perceptions are present in a very low percentage of responses: only 1 professional linked a higher risk to low educational level; 1 professional attributed higher risk to having religious beliefs, and 2 others to Muslim religion, and another professional attributed higher risk to sub-Saharan and Latin American women.

Regarding male perpetrators, 90% of professionals said that some men are more prone to violence than others. Most professionals gave a psychological explanation of this proneness, relating it to having suffered violence as children (35%) and being predisposed to a violent behaviour (22%). However, two gender-based explanations received also many responses: men living in a context where gender inequality is considered as a social norm (17%) and men considering the women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions as the best pattern of a gender relationship (15%).

There was a general rejection of the statement that women and men have the same risk of suffering for partners’ violent behaviour in their intimate relationships: 43% moderately disagreed and 40% totally disagreed. This shows again a general feminist understanding of VAW, but the high percentage of moderate

disagreement points out the relevance of a moderate, uncertain or critical version of gender-based explanations of violence. The same pattern is found in the responses of the statement “also in our modern societies VAW is related to the social conflict around the continuity of masculine domination on a practical as well as on a symbolic level” (Q39), with 51% of total agreement and 43% of moderate agreement.

Following this general gender-based understanding of VAW, 38% totally agreed to the statement “irrespective to their social and cultural differences, all women are at the same risk of violence considering their lack of power in gender relationship” and 28% moderately agreed. These responses also show a feminist understanding of VAW, but the percentage of moderate agreement may be related either to a “softer” feminist-related understanding of violence. Of those who totally agreed with the statement, 75% had received VAW training. This view was mostly widespread among services for migrant women (100% chose this option) and VAW services (55%).

Regarding sexual violence, 34% totally agreed and 43% moderately agreed to “the social recognition of the men’s right to maintain sexual relations with his partner or wife increases the risk of violence”. Again, the amount of moderate responses points out a general, but not complete recognition of the importance of structural patriarchal norms on VAW.

It is also interesting to note the acceptance of the term of sexist violence (*violència masclista*) as an adequate term to refer to VAW (36% moderately agreed and 31% totally agreed). This may show only a moderate acceptance of the concept consolidated in the Catalan law to describe VAW. This is relevant because the Catalan law was a pioneer, from a feminist point of view, in coining a term which very clearly defines violence as a direct consequence of gender inequality.

Regarding equality policies, there is a general view of the need of equality policies, even though a third of the respondents are somehow critical about them. 66% totally disagreed and 31% moderately disagreed to the statement that in Catalonia there is equality between men and women and gender equality policies are not necessary anymore.

### **Specific Types, Spheres, Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups**

Over the questionnaire, some questions focus on specific forms and spheres of VAW; as well as factors associated to increased risks of VAW.

One of the risk factors analysed is marriage: professionals do not consider that de-facto couples are more at risk (70% totally disagreed, 29% moderately disagreed), while generally they relate arranged marriages to VAW: 62% totally disagreed and 30% moderately disagreed to the statement that women are more at risk of suffering violence by their partner in love marriages than in family arranged marriages. There is also a link between forced and arranged marriages, which questions the voluntary character of family arrangements on the part of

women: 52% totally agreed and 34% moderately agreed that arranged marriages are a type of social violence that affects mainly women.

Regarding contraception and abortion, it was strongly linked to violence against women: 60% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that the difficulties to access to contraception methods are a type of social violence against women. Similarly, 65% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that the legislation that denies the women's freedom to abortion is a type of social violence against women.

As for prostitution, a conservative understanding of voluntary prostitution as a social need defending marriage was rejected by all respondents, with 77% of total disagreement, and 23% of moderate disagreement.

Positions about voluntary prostitution and its link with VAW were divided. 42% moderately disagreed, 23% moderately agreed and 18% totally agreed that prostitution should be considered as a kind of VAW, even when it is a personal choice.

More consensus was reached on the statement "when it is a personal choice, prostitution can empower women", which was mostly moderately disagreed on (47%) or totally rejected (20%). However, 2% of professionals totally agreed and 31% moderately agreed with it, showing the clear social divided opinions on this matter. Division was also showed in opinions about the banning of voluntary prostitution as a form of VAW: 41% moderately agreed and 35% moderately disagreed. 52% moderately agreed to the statement that voluntary prostitution is a job.

Generally speaking, the relationship of prostitution with economic reasons was recognised, with big support of statements such as "It's, above all, the lack of economic resources that leads women to prostitution" (32% totally agreed, 50% moderately agreed) and "women involve in voluntary prostitution basically to make more money" (23% totally agreed and 49% moderately agreed).

Finally, and related to street regulations on prostitution, 45% totally agreed with the fact that women involved in prostitution are better when they work inside the premises of a business than on the streets and 37% moderately agreed. What professionals saw clearly is that women involved in prostitution were considered more vulnerable to VAW: 54% totally agreed and 35% moderately agreed.

Concerning the manifestations of violence in intimate partnerships, the first clear sign of this form of violence was identified as "lack of respect", with 23% of the responses, followed by the "negation of the other as a person" (21%). Other responses point more clearly to elements of control ("limitation to personal freedom", with 10% and "imposition on the other's will" with 9%). This is linked to the importance given to psychological violence in other answers.

The conceptual understanding of intimate partner violence as a consequence of the romantic imaginary was widespread, but professionals were also critical about this. The statement "To consider jealousy as a love signal and inseparable part of the relation is a risk factor in the affective relationships" raised 64% of total agreement responses, but also 31% of moderate agreement responses.



Some of the questions provided interesting information about the role of sexual orientation in VAW and violence against LGTB people. When asked if the origin of the VAW is on the social norms that privilege the heterosexual relationships, 41% moderately disagreed and 29% moderately agreed. This shows that there is no clear view about the relevance of hetero-normativity in theoretical definitions of VAW. Regarding actual cases of intimate partnership violence, professionals disagreed that homosexuals have more risk to suffer violence by their partner than heterosexuals (71% totally disagreed and 25% moderately disagreed). However, when asked if the prohibition of marriage with people from the same sex is a type of social violence against this people 67% totally agreed and 27% moderately agreed. The agreement on the concept of “social violence” as a stronger version of what discrimination in this statement may show how discrimination against LGTB people is considered intolerable, but not related to gender-based violence.

Questions about the ability of women to exert violence produced unsure responses, with high percentages of moderate positions. For example, 40% moderately disagreed and 34% moderately agreed that women are able to use the same violence than men, especially in their intimate relationships. Moderate percentages in this and other responses may point out the fact that professionals are unsure about the conceptualisation of violence outside of the most common framework limited to male perpetrators.

### **Migrant Women and Violence**

Some questions provide information about the perception professionals have of migrants. Professionals are very aware of the lack of opportunities and rights of migrants: 63% totally disagreed and 31% moderately disagreed to the statement “In Catalonia migrants share the same rights and opportunities with the rest of the population and specific migration/intercultural policies are not necessary”. However, this discrimination was not so clearly linked to the legal system; 36% totally agreed and 31% moderately agreed that “the legal system discriminates migrants”.

Also relevant is that for 47% of the professionals the most widespread type of VAW is that “committed by migrant/refugee men against women of the same nationality or group”. 34% thought that it is “violence committed by native men against native women”. This shows not only a perception of the higher prevalence of migrant victims and perpetrators, but a conceptualisation of intimate partner violence as a phenomenon limited to the interaction between members of the same cultural group.

As for the vulnerability of migrant/refugee and Roma women regarding VAW, 59% totally agreed and 38% moderately agreed that migrant women are more vulnerable to VAW because of their vulnerability in legal, economic, labour and social terms (e.g. lack of support networks) and this made it more difficult

for them to press charges. Similarly, 53% moderately agreed and 41% totally agreed that migrant, refugee or Roma women are often more vulnerable to VAW because their legal status or due to discrimination in administrative local rules.

Views are more divided about the adequacy of existing mechanisms to press charges and VAW attention services to migrant women: 51% moderately disagreed and 29% moderately agreed.

The Catalan society was generally recognised as more egalitarian than some societies migrants come from, even though professionals are somehow critical about this view: 55% moderately agreed and 30% totally agreed that “most come from countries with more inequalities between men and women”.

Their higher vulnerability to VAW in the workplace was not strongly recognised: 56% moderately agreed and 25% moderately disagreed to the statement “In workplaces, migrant, refugee or Roma women undergo harassment, mobbing and other kinds of violence more than Italian women”.

Vulnerability was related to family reunification due to dependence of partner (45% moderately agreed; 39% totally agreed) and also to family control of spaces and movement: 67% totally agreed and 30% moderately agreed that “migrant, refugee or Roma women are more vulnerable to VAW where family rules restrain their independent mobility outside their house”.

The obligation to learn the language as a way to reduce vulnerability to VAW was recognised, but not strongly. 45% moderately agreed; 30% totally agreed.

Cultural relativism was not widespread among respondents. 49% totally disagreed and 37% moderately disagreed to “in every culture, relationships between men and women are different. We must respect that what in Catalonia is considered as violence may not be violence in other cultures.” Similarly, questions pointing at the respect of cultural rights and individual freedom over issues of social equality did not have much acceptance, as shown by the 38% of moderate rejection and 37% of total rejection of the statement “The possibility of having separate swimming pools for women could be approved as it is in favour of cultural rights and women privacy”.

Other items of the questionnaire point out in the same direction, generally rejecting relativist visions of what constitutes VAW over the law and human rights. For example, 41% of professionals moderately disagreed and 25% totally disagree that only the women suffering intimate partnership sexual violence can say if what they have suffered is or it is not violence (except the cases covered in the criminal code).

Statements presenting stereotypes of migrants and migrant women were generally rejected, but an important part of professionals did not totally disagree with them. For example, 52% totally disagreed and 37% moderately disagreed to “most of them do not want to integrate in our society”, 47% moderately agreed and 35% moderately disagreed to “they are more submissive than women born in Catalonia and this leads to a higher risk of VAW in intimate partnerships”, and 43% moderately agreed and 42% totally agreed to “migrant, refugee or Roma

women are often well educated but they are obliged to accept low-level jobs. This is a form of social violence”.

Regarding the Muslim veil, regulations banning the burqa were not unanimously linked to VAW (45% moderately disagreed that they constitute to VAW; 28% moderately agreed). However, limitations of the freedom of women to choose to cover their head or body with a veil were considered a type of violence: 52% moderately agreed and 31% moderately disagreed to this statement. The degree of moderate positions may point out to uncertain views about this issue.

There was a general disagreement on the fact that women who cover themselves with veil are less vulnerable to many forms of violence outside the house: 49% moderately disagreed and 35% totally disagreed. This rejects the justification of the veil as a way to protect women.

The most recognised reasons why women wear the Muslim veil were reaffirmation of cultural identity (moderate agreement 76%) and religious practices (moderate agreement 72%) Even though these two reasons were considered the most important, moderate agreement seems to point out an uncertain or critical acceptance of these statements.

Professionals were also unsure about the voluntary character of the veil: 43% moderately disagreed and 43% moderately agreed with the statement that women who wear veil do so because the family or men require them.

Identification of wearing the veil with VAW, even if voluntarily, was also unclear: 43% moderately agreed to this identification and 41% moderately disagreed.

Finally, the distinction between the types of veil was generally recognised, but not always strongly: 41% moderately agreed and 40% totally agreed that to cover her head with a veil is not comparable to cover all body with a burqa or niqab.

Putting the issue of the veil in the context of the regulation of Western women's bodies, professionals rejected identifying FGM to Western genital aesthetic surgery procedures: 44% moderately disagreed and 31% totally disagreed to the statement “Some types of the legal genital aesthetic surgery are more invasive than some illegal typologies of Female Genital Modification)”. However, the regulation of modified representations of women in publicity was generally accepted: 41% moderately agreed and 36% totally agreed with “The possibility of having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies is a good form of anti-VAW politics”.

## 3.2. Conclusion

The responses to some of the questions and the comments of respondents in open questions show multiple methodological problems in the planning of the survey. Regarding the formulation of the questions, some of them are not clear and/or request a high degree of abstract thinking, previous knowledge of cer-

tain issues, or the ability to understand subtle conceptual distinctions. All of this, together with the length of the questionnaire, may put into question the veracity of the perceptions collected with the questionnaire.

However, some general remarks can be made. In general terms, the responses to the questionnaire show a feminist understanding of violence against women among professionals. These results may be linked with the very high 60% of respondents who received training on violence against women and a high percentage of them have received periodic training. Most of them worked in services for women, health services and VAW services.

The centrality of intimate partner violence, violence in the family and psychological violence as training interests of professionals and as the types of violence professionals are more concerned of. Other types of violence (in the workplace, sexual violence, harassment in public spaces, economic violence) do not receive enough focus by professionals.

Some xenophobic responses and biased conceptions of migrant women were gathered in the survey (such as identifying an increase on VAW to increased migration or relating it with specific cultures, countries of origin and religion). Strong xenophobic, biased positions were only shown by a small minority of professionals, but on the other hand, a larger number of professionals did not totally disagree with these statements.

Cultural relativist responses showing respect for cultures over the rights of women were also a minority. However, more common was uncertainty regarding key cultural questions: many responses are placed in the “moderate agreement” space, showing perhaps an uncertain, ambivalent or incomplete understanding of specific phenomena. This is especially relevant to controversial issues where culture and gender intersect, such as the Muslim veil and prostitution. The criss-crossing of these two factors made it difficult for professionals to take a clear position about them.

### 3.3. Focus Groups on VAW, Migration and Cultural Differences

#### Objectives and Methodology of the Focus Groups

Three focus groups were organised as follows:

- one with 15 professionals of Spanish and Moroccan origin;
- one with 7 professionals of Spanish, Latin American and Moroccan origin;
- one with 7 migrant women from different Latin American countries.

Professionals participating in the focus groups were selected according to the criterion of interest and expertise on violence against women and female migration, so that participants could provide informed opinions. Regarding the focus group with migrant women, they were participants in a vocational training course at SURT.

The objective of the focus groups both with professionals and migrant women was to gather perceptions regarding definitions of violence against women, specific types and risk factors of violence against migrant women and knowledge of resources available. The professionals' groups also included discussion of the needs and demands of migrant women and strategies of professionals to address violence against migrant women, with a special focus on empowerment methodologies. On the other hand, in the migrant women's group a lot of attention was given to the topic of gender roles in general, in order to explore the underlying conceptions that may lead to violence against women.

## Results

The focus groups showed very interesting points to be further explored in research about the specific definition, forms and spheres of violence against migrant women.

First, existing definitions of violence against women cannot exactly be applied to migrant women. Though both professionals and women related to a feminist definition of VAW based on control over women's autonomy, exerted by a variety of agents (partners, employers, community and institutions) and in different private and public spaces, it should be taken into account that the concept of violence against women is not fixed. Definitions of sexist violence were promoted by feminist activism to express the fatal consequences over women of gender discrimination. During the fieldwork, the discourses of both professionals and women showed that the boundaries between discrimination and violence are not clear. The experiences that some described as discrimination others defined as violence to put emphasis on its unfairness. Defining manifestations of discrimination as forms of violence is a form of activism that demands a stronger reaction of public administrations and society at large to respect and defend women's rights.

Secondly, both professionals and migrant women focused the discussion of violence against women on intimate partner violence, and especially psychological violence. However, other types and spheres were mentioned as specific forms and spheres of VAW affecting migrant women: institutional violence, community violence (identified especially in migrants from the Maghreb), violence in the workplace, violence against domestic workers, transnational violence.

One of the types of violence specific to migrant women was institutional violence, i.e., violence exerted by public institutions and officers. The most important form of institutional violence that appeared was the legal and social discrimination against migrant women in the host country, which was defined by some professionals as a form of violence. Also included in institutional violence was the neglect of public institutions towards migrant women, for example when civil servants and professionals (social workers, teachers, career guidance

counsellors...) did not inform them or inform inaccurately or inefficiently about their rights. Similarly, simply informing migrant women about their rights, but refusing to effectively empower women to defend their rights was also considered violence.

Another relevant aspect of violence specific to migrant women was community violence, defined as the control of public space by the male migrant community of a specific origin. This meant an occupation of central public spaces by men and limiting access to these spaces to women. A Moroccan mediator described the case of a small town where the Moroccan men occupied the central square and effectively limited the circulation of Moroccan women through the square, making them find new ways to get around town through small, side streets.

Professionals also related this kind of male migrant community violence to the reinforcement of patriarchal norms in the host country, which may be motivated by the reconstruction of male migrant identities in a new context where they are powerless. The way to reinforce their lost power is to strengthen control over women in the migrant community where they live. The destabilisation of male identity is a process associated to migration, regardless of origin (Donaldson 2009; Alcalde 2011). However, during fieldwork it was only professionals working with North-African migrants that identified community violence as an issue.

Professionals also mentioned how institutional violence may reinforce community violence exerted by the male migrant community. For example, public administrations seem to give sometimes too much power to conservative imams when they are identified as the only legitimate representatives of the community in public policy design. This way diversity inside a migrant or ethnic community is ignored and delegation is placed on a single conservative patriarchal voice.

A remarkable public debate illustrating these attitudes has developed in Catalonia around local regulations forbidding the integral veil in public spaces (which in practice results in more reclusion for women). All social groups seem to have an opinion about it except the women themselves, whose voices are not usually present in the public debate, denying their voice as interlocutors for the issues that affect them. Instead migrant women are instrumentalised by the interests of different social groups (political parties, hegemonic voices in the community, etc.).

Another type of violence specific to migrant women was violence exerted against domestic workers, a kind of violence in the workplace which is strongly related to domestic violence, as it is perpetrated inside a private home, and in a sector where many migrant women are employed (as a result of gender-based phenomenon of the “global care chains”). This type of violence was especially emphasized by the migrant women’s focus group.

Finally, another form of migrant-specific VAW was transnational violence, defined as pressure on migrant women exerted from the countries of origin. The

pressure may be aimed at forcing women to comply with traditional gender roles in a new context.

The emphasis on all these forms of violence suggests that further attention should be paid to other forms of gender-based violence (in the workplace, institutional violence) to ensure a deeper understanding of how gender-based violence is defined, how it intersects with xenophobic and racist violence, who are the perpetrators in each case (some may be women and not men) and how are responses articulated. In this sense, the debate of professionals about the integral veil illustrates that professionals are concerned both about discrimination and violence against women and xenophobic attitudes, but the interaction of both concerns results in having confusing, contradictory or ambivalent viewpoints, which may inhibit professionals to clearly position themselves and act.

Thirdly, as far as the positions of migrant women on gender equality and VAW is concerned, migrant women showed a general understanding of gender equality and positioned themselves against sexism in the public and private spheres. However, when discussing everyday negotiation of gender roles, their positions generally veered to traditional gender roles. This may be related to the perception of some professionals on the existence of a vague unease to VAW among migrant women, but greater difficulties of precisely identifying violence, or the recourse to couple mediation as a viable solution. At any rate, results suggest that there is much to be improved in deepening sensitisation and understanding of VAW among migrant women, as well as on their knowledge of available anti-violence services.

There was a tendency to identify higher sexism in countries of origin among professionals and migrant women, which may result in biases. This should be challenged with a deeper understanding of the multiplicity, evolving nature of cultures both in the countries of origin and host countries.

The focus groups also provided interesting information about how to improve methodologies for preventing and addressing VAW with migrant women. Good practices suggested by professionals were women's multicultural groups (including Spanish-born women), migrant mediators accessing traditionally female spaces (homes, maternity hospitals, schools), working with migrant men and, above all, long-term community intervention work to diagnose the existing disempowering forces in the community and find allies to design strategies for empowerment that do not place the responsibility of overcoming VAW exclusively on the women suffering it.

Professionals denounced how migrant women have been denied a voice in the public and political debates that affect them (for example, regulation of the integral veil), while migrant women themselves showed a tendency to self-deny their own voice because of fear that public exposure may put them in even more vulnerable positions with the authorities. This legal vulnerability, together with other vulnerability factors such as the lack of support networks and the instrumentalisation of vulnerability by perpetrators for higher abuse, as well as the

specific definitions and forms of VAW described above among migrant women, may demand designing specific strategies to prevent and address VAW with this target group.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in Spain

Table 5: Migration in Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona

<b>Foreign nationals in:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of total population</b>
Spain (National level)	5,711,040	12%
Catalonia (Regional level)	1,183,907	15.6%
Barcelona (Local level)	806,108	14.5%
<b>Foreign national women in:</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of foreign nationals</b>
Spain (National level)	2,746,809	48.1%
Catalonia (Regional level)	554,423	46.8%
Barcelona (Local level)	378,843	47%

Source: Register of inhabitants January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, provisional results, Spanish National Statistics Institute, except Barcelona data, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

Currently the most common nationalities of migrant women in Catalonia are Moroccan, Rumanian, Ecuadorian, Colombian and Chinese (Source: Idescat 2011).

Table 6: Violence against Women in Catalonia

	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Catalonia</b>	<b>Barcelona</b>
Charges pressed in the violence against women courts (% of foreign nationals) <sup>1</sup>	134,002 (36%)	18,475	12,861
Number of dead women (% of foreign nationals) <sup>2</sup>	44 (22.7%)	11	4

<sup>1</sup> Source: Spanish Violence against Women courts 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Delegation of the Spanish Government for Gender Violence, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality. Updated November 27<sup>th</sup> 2012.



According to the Spanish Macro Survey of violence against women 2011, the prevalence of intimate partner violence (by partners or ex partners) among migrant women duplicates compared to women born in Spain. 20.9% of migrant women declared being victims of violence by partners (Spanish women: only 10.1%). This percentage increased considerably compared to the earlier macro survey in 2006 (when the percentage of foreign women was 12.1).

Results also show that a 5.8% of foreign-born women had suffered violence in the previous years (while the percentage among Spanish women was only 2.8%). The percentage of women who had overcome violence (suffered violence at one point of their lives, but not in the previous year) is almost identical for both foreign-born and Spanish born women (around 72%).

According to the 2006 Spanish Macro Survey, 10% of foreign women are victims of violence but do not recognise themselves as such (for Spanish women the percentage is 5.8%).

