

A project coordinated by



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Report Survey

SWIM - Safe Women in Migration. Strengthen GBV protection for migrant and asylum seeker women

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The project envisaged a survey targeted to the reception systems' operators belonging to the Countries involved in the project. More precisely, four Countries participated to the survey: Italy, France, Great Britain and Sweden. The survey was based on the same questionnaire in order to make the results perfectly comparable. The areas covered by the questionnaire were the following:

1. The **relationship** between reception system professionals (operators, social assistants, psychologists, ...) and migrants women;
2. The **gender-based violence** (GBV) the professionals enter in touch during their work;
3. The professionals opinions about the **vulnerability** of migrant women seeking for asylum and refugees;
4. The reception systems' operators **training needs**.

The total number of questionnaires collected in the 4 Countries are 437. Among the respondents, 70% are women (304); 35% of them is aged between 33 and 45 years old; 57% has an academic degree (or equivalent).

In the four Countries there are differences in the profiles of those who answered the survey especially in formal educational qualification. In fact, in Italy the 39% of respondents has an upper secondary education diploma while, in general, in the other Countries the practitioners involved in the survey have higher formal qualifications and are also a bit younger. In all the Countries the highest share of respondents (between 42 and 52%) works in migrants support services but since quite a short time (from 1 to 3 years). These features are obviously relevant only for this survey: they describe the profile of our sample and do not identify the profile of all the practitioners working in the receptions systems of the 4 Countries.

Tab. 1 – Practitioners distribution and characteristic

Countries	Number of Questionnaires	Gender		Age					Education		
		Male	Female	18-25	26-32	33-45	46-55	+56	Upper	Grad	Post-grad
Italy	190	65	125	16	58	73	40	3	75	86*	29
France	116	18	98	16	56	33	4	7	6	107	3
G. Britain	59	12	47	6	27	12	9	5	5	25	28
Sweden	72	38	34	1	15	22	23	11	2	31	39
Total	437	133	304	39	156	140	76	26	88	249	99

* 39 with a 3-years academic degree, 47 with a Master's Degree.

Source: data ISMU

In all the Countries the majority of the respondents works as social operator (or caseworker) inside the reception system.

In Italy, the 74% of interviewed operators works in the so-called CAS (Centres of Extraordinary Reception). The 50% of them is in big dimension centres and the 52% of the centres hosts families: therefore, the gender composition of the centres is mixed.

As for France, the 74% of operators works in CADA (Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers), mostly in medium/small centres (60% of the respondents): in the 75% of the centres, the gender composition is mixed (men and women), single or families.

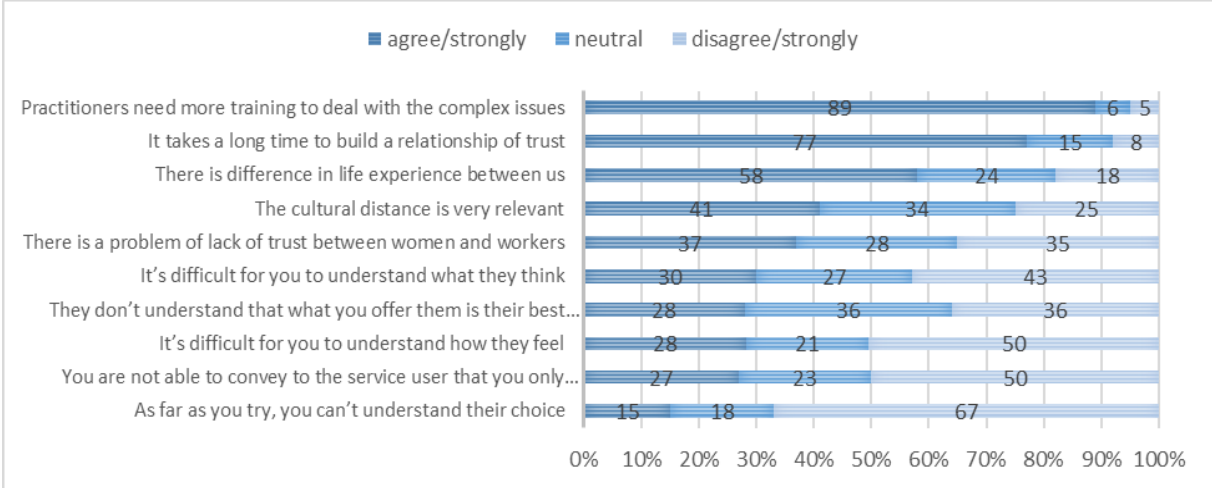
In Great Britain, the 65% of the respondents works in refugees’ support services more or less the same as in Sweden where the 66% works in the same type of services.

