Intimate Partner Violence against Women: An Analysis of Victimization Trajectories

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Abstract

This study maps latent life-course trajectories of intimate partner violence (IPV) against women using linked sentencing and protection-order records from Catalonia, Spain. The sample comprises about 7,000 men convicted of IPV (2010–2014) and about 4,000 women who obtained protection orders against those men; records track criminal and victimization histories through March 2019. We applied group-based trajectory modeling (GBTM) in a data-driven way to identify distinct patterns of recorded victimization from adolescence into mid-life. Two reproducible trajectories emerged: a "moderate–decreasing" trajectory (earlier onset, modest peak, subsequent decline; onset about 25 years) and a "violent–increasing" trajectory (later onset, sharper escalation in violent episodes; onset about 33 years) in the main analysis. Mean age at first recorded victimization was about 35 years. The violent trajectory accumulates substantially higher counts of physical, psychological, and unspecified IPV and concentrates the most severe outcomes. Notably, both trajectories are interpretable as subtypes of coercive-controlling violence, suggesting heterogeneity within that category. Because our data derive from adjudicated cases, they likely represent the "tip of the iceberg." Findings underscore the need for age-inclusive prevention and tailored interventions that account for divergent timing, severity, and power dynamics across women's IPV trajectories.

Keywords: life-course trajectories; latent class analysis; gender-based violence; late-onset victimization; victim-offender dynamics

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) extends beyond the realm of private family issues; it is a critical public health concern that jeopardizes the realization of an egalitarian society (Cho et al. 2023). Emerging as a central topic in sociological debates during the 1970s, IPV transitioned from being seen as a private matter to a recognized social problem that demands systematic intervention (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Gelles 1985). However, the sociological field has since been divided into two main theoretical perspectives: the family violence perspective identifies IPV as just one form of family violence, arguing that violence occurs within the family regardless of gender, and suggesting that women can be as violent as men (Dixon and Graham-Kevan 2011; Dutton 2012; Gelles 1974; Straus 1971). Conversely, the feminist perspective recognises violence as intricately intertwined with gender (Jakobsen 2014), and so IPV as resulting from patriarchal domination of men and subjugation of women (Lawson 2012). Feminist scholars have criticized the gender symmetry perspective for advancing undertheorized claims about IPV's (non-) gendered nature that fail to connect violence to gender inequalities in society or treat gender merely as an influencing force without recognizing its fundamentally political nature (Anderson 2009; Jakobsen 2014).

Despite these disagreements, most researchers agree that the impact and consequences of abusive behavior in an intimate relationship are substantially more deleterious on women (Muehlenhard and Kimes 1999; Sagot 2005), affecting more seriously their mental and physical health, employment, and daily functioning (Bosch et al. 2017; Harned 2001). This justifying studying patterns of men's intimate partner violence against women, and proposing an operative definition of IPV as any act of violence or coercive control—whether actual or threatened—perpetrated against a woman by her current or former male partner (EIGE 2017; Krug et al. 2002).

Research indicates that risk factors differ across groups of women defined by their age (Capaldi et al. 2012). This suggests that the manifestation and aetiology of IPV may change over the life course. Research has indeed identified the existence of latent longitudinal trajectories of IPV victimization (DeLong et al. 2020; Kelly et al. 2024; Swartout et al. 2012; DeCamp and Zaykowski 2015). Each of these studies used different methods and samples and focused on different age groups or regions, yielding divergent findings and conclusions. To our knowledge, none has examined this issue using judicial (court) data on women in mid- or later-life in Spain. Thanks to these studies, we now understand that what was previously assumed to be a single, normally distributed risk of IPV along victims conceals multiple, distinct trajectories corresponding to different subgroups of women. Despite this, the investigation of IPV victimization trajectories across the life course of female victims remains an underexplored area of research, especially at later ages.

In examining trajectories of IPV victimization, age emerges as a central factor (Adebowale 2018; Fernández-González et al. 2014). Yet, most prior studies have treated age as a static, cross-sectional variable—comparing women of different ages—while neglecting how repeated victimizations shape women's vulnerability across time (Stubbs and Szoeke 2022). This conflation of cross-sectional and longitudinal perspectives lies at the heart of the debate over whether women who have experienced IPV should be described as "victims" or "survivors." Whereas "survivors" are understood to have endured and, in some cases, escaped IPV, the term "victims" risks representing women solely as passive recipients of violence, without agency or resistance (see Cho et al. 2023; Marganski et al. 2022). Such a static framing is a direct consequence of overlooking the dynamic nature of their experiences.