There are no specific figures of violence against migrant women in Catalonia and Barcelona. However, the following data illustrate the prevalence of some types of gender-based violence which especially affect migrant women: in 2011 the police registered in Catalonia 36 cases of Female Genital Mutilation, 21 forced marriages and 13 minors in forced marriages.

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### **4.1. Representations of VAW, Gender and Migration among Professionals**

This part of the report summarizes the preliminary research developed in the Autonomous Community of Madrid (Spain) by CEPAIM under the Work Stream 1 of the *SPEAK OUT!* project.

The aim of this local research was to analyze the experience and understand gender violence toward migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women from three different perspectives: migrant women themselves, migrant men, and professionals belonging to different social services organizations among whose users or clients are migrant, refugee or minority women.

Both male and female migrant perspectives were explored through focus groups, whose participants in two of them were immigrant women and whose participants were men in another two. Professionals' experiences, opinions and attitudes toward gender violence affecting immigrant, refugee and ethnic minority women were collected by the use of an online survey.

In the following paragraphs, the main characteristics, results and conclusions derived from these three different perspectives are summarized.

#### **The Survey**

An online questionnaire made up of 45 questions was employed, using the e-en-cuesta.com platform and email system for its editing and distribution. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. The first part was composed of questions aimed at describing the characteristics of the institution in which the professionals worked, their professional profile, and the main needs and requests of the migrant women. The second part concerned work and training methods within the institution. Some of the questions in this part specifically related to situations of gender violence. The third part explored respondents' attitudes and opinions on gender violence. Lastly, the fourth part gathered socio-demographic information.

## Participants

The survey was answered by 101 professionals and volunteers belonging to different social and health service organisations working in the Community of Madrid and counting migrant, refugee, and ethnic minority women among their users.

Most participants were women (84.91%) and Spanish (96.23%), though 7.84% of the latter had been born in other countries (Morocco, Argentina, Chile, and Switzerland). All the participants had at least completed the secondary school qualification, and the majority also possessed a university degree (94.34%).

Participants belonging to the social service sector comprised the largest single group of participants (19.80%), followed by organisations providing specific services to refugee and ethnic minority migrants (10.89%), and women's associations (8.91%).

Half of the entities (50.50%) belonged to the public sector, while 36.63% were NGOs and 4.95% from the profit-making private sector. The remainder of the sample fell into other categories.

Regarding professional profiles, 37.62% of participants defined themselves as social workers, and 12.87% as managers, 5.94% lawyers, 5.94% psychologists, and 4.95% were educators. Other categories amounted to 20.79% of the sample. Only approximately 2% of the sample defined themselves as volunteers.

30% of participants had less than two years' professional experience, with 31% reporting experience of around 2-5 years, 22% with 6-15 years, 13% with 16-25 years and the remaining 4% more than 25 years. It is clear that a high percentage of the sample had a high or very high level of professional experience.

## 4.2. Results

### **Characteristics of MREM Women in the Surveyed Services: Relative Weight of MREM Women among Services Users**

It is obvious that migrant women are the most frequent users of the services in question. In fact, they are the sole users of the services provided by 7.84% of the institutions surveyed. Furthermore, 73.27% of service providers reported to receive "many" migrant women, the percentage of providers reporting "few or very few" migrant women being only 18.81%. No organisation reported to receive "no" migrant women.

Ethnic minority and refugee women, while having less presence than migrant women, are also frequent users of the services in question. Refugee women are the group with less presence in the surveyed institutions.

Table 7. Immigrant, Ethnic Minority and Refugee Women who attended the Surveyed Social Services and Health Organizations

	None	Very few	Few	Many	All users are ...	N
<b>Immigrant women</b>	0%	3%	16%	73%	8%	101
<b>Refugee women</b>	45%	24%	22%	7%	1%	86
<b>Ethnic minority Women</b>	12%	21%	28%	37%	2%	92

### Immigrant, Refugee and Ethnic Minority Women Profile

Surveyed services receive immigrant, refugee and ethnic minority women that are young (94.44%), have children (97.85%), are alone (81.17%), live with their families (92.22%), and are unemployed (94.68). It is significant the relative low percentage of organizations working with under-aged girls (54.88%). Morocco, Romania, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Peru are the most common origin for these immigrant, refugee, and ethnic minority women.

### Women's Main Demands and Difficulties to Give Proper Response to Women's Requests

Survey respondents inform that women's main and more frequent demands are those concerning social assistance and welfare (16.31%), vocational guidance and professional insertion (13.27%), and economic support (12.24%). The demands underlined in second order of importance are legal support (16.33%), social assistance and welfare (13.27%), and economic support (11.22%). The third place is occupied by demands of other kind of services (12.24%), social assistance and welfare (12.24%), and legal support (11,22%). It is important to emphasize that those respondents who mark the answer "other kind of services" do not refer in any case to the request for help in cases where violence against women was implied. Housing, economic support, social assistance, and professional insertion are perceived as the most difficult demands to address. This is understandable, especially when taking into account the traditional Spanish difficulties in access to housing, in providing economic and social benefits, and in employment creation.

It is especially relevant to underline that 31.25% of the surveyed professionals and volunteers have been found in the position to serve migrant, refugee or ethnic minority women who have requested to be addressed only by women. When it came to know their attitude on this issue, 71.19% of these professionals and volunteers were in favour of giving a positive answer to this demand.

## Questions on Training and Working Methods

63.16% of the surveyed professionals and volunteers have been specifically training on VAW during the last three years. This figure gives an idea of the importance that VAW has for the majority of the organizations under the study. However, it is true that an important figure like 36.84% of the participants informed that they did not receive any kind of education about this topic from their institutions, meaning that it is still a long way to go.

The more frequent topics participants perceive as a priority to achieve a basic training on VAW are “global marginalization of women” (14%), “national and EU legislation regarding MREM rights and status in relation to VAW issues (14%), and VAW effects on women’s health (12%). As second in importance are again the last one concerning women’s health (15%), those about “main explanations and approaches about VAW” (12%), and “MREM women’s life, work and violence experiences” (12%)

The kind of VAW situations perceived by the participants as the more important to be specifically trained is “domestic/family violence” (35%), although it was also remarkable the percentage of respondents considering “psychological violence” (15%) and “institutional violence” (12%) as a key issue to be prioritized in training.

When taking into account the organizational patterns for anti VAW, 38% of the respondents consider of importance to have “protocols on VAW for specialized diagnostic and treatment, with standardized and coordinated indicators for the different services in a territory”, meanwhile around 30% of them perceive as necessary to count with “common guidelines on VAW shared by the different services in a territory in order to develop a counselling and sheltering of women with a proper cultural gender sensitive approach”. It is important to emphasise that these organizational patterns have already been implemented in a high percentage of the surveyed social entities.

## Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence:

### Risk of Violence

A very high percentage of respondents (89%) think that in Spain the VAW is now more visible than it was in the past. When trying to explain this phenomenon of greater visibility of VAW, 98% of the professionals and volunteers agree (24%) or totally agree (74%) with the fact that now mass media give more information about VAW. It also seems to be a rather unanimous agreement (>70%) with statements such as “Institutions are engaged in concrete actions against VAW” (86% ), “Institutions are engaged in campaigns against VAW” ( 82%), “women report more about violence” (74%), and “anti-VAW associations and services are more widespread” (74%).

However, total or partial disagreements (40%) are shown when considering statements like “the training received by professionals and volunteers about



VAW is getting better” and that both politically involved women (48% of disagreement) and men (66% of disagreement) are more sensitive and active towards VAW.

Participants perceived violence from Spanish men against Spanish Women (51% as first choice and 31% as a second choice) as frequent as violence from migrant men against migrant women (35% as first choice and 51% as second choice). VAW from Spanish men against migrant women (7% as first choice and 11% as second choice) and from migrant men against Spanish women (5% as first choice and 2% as second choice) are perceived as less common. It seems that professionals perceived that VAW is present in all kind of couples although they believe that its frequency is lower in mixed couples.

To explain why VAW is prevalent in the Spanish society, professionals and volunteers tend to appeal to structural vs. individual factors. In this sense, they favour statements like “Many men consider “natural” women’s dependency on their wishes and decisions” (30%) and that “implicitly or explicitly a large part of society maintains its cultural support to men supremacy on women” (29%). It is significant, and in a positive way, that there were no participants explaining VAW by considering that “many women display their body in too explicit seductive way” and only one bearing that “family and community have lost their control on the rules relating to young people sexual behaviour”.

Respondents have also been surveyed about the women’s characteristics they thought may increase the risk of being victim of VAW. When these refer to psychological and relational characteristic, participants see “low self-confidence” (45%) and “psychological dependence on the partner” (37%) as the most important women traits. When asked about socioeconomic factors the “lacking of social, family and community networks” (36%), the “economic dependence” (20%) and “living within patriarchal families, where fathers and husbands have authority over family members” (20%) were the most frequent answers. It is noteworthy that no participant considers of importance to explain VAW with being a migrant or the practice of a specific religion.

When questions focus on men, the risk of being violent is first attributed to those who have adopted patterns of violent behaviour (25%) and who have suffered violence in childhood (15%). It seems to be also relevant the claiming to control their partners’ life (15%) and “considering women’s dependence on their wishes and decisions as the best pattern of a gender relationship” (chosen by the 27% of the participants as second factor of importance to explain men’s VAW behaviour). That is, past experiences, learning and chauvinist socialization seem to be considered fundamental to explain men’s violent behaviour against women. Mental diseases (0%) and addiction problems (5%) do not seem to be proper explanatory variables of VAW by the surveyed participants.

## Opinions about VAW

Opinions and attitudes about different topics and situations related to VAW have been surveyed under the idea that they may affect actual behaviour when professionals and volunteers address MREM women needs. A first group of questions covered VAW in general. Another group consisted of questions about marriage, intimate partnership and family rules. A third and last group consisted of questions about VAW and MREM women, “honour killings” and prostitution.

It is noteworthy the lack of agreement among the respondents on general statements about VAW such as “all women are at risk of violence considering their lack of power in gender relationships” and “VAW has its major origin in social norms relating to heterosexual gender norms and relationship”. Also, it has to be underlined that around a 20% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “Women and men have the same risk of suffering partners’ violent behaviour in their intimate relationships”. It seems important to mention the inconvenience of such attitudes when professional pretend to give an adequate response to VAW.

No respondent agreed with a relationship between civil status and VAW risk. Surprisingly 9% of the sample agrees with the statement “women are more exposed to intimate partner violence in love marriages than in family arranged-marriages”. Opinions in relation to women’s freedom decisions in relation to their families, contraception and abortion seem to show a similar pattern. Around 10-15% of the sample is placed in positions that are both conservative and counterproductive to effectively contrast VAW. Although it represents a minority (<10%), the opinions of some participants about the prohibition of homosexuality as a form of violence, the vision of jealousy as a song of love, or the male monopoly to solicit sex to their partners are considered a point of attention by the Spanish research team. It is as worrying the position held by approximately half the sample on freedom of women to decide what they consider to be intimate violence.

Unfortunately, subtle xenophobic attitudes were detected among some participants. An example is that 30% of the respondents disagree with the statement “in workplaces, MREM women undergo harassment, mobbing and other kinds of violence more that Spanish women”. Although it is true that a majority of the surveyed professionals and volunteers agreed on the higher risk of VAW among MREM women, it is important to underline that 59% of the sample agree or totally agree that “rules obliging MREW people to know Spanish language to make MREM less vulnerable to VAW”.

## Use of Burqa and Veil

As Table 8 shows, the surveyed sample seems to be polarized about the understanding, use and regulation of burqa and veil. The polarization is lower when the use of these clothes is linked with VAW vulnerability, the majority (79%)

being those who disagree about this relation. It needs to be underlined the data distribution in relation to the comparison between the invasiveness of some types of legal genital aesthetic surgery and some female genital mutilations, although a majority disagree about that similarity (76%). Also, a certain percentage of respondents (15%) agrees with the availability of “separate swimming pools or times for swimming for women” as a favour of cultural rights and women privacy. This is a somewhat smaller percentage (22%) of those who disagree on the possibility of “having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies as a good form of anti VAW politics.

## Honour Killings

In relation to honour killings, once again a minority shows attitudes that are not ideal in order to prevent and stop VAW. This is the case of 9% of participants that agrees that “the defence of women’s honour relating to body modesty, pre-marriage chastity and conjugal fidelity could prevent VAW”, or 11% that disagrees that “the value of honour, considered as men and family respectability linked the control on women life and their sexual behaviour, is the contrary of gender equality”. It would be interesting to analyse the relation between these kind of opinions and variables such as sex and age among others, but it is not possible due the low number of participants that answered the last questions of the survey. It is striking, also, to consider the high percentage of respondents (69%) who agrees that “honour killing’ is a label that is used to discriminate some minority groups of immigrants and refugees”. The same can be said about 36% of the participants that think that “honour killings concern only migrant women belonging to Muslim cultures”, revealing their ignorance of what is happening in the cultural majority context or what is worse and unacceptable xenophobic attitude towards Muslims.

Table 8: Opinions about veil and burqa

<b>When it is by her choice, hampering a woman to veil her head and to cover her body it is violence:</b>	
Strongly agree	29.1%
Somewhat agree	30.9%
Somewhat disagree	27.3%
Strongly disagree	12.7%
<b>Laws prohibiting clothes that cover woman’s head and body (such as burqa) constitute VAW:</b>	
Strongly agree	16.4%
Somewhat agree	25.4%
Somewhat disagree	32.7%
Strongly disagree	23.6%

**Veiled women are less vulnerable to many forms of VAW when they are outside their house:**

Strongly agree	7.3%
Somewhat agree	10.9%
Somewhat disagree	30.9%
Strongly disagree	47.3%

**Some types of legal genital aesthetic surgery are more invasive than some female genital mutilations:**

Strongly agree	3.6%
Somewhat agree	16.4%
Somewhat disagree	27.3%
Strongly disagree	49.1%

**The possibility of having separate swimming pools or times for swimming for women could be approved as a favour of cultural rights and women privacy:**

Strongly agree	1.8%
Somewhat agree	12.7%
Somewhat disagree	25.4%
Strongly disagree	56.4%

**The possibility of having rules against some kind of publicity using women/men bodies is a good form of anti VAW politics:**

Strongly agree	49.1%
Somewhat agree	21.8%
Somewhat disagree	5.4%
Strongly disagree	16.4%

## VAW and Prostitution

Some of the opinions and attitudes expressed by the surveyed professionals and volunteers are worrying from the abolitionist position toward prostitution held by the Spanish research team. That is the case, for example, of the 3 participants that agree that “voluntary prostitution is good for a society because it protects marriage”. As Table 9 shows, the position of the sample about prostitution is clearly split.

Table 9: Degree of agreement or disagreement with some statements on violence against women and prostitution

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<b>Voluntary prostitution is good for a society because it protects marriage</b>	
Strongly agree	1.8%
Somewhat agree	3.6%
Somewhat disagree	8.9%
Strongly disagree	82.1%

### **Even when it is a personal choice, prostitution should be considered as a kind of VAW**

Strongly agree	41.1%
Somewhat agree	23.2%
Somewhat disagree	21.4%
Strongly disagree	14.3%

### **When it is a personal choice, prostitution empower women**

Strongly agree	7.1%
Somewhat agree	8.9%
Somewhat disagree	23.2%
Strongly disagree	55.4%

### **Prohibiting voluntary prostitution is a form of VAW**

Strongly agree	8.9%
Somewhat agree	26.8%
Somewhat disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	33.9%

### **It is, above all, the poverty that leads women to prostitution**

Strongly agree	17.9%
Somewhat agree	33.9%
Somewhat disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	19.6%

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## **Attitudes and Acts of VAW**

How do participants perceive certain attitudes and behaviours as cases of VAW? With the exception of “arrogant behaviour”, any included item is considered as examples of VAW at least for one of the participants in the survey.

Among the attitudes and behaviours chosen as most representative of VAW it is noteworthy the “limitation of personal freedom” (27%) and the “negation of the other as a person” (18%). As second in importance and in addition of the previous two, participants point out, “psychological coercion” (16%), “controlling the other’s life” (11%) and imposition of the sexual intercourse by an intimate partner (11%). Humiliation (14.55%) is selected by a majority of the participants as the third behaviour in order of importance that most clearly express VAW in intimate relationships.

## **Principles and Practices to Fight VAW**

We now briefly describe the importance respondents give to some principles and practices capable of providing eradication of VAW in our society.

The “recognition of equal rights and responsibilities in the family and in society” is the principle that receives more support, being selected by the 55% of the sample. The “recognition of women self-determination” (41%), “equal per-

sonal freedom in the life's choices for women and men" (39%) and "equality of rights both for women and men" (37.5%) are also principles that receive an important support by the participants.

Only 8% of the respondents give importance to affirmative action principle consisting of "positive special treatment and quotas for women and MREM people". The "recognition of cultural differences and minorities in legislation" (5%) and the "recognition of different ways to define family patterns in legislation" (0%) also receive very low or any support.

In summary, the participants seem to have clear that the most appropriate measures to eradicate gender violence is by the equalization of rights between women and men but not for positive discrimination by gender or ethnicity.

## **VAW and Women**

We now present data on the opinion of participants about certain statements regarding the role and responsibility of women in intimate partner violence.

Again, we can see how male chauvinism is able to penetrate the attitudes and opinions of professionals. In fact, 18% of the respondents agree that "especially in intimate relationships women are able to use the same violence as men" and 22% concedes that in "the modern equalitarian society women and men share the same social responsibility for their violent relationships".

Undoubtedly, this data show how important is the work to be done in relation to VAW. This is a type of work that it is not only necessary in relation to the society as a whole, but also with professionals and volunteers that promote social welfare.

### **4.3. Focus Groups**

Focus groups were the method selected to better comprehend migrant understanding of gender violence.

#### **Migrant Women's Perspective**

Focus groups with migrant women involved 12 women from the age of 20 to 50 years old.

As with the focus groups with men, we invited the women to speak about equality and not directly about GV. However, as soon as the conversation got underway, the subject of GV came immediately up. This is evidence that the link and relationship between equality of women and men and violence against women is clearly perceived.

As in past research experiences, (NO SOLO ES PEGAR 2007), we encountered several women who told the story of their case of GV in first person.

Table 10: Country of origin of migrant women

Country	Number of participants
Colombia	3
Ecuador	2
Brazil	1
Nigeria	1
Syria	1
Bolivia	2
El Salvador	1
Nicaragua	1

Specifically, a woman from Syria and another from Colombia shared their cases, and the latter added that one of the reasons that brought her to Spain was the chance to get away from an abusive relationship she had been putting up with for years. A third woman told at length how her mother suffered years of abuse. And lived situations of psychological abuse were described by a fourth woman.

The women gave numerous examples of what they meant by psychologically abused:

*it's when you're not worth anything, he doesn't let you out, he doesn't let you study (Syrian woman); that you're fat, you hear that a lot, that you don't know how to cook, that that's shit, they talk to you like that, physically he never abused me but verbally I was a disaster and with time you begin to realize that that's abuse.*

Women are surprised by the high number of GV victims in Spain and, particularly by the deaths «*here they kill the women, not in our country*». However, they thought that in Spain, generally there's more equality in employment issues:

*as far as work, well, I see a bit more gender equality. In our country it's harder to find a woman driving a bus", "you can tell there's a big difference on the professional level.*

During the first few minutes of the group discussion the question emerges about how there are also women who are abusive about their rights: «*but I think that one thing is for you to have your rights as a woman, and another is being abusive with the guy's space, you know?*». Where the idea appears that now men don't know very well what their place is (we'll go back to this issue when we talk about the causes of GV identified by the women):

*it's because they don't feel any more what phase they're in, to what point it is that they should or shouldn't do things", "that the Law is fine, but some respect should be shown for their decisions too.*

Comments worth noting about how some men change during the migration process with regards to their relationships to women:

*yes, they do change, here he's got to adapt to the laws", "because I've got friends whose husband was a male chauvinist over there but has changed here, they help with the children, they do the laundry and they do things.*

A woman from Nigeria points out: *«little by little things are changing, many women are studying and they don't beat the women».*

Although a few added other considerations to this point: *«I don't believe they change, I believe the system forces them clear and simple to take on another pattern of behaviour».* But change not only occurs to men, some women also experience interesting turnabouts upon arrival to Spain: *«as women, I feel that my self-esteem in a sense has gone up a lot", "I've become aware of things here, and I've claimed myself».*

With regards to women who are abused –an unfortunately recurrent topic –, one issue is the link with women's guilt:

*when they hit a woman, she feels guilty; she's the victim but she feels guilty that they hit her for something she did wrong", "you feel inferior and feel that you shouldn't ask for help because you're the one who's not functioning right and you're the one who has to change.*

Although many cannot understand why women endure the violence, and thoughts are heard along these lines: *«us women also allow... well, I don't know whether this is a mistake but it's as if us women we like being treated bad ...».* Although some women show their disagreement with this statement, the discourse moves ahead with the idea that women don't like or don't know how to be alone, and that's why they want a man and endure abusive situations: *«they get involved in relationships without knowing the men well enough so they won't be alone».*

## **Causes of Gender Violence**

At a certain stage in the discussion, the moderator will ask about the causes of violence against women, and this topic takes up an important part of the debate. Curiously enough, as with the men's groups, the issue of “respect” appears frequently. There is no time or space here to delve into this concept further but it might be interesting to focus future research on what we could gather from this concept, given that both women and men consider that if there were respect on both parts, the problem of abuse would disappear. It seems important to point



out that when they refer to “respect”, they do so not only with regards to women and men but to family relationships in general (ex: parents/children) and they link it clearly to a sort of lack or crisis in values:

*children no longer have respect for their elders, for their parents, their grandparents, now since we're in a more liberal world where you can't correct your children anymore because if you correct them the police is after you, we're bringing up our children in a way that there is no father or mother figure, respect for adults and when they become adults well there won't be anyone that can stop them and there is no authority figure.*

This is no doubt an interesting issue, because emerging from this discourse there seems to be, at first sight, the idea that when there were “other values” and when there was “respect”, there was no violence against women, an assumption which is not sustained by data or by what we know of the history of humanity. Furthermore, wherever there may seem to be practically untouched “traditional values”, where male and female spaces are well predetermined and marked, women continue to suffer abuse: stoning, burning, genital mutilation, and so on, are still frequent practices in numerous latitudes of the planet.