1. The relationship with migrant women

The Italian operators declare that migrant women, after becoming familiar with them, talk about their life in their Countries of origin (51% of cases) more than they about their journey (44%).

In **Italian** operators’ opinions the main barrier in their relationship with migrant women is operators’ lack of specific knowledge on GBV. In fact, they affirm to need more training to deal with such a complex issue like GBV (89%). Respondents also evidence they put a lot of time in building a relationship of trust with migrant women (77%). In spite of cultural distances (41%) and differences in life experience (58%) between practitioners and migrant women, they think that it’s not so much difficult to understand what migrant women think (43%), feel (50%) and their choice (67%).

Graf. 1 – The main barriers of Italian operators in talking to migrant women disclosing gender based violence (level of agreement)



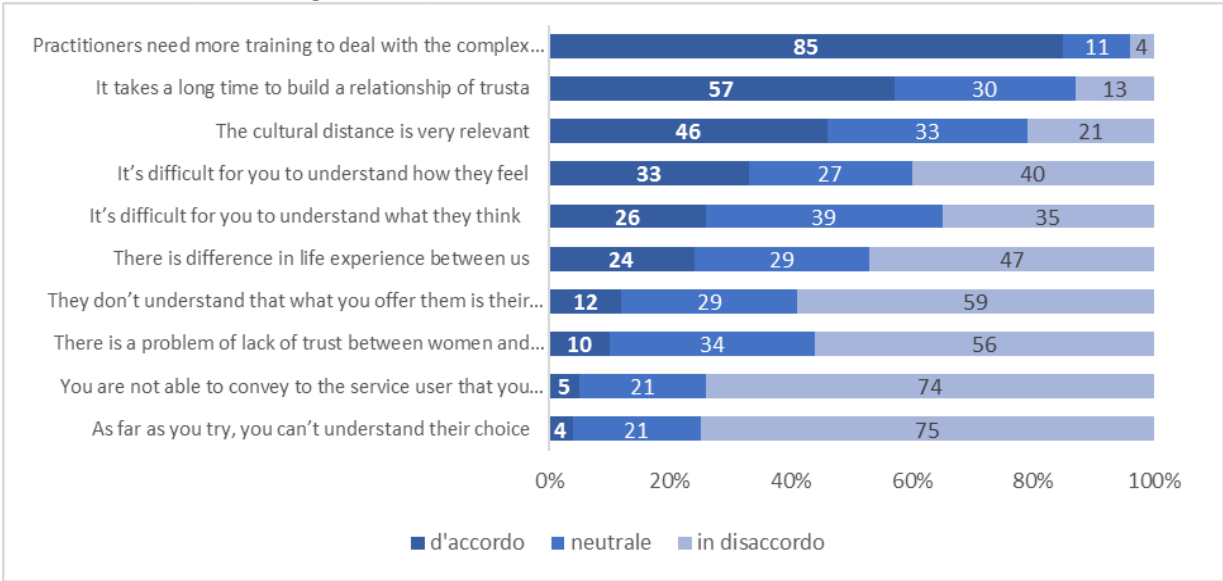
Source: data ISMU

Also French operators’ opinion is that migrant women are more eager, after they became familiar, to talk about their Countries of origin (52%) rather than their journey (41%).

In a share which is quite similar as Italian operators, also French think that their main barrier in talking of GBV with migrant women is their lack of specific knowledge on this issue. In this