The discussion continues with the topic of the possible causes for the perpetuation of violence against women:

- lack of communication in the couple:

*I believe that by talking people can come an understanding and so if, for example, in a house two of us work, then you choose and I cook or do the laundry, in other words, we share.*

This comment was followed by another woman who pointed out, however:

*because you can talk it over with your partner but there are women who don't have that choice. They open their mouths and get beaten at once.*

- Men have trouble accepting equality:

*well I think that men are having trouble accepting that women have the same equalitarian space, and this change is a frustration to them and they take it out on us... when the woman says 'that's it'... and these are my rights, and I take decisions even though I don't contribute with money, financially, but I take decisions because I work at home, and domestics, and that has to count...; the thing is that they have trouble accepting that we have – as they say here in Spain – the ovaries to be on our own. We get tired of being good, being tolerant, being mediators because we end up even being psychologists with them ... They have trouble accepting it because they don't have the courage we have and that's why they're furious, they feel their self-esteem is low because they don't*

*want to accept feeling on an equal level ... They want always to be the masters (...) and we are always submissive; (...) and when they see that you change, well, they don't like it.*

- Women endure the situation:

*talking with my mother I'd ask her but why did you allow it? I don't know, she says... because I was so in love, I loved him very much, I had five children ...; women put up with it because he's a man, and men are like that, and I can't destroy my family, because my children ...*

- The way children are educated:

*if a child sees his father beating up his mother, he grows up with those values; if you see movies like Cinderella and Snow White... the prince... and all those things we're filling the girl's head with that there's a prince; women make male chauvinists of men.*

- Men are afraid of women:

*I think they abuse us because they fear us, because we're strong, because we're perceptive, because we're intelligent. Men want to dominate what frightens them. I think abuse by men occurs because they very often feel inferior to women. It's a problem of inferiority... the first thing a man does is raise his voice, and the second is roll up his sleeve; and the freer we are, if we're working, if we've got our own money, the more afraid they are.*

- Men think they are superior:

*In my country, in Nigeria, men think that they are Gods, like superiors... a man doesn't cook, nor clean nor nothing... and the women serve like servants, like a slave ...*

One recurrent issue that always comes up when talking about gender violence (and not only with foreigners; with nationals and professional groups as well) concerns supposed abuse on the part of women. The following extract of the conversation includes three issues linked to this topic (there men are abused, women abuse, and “false charges” occur):

*I think it's pretentious to say that the only one deserving respect is the woman because men do too... in many situations I've attended men abused by women, I've seen women abuse of their position as women to try to harm a husband for whatever situation, mentioning aggressions that have never existed.*

## Solutions

In the last part of the conversation we wanted to explore possible solutions envisioned by the women to put an end to the severe problem of gender violence. Through group dynamics, they were asked to imagine that they had just won the elections, and as ministers of different Ministries they could do things to put an end to abuse. The following are the strategies expressed: laws, education, awareness-raising, information, strengthen values, police, empower consciousness-raising with men. Formulas for expressing these proposals are as follows:

*Pass a law that both for women and for men, work and home be more equitable, a Law and a sanction for whoever doesn't comply.*

*That an attempt be made at schools to change the boys and girls for a just society.*

*Police should get a bit more involved too, put more Police on the street.*

*Give more information to people who don't have it.*

*A Programme that could go to the homes and talk look, you've got this number, if that happens to you give a call... something more efficient because here we also hear a lot about women of 70, 80 years old getting killed and they never spoke out against their husbands, because this abuse is not new, it comes from way back. The problem is women also get used to the abuse.*

*Training, education, giving more information to raise awareness among women.*

*It's easier to educate than to re-educate. When the men are old and we want to re-educate them then it's more complicated.*

*If I were the Minister of Education I would propose changes in Programmes starting with childhood, approach it from the children. Work and get the children to share toys. And then with adolescents and for men, married couples, I'd spread the information... like holding talks like this one now.*

*Make Laws known*

*Advertising, too, at the city-council level; for us, getting information by mail is good, to each house, about laws, courses, create them so that they know too, because I think they're also part of this, and raise their awareness.*

It is clear from the answers expressed that women demand government intervention, from public authorities; that these problems we face are not of a private nature that should be solved within each family, in each home. Regarding the issue of resources, we are brought to the Syrian woman and what she things about men going to prison: «before I had a problem with him, now I have lots of problems with everyone». Also with regards to resources, the topic of restraining orders is brought up:

*and if they impose a restraining order of whatever meters... I believe it works in some cases but in these cases of abusers, that doesn't work for them.*

The role of judges:

*there's one thing I just can't get into my mind , how can you explain that a judge has the courage to hand the children over to an abusive father? Who's to guarantee that this father won't treat his children harmfully?*

If we had to point out a big difference between women and men's discourses, the latter did not admit their mistakes, their own faults; while in women guilt appears.

### **Migrant Men's Perspective**

As previously stated, two focus groups were organized where the participants were migrant men. They were contacted and recruited by CEPAIM with the stated goal of meeting and talking to each other about equality between women and men. No reference to gender violence was made before group participants met.

18 men participated in total on a voluntary basis, 8 in the first group and 10 in the second. The main characteristics of the participants are summarized in table 1. They all spoke fluent or understandable Spanish. They had been living in Spain for durations ranging from a few months to ten years. Most were married or had partners. Almost half of them had left their partners and children in their country of origin. More than half of the group was unemployed when the focus groups were held. All those employed had jobs below their qualifications.

Table 11. Country of origin, age and education of the migrant men participating in the focus groups

<b>Group</b>	<b>Participant alias</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Studies</b>
1	CHO	Morocco	33	Primary education
1	SER	Senegal	43	Master
1	BAK	Mali	35	—
1	YVO	Congo	40	College
1	MOH	Algeria	46	Bachelor student
1	RIC	Nigeria	32	Professional education
1	JOH	Ecuador	44	Secondary Education
1	JAV	Ecuador	38	—
2	IBR	Guinea Conakry	28	College
2	WIL	Venezuela	29	Secondary education
2	MOM	Morocco	38	Secondary education
2	INU	Ghana	35	Secondary education
2	CHE	Senegal	40	College
2	MAM	Senegal	44	Secondary education
2	MUS	Liberia	35	Professional education
2	ISI	Cameron	34	—
2	ANT	Guinea Conakry	28	College
2	JUL	Ecuador	52	Secondary School

## Topics to Be Discussed in the Focus Groups with Men

The script followed in the focus groups was the same for men and women. Topics to be discussed were: 1) the participants' understanding of equality between women and men; 2) their definition of gender violence; 3) their thoughts on the causes of violence against women; 4) their ideas about how to fight violence against women.

### Men's Focus Groups Discourse

With two focus groups, we reached discourse saturation. In fact, the similarities in structure and content of the discussions held in the two focus groups were remarkable.

The facilitator of the focus group perceived the participants' discourse as sincere. The fact that the facilitator was also men could help this. He also did his best for remembering participants that true opinions were looked for.

### Gender Equality

The first topic to be discussed (equality between women and men) led to a first general agreement that, regardless of the sex, there are no differences between women and men and, therefore, they should have equal rights.

*The only thing that sets us apart is physiology, they can give birth, and we cannot. From there, the rest is equal; we have two eyes, a nose, a mouth (JAV).*

*I think that both women and men are equal in almost every respect. That both women and men have equal rights (JUL).*

It was the feeling of the facilitator of the two men's focus groups that some of these initial comments were tinged of social desirability. But it was only at first, because, some nuances soon emerged out of this apparent agreement on equality between men and women. In fact, some participants, especially but not only those of Muslim faith and from the Maghreb, qualified their egalitarian speech by making remarks about the "natural order of the things" and "divine will".

*They may be equal in anything, but there are things He has given, as I believe in God, that God has given. I believe that nature cannot be changed and nobody will be able to change it. For example, in their sex, in their speech, in their body, everything (CHO).*

*I agree with what you are saying. There are things we cannot change ... I don't know how to say this, the nature that belongs to God cannot be changed (BAC).*

*That is, there is a difference, we are different not only maternally but also physically (IBR).*

These were the first signs of ambivalent sexist attitudes (Swin, Aikin, Hall and Hunter 1995) that became evident as the discussion progressed. Occasionally, these attitudes were benevolent, establishing differences between women and men by saying, for example, that women are more competent to properly raise children or more emotional and sensible than men.

*Now men look after children and children do not get well educated, because the person who really educates a child is the woman, it is the mother. If you don't do your job within a marriage, things will not work (...). But each person has their little job fixed, firm and clear (CHO)*

*Men are capable of doing more harm to humanity than women (IBR).*

In other instances, attitudes expressed a clear hostility toward women, especially in those cases when rights of women and men were discussed in relation to partner conflict situations or, as underlined later in this report, when talking about gender violence.

*We know that women always lose their temper quickly. Then, when they lose their temper they get out of control. So, here a woman has to learn, for example, that if there is a husband at home she must respect him, you know? Because there are things you must not do (ANT).*

The existence of gender role differences was recognized by the participants and the idea that these differences were greater in the past as well as in their countries of origin than in Spain was clearly stated.

*That has to be seen in different contexts. In the context of Europe or Africa, things are very different. We know that here (in Spain and Europe), before this situation of equality between women and men, a tremendous inequality existed (...) it has been a process of struggle for male power to reach this situation. (...) it's a process that will continue (...) The African context is another matter. It is a problem of religion and culture and that makes things go sometimes different. Women have in mind that they are inferior to men, especially in rural areas. In urban areas education is different because it makes people aware that some rights must be defended. I think it's a matter of context (MAM).*

*I want to say that they are two different projects, because equality cannot be absolute. It depends on the specific society (MOH).*

*When you ask grandparents, aged 80 or 70, what they say is women at home and men at work (JAV).*

*In my country, women have nothing to say (YVO).*

In this regard, participants voiced diverse opinions ranging from positive valuations to a more or less clear rejection of differences between men and women.

For some of them, the traditional gender differences and relations were perceived as ideal ones:

*The primary obligation of man in marriage is to work and to feed his woman. Right now things have evolved a bit more. But I do not have the right to force my wife to work. Well, if she wants to work, she can work (...) My ideal? Well, I wish things could be like that. Hopefully we as men could sustain women to continue their normal lives at home (...) Currently things are not going in the right direction (...) so many laws, so many (...) talks like this... (CHO).*

Other participants, while stating their general agreement with gender equality, stressed the logic of gender differences between their home countries and Europe appealing to economic, social and religious considerations.

*So I think there are many values that come into play: cultural, social, religious, all of them must be taken into account, but I think everything is on track (SER).*

The latter respondent, by using a personal example, showed the change in mentality that the migration process causes in some African men.

*Honestly, I've lived four years in Spain, and I've changed my mind about women. It has helped me to reconsider many things (...) How to treat women ... why women should have the same rights men have (...) (SER).*

It seems that the migration experience makes some immigrant men change their mind towards a more egalitarian perspective. By contrast, the traditional male chauvinist discourse of other immigrant men seems to be reinforced when they leave their country. Unfortunately the latter type of men tends to be the loudest and visible, while the egalitarian type tends to be silenced.

## **Gender Violence**

The term 'gender violence' was *naturally referred* by several participants in both groups before the facilitator raised the topic of violence against women as it had been planned by the research team. The person coded as SER did so when explaining the reasons why he decided to participate in the focus group<sup>1</sup>. The rest employed the term in the context of their talking about equality between women and men.

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<sup>1</sup> He is now enrolled in Higher education and his curiosity for development cooperation made gender issues of interest to him.

*So I think that (...) leaving the girls with the women at home (...) will be removed (...) for example, genital mutilation of girls, ablations are ways to violate the rights of women (CHE).*

*Women are not slaves; we are here to fight for equality for women, because there is also a problem of violence (YVO).*

*[for example] a woman is talking, arguing at home, she gives you a slap and you cannot do anything. But you would do the same to her and she calls the police and the same day you are in jail. That happens, and there is not equality for the man. (...)so I thought that equality depends on what you seek (...). Because at work, with the same certificate (...) the man earns more (RIC).*

It seems clear that for these immigrant men, as it was for the immigrant women participating in this research, violence towards women is clearly related to gender issues and, specifically, to gender equality and personal rights. But male and female participants were mistakenly inclined to understand that gender violence is both against men and women.

- I have not seen any law about that.*
- About what?*
- About women who mistreat men too (RIC).*

*There is a problem because I think the law automatically punishes the man (...). It may be that the woman is guilty. So gender violence may be reciprocal (MOH).*

*I know many men, I'm not just talking about the immigrants, I am talking about the Spanish. They are really suffering because of women. But they do not enter in the surveys. Surveys only include the women (ISI).*

On the same level, they also showed surprise and astonishment at the number of murders of women seen in Spain.

*I share MOH's view. Family disintegration also plays an important part in this issue, for example, as Africans we see ourselves as very sexist, but it is really unusual to see the kind of violence we see here, killing women ... (YVO).*

A “fact”, the latter, that some African participants explained by resorting to cultural differences, among other issues, and specifically to the role of family neighbourhood and even religious leaders mediation.

*Family mediation is very important – neighbourhood mediation, because “family” structures are very important in a society. In Africa, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, which I know about, belonging to structures is really important, the family and the neighbourhood are really important. They give you guarantees. So it's really strange, as MOH has said, to see a married couple with problems managing those problems*



*alone. The family is always aware of the problem, and intervenes. If the family splits up, neighbours get involved. In the Muslim faith, even the Imam, the head of a mosque, may get involved and mediate to solve the problem... Here, in the Western world, people... you live with your girlfriend in a house, they hit each other... everyone is in their own house, people don't get involved. At least a neighbour sometimes picks up the phone and calls the police. Before the police arrive, things have happened...* (YVO).

But similarities between the views of immigrant men and women on this topic seem to end here. In fact, men's definitions of gender violence were more restrictive than women's. Their definitions, with exceptions such as the one quoted below, did not usually include behaviours like coercive control or stalking. Moreover, most of the participants were ready to add some comments to their definitions that without denying the existence of physical and psychological violence toward women presented men as the actual victims of the conflict between men and women. As it has been pointed out before, by doing so they expressed an overt hostile sexist attitude. A similar phenomenon has been pointed out by Baobaid (2000; 2006) in a series of research taking place in Yemen.

In short, although men's discourse agrees, at least in principle, with the need to promote and ensure gender equality, it tends to underline fewer scenarios of inequality than women's discourse does. Moreover, arguments for questioning equality are quickly incorporated both in a benevolent or hostile manner, as mentioned before.

## **Causes and Factors of Gender Violence**

The idea to have a detailed talk with men about causes and factors that may lead to VAW has been an almost impossible expectation of the researchers during the development of the focus groups.

When MREM men are asked about the causes of VAW it seems that the question is nonsense. In fact, the same two main and combined answers from the specific question are used by the participants in the two researched groups.

On the one hand, for these men, the problem of VAW is derived from the laws in general and from VAW laws in particular.

*Nowadays, people get married for love, and then they end up killing each other... why?... Because the problem is the law, the law in general. We need to make a small change to the law, I'm not saying we should remove the law, no... no, man, we have to do what we're talking about, to make the law really equal between men and women(CHO).*

*It is true that women are suffering gender violence, this is a reality, but I also think that there is another side of the problem... in this moment many women are making an abuse of the law in their benefit. This is also a reality (MAM).*

On the other hand, the violence of men against women is a kind of reaction created by a previous aggression (physical or psychological assaults on the part of women) or defenceless situations that make men feel cornered:

*Whenever men feel threatened, they end up killing women, because they'll lose their house, their job, they'll lose it, so where do they go? This is also maltreatment, the law, recently the law only favours women which means maltreatment for men too (JON). Why do we hear so much about what men are doing?...because women do lots too, women also maltreat men (RIC).*

Again, participants appeal to the respect and specifically to the lack of respect to explain men violent behaviour (see verbatim ANT, below).

### **Solutions: Is There Anything that We as Men Can Do to Fight VAW?**

If the discourse about causes and factors of VAW has been difficult to elicit, the discussion about its potential solutions has been even harder. When men are asked about what they can do to fight VAW, they do not answer the question or they tend to offer stereotyped answers. They come back to their references about the law, they present themselves again as victims, or they just say, men has to defend women.

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### 5.1. The Survey

The questionnaire was translated into Finnish in spring 2011 and delivered to the informants in June – October. The questionnaires were brought and gathered in person and the visits to the organizations provided valuable discussions and contacts for the research team. Some of the questionnaires were not completely filled. In some cases, the insufficient language skill explained the missing answers, but there were also questions, which seemed difficult for the respondents. Some women wrote comments on the margins, explaining why they found the questions difficult to answer. Furthermore, a couple of questions received criticism in these comments. For example, the question that juxtaposed women's circumcision and genital plastic surgery was considered insulting for the victims of genital mutilation. In this question, the amount of missing answers was 17%.

The questionnaire was distributed in 16 different organizations, which included authorities, NGOs and other types of associations in Helsinki. Only women gave responses. We received back 88 filled questionnaires. Of the 88 responses, 36 came from the public sector (authorities), 40 from NGOs, 10 from private sector and 2 from the Finnish Lutheran Church. The authorities included, for example, social workers, officials working with migrants or migration issues, policewomen and health care professionals. The NGO's were focused on such topics as, for example, helping the victims of family violence, migrant organizations and assistance for refugees. Questionnaires were also gathered in an organization, which includes vocational school of health care, support for unprivileged groups and has a high profile in the work with migrants. Given that the eastern parts of Helsinki have a relatively high percentage of migrants, it was selected as a focus area and, for example, the responses from the social and health care professionals were predominantly gathered there.

#### Description of the Sample

The majority of the respondents were Finnish citizens (86%) and were born in Finland (78%). Most of the non-Finnish people worked in migrants' NGOs while among authorities almost all of the respondents were born in Finland. As some respondents stated, the questionnaire was relatively long and it took almost half an hour to fill it. Therefore it can be assumed that the women who were will-

ing to spend that time were already interested in the topics and therefore, do not perhaps represent in all respects an “average” policewoman or a social worker.

The respondents were also relatively highly educated. 40% had a university degree even though within authorities, the majority had a vocational training, which is required, for example, for policewomen, social and health care workers. The age distribution as well as the time of working had a relatively even dispersion.

The majority of the respondents had many migrants as clients (59%) and refugee women (49%), while only a minority (17%) had many ethnic minority women among their clients. The clients’ most common countries of origin were Somalia (37.5%) and Russia (28.4%). The most common request of the migrant, refugee and ethnic minority (MREM) women was counselling and support concerning violence. However, the most difficult requests to fulfil were such practical issues as vocational guidance, professional insertion (17%) and housing (12.5%). Apparently, such structural issues complicating migrants’ life in Finland were conceived as being beyond the control of even professionals working with migrants.

The vast majority has received a request from migrant women to be attended by a woman (84%) and the professionals were very unanimous that this request should be filled. Only 1 respondent stated that such a request should be denied. However, there were also some missing answers with such comments as “depends on the request or the situation”.

The respondents also recognized the importance of understanding and respecting other cultures in their responses to the things that professionals working with migrants should have. The most common theme mentioned was training on cultural differences (38.6%). Furthermore, the second most common choice for the respondents was the support of interpreters and cultural mediators (27.3%).

## Questions on Training and Working Methods

Little over half of the respondents have received training on violence against women over the last three years. Nevertheless, those who received training were most often women with higher education and working in NGOs while the majority of the authorities did not have such training. Surprisingly, the authorities working with migration issues have received training on violence against women least.

The topics concerning violence against women and MREM women that the professionals wished they had been trained on were most often practical everyday issues, such as violence against women relating to life and work experience of MREM women. In contrast, such more theoretical issues, urban safety debates or the typologies of violence against women gathered very few mentions. About the topics concerning violence against women, family violence, which

was also considered as the most common type, was the issue most professionals wished they had been trained on. However, also issues which are somewhat newer in the Finnish context were also mentioned. The second most often mentioned topics were trafficking of women and forced prostitution, and the third was honour crimes and killings to defend the reputation of family or men. Among the topics that the professionals would like to have training on, the fourth place held institutional violence, though this topic mainly interested women working in NGOs and with a higher education.

The respondents considered cooperation among different organizations important in facing violence against women. The most common response to the question on effective patterns against it was networks of public and private actors (34%).

### **Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence**

The majority of the professionals, who answered to our survey, considered that violence against women in Finland has become more visible (66%). According to the respondents, the most important reason for this is mass media and women, who report these cases more often than in the past. The work of institutions was also considered significant. Interestingly, the role of NGOs was considered more important by the officials than by women working in these premises. Politicians were least credited in making the violence against women visible and especially the effort of male politicians was seen as significant by very few professionals.

The opinions in the question whether violence against women has increased in Finland or not were divided, but the majority thought that it has increased. Women who answered to this survey were well aware that the person who most frequently commits violence against women was the women's partner or other person close to them. Only 7% argued that the most common violator was a stranger.

The question on the most typical case of violence against women turned out to be difficult to interpret, because of the inaccurate instructions of the questionnaire. While some of the respondents seem to understand it as referring to the relative percentage between different groups, others were thinking about the number of cases. Nevertheless, many respondents obviously wished to discredit the idea of MREM people as more violent than Finns. The commonest type of violence in intercultural context was mentioned "native man against native woman". The second most common type was migrant man against migrant woman".

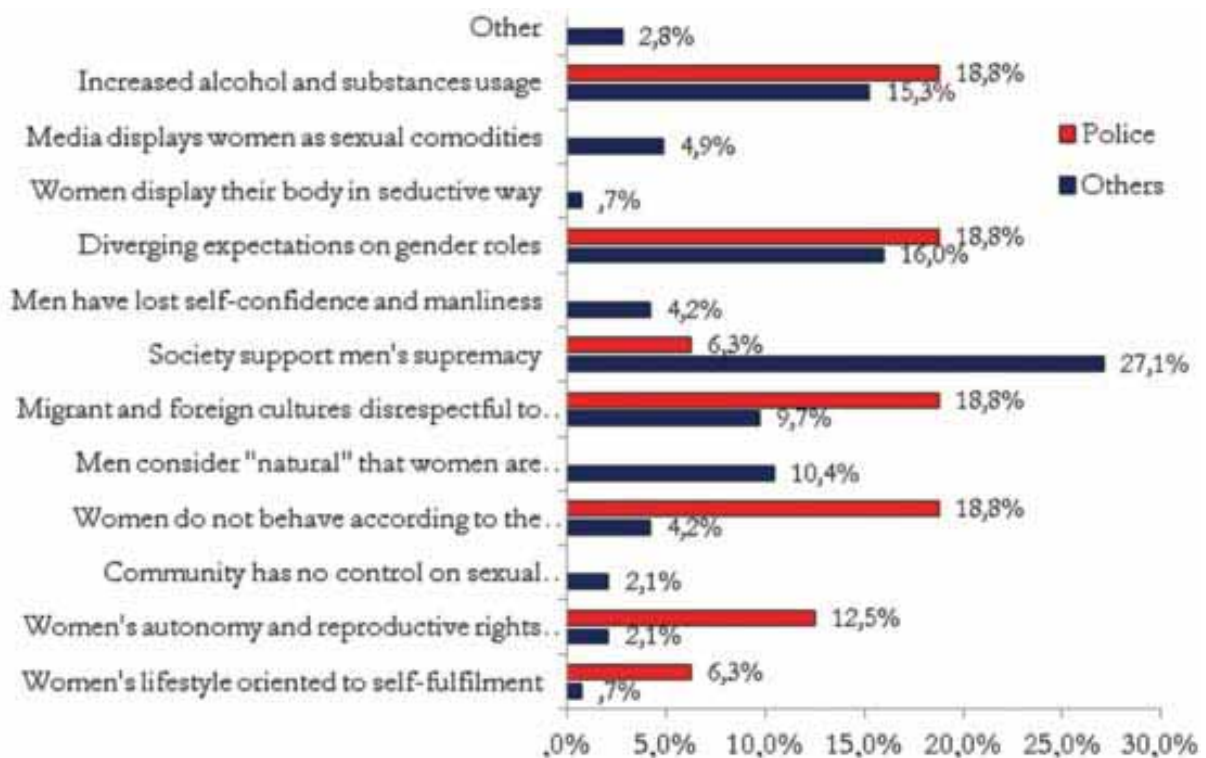
Though domestic violence was considered to be the most typical type of violence against women, the fact that physical and psychological violence are interconnected was also brought up in psychological violence among the three most widespread types and situations regarding violence against women. How-

ever, the most typical forms of violence against women were not necessarily considered as the most dangerous ones for the whole society. Institutional violence was seldom mentioned among the three most typical type of violence against women (1.2%), but it was considerably more often considered to be the most dangerous one (10.2%). Interestingly, it was mentioned as such by both the women working in NGOs and by the authorities. Though in general the age of the respondents made very little impact in the survey, in this question the institutional violence was mentioned most often by younger women, born after 1980. Also the marginalization of women in decision making places was chosen as the most dangerous type of violence against women relatively often (11.4%).

Within the answers to the question on what explains violence against women best, feminist position of many of the professionals, who answered to this survey became evident. The most common response was that the “society supports men’s superiority” (30.7%). The opinion was shared both within women working in NGOs and by the authorities, though the policewomen selected that explanation not as frequently (6.3%) compared to others. In several questions policewomen held feminist values less often than other respondents. They were also more often critical of other cultures.

The question about what type of women are most at risk of gender violence received several angry comments from women who considered it as putting the blame on women who have suffered violence. However, the most common re-

Figure 7: Explanation of VAW



sponse was “women who are psychologically dependent on their partners (44.3%). In describing men who commit violence, predisposition to the patterns of violent behaviour was seen as a crucial factor. The most common characterizations were “man being predisposed to violent behaviour” (29,5%) and “man, who suffered violence in childhood” (20.5%). This kind of reasons, which referred to people’s environment, were much more present than descriptions of personal characteristics or the men’s vision of the world.

Most of the respondents did not think that all women are at risk of violence irrespective of their social and cultural differences (70.5%). Even though statistics clearly show that women are much more often the victims of intimate violence than men, 41% of the respondents agreed that men and women are at the same risk of suffering for their partner’s violence. The answers may reflect the impact of the so called “men’s movement”, which has vociferously criticized the study of gendered violence in recent years. These critics have argued that the discussion of violence against women has belittled the amount of the male victims of family violence or that in these discussions the verbal forms of violence used by women should be taken into account. A group, which most often disagreed with the statement, was policewomen. Undoubtedly, the reason for this can be found in their profession and the fact that in their work policewomen mainly deal with cases of physical violence.

Liberal values were predominant within the women who filled in the questionnaire and, for example, a vast majority considered the lack of contraceptives (89.8%) and the lack of legal abortion (85.3%) to be a form of social violence. Much less understanding the respondents showed to such features of other cultures as, for example, arranged marriages. 78.4% agreed that arranged marriages is a form of social violence even if the women would agree with it. However, even though many were critical of such practices within minority cultures, they also shared a conviction that the state should be active in guaranteeing equal rights to all women despite their cultural background. The majority opposed the prohibitions of veiling and considered such prohibitions (71.6%) and the prohibition of burqa (61.4%) as a form of social violence. 65.9% of the respondents agreed that having a separate swimming pool could be approved for cultural rights and women’s privacy.

The attitudes toward LGBT minorities were quite liberal. The majority (82.9%) considered prohibiting same sex marriages as a form of social violence and disagreed that gay and lesbian couples entails more risk of intimate violence than heterosexual couples (62.5%). The respondents held very similar views in these questions despite their age or country of origin.

Also, many professionals did not seem to admit that in the Finnish society migrant women are often in a disadvantaged position. Alarmingly, this was especially common within authorities working with migrants or refugees. Of the women working in MREM organizations, 12 agreed that MREM women experience harassment and violence in workplaces more often than native women and

Figure 8: Types of organization

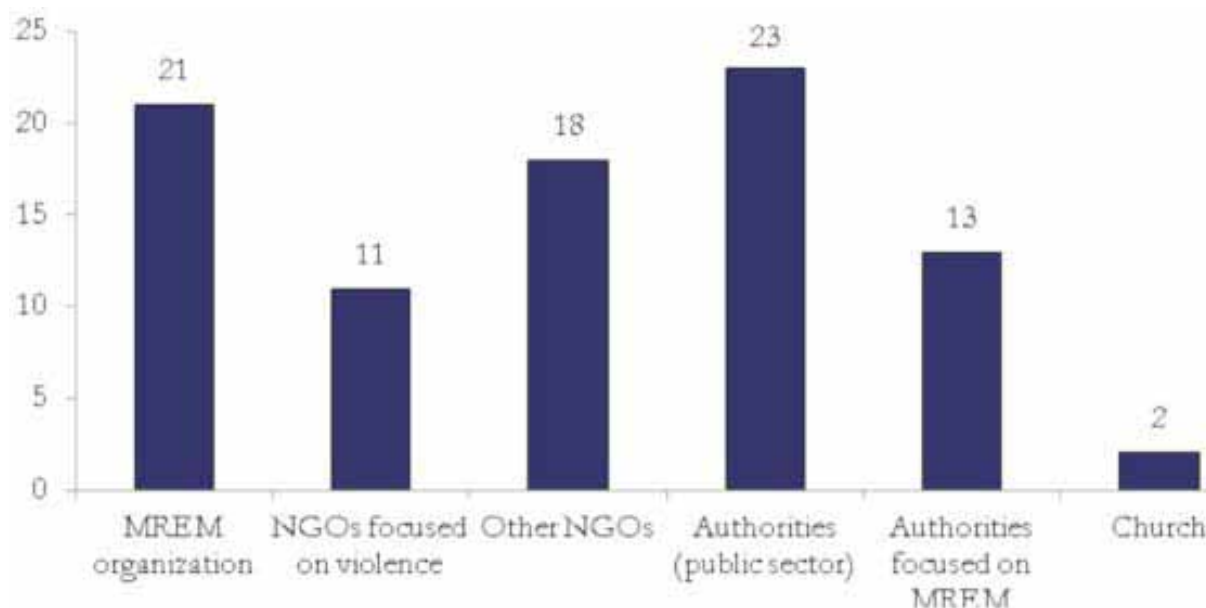
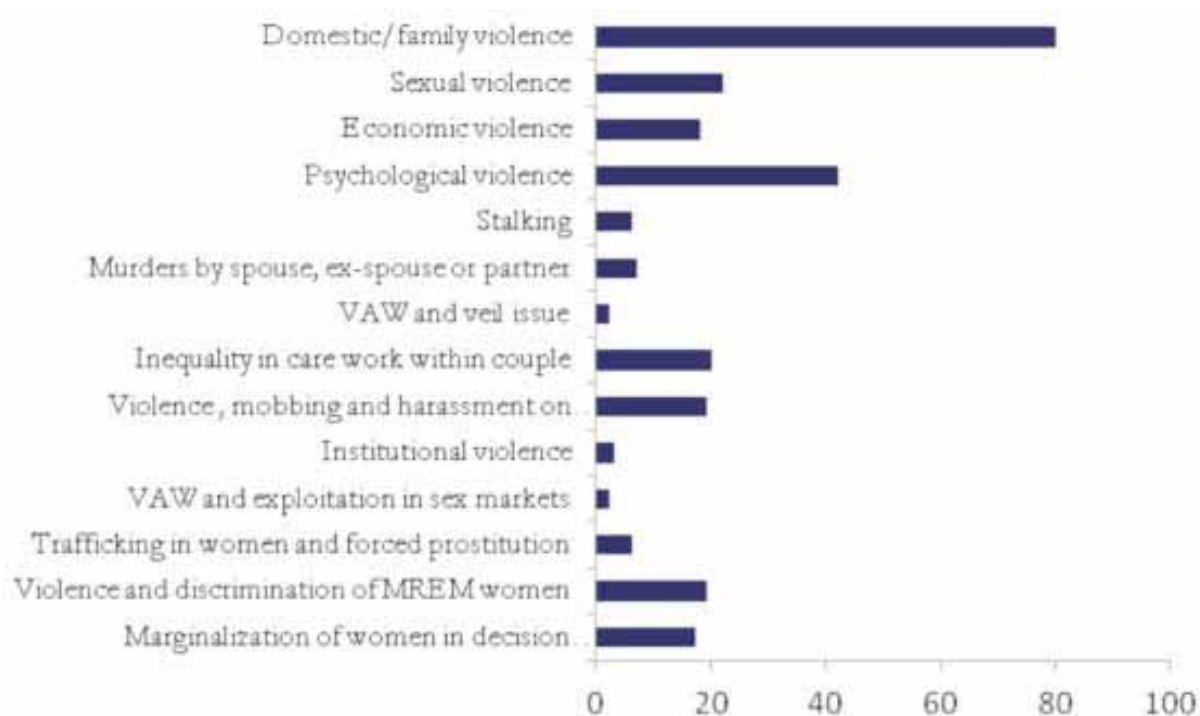


Figure 9: The most widespread types and situations relating to violence against women



only 3 disagreed, the respective numbers within authorities, focused on MREM were 6 and 7. Authorities in general were also less inclined to agree that MREM women are more vulnerable to violence against women because of their legal status and administrative rules if compared to women who are working in NGOs.



Honour and chastity as important values, especially linked to women, were seen rather negatively. The majority agreed that the social relevance of honour entails the risk of violence against women (69.3%) and that linking honour as a value to women's life and sexuality is contrary to gender equality (88.6%). Only a minority believed that the defence of women's honour and chastity could prevent violence against women (12.5%).

The suspicious attitude towards some cultures became again evident in the questions on honour killings. The majority argued that in Finland honour killing concern only migrant Muslim women (55.7%) and only a majority considered the term "honour killing" to be a label that is used to discriminate some migrant minority groups (60.2%).

Very few respondents (6.8%) agreed with the statement: "when being a personal choice, prostitution is a social need that defends family". In general, prostitution received very little understanding and was seen very critically. Its prohibition was not considered to be a form of social violence (75%) and it was not believed that prostitution as a personal choice could be empowering to women (79.5%). The respondents were unanimous that poverty is the main reason that leads women to prostitution (92.1%).

The most important principle of action and policies to end violence against women was considered to be equal dignity for women and men (28.4%). Much less support received such conservative explanations as "the capacity of acting with any overpower in a relationship" (3.4%) or "reciprocal respect acting in two different social roles" (4.5%).

## 5.2. The Focus Groups

### **The Selection of the Participants: Group Formation and Composition**

The participants of the six focus groups were professionals, i.e. specialist and activists and were selected from relevant organisations and institutions both in the service producing sector and the public sector, and, moreover, women from migrant, refugee, and national minority groups: Russian, Somali and Roma women. They represented the main minority groups among the Finnish residents, also in the sense that they are badly exposed to exclusion and violence, according to the Ombudsman's (2011) and EU-Midis report (2009). The women involved were in their 20s-50s.

The meetings, held between September – November 2011 and March 2012, were arranged at the Aleksanteri Institute; coffee, sandwiches and fruits were served. The discussions lasted two-three hours; they were taped and transcribed; the length of the transcripts was 119 pages.

The discussions were moderated by the project personnel Dr Aino Saarinen and Dr Kaarina Aitamurto; the team was completed by Dr Airi Markkanen, a majority woman herself, who worked in the field among Roma women for twen-

Table 12: Focus groups in Finland

Focus group	Who	Number, origin of participants	Interviewers (interview language)
First focus group 9.7. 2011	Women professionals: native and migrant origin, NGOs	3 (2 of migrant origin, 1 of Finnish majority)	2 researchers (Finnish)
Second focus group 10.26. 2011	Roma women professionals: NGOs	2 (2 of Finnish Roma minority)	1 researcher, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Third focus group 10.7. 2011	Roma women	3 (3 of Finnish Roma minority)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Fourth focus group 11.2. 2011	Russian women	2 (1 returnee, 1 migrant)	2 researchers (Finnish, occasionally Russian)
Fifth focus group 3.6. 2012	Somali woman	1 (refugee)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish)
Sixth focus group 11.2. 2011	Mixed group: minority and majority professionals, activists	3 (1 migrant, 1 Finnish Roma minority, 1 Finnish majority)	2 researchers, 1 Roma specialist (Finnish – a few words in English)

ty years (now among travelling EU Roma). The team was older than the interviewed women i.e. in their 40s-60s. Thanks to the mediator, convening with Roma did not take extra efforts. However, the formation of other groups proved difficult. As to Somali women, a women scholar active among Somalis since 1990s managed not to mobilise them, even after several tries; finally, three young women were supposed to attend the session but two stood at the very back in the last minute; altogether only one participated. As to Russians women, irrespective of a group insider person's effort and the researchers' long-term contacts to this major minority group (of relevance to the Institute's focus on Eastern Europe) only two interviewees attended. In sum, it was useful to attend the action part organised by the Monika Association: involvement of women from Somalia and other sub-Saharan Africa countries and Russia made views more multi-faceted (this will be analysed in research reports). (See also the report by Jekaterina Tantt).

### Recruitment, Ethical Problems and Methodology

The call for attending a focus group was sent with an attachment on the rights of the interviewees regarding anonymity and confidentiality – excluding the Roma who according to our mediator would have been “alarmed” by this official approach. The permission to record and transcribe the tape was asked in each group. At first, we presented (anew) the project and mentioned the stake-holder

seminar to make the participants included to the process and able to follow its results. Also, we promised to send the summary report to them, as to all the participants to the survey. Some interviewees (Roma especially) asked more or less directly for some compensation; this was due to the fact that (as mentioned) the information letter had not been sent to Roma. Also, we emphasised the fact that we approach them as representing their communities. Quite often however the interviewees took up experiences in their own life; evidently, the decision to attend the group was taken to mediate experiences of discrimination and exposure to violence. Anonymity and confidentiality was a concern for many interviewees (except in the group of professionals).

The discussions were carried out along the pre-formulated theme interview form, which was modified a little at every occasion. The themes dealt with both problems and solutions but they were not direct replies to the survey results but more like open questions – on attitudes of the majority; situation of various vulnerable groups (e.g. marriage migrants, refugees); integration, networking *versus* isolation; the most flagrant and the most difficult form of violence to recognise; institutional violence; negative views on migrant/minority men. Lastly, we asked an open question: what is it that we did not cover but you think should be discussed? We tried to make sure that all of them had their space; in the end, this varied especially with the Roma group.

### **Focus Group with Professionals**

The three interviewees came from NGOs working with all migrant women, refugee women, and travelling Roma and undocumented people. Two of them were originally from abroad (Estonia, Romania), and they both were married with a Finn now. The discussion proceeded very much on interviewees' conditions, and quite often they "corrected" our formulations and emphasised their own expertise. All of them were committed, meaning they were activists, with 5-20 years' experience of work.

Discussion focused in particular on institutional violence, seen from the perspectives of NGOs. The interviewees stressed the limitations of their possibilities and powers and criticised the public control and service system, especially the practices of refugee reception from the institutions: they are not really interested on recognising violence in the country of arrival or at least not doing much or enough. Often women get only *panadoolia* i.e. painkillers during the overdue application process. Formally everything is in order but human rights are not respected as a matter of fact.

*It would be possible to make another interpretation but in general it is the most extreme (negative) one. (...) I just talked about raped women-asylum seekers. (Raping) seems not to be any ground to be taken into consideration. Authorities see it like "they all have been raped, all have been exposed to raping", so that is not anything special*

(gives a laugh). *Something cynical in minds of authorities, decision-makers, they do not see those women as individuals.*

NGOs feel mostly helpless: the gap between incomers' needs and their resources is too wide, and they are not capable of developing their services. It is about the priorities. Women's networks have tried to contact the minister of finance but the response was that there is "no time". "Men sit on money". The best way of helping women was living isolated, in vast and peripheral areas, and training the personnel dealing with basic services, kindergarten, school, dentist. Having a rotating social worker trained on VAW could work but for now NGOs must make a choice.

*It is really important that we think how we reach out to those ... who do not dare, who do not know about their rights and opportunities. But I see it as a big thing that we cannot help even those who seek for help. That there are no such structures, no money, no enough of shelters. Authorities do not want to help, do not want to see, do not want to interfere, and the structures are so heavy, procedures so incredibly long, restraining order so formal. The victim herself is responsible for her own safety. (...) I see that we have to help those who cry for help (first).*

Marriage among migrants and family reunion are cases themselves. Critique turned to group-internal problems. NGOs have to confront the important issues on all agendas, in media and social media, in politics – thanks to "migration-critics": arranged and/or forced marriages. Arranged marriages seem common (or not an exception), and the worst is that women function as "travel tickets". Occasionally, the motivation for bringing a young woman from the country of origin is to guarantee her "purity". Intervention is not as simple as it may seem but it would be immoral not to intervene: women have the right to know about local legislation and practices. Moreover, majority people are often involved as well. Wives are brought to the "middle of nowhere", there is no common language, only body language. Maybe economic self-interests are at stake as gendered age-related asymmetries are not rare. There are fake marriages between a Finnish woman and a foreign man, e.g. an asylum seeker, and many times the woman is much older than the man:

*But if it is the other way round, no worry! A man in his 60s and a Thai woman in her 20s ... that's nothing.*

As to travelling EU Roma, they are no asylum seekers nor marriage migrants but "tourists". Therefore, even a local emergency service can turn them away. The unit for medical and social help works in conjunction with the Deaconess Institute for the most minimal public and NGO funding. Half of these "beggars" – harassed on the streets – are women, often transnational mothers. Sexu-

al and reproductive information, advice and help should therefore be a priority. However, the decision on contraception can belong to the whole family i.e. the husband and the head of the extended family. As belonging to the community is vital, women cannot risk being excluded. Also, professionals must often deal with false “knowledge” of sexual health and contraception in particular. For instance, “from the coil, you get cancer”. Self-evidently, being on pills is difficult when travelling. Not to mention the sexual double standard. The special problem is that spoken knowledge is the main and best relied source of information.

## Focus Group with Roma Professionals

The interview was made together with the mediator. The participants, in their 40s, who had links to various Roma associations, worked on a social empowerment project. They were talkative but mentioned many times how the issues of their work are sensitive.

Of interest was the special “way of learning” that should be a starting point in all development work:

*The history of Roma is absolutely different, Roma’s way of learning is different, the way how they learn is different, how they provide and use information and knowledge, that is so different as compared to the majority population. It is a culture where interaction and oral knowledge has such a great significance. Moreover, there are the taboos that give a different sense to gestures and movements, the habitus and taking one’s space. The majority people do not detect it. (We ourselves) are in-between the clients and the staff, we speak to both, on two channels simultaneously.*

They did not want to make a distinction between majority and minority cultures. The Finnish culture too is violent but the Roma culture conceals violence, especially in close relationships. The hinder for seeking help from outside is linked to lack of trust in the authorities due to long-lasting violence against Roma, for both men and women.

*We’ve always been in our own gang, which has solved the problems, endured and suffered. Physical discipline is to a great extent part of hard life. To get help from outside is only coming now. Spanking has been a way to put the children in order. We do not have the same concept of violence as the majority. The issue has been raised up only lately.*

There are different “gangs” in different localities but as to the “Roma law”, the strict moral rules and “avoidance behaviour”, it is still a living practice which obliges everyone, and it is a special problem for women as the victim is considered guilty: the woman “provokes” violence with her own behaviour.

*The (Roma) law does not condemn rape, it does not condemn incest, suffering of the woman, the woman deserves it. This incomprehensible hierarchy is being protected where the woman has no place. (...) Think through how you were dressed up, did you go walking there, did you aggravate the man, why did you not say to the man "now peace".*

The interviewees emphasised how difficult it is to define what constitutes gender violence. The majority culture now knows that leaving women without money is economic violence, not the Roma culture, where it will take the "next twenty years to realise this". The same applies to the powers of the family, the community as a whole over the woman. It can be seen as violence over an individual. And "hello, what is mental violence?"