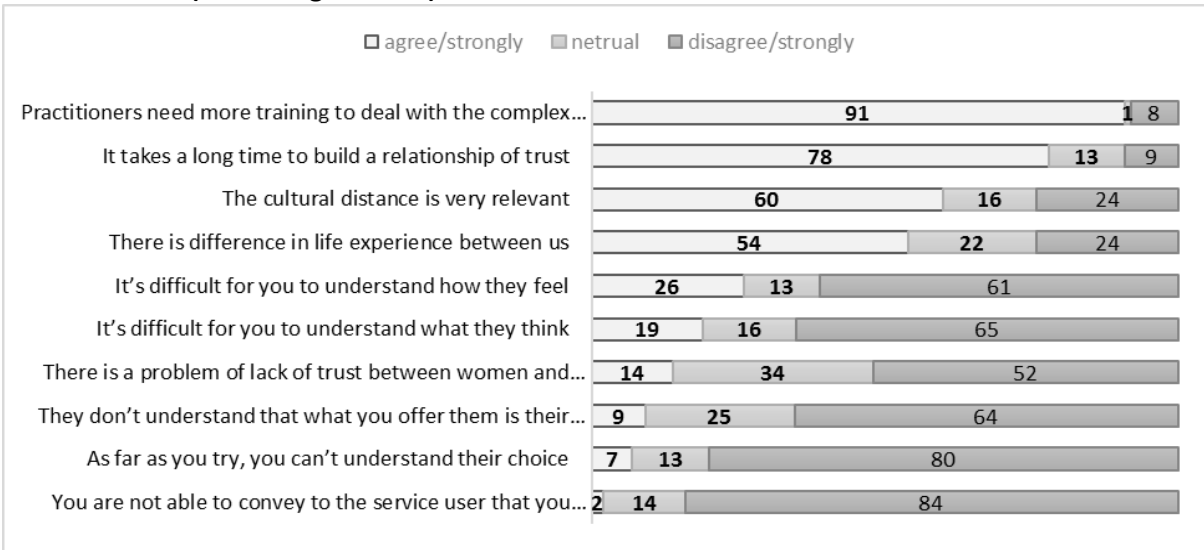
regard, the 85% of the respondents has the opinion that operators need more information for successfully dealing with complex situations like those related to GBV; it is instead slightly lower the share of those who think that a long time is needed for building a relation of trust (57%) and of the respondents for whom a relevant cultural distance problem exists (46%). Also French operators show a significant level of empathy with migrant women they work with and affirm they do not have relevant difficulties in understanding how women feel (40%), what they think (35%) and their choice (35%) and their choice.

Graf. 2 – The main barriers of French operators in talking to migrant women disclosing gender based violence (level of agreement)



Source: data ISMU

Graf. 3 – The main barriers of British operators in talking to migrant women disclosing gender based violence (level of agreement)

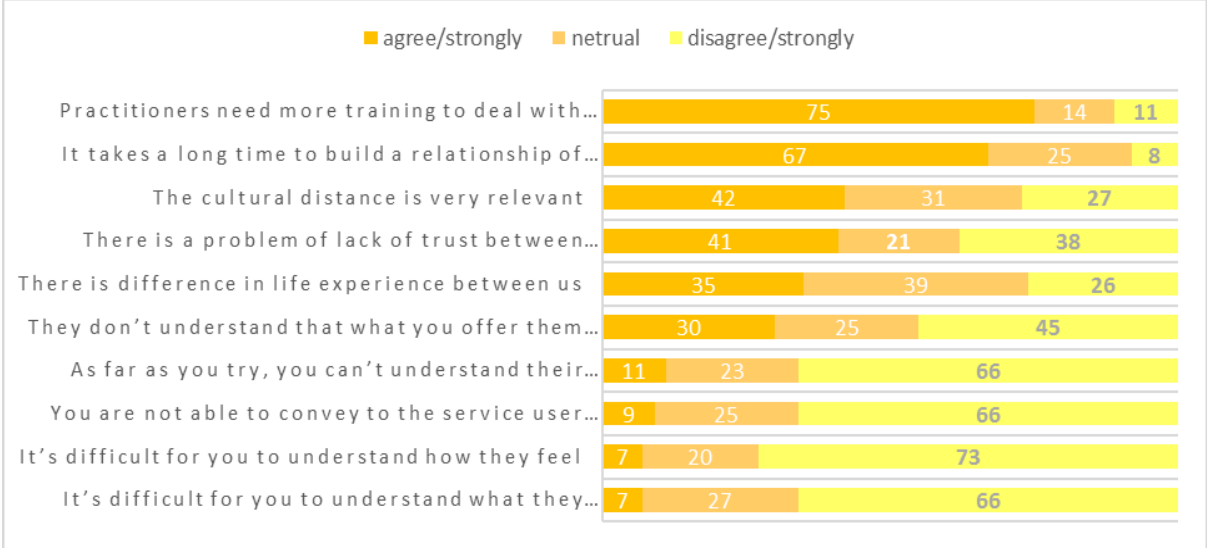


Source: data ISMU

Moving to British operators, their opinion is that migrant women only sometimes talk about their lives in their Country of origin (62%) or their journey (57%). The difficulties the respondents mention in their relationship with migrant women disclosing GBV are substantially the same indicated by the Italian and French colleagues: the main difficulty comes from the need for more specific training in order to be able to manage such a complex issue (91%) while the second one is the long time the building of a relationship of trust requires (78%). This last problem is always mentioned by the respondents of the four Countries but it has a different relevance in each Country covered by the survey according to the diversities the national reception systems have, the delivered services and how much time operators spend with migrant women.

Also for British operators it is not difficult to understand migrant women choice as GBV victims (80%), what they think (65%) and how they feel (61%).

Graf. 4 – The main barriers of Swedish operators in talking to migrant women disclosing gender based violence (level of agreement)



Source: data ISMU

Swedish operators think that migrant women are only sometimes willing to talk about their lives in their Countries of origin (96%) or about their journeys (80%). The main barriers indicated by the respondents in their relationship with the migrant women are the same mentioned by other Countries' operators: the very similar answers' distribution is shown in Graph. 4 here above. Also Swedish operators have a high empathy and closeness with migrant women victims of GBV: in fact, they affirm not to have difficulties in understanding what women think (66%), how they feel (73%) and their choice (66%).

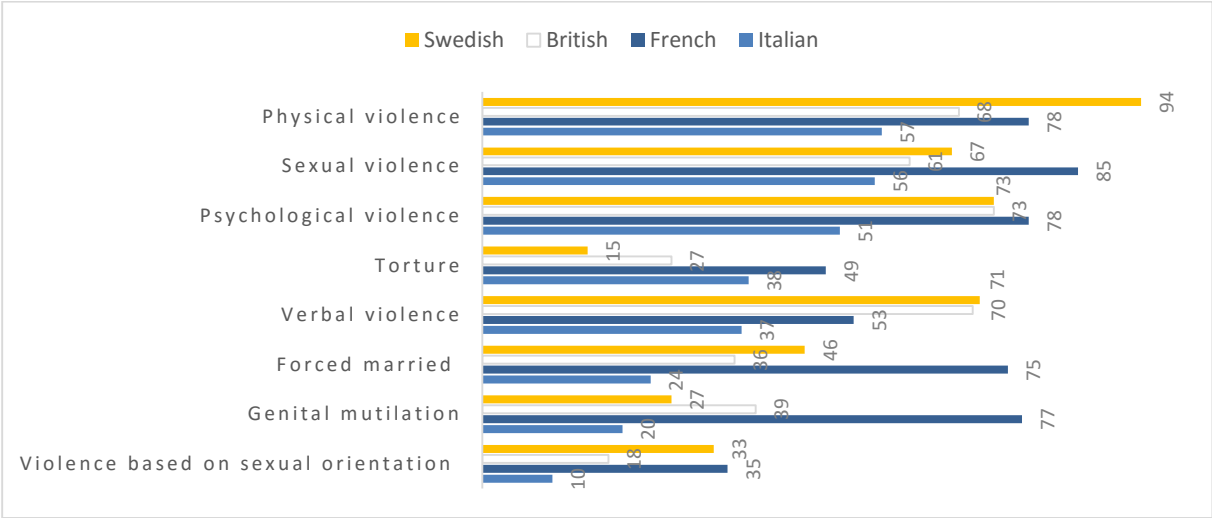
The reception systems operators of the four Countries, therefore, present similar patterns of relationship with migrant women and at the same time evidence similar difficulties: they all

aim to build a relationship of trust but this requires time and instruments specifically tailored to those working in the reception systems.

2. The forms of Gender Based Violence

The forms of violence indicated by the respondents are various: physical, sexual and psychological violence is significantly mentioned for all the Countries. Cases of tortures are relevant mostly for France (49%) and Italy (39%).

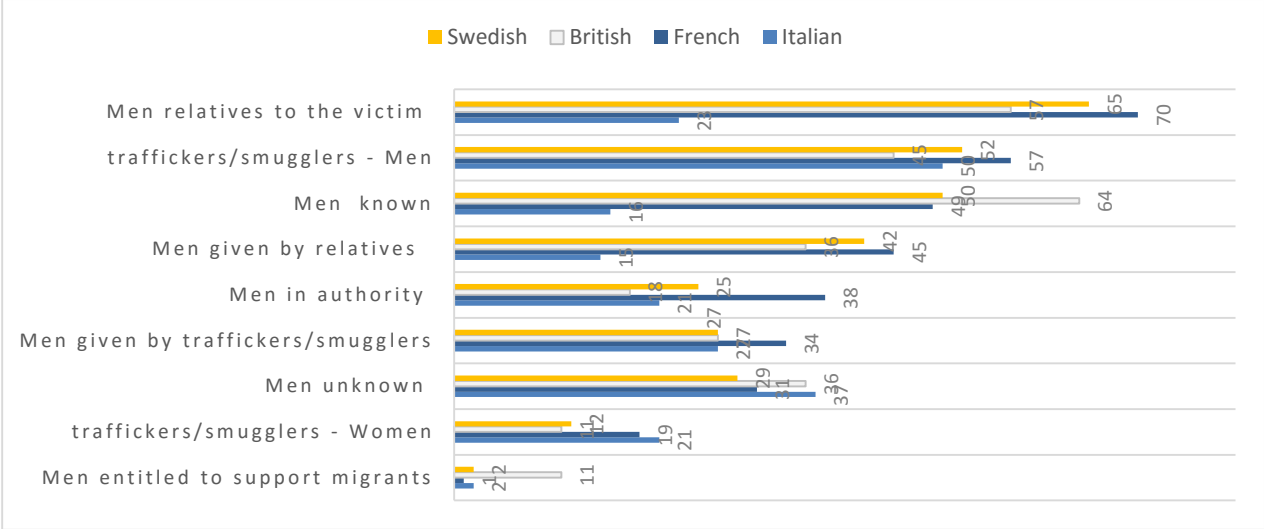
Graf. 5 – The form of gender based violence more frequently experienced by the migrant women