Bringing in human rights does not work although there are many of the Roma who want to make changes. The interviewees themselves questioned the demand for body-related and symbolic purity as it goes: women in their kitchens, cooking and doing laundry must follow these rules in detail.

The gendered division of tasks and the hierarchy exists in all ways. The woman is responsible for the whole network, her own family and the husband's family while the man is responsible for the livelihood, the daily bread. The age is of importance but not in the same way as in many other parts of Europe. Adolescent Roma girls "do not have a childhood" but on the other hand they do not marry so early thanks to the school and the parents who go to get the girl back from the partner if she is very young, like 15. Also, they do not take care of younger siblings as in the old times, when Roma were "on the road". A change related to sexual double morality has taken place: being a virgin is not (so) important anymore. Later, however, sexual double morality comes into the picture.

*A woman cannot leave in the same way as the man, with someone else. She is worse and deserves being punished, she has spoiled the reputation of the husband and the family, the children and all. That banking that happened in earlier times was really hard. When the woman has been "adulterous" her hair might have been cut, even if she has only met another man or only spoken to him on the phone. At worst this included cutting the hair. That happens extremely rarely today. This should not be spoken of.*

But women are exposed also to violence between families. Many times the woman has to flee. "She like the children has to be responsible for the vendetta between extended families, move away, cut all friendships, as obliged to give way, not able to choose where you move." In this isolation there might be no one to turn to for help against intimate violence.

The communality pushes aside individuality, all human rights, and rebellion leads to exclusion. But disciplining girls and women takes place also in public spaces, even from both directions. A Roma girl does not walk through special places with drunkards and drug addicts because she can be forced to criminal actions. In addition, all Roma confront discrimination and harassment by the ma-

jority in shops, restaurants: they are denied access, treated as thieves – the guards and shop assistants follow at every step. Roma women in particular are one of the “visible minorities” not only for their dark skin colour but as they wear the traditional the long velvet skirt, colourful blouse and jewels. Men are exposed to violence in public spaces but they are not as easy to recognise by their clothing. Surprisingly, the appearance of Somali women has not made Roma women’s life easier in this respect.

If life goes very wrong, motherhood in prison is part of it. The interviewees have met the fifth generation of women there. How to arrange care of children is a problem. Small children can stay with the mother, for older ones she has to find care outside, with a relative maybe, or in an institution.

The interviewees criticise the Finnish society for not protecting women properly. The shelters do not give space to Roma culture, and there is no shelter which would be totally in hiding. The health system is as bad as it does not recognise symptoms of exposure to violence – headaches, migraines, depression. Staying one week in shelter, psychiatric hospital, and on medication does not help.

As to silence, another public already exists, probably among younger people in particular. On the internet many taboos between genders and generations are now discussed.

### **Focus Group with Roma**

The three participants were young, around 20s and 30s; two were single, one was married with children; “ordinary” women had links to religious Roma organisations. Everyone was wearing in the traditional clothes. Worth a mention is that in the Roma culture the age and generation matters: respect for elderly people is essential, and many taboo issues can be discussed only in a peer age and gender group. It may be that the composition of the interviewer group mattered too as we were of different generations. Throughout the discussion, the two younger ones echoed the older one. These interviewees did not themselves take up sensitive problems and issues first. The replies to our questions were often so selective and indirect that our cultural mediator tried to encourage them with comments that were like pieces of conversation from some earlier confidential discussions. Everyone was worried of anonymity.

The issue of identity was however taken up by the interviewees themselves, and with pride, in two respects: they were no immigrants but born Finnish citizens; on the other hand, as Roma women, their reference group was the Roma community, even in the first place. Changes have been happening, e.g. as to education, but there is something that is unaltered – the asymmetrical gender difference:

*Yes, there are similar issues [in our culture] they are such sensitive issues, many do not want to reply... everyone keeps them inside themselves. Maybe they are not capable of making a difference between what is right or wrong. (...) In our culture a woman is not*

*equal to a man, we do not have equality... we respect a man more than a woman. It is normal and not a bad thing. (...) It has to do with honour... and with that we are all religious people. It is said in the bible already that the man is the head of the household but in healthy way. It is important to make a difference between "healthy" and "non-healthy"... Someone may say that... why you respect the man and do not demand your own rights. (The younger ones: we clean the house that is our honour).*

Evidently, the most dangerous phase is indeed separation from a violent man. It may be that staying together is an easier option although living a life together with the children alone would be best. The women were conscious of hazards, long-term harassment and even a loss of life. In this occasion, the interviewees became even poetic – it was like talking about physical violence by only hinting to what happened: «*Someone who does not accept (the wife leaving) can even till his last breath of life fold her up ... it is an obsession*». The gendered asymmetry of rights and responsibilities – dealing with shame and honour, the concepts that became often mentioned – centred also round sexuality: men are free to come and go, and leave, but women must be tolerant and faithful, and living with a new man is a “big issue”.

As to violation of rights from the side of the majority and its institutions, the interviewees were aware of discrimination, typical experiences to Roma all over; “racism” was a concept they used often. They were familiar with harassment in public spaces – not only shops but also in restaurants which they themselves can access, to sing karaoke, if and when they know how to “behave” i.e. respect the Roma codes for behaviour. They attract negative attention and acts from the majority, from other customers and doorkeepers; the consequence of being recognised as Roma is to be perceived as potential thieves and troublemakers. They know that this discrimination is against the constitution, even considering that the dress is their “national dress” – and that denying access on this basis is an “insult”; it would be as if the Sami people would be exposed to a similar ban.

The problems caused by clothing cannot be avoided in vocational education and work life. Clothes do have a major effect on Roma women’s opportunities throughout life. Thanks to residence-based rights, Roma go to school more permanently than before 1970s when being on the road as young women, the school might become a painful experience. In the last years of the secondary school, they come to an age when they have to choose whether to wear the traditional clothes or not. Our interviewees had made this choice at the age of 16-18 and stated that the choice is a female symbol of Roma values and identity, commitment to “respectability”. In case you later undo it, you will be excluded from the community. To the question if it was possible to leave those clothes for work or school hours, our interviewees unanimously replied: “We do not even want!”. Once they had tried a more ordinary long skirt: it was like going “naked”.

The interviewees had experienced exclusion and lack of opportunities at work too: the skirt cannot be used when working in (public) kitchen or in hospi-



tal, out in the woods with children. But this is all “so commonplace” that they do not even discuss it with other women. In any case they know that the authorities have been educated on how to treat Roma, there is even a guidebook for that.

The relationship towards the other major visible minority, the Somalis, was of interest. Among Roma women, they can say after seeing a TV programme “Did you see it? Horrible!” and refer to what Roma women would probably call genital mutilation if anything. They “pity” Somali women, especially women that show “only the eyes” and who cannot “go out after six o’ clock”. But it also came out that, from their perspective, Somalis made use of social benefits – the same accusations which have been used against Roma themselves. As to travelling Roma, their fate is “pitiful”. Women know about their economic difficulties and harassment on the streets, here and back there.

Thanks to the Roma mission association they came to know about shelters and felt that they can ask for advice there. However, while leaving they asked once again about the shelter with a secret address.

### Focus Group with Russians

The two participants were in their 40s-50s, one of them had arrived as a returnee; they were married to a Finn and a Russian. The discussion was carried out in Finnish; occasionally, mediation in Russian was necessary. In this focus group we gave a lot of information on the state of affairs in Finland. The theme outline did not work well in this group as they had come on a “mission”.

They started immediately to talk about a Russian acquaintance of theirs who is serving a 2.5 years sentence for physical violence against her Russian wife. Critique on institutional violence concerned both the authorities and NGOs, from reporting the crime to final sentence – fatal because it is connected with a permission to stay in the country. The xx association has done a lot to send him to prison and all in all, the constellation had been a “good woman” and a “bad man”; the “good woman” i.e. the “victim” must be saved.

*He has married to a Russian woman who was younger and brought that woman to Finland. They lived together one year, and he wanted to separate but the woman did not want to go back to Russia. And then she went to the xx association to tell that she had been exposed to violence, she had a few bruises. She went to see a doctor to get a proof. But that woman had a lover, she moved to him. I don't know who had advised her. After a year then she remembered that she had been raped a year ago (gives a laugh). And that she had to report an offence. He says that nothing happened ... and he has to leave Finland but that women, she can stay here, she is the victim.*

Both emphasise that men are in the margins, “nobody asks them”. The interviewees do not know about work with men (and seem no interested in it). They continue to say that the language is a manifold problem. Often, a woman has

learnt the local language and the man has not. In general, women are good at speaking, presenting their case, and often they are guilty of verbal violence that “provokes” physical violence in men. This leads them to criticise not only the shelters but the police and the court too. Interpreters too might take the woman’s side.

*Interpretation ... has to do with such small psychological details. If a Finnish woman speaks Finnish well and is self-confident, and speaks with temperament, and if the man is such who speaks bad Finnish and cannot defend himself... Everybody believes her, takes her side, and the man for his part (laugh) is difficult to believe in. (...) Every-one believes that he is violent and (then) he is not allowed to see the children.*

Another theme of the discussion was the heated debate that is all over for the news now: in Russia, Finnish practices are often seen as institutional violence against Russian-born families; media too is to blame. The interviewees brought to the agenda break-up of the family, right to custody, visiting rights – and the practices of the authorities. Sometimes the children have been taken to custody, or the father has lost the visiting rights because he is violent, according to the wife; now the children are old enough to say that they do not want to see the father anymore. The interviewees seem a little unsure of the usefulness of joint custody. In any case, *«separation is the last step, instead the partners ought to try and try to make the partnership work»*. The concepts concerning violence in its different forms seemed not clear: verbal, physical violence and harassment.

One more theme was the interviewees’ work with youth, both in multi-cultural and Russian settings. Exposure to cultural harassment on the streets for being Russian and therefore potential prostitutes had not happened to them personally (if not once on a ship to Tallinn). Also, they did not avoid speaking Russian in public spaces. Media has to be blamed. Soon the interviewees turned to their work with girls and young women: heavy make-up relates to a weak self-confidence. Lastly, the question on the other immigrant groups exposed to discrimination was posed by the interviewers. They were not eager to discuss Somali women but took up their experiences in youth work with young Somali men, very likeable. They both stress a need to understand that integration is a two-sided process, where one has to leave aside prejudice.

As an answer to the open question they returned to the problems relating to men’s fate.

### **Focus Group with a Somali Woman**

In March 2012, finally, three Somali women were supposed to come to the interview, but only one came, a young woman in her early 30s, speaking good Finnish. She talked widely about VAW. On the other hand, the two researchers and the Roman mediator did not direct the discussion. It lasted nearly three hours. The

interviewee's language was colourful, full of slang words of young people; it was ironic that she was using terms that label and degrade Muslims, Somalis, and refugees; racism came up all the time. She herself seemed to be navigating between the majority and minority cultures, torn with dual loyalties. Much of this behaviour was mirrored by her clothes, the scarf, and sexual self-determination.

Since the interviewee had arrived as a child, she had a lot to say about violence in schools. Occasionally, she had to defend her younger brother from racist violence. Even teachers participated in bullying. Comments on Somalis not willing to work came also from teachers. «*Such talk, direct to my face, standing next to me*». She decided that «*this nigger will succeed*».

*I went to give a lecture in my old school that I have found my place here. It was nice to see the faces of young people... that I have succeeded, that I work in a laboratory. There were a few Somali girls there, who looked proud. That if she has been successful so can we too.*

Not all were like this. A few wonderful teachers saved her but in the end she had to leave high school before graduating. She is certain that in Somalia she would have become, maybe, a doctor.

Problems regarding media came up all the time. Every Somali is responsible for everybody else's doings. "It is not easy to be a Somali here", this is a "racist country". She became "paranoid", was "on guard all the time". And the success of the (populist) True Finn party made everything worse. The "pigment of the skin" and the religion do make a difference. "They [some majority people] call me a nigger, and I think I'm proud, what do you say about that." Calling by names is of course gendered. A "nigger whore" is luckily not heard so often anymore.

But there are big problems in the Somali community too, obsessed with religion. Pressures are stronger when growing up as everyone has to be a good Muslim. Wearing the scarf – or not – can be difficult for girls in their late teens. They are guarded by the community, and even little Somali boys can attack them for not wearing the scarf at school, call them "whores". Later, brothers – quite free themselves – can do guarding. This is why girls choose to go to bars where there are no black men. In a bitter tone, «*women should not go to bars, women must stay at home wearing the scarfs*». Not all cope with this.

*Many run away from the family and started living alone, their own life, and court some Finnish man. It has happened that the parents have suggested a summer holiday in Somalia and then the girls have disappeared. (...) I disapprove those families. I absolutely not want to loyal to a community that treats an individual in such a cruel way. (...) That deserting. (...) Plus that you have learned to live here, you lose that right. (...) These are quite common (stories).*

All girls should have the right to make their own choices, including clothing. For her own part she has taken a halfway as she uses it in a knot, backwards, not as tied below the chin. But this does not feel right when being among Somalis. And she does not wear it among her Finnish friends as she would not be accepted. At the same time, she feels herself uneasy when seeing somebody in a “ni-quab”.

*It is a statement that you do not want anything from the world and that you save yourself to a life hereafter. Luckily it is not so common in Finland. I too have been startled when I have seen some of these women, and they had to say to me “salam aleikum”, that is, “peace on you”. Then I just reply to it. But I have noticed that I too disapprove. Why? Because I’m afraid that bad things is said about them.*

She feels that for them it would be impossible to get a job but live on social security. She did not herself wear the scarf when she went to the job interviews. At work she has noticed that some do not like “dark pigment” and/or Muslim religion but can be friendly. She had some innocent flirt with one true Finn guy. She is an active trade-unionist, even in a trusted position, but there she has to confront discrimination. On the other hand, one trade union top leader has welcomed her.

When comparing life here and back there, women have more freedoms in Finland than in Somalia as in Finland gender relationships are not as much male-dominated. The welfare system protects you from economic violence.

*There is a saying: in Somalia you are under the foot of a man but in Europe Allah is merciful, here you can get social benefits, you do not need the man. Men are like astonished, that power has been removed from them. Because there (in Somalia) they earn the living and you have to be the obedient wife as men can take another wife whenever they want.*

The issue of rape in warfare was raised by the interviewers. Yes, “something horrible” had happened in Mogadishu but mothers hit the daughters for asking about such “dirty things. “It was terribly shameful.” To the question what is the most horrible experience, the interviewee replied without hesitation but she chose the term that is used in her community.

*Yes, that circumcision, there it is. Because it is about the human being’s integrity and it harms you also in the longer run. There is talk about it but not enough in my opinion. I feel that even today people in our culture, the Somali culture do not understand that the individual is free... that the community does not own you. But luckily it is not done here in Finland but I cannot trust on it. I’m pretty certain that there those girls are taken ... (Most difficult to recognise?) But the most difficult to recognise it is maybe domestic violence because in our midst we do not talk about it.*

She tells also about a group-internal practice at divorce and other disputes. Her mother is one of mediators (consolidators) in their clan. She talks to the wife to find out what happened. But not many women want to talk about the fact that their husbands beat here. We have such sayings as “if a man hits you there must be a reason for it.”

*For us the shame is most important of all. I think that admit that it is difficult now and I go the shelter. There is much talk about it if somebody has gone to the shelter (little laugh). It is a quite shameful thing. It is talked here and there, pondered upon, what are the motives.*

Polygamy hurts women, they can become badly depressed. The Khoran is on men’s side, the prophet Mohamed is used to suppress them.

*Actually Somali women can be so depressed that that it is thought that there is a devil inside them. (...) The woman goes to a dark corner to sit alone, maybe talk to her-self. And some-one comes there and says that there is a devil inside her and one should read the Khoran (Quaran) to her. Then it can be some religious sisters who visit you, who have long black robs, they remind you of that a man has the right to take many wives... that Mohamed’s wife agreed to this. This is a most violent custom in my view because it is an insult.*

As to the question on sexual practices, “the angels damn you” for denying sex and not to have more children. Again, there should be women interpreting the Khoran in another way. Women are now modern, work and do not want so many children, and it should be the women’s own decision as they are the ones who give birth. Finland is an ok country, here you can realise yourself in spite of being a woman. On the other hand, even here women have to stay virgins till marriage, and some have anal sex even if there is a HIV-risk, so it is unsafe in her opinion. Prostitution in Somalia is widespread and according to women it is due poverty.

As to the open question, in the interviewee’s mind all was said already.

### **Focus Group with Mixed Participants**

The Asian participant from a trade union (after seeing the survey form) did not appear. The three women who did, represented migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Roma and the authorities i.e. the police; their age was between 30s-40s and 50s; two were divorced with children, one married and expecting. The African interviewee arrived with the husband but had lived alone for the past 15 years; she had worked for long at a public centre and was responsible for activities with migrant women; the minority woman was an artist with academic examination. The policewoman had ten years’ experience at a unit specialised in

violence in close relationships. The interviewers were both researchers and the mediator.

The discussion started from the basics: how to define gender violence? The migrant brought up her own experiences from the African home country and other Western countries – and also from work here, including responsibility for work with women and collaboration with the police. The Roma woman spoke from inside her cultural community but not personally; the police woman pondered upon policing and migration and her own position as a woman in the male working community.

A migrant woman who stayed in shelter pointed to the fact that a woman can be the violator as well, because she met men who were victims of violence at home. According to the police woman, one cannot close the eyes from this kind of violence. But the threshold for calling the police by a neighbour is high when it is about a man's exposal. And very few men come to the police station themselves. The migrant continues by claiming that NGOs leave men aside, break up the family. This does not work in African cultures. According to her experience, Asian women too understand violence in their own way. All in all, the man needs to feel like he is one who "brings the bread to the table", and Eastern European models should not be applied everywhere. Another problem is the sexualisation of African men, treating them as nothing else as physical and sexual beings. "That brings the man down".

She takes up, from another angle, institutional violence or incapacity of the police to deal with Nigerian prostitutes. In encounters between white police men and black prostitutes, the colour of the skin and even colonial history are relevant. The police woman agrees but emphasises that at the moment there are very few of those who have been trained and are not Finnish by birth. *«As to the criteria, you have to be a Finnish citizen but not a born Finn... (but) mastering Finnish language is stressed».*

The Roman participant has concerns about culturally specific rules that permit both beating women and children and violence between men themselves – is that gender violence too? The worst is physical violence against women and children, and women's fate. If there is a conflict between a man and a woman, the woman is "badly off". Even if the man has beaten the woman without any reason, a woman cannot attack the man, in her culture. To a question on contacting the police or a social worker, or going to a shelter, she says that that it depends.

*(It is possible only if) the life of the woman is according to a witness and clearly in danger... or if she is in hospital in intensive care... or her hair has been cut or something. Then normally her parents defend their child (...) let her to go to a shelter. But if it is about a milder violence then that you contact the police then this is bad publicity to the woman.*

The dangers regarding the separation and divorce were shared by all. The migrant tells about visits of the police (called by neighbours) and escapes to a shelter which became “like a home“. In one occasion, the husband contacted her boss to put an end to her economic independence – told how he loves the wife and only wants to keep the family together but the female boss refused to fire her. The husband’s brother was involved too, to help him sending her back to Nigeria where she would be totally isolated. In the end, she dropped charges herself as without a stay permit of her own she would have been in serious difficulties. The situation was life-threatening, dangerous also to her parents back there.

The police woman tells about the police’s role in legal procedure. It is common that at some point women wish that the charge would not be taken further to avoid making the situation worse. The recent law reform makes recalling public prosecution impossible. The Roma participant confirms that intensification of violence after the divorce can occur, when the husband cannot control “one-hundred per cent” his former family’s life.

The most challenging issue for the police is violence against children. In many cultures (and even in the Finnish culture) physical violence has been ok – to give fillip, bull hair, or beaten. This often comes up in discussions with clients: they do not understand that Finnish laws are valid here. All agree that more information is needed as the parents do not know about the local custom, especially illiterate refugees are not told. Anyway, police practices are questioned because protection of children can too easily turn into custody.

As to the restraining order, the police woman sees that it might be a “piece of paper”. Only those at high risk can get a security plan made and, moreover, the police lacks resources for 24/7 surveillance. The woman with family pays in any case a high price as going to a shelter “muddles up badly the everyday life of the family as the kindergartens and schools and work places are in some other place”.

As to institutional violence, the police woman claims that the Finnish police is not racist even though she herself was taught not to be such an idealist. Instead of being like a “guy” she has been a kind of “social police”, i.e. collaborated with social workers a lot. The African migrant-professionals has used the “power game” to train police men and learned about gender-based discrimination against women police.

There are ways to solve these problems, possibly thanks to women’s networks. In the Roma community men must be involved, together with the older women, but there are not so many “conscious and educated men”. However, they do not say a word for women, that “this is wrong in fear of losing their face in front of other men”. The one who is homosexual does not count. Something has anyway changed: women are ready to contact the police. The migrant’s solution has been going to politics, networking with women, not only with those Finnish women married with an African but Nigerian women too. These NGOs however do not get funding as everything goes to one association. She wants to

stress the differences between women, the importance of education and class. Moreover, instead of leaning on the social office, women should be encouraged to economic independence, to start a business.

In the end, the interviewees returned to defining violence. It is “abuse of power” and includes economic violence and social isolation. For the Roma participant, men from Africa are “threatening” because of their size. Rape (a threat) is mentioned but the African interviewee hopes that it will be investigated more thoroughly.

As to the open question, the Roma participant said (in a silent voice) that incest is the most silenced issue. The police woman for her part repeats the importance of more and correct information to migrants, the need for multi-professional and multi-cultural collaboration and, lastly, lack of resources.