Source: data ISMU

Genital mutilations and forced married are very frequently under the attention of French operators: this is partly dependent on the Countries of origin of the asylum-seeking and refugees women (Countries where these forms of violence are very common) but it partly depends also by the French system having a particular attention to the disclosing of these types of violence. As for violence based on migrants’ sexual orientation, it is generally mentioned to a lesser extent, especially in Italy (10%) and Sweden (18%).

Graf. 6 – The perpetrator more frequently declare by migrant women

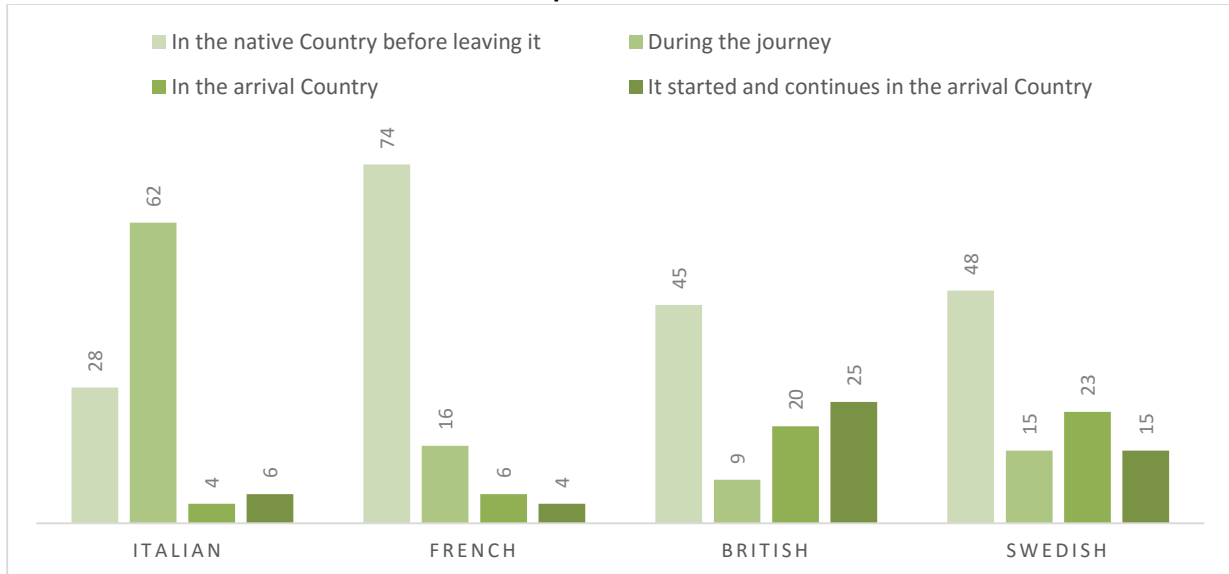


Source: data ISMU

According to the answers, violence is more frequently perpetrated by men who are *near* to the victims or who belong to their families (especially for French and Swedish operators but in a lesser extent for British). For Italian respondents, instead, the violence main perpetrators are traffickers and smugglers as well as “men known” in general. As for relatives, they are mentioned mostly by French and Swedish operators (to a lesser extent by Italians) as those who “offer” women to traffickers during the migration journey.

In almost all the operators’ opinions violence mainly took place in the women’s Countries of origin with the exception of Italian respondents (28%) who think – on the opposite - that the “the journey” is the situation at most risk for women (62%). This is to some extent dependent on the migration routes used by women for reaching their destination in SWIM project’s Countries and, for Italy, by the use in the past three years of the Libyan route which is a very dangerous and unsafe one.