### 5.3. Final Remarks

#### Introduction

Working against violence towards migrant and minority women – not to forget sexual and gender minorities – has been badly delayed in Finland, mainly because immigration started only in the early 1990s. The information on the subject and its forms are patchy and sometimes non-existing. Often, statistics and various surveys made with “majority purposes” say hardly anything about minorities, and especially regarding gender; the information sometimes is not comparable. The legislation (the constitution, special legislation, criminal code) – for prevention, protection and punishing – is in general in place and follows the international norms and policies. But there are serious problems as far as the implementation is concerned, of both the policy and on the institutional level. There are only a few sporadic interventions (e.g. honour violence), but on the whole the “*SPEAK OUT!*issues” have not been properly integrated to even newest anti-VAW plans, nationally or locally. A lot has thus been left to the local institutions, in particular, the units for fighting against gender violence, the insufficiently resourced NGOs among them. It needs to be mentioned that in Greater Helsinki the share of migrant women in local shelters exceeds their share in the population three-to-four times, but fighting VAW itself in regard to minorities has not been on the agenda (properly anyway). Lastly, since the Speak Out project started in 2011, violence against the most vulnerable national minority and women has not been taken into account at all. Actually, the Speak Out team is the *first* to map out the experiences of Roma women (living here since the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The analysis of the situation of Sami women still awaits.

Therefore it would be necessary to turn to the Statistics Finland and push them to include these problems to the next survey on the living conditions of the residents in Finland – and to encourage some research and development units to continue along more specific lines (irrespective of the difficulties re-



garding the “banning” of ethnic statistics). The migration departments in Greater Helsinki are also in need of networking to start some joint integrated efforts in this respect. Convening the various shelters in the area to work more intensively together around the minority issue is a “must”.

## Survey

The survey, by targeting the public and services sector, controls and helps institutions, and it also seems to be the first in its kind to be carried in Finland-Greater Helsinki-Helsinki. Though some of the problematical aspects of the survey could have been avoided by a more extensive testing of the questionnaire, the questions that created confusion and comments also showed the need to continue discussions on different ways of understanding violence and especially, violence against women. They also indicated which kind of moral issues were considered as the most controversial and difficult when thinking about cultural sensitivity and women’s equality and freedom.

Though women, who answered to the questionnaire were probably more motivated in facing these issues than the average people, the questionnaire revealed that many professionals working with migrants, health care and social issues are interested in violence against women among migrant and minority women and that this topic is seen as acute and deserving more attention. This was especially showed by the interest in receiving more training on these issues.

Therefore, the uneven distribution of training should be taken into account. According to the statistics, 33%-43% of the clients in shelter houses taking care of victims of family violence have a migrant background in Helsinki, which is over three times more than their portion of the population. Yet very few professionals, who work in these services, have received training on the migrant issues. Respectively, even though migrants seem to be more at risk of gendered violence, the authorities working with them have rarely received any training on violence against women. Though the main reason for the lack of training is that public bodies seldom provide it for their employees, in some cases the attitudes of the professionals may be reluctant as well, partially due to the lack of resources and the work load they already have. The issue also came out in the focus group discussion with professionals, as a representative of an NGO, which provides such training, told that some professionals, working with refugees did not consider detecting and helping the victims of gendered violence as a part of their tasks.

## Focus Groups

The focus group discussions produced a lot of challenging material to be analysed by the closing research conference in February 2013. The women involved represented the biggest and the same groups which in all accounts came

up: Russian-speaking, Somali and Roma. These three groups are themselves very different from each other in terms of being “Finnish/non-Finnish”, culturally “close/distant”, or relatively “well/weakly integrated” to the Finnish life. The last two belong to the “visible minorities”. Especially in these two cases, the method was tricky: it is not customary to speak about sensitive issues in (formal) groups neither among Roma nor Somali women (although the sessions at the Monika Association proved otherwise, partially at least). As to the culturally “visible” groups, the importance of religion-related cultural norms, customs and practices (Roma “law”, “sharia law”) – and religion itself (both the Bible and the Khoran) proved a “source” of problematic constructions along the gender lines. Divisions and hierarchies in work, daily life, within multigenerational families and the communities as a whole, bind women to male control, expose them to various kinds of physical, sexual, mental and symbolic violence not to forget economic violence and social isolation. A few remarks.

There is no common vocabulary as to what constitutes violence and how it relates to “equality”. In this respect “provoking” is a term that builds on gender “qualities” and makes women guilty of violence. Reliance on oral knowledge simultaneously with submission to group-internal “laws” and the dictates of religion creates a vicious situation, in which women (and young, teenager girls) do not have much space for interpreting experiences and norms from their own angle. Disobedience, violating the norms regarding, e.g. sexuality, reproduction and family formation (virginity, arranged/forced marriages, polygamy), come with a price. The clothing as a female symbol of the cultural community is particularly problematic, almost a trap: by keeping to the traditions women are respected in the community’s eyes but are targeted negatively by the majority; by choosing otherwise, they get opportunities for independent life in greater society but may be excluded from their own community. As a note, the physical symbols of cultural belonging can be interpreted as physical violence. The same applies to the issue of genital mutilation, modification or circumcision.

Sexualisation, calling someone a “whore” is of interest too. From inside the community it seems to individualise the woman as “bad”, a deviant; from the side of the majority (or other minorities) it seems to label the whole group of women as people who are different and must rightly so be degraded, disposed, even destroyed. Racism does not include references to the skin colour, the “pigment” only but may refer to national origin and way of life of whole communities. As to vocabularies, using labels as self-identification terms can be one way of empowerment and critique of the majority/men but it is not necessarily useful in the long run. This kind of criticism prevents seeing alternative ways and means for genuine self-determination, seeing oneself both as the same and different.

Gender and generations are in many ways intertwined, especially in regard to cultures and communities where the autonomy is based on seniority. This does,

to some extent, empower older women but in case there are cultural hindrances to cross-generational communication and collaboration as to the most sensitive issues, it often turns against younger women: women with some power and authority become allies of men. In the most crucial phases of the sexual and reproductive life, younger women would, on the contrary, need to trust these women themselves in order to question gendered suppressive and degrading practices.

As far as the discussions between professionals is concerned, another kind of approach on the life cycle highlights a couple of groups which are in the most vulnerable positions, namely asylum seekers and, also EU-European “tourists”, travelling Roma. These situations deserve special attention and conscious use of empowering methods to tackle the multiple and intertwined disadvantages.

The role of men and men’s exposure to gender violence (by women) is a case by itself. Irrespective of men’s work carried out for more than ten years, there are often accusations of men being “provoked” for severe violence, as a response of women’s “milder” type of violence i.e. verbal violence. Criticism on the system (formal institutions, NGOs) was the most direct approach in this respect. As global cultural hegemonies too came into the picture – Finnish or Western *vs* Eastern, African or Asian ways of arranging gender relationships in general and the family life in particular – this problem is worth mention, also because of growing post-colonial criticism.

Note: “personal questions” made us hear the issue that was not on the theme list, incest – a challenge itself.

Therefore, special attention should be paid to women who are vulnerable in different ways. The “old minority” Roma women must in the end come to attention. They fall through the net: as born Finnish citizens, they do not approach the services for migrant units; in the units for majority women, their cultural ties are not understood and/or respected. Not to forget that the only shelter with a secret address (in Greater Helsinki at least) is dedicated to migrant women. Turning to cultural silences, in communities leaning on oral traditions, new and more open forums should be taken along, like Internet for instance, which is important to younger women tied by the seniority rules, without a voice of their own inside the communities. Diasporal situations and moments call, in such a “model country” like Finland, urgent and additional efforts. Second generations represent a concern also in view of transnational motherhood, a risk both for the mother and the child/children. Lastly, a word or warning needs to be mentioned: even if culturally valid, all kinds of methods that do not question women’s dependence *versus* men’s superiority – or practices which are usually understood as violation of women’s sexuality and integrity – must be explored carefully.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in the Project's Territory

#### Migrant and Minority People in Finland, Greater Helsinki and Helsinki

On January 31<sup>st</sup> 2011, there were 5 401 267 residents in Finland; out of them 183 133 were foreign citizens (4.0%); 244 827 were speaking other languages other than the national ones (Finnish, Swedish, Sami) (4.5%); 266 148 were outside of Finland (4.9%). Women made up 50.9% of the total population but among newcomers they were less than a half: 47.1% out of foreign citizens; 49.5% speaking non-national languages; 49.4% was born outside of Finland.

In Helsinki the total number of those who spoke non-national languages was relatively double compared to Finland as a whole i.e. 63 475 (10.8%). These residents form the “new minority”. They had arrived from Europe: 37 142 (58.2%); Asia 14 737 (23.1%); and Africa: 9 279 (15.2%). Smaller groups were from North-America: 1 726; Central and South-America: 1 518; Australia and Oceania: 368 (unknown: 977).

Special information from the City Statistical Office of Helsinki (Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus) tells that women born outside Finland make up 9.5% of all women in Greater Helsinki; the biggest groups are women from the Soviet Union / Russia, Estonia, Somalia, China, Thailand, Former Yugoslavia and India. From a gender standpoint, more men (36%) from the Soviet Union/Russia than women (31%) have settled down in Greater Helsinki. Regarding arrivals from Africa, 70% of women and 66% of men live here (Joronen 2007)<sup>1</sup>.

As to the admission gates, the differences are evident as well. Among migrants from the neighbouring Soviet Union/Russia, women are a majority (over 60%) as so many arrived as marriage migrants. The same applies to Thai people; the major bulk (some 80%) is women, almost all marriage migrants. The partners were by majority Finnish. As to refugees, Somali women are a minority as they often come in conjunction with the family (Helsinki – tilastoja 2011). Interestingly, in Helsinki the number of single-provider families is above average (50%) among Vietnamese, Estonian, Russian and Somali families (Joronen 2007)<sup>1</sup>.

The most numerous *national i.e. “old minorities”* (excluding 250,000 well-positioned Swedish-speaking people) are the Sami and Roma people. Some 10,000 Sami and 10,000–13,000 Roma people live here, around 3 000 Sami and 3,000 Roma in Greater Helsinki. (Saamelaiset; Suomen romanit) The exact number cannot be given as compiling statistics on ethnic basis is not allowed. Statistics

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<sup>1</sup> Work migration has been low; men are the majority among work migrants. From the Soviet Union/Russia, women make up the majority also among returnees. Note: illegal migrants are less than 2% (Saarinen and Hietala 2010).

Table 13: Statistics on migrants: Finland, Greater Helsinki (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa), Helsinki, 12.31.2011

<b>Finland</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total population</b>	5,401,267	2,748,733	50.9
Foreign citizens	183,133	86,178	47.1
Born outside Finland	266,148	131,356	49.4
<b>Greater Helsinki – Total</b>	1,050,824	54,729	52.0
Born outside Finland, total	94,966	43,937	46.3
Helsinki (Total)	588,549	(est) 311,930	(est) 53.0
<b>Non-national languages (Tot)</b>	63,475		10.8
Russian	13,684		21.6 (out of 63,475)
Estonian	7,940		12.5
Somali	6,513		10.3
English	4,291		6.8
Arabic	2,905		4.6
Chinese	2,328		3.7
Kurdish	1,900		3.0
Spanish	1,745		2.7
German	1,474		2.3
French	1,315		2.3
Turkish	1,294		2.0
Vietnam	1,195		1.9
Other	16,891		26.6

Sources: Statistics Finland; Statistical Yearbook of Helsinki; Helsinki – tilastoja 2011.

on language is inaccurate as these minority languages are almost extinct and are only coming back now.

An estimate on the numbers of the *sexual and gender minorities* have been presented since 1990, ranging from 5-15% of population, over 100 000 people (Lehtonen 2006).

### **Violence against (Migrant and Minority) Women**

The second *Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women* given by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Naisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan 2010) aims to implement the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2008-2011, in which the government decided to draw up a multi-sectorial action plan to reduce vio-

Table 14: Statistics on migrant women in Greater Helsinki (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa) and Helsinki, in 2011 (12.31.2011) (selected)

<b>Born outside Finland</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Greater Helsinki</b>			<b>Helsinki</b>	
Women born outside Finland	53,483	9.5	31,795	(est) 10.0
Soviet Union, Russia	13,589	(53,483) 25.4	8,361	(31,795) 26.3
Estonia	8,131	15.2	4,881	15.4
Somalia	2,809	5.2	1,835	5.5
China	2,240	4.2	1,245	3.9
Thailand	1,620	3.0	893	2.8
Vietnam	1,267	2.4	578	1.8
Former Yugoslavia	1,194	2.2	457	1.4
Iraq	1,158	2.2	604	1.9
India	1,116	2.1	554	1.7
Other	20,360	38.1	12,387	39.0

Source: Helsingin kaupugin tietokeskus, special information.

lence against women – in order to implement global and regional norms, to respond the critique from the UN-CEDAW and update the first national action plan against violence and prostitution drafted in 1998-2002. The new plan emphasizes three “P-principles”: prevention, protection of victims, and bringing the perpetrators to justice. It summarises the trends at the end-2000s by claiming that violence has increased, mainly due to an increase in sexual violence and, moreover, that harassment as part of it targets especially young women. Furthermore, the number of women who have been exposed to various kinds of violence in close relationships is higher. The analysis leans on the surveys of the National Research Institute of Legal Policy from 1997 and 2005 (Piispa *et al.* 2006). They targeted women with an age between 18-64 to map out their experiences starting from the age of 15. In 2005, a great part of these women had been exposed to violence: 43.5% to at least to one form of violence or threat; 29.1% to violence outside the partnership; 19.6% to violence in current partnership; 49.0% to violence in all partnerships including the previous ones. Alarmingly, as compared to 1997, the share of those who did not seek help had increased (to over 50%) – meaning that the share of those who reported and/or consulted had decreased (both to around 20%).

Even this newer plan does not say much about new minorities – only (in words) that attention should be focused on “family violence”, “honour violence”, “polygamy” and “genital mutilation”. Worth a special note is that (based on Lehti 2009) homicides have doubled if compared to similar deaths of native women; Iraqi (Kurd) and Russian women are mentioned (among men it is at the “native” level); two-thirds of the killers belong to the same group as the victim. As to sexual crimes in particular, non- and under-reporting is a problem although some improvement has been happening. There is also a mention on refugee women as being often exposed to sexual violence before arrival. As to “honour violence” the plan refers to actions by NGOs and the state (Turvallinen elämä jokaiselle (Safe life for all) 2008) in late 2000s that however did not give any figures on victims by gender. Problems in contacting the local control system and information, help and service system are due to women’s weak position in the family, lack of knowledge of local language and information on rights and services. On the institutional side, migrants meet misunderstanding, underestimation of problems and prejudices. The report mentions also difficulties concerning stay permits, regarding both refugees and marriage migrants.

From early 2000s, in other sources, there are some figures on migrants. The National Victim Survey (2003) pointed out that new minority groups report on more violence than the natives (partly because the figures include racism). As to women, group-internal violence is included in addition to physical and psychic violence, isolation and economic dependence. Men are mostly exposed to group-external violence (e.g. on streets). In the same year, the Statistics Finland published a report (Pohjanpää *et al.* 2003) on migrants’ living conditions. According to this survey 44% of Somali, 18% of Estonian, 14% of Vietnamese and 13% of Russian had been exposed to violence during the last year (2001-2002). In the 60% of the cases, the ones doing physical violence were close relatives. 65% – 75%, depending on the group, did not report the crime to the police.

Therefore, the majority of the violations are not investigated and prosecuted. In 2007, the police (Korhonen and Ellonen 2007) was informed only about 1 2004 crimes against migrant women: 6% of them concerned sexual violence, 22% threats, 72% other physical violence; 60% of physical violence took place in close relationships. Victims were often Russians, Estonians and Somalis; out of the violators, 55% were Finnish.

Not much information is available on Sami and Roma women. In 2009, the National Victim Survey (2009) included a mention on violence against ethnic and cultural minorities but only to conclude that there is no information on national cultural minorities<sup>2</sup>. There is however one important source, namely the Annual Report of the Minority Ombudsman from 2002 on, dealing with both old and new minorities<sup>2</sup>. Year after year, the violated groups are Roma, Russian-

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<sup>2</sup> In autumn 2012, the Ministry of social Affairs and Health, finally, started investigating violence against Roman women.

speaking, and Somali people. The same groups came up in the FRA's EU-MIDIS Report (2009) (Roma were not investigated in Finland). Note: none of these reports is carried out according to gender.

Sexual and gender minorities are mentioned in the second action plan. As far as males are concerned, every 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> has been exposed to violence, mostly in public places, while women were less and mostly at home; the violators have been mostly men (Lehtonen 1999).

## Services

The first national action plan of the 1990s-2000s hardly touched the topic of migrant women – although immigration continued increasing and integration policy plans included some mentions on violence against women (Saarinen 2010). Also, as late as in end-2000s, the handbook for social and health workers by the City of Helsinki (Ensiapua 2008) mentions (new) minorities only in one subordinate clause; Roma are totally invisible. The book includes however the list of public institutions and NGOs for information, help and support, which are available to all residents. And the recent guide from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health (Tunnista 2009) mentions “honour violence” but says nothing more.

Therefore, the handbook for social and health workers produced jointly with the Ministry for Social Issues and Health, the Ministry of Labour, and the Monika Association (Kyllönen-Saarnio and Nurmi 2005), continuing the work of the first anti-VAW plan in view of migrants, is a valuable source<sup>3</sup>. The handbook was based on interviews with professionals as well as Monika's own experiences. Special concern was that violence is not recognised by basic help institutions and authorities. At the same time, there are (too) few shelters; in Finland, where the distances are long, especially in the eastern and northern parts, this is a severe problem. It is difficult to speak out and search for help, let alone make official complaints; consequently, it becomes difficult to intervene and protect victims by prevention, early intervention, or low threshold services. The handbook emphasises that violence harms integration and welfare of children, and may intensify problems related to separation and custody of children.

In a key position are the special help institutions. According to the latest annual report of the Monika Association (Monika-naiset liitto 2011), in 2011, its resource centre was contacted by 684 clients; the total number of contacts to clients and (outsider) professionals rose to 4 491. The clients resided mostly in Greater Helsinki (95%). Statistics on ethnic background is available: over half of the violators (55.3%) were Finnish. As to the clients, the major groups were from Russia and Eastern Europe (47%), other parts of Europe (11%), Asia

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<sup>3</sup> See also numerous other publications by the Monika Association and the report by Jekaterina Tantt.



17%, Africa 11%; only a few were from the Americas (3%) (11% was unknown). In the last years, violence has become harsher, and there are many formerly hidden forms that have become visible: honour violence, forced marriages, trafficking<sup>4</sup>.

MONIKA's activities include information, hot line in nearly 20 languages, empowerment by peer groups, consultation, and, a shelter with a secret address (see Jekaterina Tantt). In "ordinary" shelters in 2011 in Greater Helsinki, migrant women are extremely over-represented as clients (from 33% to 43%) compared to population figures (some 10%) (Pääkaupungin turvakoti 2011; Naisten apu Espoossa 2011; Vantaan kaupungin turvakoti 2011 (public)<sup>5</sup>. In the last years, among clients in Espoo, there have been some trafficked women – and very few men; 3 in 2011. But the shelter collaborates closely with NGO men's groups, e.g. Miessakit (Men's groups) Association for helping with problems related to intimate partner violence, fatherhood, and divorce; support for immigrant men has been carried out since mid-2000s (Vieraasta veljeksi – From Strangers to Brothers).

Sexual and gender minorities contact mainly the Sexpo (sexual policies) Association (1969), or the Seta (sexual equality) Association (1974) for information, advice and support.

## Legislative Reforms

Legislative reforms to implement the three "P-principles" started in 1990s, along with the implementation of the UN norms and policies against VAW. The criminal code now includes criminalisation of battery and rape in marriage/partnership (1994); since 2011, public prosecution has been in force even without the victim's consent. The paragraphs on raping and pimping were renewed in 1998, on trafficking in 2004; on crimes against humanity and ethnic agitation in 2008; on ethnic discrimination in 2009. The separate restraining order was renewed in 1998. Homosexuality was decriminalized late, in 1971. The Non-discrimination act (2004) is also in force and denies discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; it was preceded by the reform of the criminal code in 1995 already. Registration of same-sex partnership (not marriage) was enacted in 2001 (not congregated by the church). Note: the reform of the constitution in 1994 already included protection of the rights of various minorities. The Equality act (1986) was the first one in this direction (Finlex).

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<sup>4</sup> Figures on forms of violence: mental and verbal violence 355; physical violence 282; threats 18; economic violence 179; stay permit 12; child custody 93; child protection 84; residential separation 83; threat to kill 7; sexual violence 57; violence against children 32; child kidnap 19; trafficking 17; threat to forced marriage 14; other 397.

<sup>5</sup> The Espoo shelter with most migrants will be closed on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 (!), to be replaced with "safe flats".

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### 6.1. The Survey on Representations of VAW, Gender and Migration among Professionals

Upon receiving the questionnaire, TIYE International had to find a way to translate it into Dutch. At the same time we had to look for a researcher and other personnel, as well as different articles that were published in the Netherlands. We also had to discern what kind of research was done and when. The preparation went well. In sum, the main difficulties that were encountered were with the questionnaire and the budget.

#### Objectives and Methodology

The questionnaire, which was originally developed by the University of Padua is extensive in its attempt to gain in depth knowledge of the situations surrounding violence against women. However, in order to make the survey culturally relevant to women in the Netherlands several changes were made. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gain as much insight and information as possible into the current and predominant issues that some (Black, Migrant, and Refugee) BMR women face on a daily basis. These issues include, but are not limited to, family, economy, crime, work, society, support and specific risks relevant to BMR women such as female genital mutilation (FGM). In conjunction with interviews conducted in focus groups and individual interviews with police officials, social workers and scholarly research, the questionnaire acts as further concrete and quantitative knowledge of the ongoing and complex issues surrounding gender-based violence experienced by many Dutch and BMR women. The survey was completed by persons from all walks of life, backgrounds and professions relevant to this research and as such adds to the richness of the conclusions and results inferred therein.

#### Designing the Questionnaire

Questions were aimed specifically at black, migrant and refugee (BMR) women in conjunction with intimidation, honour crimes and other socially and culturally relevant questions. For instance, “Considering all the users of your service, could you indicate how many women from the different BMR groups do access

it?” and “Please indicate the main countries of origin of BMR women who access your service. Maximum three countries in order of importance” were amongst the questions that were asked. Aside from specific cultural aspects which were covered, the survey covered a series of issues ranging from typologies of victims and perpetrators to public knowledge and media coverage. It also dealt with the age, work experience, training and opinions of professionals in numerous fields which were applicable to the research conducted on BMR women. The adaptation of the survey although complete, was difficult due to the original approach to the survey and its relevance to Italian society as opposed to Dutch society. Language was also somewhat of an issue in that many of the respondents, of mixed origin and different professional approaches did not find relevance in parts of the questionnaire. For the purpose of this research the questionnaire was translated into Dutch with the availability of English translation as well. However, all the surveys returned were in the Dutch language. The survey, as previously mentioned, is highly dense which presented numerous difficulties. For instance, there was not enough budget to adequately translate the survey and due to the denseness and details we had to do many face to face surveys in order to ensure quality control which was both time consuming and costly.

### **Description of the Dutch Sample**

Of the sample group, approximately 42% are volunteers working with BMR women, whilst the second highest percentile, governmental and non-profit organizations each account for 25% of professionals. 16% worked for the government, 9% worked for private organizations and 8% worked in the public service sector.

The majority of the respondents, 12.5%, were born in the 1940's, another 12.5% were born in the 1950's, 35% were born in the 1960's whilst another 27% were born in the 1970's. Lastly, 10% were born in the 1980's (see Figure 10). In this sense, we feel very confident that although the surveys were problematic in terms of completion, the information gathered remains relevant and strong.

With regards to the respondents, as previously mentioned, their backgrounds vary widely. They include members from Indonesia, Aruba, St. Maarten, Ethiopia, Turkey, Ghana, Brazil, Morocco, Suriname and the Netherlands (see Figure 11).

Approximately 44% of the respondents had experience in the field on gender-based violence against BMR women for at least 2-5 years whilst another 32% have experience ranging from 6-15 years and very few have experience over 25 years, about 12% and another 12% have less than 2 years of experience.

With regards to the level of education of the respondents, 25% completed their high school education 35% completed their HBO whilst 24% completed their MBO. 9% of the respondents completed university level education and an-

Figure 10: Type of organization

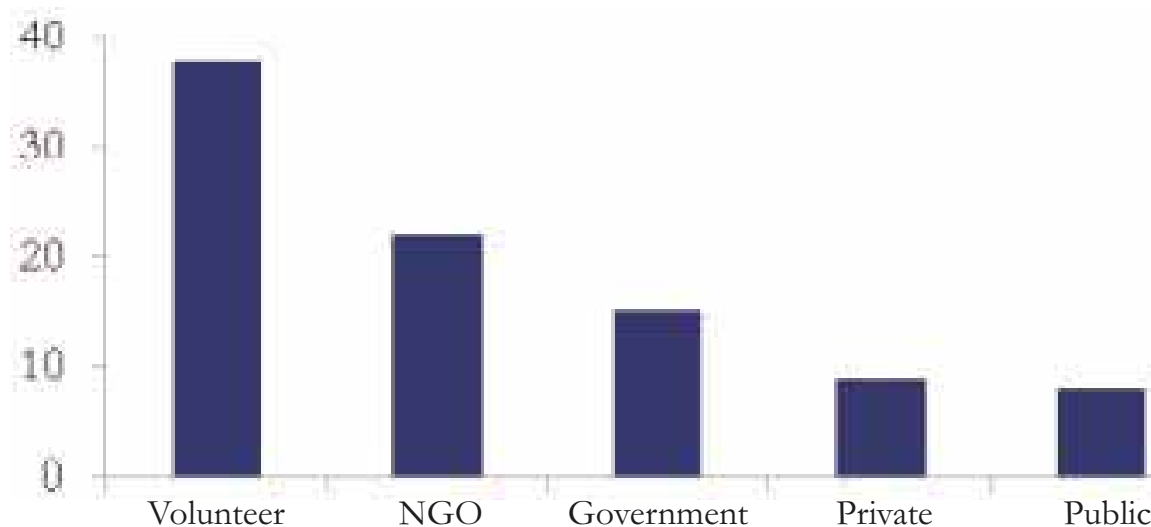
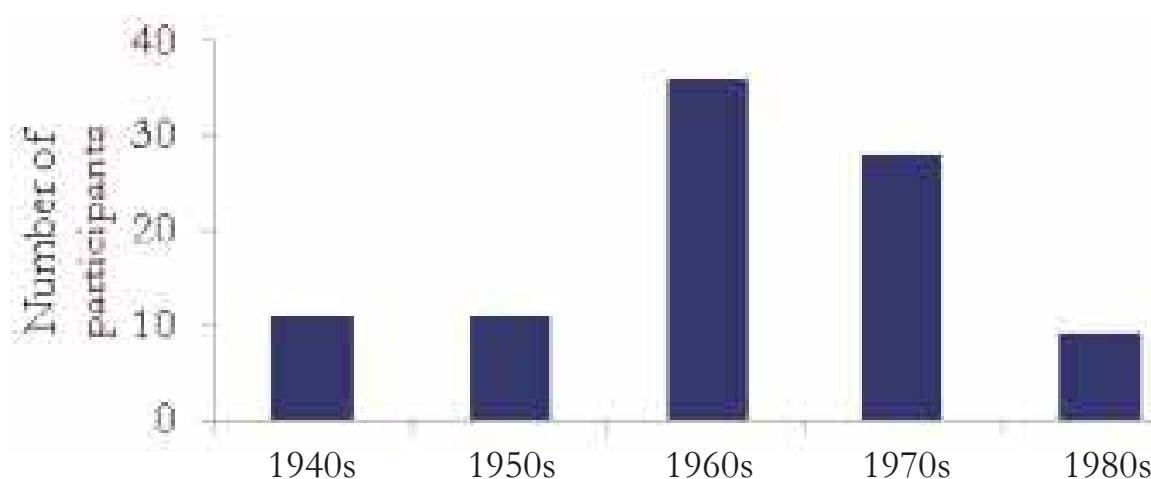


Figure 11: Year of birth



other 9% completed their postgraduate studies. Some respondents failed to fill in the portion of the survey creating 7% of non-applicability (see Figure 12).

## 6.2. The Dutch Questionnaires

The questionnaires were distributed via email and in-person. Together with the questionnaire, there was often an introduction letter distributed alongside the survey so that participants could fully grasp and thus appreciate the importance and relevance of their contributions. Distributions were made to individuals on a person-to-person basis but also during conferences and meetings, taking advantage of any opportunities available to reach the persons relevant to our re-

Figure 12: Country of origin

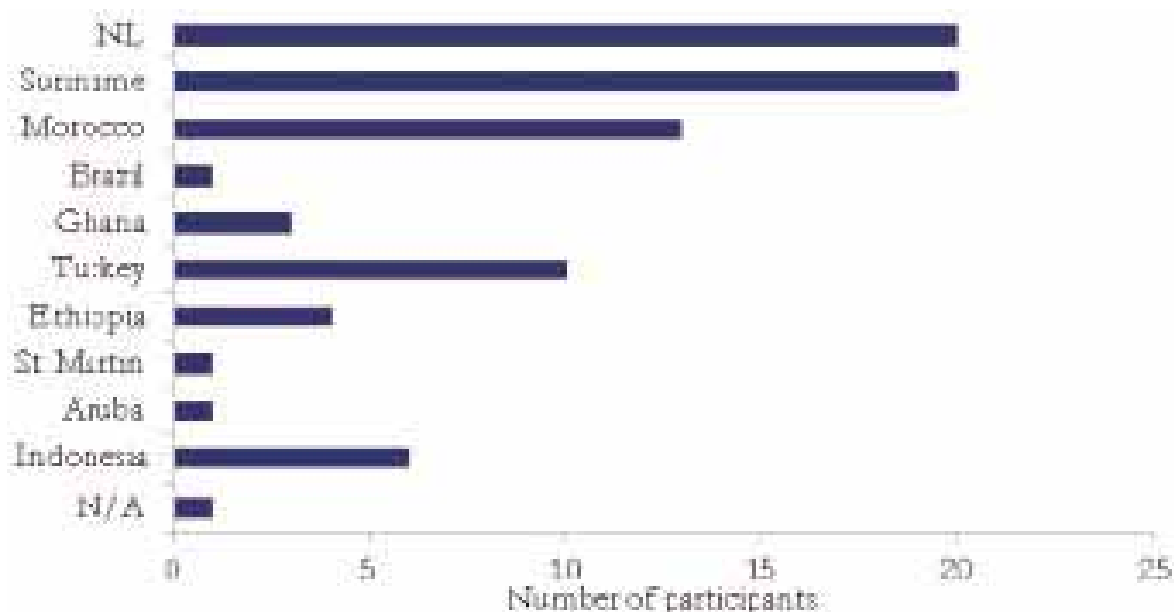
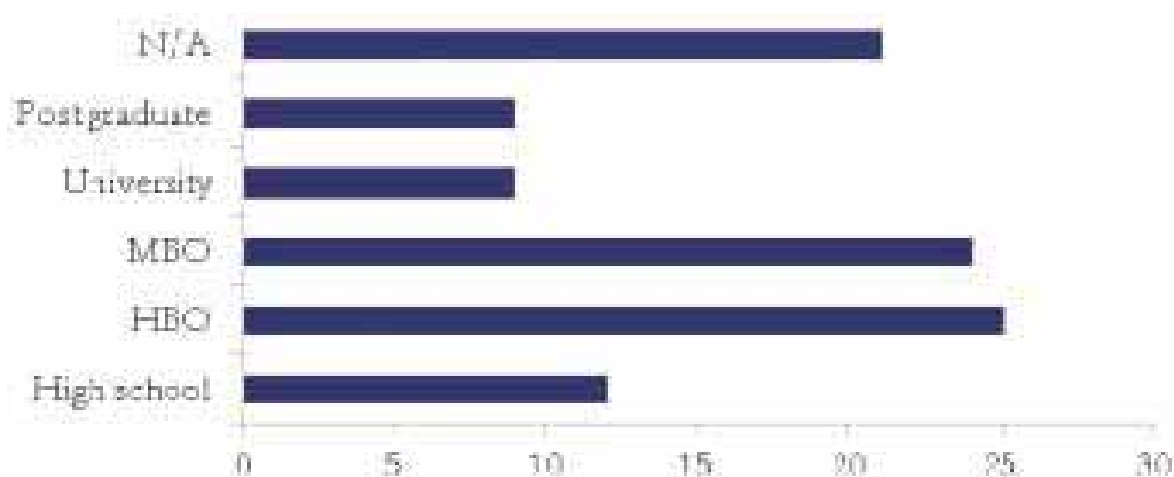


Figure 13: Level of education



search. Relevance was determined in part, based on the qualifications and involvement of participants in matters pertaining to violence against women, with particular emphasis upon violence against black, migrant and refugee women. Since the surveys were difficult for the majority of respondents, our best efforts were made to promote the completion of the questionnaire, although this was impossible in certain cases. The surveys were sent to hundreds of people, including members of organizations, law officials, shelters, volunteers, social workers and other relevant participants. However, limitations arose in the fact that of the surveys returned about 25% of the respondents were unable to complete the survey while approximately 10% of the surveys returned were abandoned entirely. It should be noted that many of the participants criticized the surveys design, claiming that it promoted a “tunnel vision” perspective on gender based



violence as it relates to some BMR women and a notable amount; about 20% were accompanied with extensive notes on the difficulties and limitations posed by the survey. The criteria of participants were based on the following:

- Members of the government with a background in BMR issues and policies.
- Social workers who have direct contact with victims of gender based violence.
- Volunteers who are directly involved with entities and victims of gender based violence against BMR women.
- Doctors, psychiatrists and other medical professionals who encounter and treat BMR women on a regular basis.
- Survivors of and advocates against gender based violence against BMR.
- Non-Governmental Organizations, human rights organization, research institutes and experts involved with the subject of gender-based violence.
- Police officers and law officials who encounter and deal with gender violence in the Netherlands.
- Intercultural professionals, help desk professionals, welfare professionals, youth workers, counsellors and any other relevant individuals for the purpose of this study.

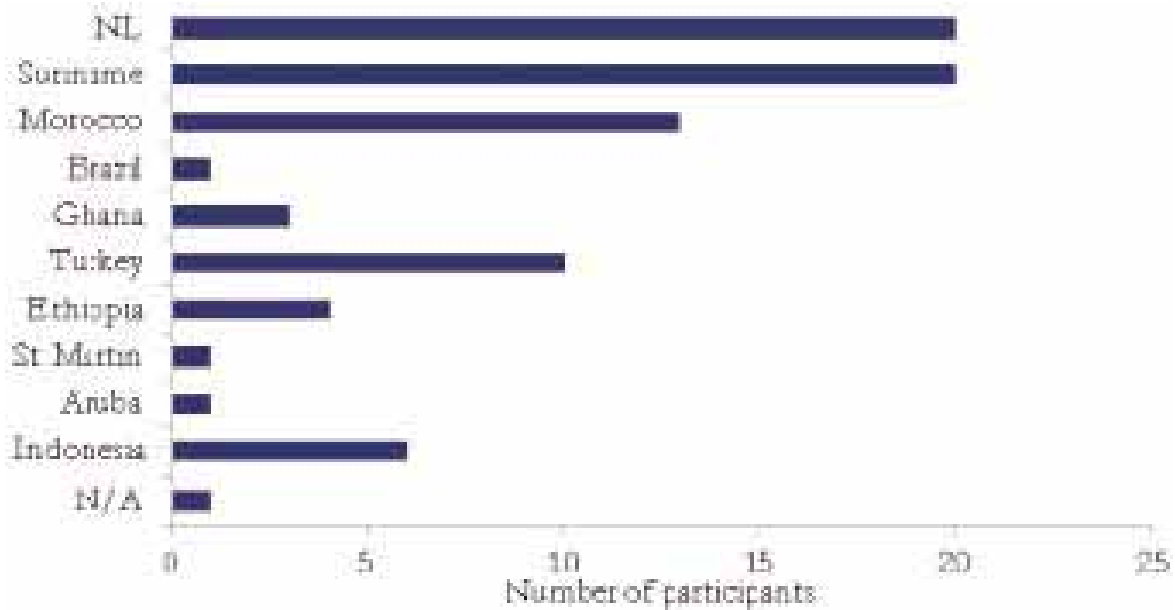
### **Types of Service Involved in the Research**

Participants were asked to inform us of their perceptions of the women who access their services and their prevalence. According to the respondents, approximately 43% have many clients who are black females. Another 31% are comprised of migrant women while refugee women make up only 5% of the clientele encountered. To expand on this, only two of the professional respondents claim to experience a high level of refugee clientele while the rest only encountered a few or none at all. With regards to the provision of services, respondents were asked whether or not they receive requests from women to speak only with other women, as such about 84% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Furthermore, when asked whether or not this request should be adhered to, the respondents answered 95% in the affirmative.

When asked which services are the most difficult to provide to the respondents, approximately 50% claimed that childcare and mental health are among the most difficult while 20% claim that economic and legal support are amongst the most difficult. Housing and healthcare were the least difficult of the services totalling 11% with a 19% abstention (see Figure 13).

When asked whether or not violence against women (VAW) was becoming more visible, 65% said “yes” whilst 23% said “no” with an abstention of about 12%. When asked whether or not there was an increase of VAW in the Netherlands, 62% of the respondents answered yes, while 24% answered no with an abstention of about 14%. Respondents were asked the question, “Among the

Figure 14: Services



professional and organizational patterns for anti-VAW services listed below, choose two that you think are more effective and useful to properly face VAW, also considering the migration contexts and different nationalities and cultures present in the territory you are working in” To this question, 56% of professionals agreed that a network of key private and public services that work on gender violence led by BMR and white Dutch women is essential. Secondly, 33% believe that there should be rules across all services and woman’s organizations with sensitive approaches to the gender perspective. The remaining participants, 11% believe that there should be separate networks of common services working on gender based violence.

### Questions on Risks of Violence and Definitions of Violence

When asked the question, “Among the typologies and situations relating to VAW listed below, choose the two you consider more important to increase your specific training on VAW”, 33% of professionals replied that institutional violence by service providers, officials and bureaucracy was most important. Second, 27% states that sexual harassment and molestation in the workplace was most important. Following that, 23% stated that domestic violence was most important. 17% stated the importance of the issue of forced and early marriages.

When asked which types of women were most at risk of violence, respondents indicated that 36% of women suffering from low self-esteem were at risk of experience gender-based violence. Women who do not know how to handle conflict situations with partners accounted for 21% of the total. Women who are psychologically dependent on their partners account for 16% of the total. Women who do not conform to their partners expectations accounted for 15%

of the total professional surveyed. Lastly, women who centre their lives on their partner account for 12% of the data collected.

When asked about intercultural relationships and the prevalence of abuse amongst specific spousal combinations the data collected indicated that 52% of the clients experienced violence from migrant/refugee males against the same minority group. 50% of Dutch white women experienced violence from men of the same race. Furthermore, 27% of minority women experienced violence at the hands of white Dutch men. 13% of the respondents indicated that violence was experienced by white Dutch women at the hands of migrant/refugee males with an abstention of 19%.

One of the questions asked to respondents was “Among the expressions listed below, choose three that, in your opinion, catch better the most important meanings you consider in defining VAW in intimate relationships. To this, 63% considered power abuse to be the most important meanings in defining VAW. 38% considered disrespect to be of secondary importance. 33% consider the control over another person’s life to be the third most significant aspect of VAW, followed by imposing ones will upon another (23%), denial of another person’s needs (23%), psychological coercion (17%), limiting personal freedom (17%), physical coercion (15%), hurting of dignity (13%), forced intercourse (8%), humiliation (2%), arrogance (2%) and abuse of loved ones (2%) with an 8% abstention.

Another important question was, “Among the expressions listed below, choose three that, in your opinion, catch better the most important principles of action and politics you consider should be implemented for a society free from VAW”. The majority of the respondents stated that mutual respect of action in the two different social roles (gender) is most important. Followed by, recognizing the rights of women (35%), equal rights between men and women (35%), implementation of the legal recognition of different ways to define family models (35%), implementation of gender equality through affirmative action and quotas for women including women BMR (33%), equality for women and men in the family and society (27%), recognition of equal rights and duties both in the family and in society (27%), implementation of gender equality through affirmative action and quotas for women including women BMR (13%), respect for women (10%), for couples, the joint choices for both men and women (4%), implementation of the legal recognition of different ways to define family models (2%), with a 10% abstention.

### 6.3. A Synthetic Overview

Of the clients encountered by professionals, 43% are black women, followed by migrant women who total 31%. Only 5% of professionals encounter refugee women. With regards to the most difficult services to provide for BMR women,

50% of professional claim that childcare and mental health care are the most difficult, followed by economic and legal support at 20%. Based on the difficulties encountered by professionals in providing certain types of aid, it is not surprising that 56% agree that a key network of private and public services working on gender violence, led by BMR and white Dutch women is essential in increasing the effectiveness and availability of services.

With regards to what trainings are considered to be most important in providing effective care, 33% of professional agreed that training on institutional violence by service providers, officials and bureaucracy was the most important, followed by 27% of professionals who agreed that training on sexual harassment and molestation in the workplace is the most important thing.

In terms of intercultural relations amongst BMR women in the Netherlands, it was found that 50% of the respondents considered power abuse to be the most important thing adding to violence against women in the Netherlands. Another 32% believe disrespect is integral to VAW and lastly 18% of respondents believe that psychological coercion is the most important aggregate of VAW.

With regards to the most important factors which contribute to a society free from VAW, 48% of respondents believe that mutual respect for different social and gender roles is most important in catching the important principles of action and politics that should be implemented for a society free from VAW. 28% of respondents believe that equal rights are the most important in conjunction with another 24% who consider recognizing the rights of women to be the most important.

## 6.4. Focus Groups

### Objectives and Methodology

TIYE organized 3 focus groups. A description of the meetings is provided in the chart below.

The accommodation and environment we used for the meeting of the focus groups was safe, comfortable and non-threatening for women, also it was culturally appropriate for all. We were sitting in an ellipse like setting so that no one was left out. We also tried to encourage and create an atmosphere in which women could feel free to make their contributions. We also tried to give guidance to the group without cultural biases, so that women could freely share their thoughts and feelings. In order to do this we let each women know that we appreciated her and that she was valued. We treated them with respect as we would like to be treated with respect ourselves.

Table 15: Focus Groups in The Netherlands

<p><b>First focus group with counsellors</b></p>	<p>Attended: 7 women and 3 counsellors.          Ethnicity of counsellors:          Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans          Ages : 27-57 year old;          Work experience: 3-25 years          Topics: <i>What kind of violence do you think BMR women faced the most?</i>          Honour related violence; institutional violence; symbolic violence; domestic violence and all other forms of violence that you can find within domestic violence.</p>
<p><b>Second focus group with BMR women</b></p>	<p>Attended: 13 women and 3 counsellors.          Ethnicity of women:          India, Africa, Ecuador, Suriname, Somalia, Ethiopia and Philippine.          Age: 29 – 61          Topics:  <i>What did you feel the first time when you enter the office for help and how was it when you left that office the first day? Do you remember your expectations?</i>          Answer: Well, I was very insecure, I did not know what I could expect. I was trembling all over. I was expecting help, but did not know what kind of help I would get. I was crying, etc. (This has already been reported).</p>
<p><b>Third focus group with counsellors and BMR women</b></p>	<p>Attended: 14 women and 4 counsellors in Den Hague (NL)          Ethnicity: very diverse;          Age: 26 -63years          Topics: <i>Tell us your name and an important thing that happen in your life.</i>          Answers: important things that happen in their life were the birth of their daughter or son or children. Some mention their youth when they were growing up, they were so happy. Another one said the most important step was going to look for help. Another that she will never forget all the pain she had to face. The fear the first time she was battered, etc. (This has already been reported).</p>

Furthermore we establish ground rules that will ensure a safe environment for everyone, like:

1. Everyone should listen to each other
2. Avoid judging
3. Accept all types of experiences and opinions as equally worthy.
4. There is no right or wrong answer nor one single solution.
5. You should discuss things as a group.
6. A report of the discussion will be made. If you want a copy you can write your name and address at the end of this setting.