Graf. 7 – Place where the violence has taken place



Source: data ISMU

In Italy, France and Great Britain only a minority of the operators affirms that in the service or centre where he/she works a specific procedure to respond to GBV exists: it is more frequent that a “general procedure for all kind of violence events exist” (51% for Italy, 41% for France and 59% for Great Britain). On the contrary, the 63% of Swedish operators answers that a GBV cases “specific procedure exists” while only 33% of them indicates that it is used a procedure which is in force for “all kind of violence events”: the answers for which procedure does not exist are very rare.

3 Asylum-seekers and refugees migrant women vulnerability

Migrant women are considered as all equally at risk of GBV by about the 40% of Italian, French and Swedish operators while for British operators the percentage goes down to ¼ of the total respondents. For the 53% of British operators there are “specific groups of migrant women that are at higher risk conditions” like sex-trafficking victims or women escaping alone by dangerous situations or contexts.

Overall, all the four Countries’ operators hold the view that migrant women suffer GBV more frequently than it appears, as showed in the here below table, and that they are more often exposed to gender violence than the general population. For Italian operators the cultures migrant women come from is the main element causing GBV while other Countries’ operators agreement with this answer goes down to 50% or even to 30% for Swedish. In addition, migrant women seem to be significantly used – in respondents’ perceptions – to a significant level of GBV. Finally, while all the operators agree on the absence of a multiplier-effect deriving from GBV suffered by migrant women, only few operators agree with the position that migrant women suffer GBV “less frequently” than it is commonly assumed.

Tab. 2 – Level and origin of vulnerability of migrant women (percentage of agree and strongly agree)

	IT % agree/strongly	FR % agree/strongly	GB % agree/strongly	SV % agree/strongly
Suffer gender-based violence much more frequently than it appears	85	82	86	50
Are more often exposed to violence than the general population	69	79	74	59
Come from cultures that impose gender-based violence	82	51	57	30
Are used to a significant level of gender-based violence	47	49	39	27
Suffer gender-based violence less frequently than you think	10	7	6	5

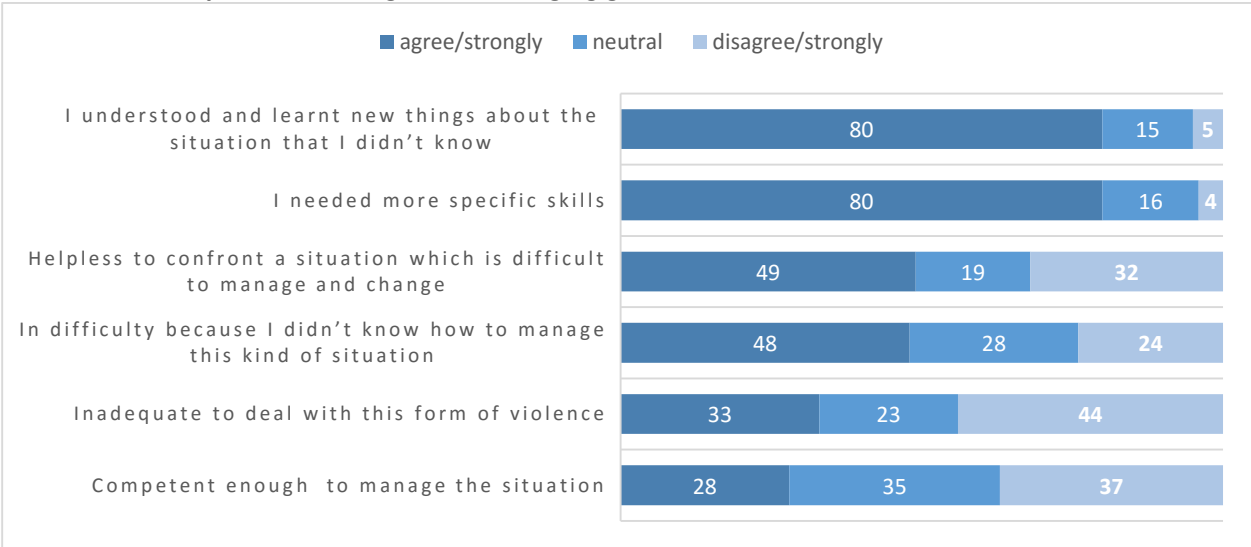
Source: data ISMU

4. The training needs of reception systems operators

Before asking the reception systems operators about their training needs, they have been requested to indicate how they felt when they had to manage GBV cases.