There were 7 professionals, one expert and one assistant.

## **Focus Group with Counsellors**

The professionals' ethnicities were: Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans.

Everyone introduced themselves. Some were working for 3 years or 5 or 10 years. One was working for 25 years.

They were working either for the police, or in a health centre or in a shelter or welfare office, help desk, women's centre or a training centre for battered women. Some offices were from a public office, or semi-governmental institute which belongs to a public office.

Their professions were: police officer, social worker, health care worker, trainer empowerment and in preventing/combating violence against women and girls, experience expert, community intervention and lawyer

Our question was: «Since you also work specific with BMR women can you tell me which groups visit your office, what are their ethnicities, and what are the questions they have?». Different types of groups visited the services where our participants work: sometimes high educated women, grassroots women, young or older women, women with or without children, married and not married. Their identities were: Surinamese-Dutch; Philippine-Dutch; White Dutch; Ethiopian-Dutch; Turkish-Dutch; Somalis-Dutch, Jamaican-Dutch. Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilleans, and different types of Africans.

The questions they addressed varied from looking for shelter a temporary house or legal support, counselling support, economic support, to children caring counselling support or children related problems, health care.

## **What Kind of Violence BMR Women Faced the Most?**

To make it clear, violence is not only something that happens to only BMR women and girls. Almost every other women in the EU experience male violence or gender based violence during her live time. One in five will fall into domestic violence. At least one in ten will be raped or forced to sexual acts etc. Violence against women and girls is the most wide spread human rights abuse within the EU, and in times of recession such as these thing only get worse. There are different forms of violence against women and girls. They are for example: honour related violence, institutional violence, symbolic violence, domestic violence and all other forms of violence that you can find within domestic violence.

## **Honour-Related Violence**

Honour-related violence stems from traditions that have their origin in a society without central authority and are characterized by paternalism and collectivism. Honour-related violence in the vision of some of the professionals is not a phe-

nomenon that can be associated with any particular religion, i.e. Islam, or the population or culture of a particular country, i.e. Turkey. Honour killings are found indeed in countries with diverse cultures of the Indian islands to Latin America, both among Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians and others.

*Honour-related violence includes any form of mental or physical violence, committed from a collective mentality in response to a (threat of) violation of the honour of a man or a woman and therefore it's the family honour, which the outside world is aware of or may become aware of.*

(Working definition Ministry of Justice, Beke 2005)

The concept of honour-related violence is the umbrella term for all forms of coercion and psychological and physical violence to prevent a member of the family a “mistake” that puts harm to the family honour in the community, and all violence against the (alleged) *eerschender* to the violated honour. The importance of family honour is even in many populations with a group culture. The cultures are particularly Mediterranean, Middle East, South and Central Asia. Also among Roma, Hindu, Muslims, Jews and Christian Orthodox communities in Netherlands, you find honour related violence.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviours by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family or cohabitation. Domestic violence has many forms, including physical aggression or assault (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving restraining, slapping, throwing objects) or threats there of sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse (e.g. neglect) and economic deprivation. Awareness and documentation of domestic violence differs from country to country and from area to area.

## **Institutional Violence**

Black, Migrant and Refugee women experience Institutional violence because it is most times a standard practice in society (governmental institutions and their officers) that has become a destructive force and has a negative impact on black and immigrant women or ethnic minority women and men and youth. Most of the time they don't get the right answers when information is asked.

*They just don't tell them their rights, which makes it very difficult for BMR women to deal adequately on their questions.*

*Lack of knowledge of their human rights causes more frustrations in their cases.*

*Lots of these women suffer more because of this form of violence committed to them.*

## Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence is another form of violence BMR women, men and their children face. This is a form of violence that you might not see if you don't want to or if someone does not bring it to your attention. These women, men and especially children give specific expression of it during the so called *Sinterklaas feest*, the Dutch celebration of Black Pete and Santa Claus, the servant of Santa who looks different from the average Santa Claus we all know during Christmas worldwide. The Dutch one comes in November in the Netherlands with a lot of "Black Peters". *Sinterklaas* looks like a kind of bishop and uses dominant methods to control Black Peter. The Black Peter is dressed in a Moorish costume, he has curly hair, he is painted in black with feathers on his hat, he has a big red mouth, he speaks broken Dutch, he is stupid, he can't remember one simple message, he is the servant of Santa Claus, and has a big linen bag with him that is to put the naughty children in and bring them to Spain if they don't promise to behave. He also has an old fashioned broom with him to whip naughty children and he also has a book where the names of all nice kids are written and what they want as a present. He also has candies which he throws in the air for the kids, who should fight to grab some from the floor. A lot of BMR families (the black and colour kids and families) feel very humiliated and say that this are the symbols who teach people how to look at blacks. The same type of symbols are displayed every second Tuesday in September and by High lights of the Dutch queen. She takes a ride in her golden carriage and on that carriage you can see how black slaves are kneeling for white people and also people of Indonesian origin in a noticeably subordinated position to the superior white men. These are all symbols of how to look at black people and it is a violation against their human rights. BMR kids are very confused during these days, they do not want to go to school during this period, a so called "children's fest".

## Migration

Migration policy is not gender neutral. Despite the proportional male/female share, migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon in the Netherlands. The migrant being a man or a woman has profound implications for the entire migration process and for all parties involved. The position of female migrants differs considerably from that of the male. Gender relations and power differences determine who migrates, why, through which channel, where and in what situation the migrant eventually land.

## Reasons

Men and women apparently have the same economic, political or humanitarian motives to migrate. Both set the stage to escape political persecution and war violence, from the desire for a better life, to escape poverty, to include social and



family pressure to leave. And yet women migrate for very specific reasons, inherent in the fact that they are women. The main reasons for women to leave are:

- Private atmosphere. Entrenched subordinate position compared with men in the family.
- Economic discrimination in the labour market and other institutions, global feminization of poverty.
- Ethnic and cultural reasons. Oppressive and female unfriendly traditions such as forced marriage, repudiation, polygamy, virginity coercion, harmful practices like female genital mutilation.
- Violence on the run from sex-based violence such as honour killings, rape as weapon of war.
- Follow migration. Family reunification, which is very difficult due to the fact that there are so many restrictions especially in terms of income, which is also partly gender discriminatory on account of the fact that women often make less money than men, therefore they have greater difficulty in migrating and supporting their loved ones. In turn, there is greater dependency on men by women for migration. Furthermore, BMR women make less money than white women in the Netherlands which creates a greater gap for BMR women.

While family reunification is still an important reason to leave, women increasingly migrate alone. Whether they come from Africa, the Caribbean, the Maghreb or Eastern Asia or Europe a common reason for all (BMR) immigrant women is the desire for more autonomy. Although their main motive is of economic nature, a recent phenomenon is the search for independence and self-reliance is always there.

### **Focus Group with Migrant Women**

First, the participants were welcomed. Then we introduced ourselves. The moderator explained why we had this research meeting, and invited the participants to speak out freely and share their ideas, meanings, doubt's and suggestions with us. What they could expect from and the role of the moderator. She explained that there are no good or bad answers. The point is to let us know what they found, what their meaning was and why. There will be a report (anonymous) of this meeting. If they are interested they may receive a copy of the final report. After the meeting they could write their name on this list. We asked if they had any questions before we begin. No one had questions.

### **Introductory Questions**

Tell us your name and an important thing that happened in your life. Each participant introduced herself and explained that the important things that hap-

pened in their life were the birth of their daughter or son or children. Some mention their youth when they were growing up, they were so happy. Another one said the most important step was going to look for help; another that she will never forget all the pain she had to face. The fear the first time she was battered.

What was your best experience when you visit our office, a counsellor asked?

*The counsellor was very nice and she could imagine how I felt or she had a lot of empathy so it was not so difficult for me to tell her my story.*

What was your worst experience?

*I had a terrible experience since this counsellor was new there, she did not know where to send me. Through her insecurity I became more insecure then I was when I visit the office, then I start crying and saying that I had expected help, instead I was very confused and that it looked like I was worst out. The counsellor was also upset she could not get hold to someone with more working experience. Not know how to deal with the cultural background of the victim. It is difficult to express my feelings without being emotional.*

What did you feel the first time when you enter this office and how was it when you left that office the first day? Do you remember your expectations?

*Well I was very insecure; I did not know what I could expect. I was trembling all over. I was expecting help, but did not know what kind of help I would get. I was crying. I had a terrible night so she looked at me, comforted me and offered me a cup of tea. I was so "happy" in a way. After a good talk I left the office very released, and felt like I could stand everything that comes up. I had no specific expectations except getting help to get out of the miserable situation I was in. I was expecting to go to a shelter; I had also some clothes with me. I was wondering what would happen to my children, how they would go to school. If my partner would pick them up and that I would not see them anymore.*

If you should describe this contact with one word, which word would you chose?

*Personal, cold, professional, business, friendly, warm, nice, Christian, excellent, insecure, mother, sister, friend.*

Now you are in the program, do you get what you want/need?

*Most of the time, I have to move to another city and there they will help me find a house, and a school for the children and help me find a job. I did not get everything yet,*

*because it takes time, but I am patient and willing to wait for the better. My partner promised to go into therapy with the family and they are making an appointment for us.*

Did you have goals before? Are they the same as what you have to deal with now?

*Yes in a way. My goals were to be happy and healthy and having a caring partner, unfortunately I went through a hell, but now I am happy again but single. Economic and socially independent at the moment not everything is correct, I have learned to take it by the day. Step by step.*

The meeting was interesting, but intensive and sometimes emotional. The counsellors will point out the remarks in their relevant teams.

### **Focus Group with Women and Professionals**

Highly beneficial were the typologies given by professionals and survivors of perpetrators of violence and potential victims. When asked about the perpetrators of domestic violence, the following topic received a great deal of discussion. One prominent type of abuser is known as the “lover boy”, which is a type of pimp. Their particular method or ‘modus operandi’, as described during the discussion, involves the seduction and isolation of traditional, yet vulnerable young women from their families. This separation and subsequent isolation, as said by participants is a common occurrence amongst young minority females who find themselves in abusive relationships on account of these young men who attempt to sever familial ties between women and their families in order to exert control over women. This is just one example of the types of dangers and experiences described by group members.

Prevalent during the discussion was traditional gender roles and the impact they have on violence against BMR women. To expand, it was explained by participants in the discussion that to have a man at home was a status symbol, defining a woman’s position in her community. Women’s roles, at least as described in countries of origin, are mainly domestic and education is more often directed towards men first as women’s education is sometimes considered secondary. Therefore, women are in a position where they must accept certain circumstances imposed upon them by their husbands and families if they intend to fulfil their gender roles. When discussing familial pressures and gender violence, participants described family members who actually send abused women back to their abusers, i.e. husbands, familial pressures to remain in an abusive relationship for the sake of traditions, the pressure to remain in abusive relationships for the sake of the children and the shame and stigma that can accompany women who seek out independence directed towards them by their family and community.

The women also stated that the family members of the husband could also become abusers as they may turn the wife into a servant, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. They claim that this can be the result of guilt, responsibility- i.e. to children, desperation and low self-confidence. They state that this occurs in some cultures where the Koran doctrine is more prevalent but less in the Netherlands due to institutional protections already in place. A great deal of discussion was focused on financial dependence as a means of VAW, as one woman stated:

*Because the husband was the provider, she had nothing to offer and so, she must suffer as penance. Financial dependence decreases leverage and independence.*

This lack of financial independence coupled with social isolation and a lack of familial support for those females living away from home with their spouses and husbands increase the risk of VAW due to a lack of self-sufficiency and social support. This situation, as described by one participant:

*It's worse for teen mothers who are more vulnerable due to inexperience and limited financial resources. Moreover, teens are seen as bringing this situation on themselves and therefore experience stigma and social isolation, thus increasing their risk of negative male relations and potentially unsafe living situations.*

Participants indicated that suicide could be the ultimate effect of the guilt one can experience as a result of violence against women.

Lastly, when considering the role of the Netherlands in combating VAW, the participants stated that in Holland there is decent protection for women, should they decide to leave their abusers. Both the victim and the perpetrator receive help with domestic violence. However, help with VAW does not involve on the spot assistance, but assistance is there so one can come to a solution in the future. On the local level, there is a general confidence in the police, doctors, counsellors and women's shelters.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

### Migrants and People with Migrant Origin and on VAW in the Project's Territory

Table 16: Distribution of study sample versus the National Dutch population

	Sample		Dutch National population	
	Native Dutch	Non-Native Dutch	Native Dutch	Non-Native Dutch
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	53%	31%	49%	50%
Female	47%	60%	51%	50%
<b>Age</b>				
Up to 24 years	9%	21%	13%	20%
25-34 years	19%	34%	15%	27%
35-49 years	30%	33%	29%	34%
50-64 years	28%	10%	25%	13%
65 plus	19%	2%	18%	5%
<b>Education</b>				
Low	16%	6%	26%	42%
Middle	44%	43%	51%	47%
High	40%	51%	24%	11%
<b>Region</b>				
Den Hague	9%	35%	10%	36%
West	31%	28%	30%	26%
City Suburbs (Randgemeenten)	4%	6%	4%	5%
Noord (North)	12%	5%	11%	3%
Oost (East)	20%	15%	21%	15%
Zuid (South)	25%	12%	25%	15%

Table 17: Victims of domestic violence, categorized by gender and ethnicity (%).

	Antillean - Aruban		Moroccan		Suriname		Turkish	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Domestic violence	41	40	10	20	26	29	20	23
Physical violence	31	36	6	16	26	27	16	15
Emotional violence	24	25	5	17	16	22	15	19
Sexual violence	9	15	2	4	2	10	2	5

Source: Van Dijk *et al.* 2002

Table 18: Victims of domestic violence. Comparison between minority males and females and white Dutch males and female (%)

	Minority males and females			White Dutch males and females		
	M	W	Tot	M	W	Tot
Domestic violence	21	27	24	43	46	45
Physical violence	18	22	20	35	34	35
Emotional violence	14	21	17	26	30	28
Sexual violence	3	8	5	13	30	21

Source: Van Dijk *et al.* 2002

Table 19: Ethnicity offender probation group in comparison with the Dutch population group

	Offender Group	Dutch National Population
Native Dutch	65%	78%
Turkish	5%	2%
Moroccan	5%	2%
Surinamese	8%	2%
Antillean and Aruban	5%	1%
Other Ethnicity	12%	15%

Table 20: Sex of victims of domestic violence compared to intensity of violence among minorities and white Dutch population

	Native Dutch						Non-Native Dutch					
	Intensity						Intensity					
	Occ.	Low	Med.	High	V. high	Tot	Occ.	Low	Med.	High	V. high	Tot
M	46	42	56	48	35	<b>46</b>	49	61	48	49	40	<b>50</b>
W	54	58	44	52	65	<b>54</b>	51	39	52	51	60	<b>50</b>
Tot	100	100	100	100	100	<b>100</b>	100	100	100	100	100	<b>100</b>

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### 7.1. Some Reflections on the Five Surveys

The results of the five surveys are not directly comparable for many reasons. Methodologically speaking, they differ for the sampling, the administrative technique and also, in some cases, for the different linguistic connotations. In any case, we very well know how misleading the “claim to objectivity” of quantitative data could be. Results’ interpretation can be conceived as “projective games” for the researchers who are called to give comments on numbers and percentages. By reading results, we can distinguish two levels: a first descriptive level, where results are showed as “naked (approximate) numbers”, and a second interpretative level, where results are evaluated. From this second level the discussion among interpretations and different normative statements takes place, even though numbers are never to be considered “objective”. Considering the inter-cultural aims of the project the interpretative part is probably the most interesting one.

How to consider, for example, the agreement with a provocative statement that draws a parallel between some illegal “female genital modifications” (where some respondents would prefer the word “mutilations”) and “our” legal aesthetic surgery practices?

And when 10% of respondents agree with the statement that considers “honour killing” as a Muslim sole prerogative, should we look at the broad majority or be worried because one professional out of ten agrees with this discriminative statement?

Beyond the “objective simulacrum” of numbers, this survey has been useful for its capacity to detect different and sometimes overlapping interpretations and approaches on VAW, both by respondents and by the project partners.

The partners preferred to focus on issues linked to the local and national public debates. In fact, looking at results, national legal frames (as in the Spanish and Catalan cases) and public/political debates proved to be very influential among both respondents and researchers.

### Requests to the Services and Services Demands

The most difficult demands to be fulfilled are generally related to social welfare support (economic, housing and job), except in the Dutch sample where “child-care” and “mental health” supports are considered the most difficult requests to

meet. That could be due to different “vocations” of the services involved in the different surveys. Economic and social disadvantage are considered as very important dimensions with respect to increasing VAW (this point was particularly explored by Barcelona’s questionnaire, with a specific question). In order to face VAW in an intercultural context, services consider the networking of private/public services with native/migrant women as the best organizational pattern.

Padua’s services are the one that show a major “anomic” concern: they ask more specific training on national, European or international laws and directives, and consider having “shared protocols” as the best organizational pattern to face VAW.

## **Stereotypes and Common Perceptions**

Let us start from a very important point: in all regional contexts the majority perceive VAW both as increasing and more visible than in the past. Its visibility is mainly attributed to mass media and to women changing attitudes, who report it more. Another common general point is that violence is mainly considered in domestic/family contexts with important psychological connotations.

The perception of the most common typologies of violence considering the migrant context is more controversial. Barcelona and Padua samples present similar results: VAW is perceived quite often as acted by migrant men against migrant women, whereas in Madrid and Helsinki professionals answered in a rather different way, choosing as the most common typology of VAW “native men against native women”. In the Netherlands, results seem to be between the two, even if they are closer to Barcelona and Padua’s results. Although the question sounded confusing for some respondents (the absolute or relative VAW rates had to be considered?) and provocative/offending for others (the question risks to reify the native/migrant distinction), results showed a controversial point to be addressed, in order to unveil well-established stereotypes and perceptions.

These different perceptions shared a common point: VAW is not generally perceived as crossing the imaginary borders of “communities”: “native against native”, or “migrant against migrant”, are in all samples perceived as much more common than “native against migrant” or “migrant against native”.

This is an aspect to consider also when we interpret the capacity of services to detect specific risks of violence for MRM women, related to their legal, economic, social and migrant condition.

The last is a very important point: MRM women social vulnerability, product of a combination of economic, social, symbolic and legal conditions, are generally recognized as critical aspect to be considered, but not always as much as it would be expected. The multiple types of discrimination that they could face are not always recognized.

“Society support men’s supremacy” and “men consider natural that women are dependant” are generally recognized as the best explanation for VAW persistence by professionals from the different regions. But these “common-sense feminist” and very general statements, were challenged and sometimes undermined when statements and questions were more specific.

For example, the controversial question on women’s individual characteristics related to the risks of VAW (for some respondents the question was insulting towards women victims of violence) showed unexpected results: with the partial exception of the Dutch respondents, all samples indicate “psychologically dependent women” and “women suffering for low self-esteem” as the ones being more at risk of VAW. This result needs to be interpreted, because in its ambivalence it is possible to trace the recognition of structural symbolic violence on women (that possibly makes them disempowered in intimate relationships) or the symbolic violence acted by services on clients who risk to be labelled in “common sense” psychological terms, and “blamed”, for not being able to quit a violent intimate relationship. Surprisingly, the statement regarding “women that do not conform to their partner expectations” is always among the less chosen.

Generally, psychological frames are competing with social and cultural discourses in explaining the phenomenon of VAW. The most interesting to investigate would be how cultural or individual/psychological categories are most often used as common sense categories in everyday practices in order to define or label different situations and peoples in an intercultural context.

### **The Limits of Liberal Attitudes**

Among professionals of this European sample, a “rather liberal” (as from Finnish partners’ definition) and “gender-friendly” attitude is shared. It concerns sexual orientations and women’s rights on body: the lack of contraception or abortion and the negation of same-sex couples’ rights are very broadly considered as forms of social violence.

The “liberal” attitude finds its own limits when it comes across issues such as freely-chosen prostitution, the use of burqa, or the recognition of different forms of “family formation”.

For example, considering the “sex work” issue, the stress on individual free-choice is generally rejected by Padua, Madrid and Helsinki: for the majority of respondents, free-choice prostitution is still a form of VAW, while Barcelona’s sample is divided (we do not have the Netherland’s results on that). Moreover “poverty” is considered, with different degrees of agreement, the main factor explaining prostitution.

The intersection of cultural differences with gender and class differences make the mentioned issues of prostitution, burqa and family formation forms in relation to VAW very difficult to be addressed and interpreted by professionals.

The distinction (cfr. Bimbi) of an “integration into (our) rights” approach and “recognition of differences” approach, although with overlapping areas of meaning, could be useful to interpret the partners’ interpretative attitudes.

## 7.2. Remarks on Focus Group Results

The heterogeneity of results on focus groups reflects the differences between the five contexts of the project, the differences between the relation and work networks of the partners, but also the different choices related to the training activities.

We verified the difficulty to join the definitions of violence established by social indicators with the definitions emerged during the focus groups’ discussions.

In the Madrid’s case the comparison between migrant women and migrant men highlighted the difficulties of men to reflect about stereotypes, whereas women stress the need to changes and they identify gender equality as the solution to overcome violence.

The Dutch team delved into the cultural identification related to the use of the self-assigned ethnic labels, which proves that the identity theme as self-assignment cannot be confused with the essentialism given by the labels of the dominant majority.

In the same way, the Finnish success involving Roma women underlined that the construction of a positive peer-to peer relation can overcome labelling barriers that entail a *de facto* stigma.

The Padua and Barcelona’s experiences stress the difficulty of professionals in overcoming an individualist and psychologist approach to violence.

The focus groups highlighted the necessity to develop transcultural vocabularies about the definitions of violence, in order to improve the comprehension between different languages and meanings and to find more effective translations of gender human rights in the practices to contrast violence, in the social policies and above all between women of majority and minority groups.