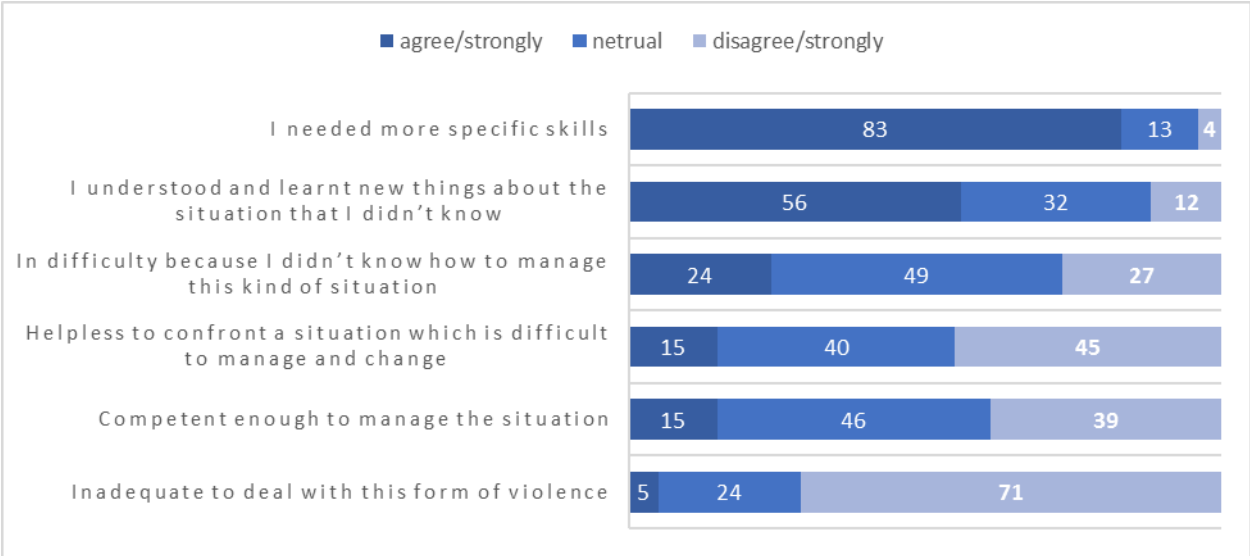
Italian operators (Graph. 7) affirmed they learned “new things about the situations that [they] did not know” (80%) and, at the same time, they recognize to need “more specific skills” (80% as well). About half of them felt “helpless” to confront situations so “difficult to manage and change” (49%) and also “in difficulty” in managing this kind of situations (48%); the 33% of the respondents feels “inadequate to deal with this form of violence” and only the 28% of them thinks to be “competent enough to manage the situation”.

Graf. 8– Italian operators feeling when managing gender-based violence cases



Source: data ISMU

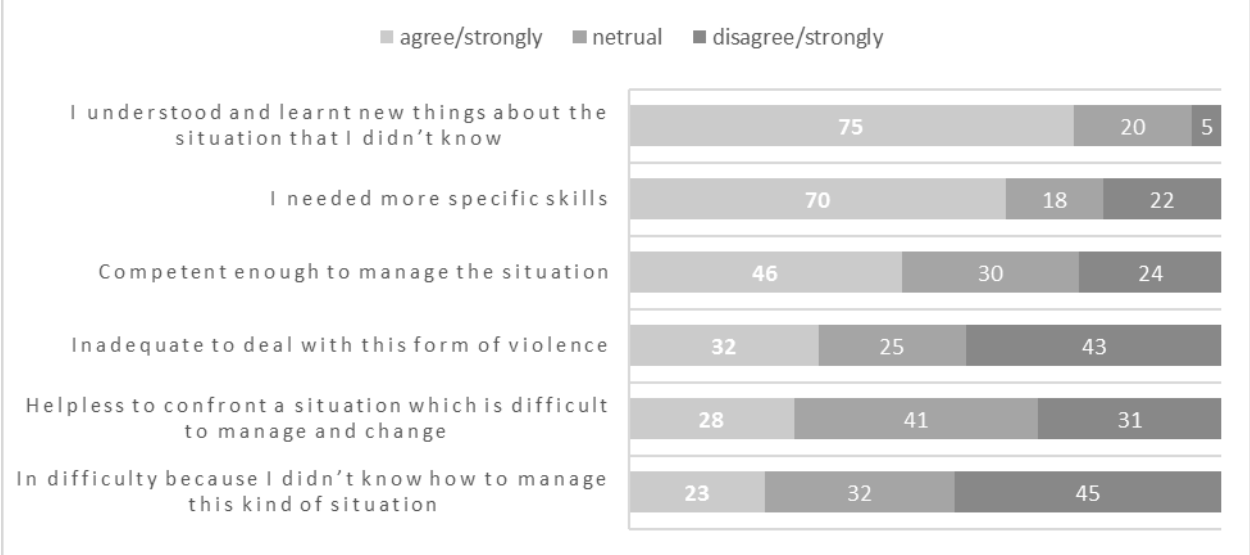
Graf. 9 – French operators feeling when managing gender-based violence cases



Source: data ISMU

French operators opinion is that they need specific competences (83% of answers) and for more than 50% of them the management of GBV cases caused them to learn “new things about the situation [they] did not know”. Unlike their Italian colleagues, they feel less inadequate (5%) and less in difficulty (15%) in dealing with GVB cases.

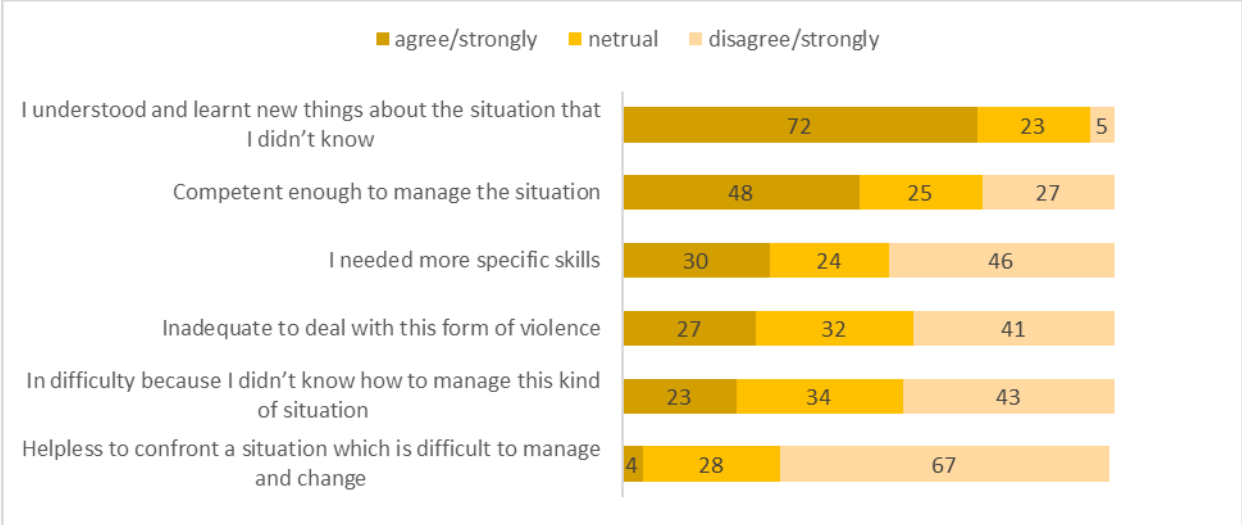
Graf. 10 – British operators feeling when managing gender-based violence cases



Source: data ISMU

British operators, like Italians, learned – working on GBV cases – “new things ... [they] did not know” (75%); the 70% of them think to need specific competences in spite of 50% of them who affirms to feel “competent enough” to manage the cases. At the same time, about 1/3 of the British respondents feels “inadequate” (32%) and in “in difficulty” (23%) in managing GBV cases. Being the respondents in a limited number, it is not possible to enucleate the reasons for these internal differences: probably they are linked to their individually specific training paths.

Graf. 11 – Swedish operators feeling when managing gender-based violence cases



Source: data ISMU

Finally, the largest majority of Swedish operators finds in GBV cases management an occasion for learning new things in management itself (72%); like the British colleagues, they feel themselves “competent enough” to manage GBV situations (48%). However, 1/3 of them indicated a need for higher specific competences and feels “inadequate for dealing with this form of violence”. Such a difference is consistent with the operators’ profiles in term of formal educational qualifications.

Overall, to conclude, in all the Countries covered by the survey the majority of the operators feels the need to develop specific competences related to both gender-based violence and to the management of cases as complex as those which are made explicit by migrant women GBV victims. Also with respect to more general topics linked to migrant people reception, the need for specific skills and knowledge emerge from a significant share of operators (51% of Italian, 30% of French, 12% of British, 43% of Swedish).

In addition, the operators have been asked to indicate the topics for which they think a dedicated training is considered more urgent: in the *words-cloud* here operators below the most mentioned topics are presented.





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