Despite these limitations, cross-sectional approaches to studying IPV offer valuable insights such as that it often begins in adolescence. The World Health Organization (2021) estimated that one in four women globally who have had an intimate partner experienced physical or psychological IPV by age 20. However, while physical violence appears to decline with age (Kim et al. 2008; Rodriguez 2001), other forms of abuse (i.e., coercive and emotionally abusive behavior) appear to persist or emerge later in life (Pathak et al. 2019; Stöckl and Penhale 2015; Mezey et al. 2002).

Another problem with the existing research is that it pays little attention to older women. Older women receive less media attention and benefit less from prevention and intervention programs that are often targeted to younger women with different problematics. Indeed, life stages present unique vulnerabilities and protective factors to individuals of different ages. While younger survivors might be particularly vulnerable to peer dynamics and identity-related challenges (Žukauskienė et al. 2021), older survivors may experience heightened risks due to higher social isolation and physical decline (Kim 2019). Recognizing the dynamic nature of age-related risks is crucial for a deeper understanding of how life stage transitions affect both vulnerability and resilience to IPV.

A final shortcoming of previous studies on IPV is that they tend to examine victims and perpetrators' risks independently, without considering a third dimension pertaining to their relationship. IPV is affected not just by the individual characteristics of female victims and male aggressors, but also by the dyadic and relational factors pertaining to the couple. Factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, migration status, ethnicity, sexual identity, and disability, among others, rare risk or protective factors that interact within the dyadic context of the relationship (Capaldi et al. 2012; Closson et al. 2024; Ellsberg and Heise 2005). Only by integrating these levels can we

achieve a holistic and nuanced understanding that reflects the true complexity of the phenomenon.

This study has one primary aim and two specific objectives that seek to address several gaps in the existing literature. It aims to advance in identifying the etiology of men's IPV against women by integrating a dynamic temporal framework with the help of a unique longitudinal dataset, ultimately informing targeted interventions and policy measures to mitigate revictimization and promote public health. The two objectives are, first, to identify distinct latent trajectories of IPV victimization over the life course (*trajectory identification*); and second, to delineate the profiles of survivors and aggressors associated with these trajectories (*couple profile characterization*).

The study focuses solely on violence in heterosexual couples where the crimes committed by the man against his partner are so severe or recurrent that surface into the institutional criminal justice system in the form of convictions. To address age in a dynamic way, our study employs a longitudinal dataset that maps distinct IPV trajectories over the life course. By exploring how victimization unfolds and transforms across the lifespan, our study identifies critical periods for intervention and helps develop targeted prevention and support strategies.

Our main research questions are: *Which are the main victimization trajectories of intimate partner violence experienced by women? Which of the couple's socio-demographic and criminological factors are most strongly associated with such trajectories?*

Literature review

The two dimensions of IPV

This literature review is organized around a central question: *is there a single, universal narrative of (intimate partner) violence, and is there a single, prototypical victim of such violence?* Society and the media often portray an "ideal" victim (Christie 1986): someone young, passive, and devoid of agency, while representing perpetrators as "monsters," detached and driven by irresistible impulses. Such archetypes foster a prototypical—and misleading—narrative of victimhood and violence: they conflate victim and aggressor roles with particular forms of masculinity and femininity (Roberts et al. 2019), casting victims as inherently weak or as suffering the consequences of challenging traditional gender scripts (Kavanaugh 2013).

We argue that IPV does not conform to one uniform story; rather, the phenomenon is markedly heterogeneous. To challenge these pervasive myths, the review is structured around two intrinsically related dimensions: (1) variation in temporal and life-course dynamics, showing that IPV occurs across the lifespan and is not confined to youth, and (2) variation in incidents, forms, and parties' characteristics, highlighting distinct typologies and diverse patterns of violence. By foregrounding age heterogeneity and typological diversity, this review seeks to overturn reductive portrayals and provide a more nuanced framework for understanding IPV.

Temporal heterogeneity: violence beyond youth

The first dimension contributing to IPV's heterogeneity is temporal. This temporal dimension is strongly shaped by historical and cultural context, but also by major stressors (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2008 global financial crisis). Here, however, we

concentrate principally on the specific point along an individual's life course at which violence occurs. In other words, age is a crucial analytic factor.

Age is a well-established predictor of IPV for both perpetrators and victims/survivors. Regarding perpetrators, researchers largely agree that involvement in violent offending rises in adolescence and falls in adulthood—pattern commonly referred to in criminology as the "age–crime curve" (Farrington 1986; Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983; Sweeten et al. 2013). Yet, applying this general pattern to IPV uncovers two significant complications that constrain its explanatory value.

First, the canonical age–crime curve is observed predominantly among men, who account for the majority of violent offending (Heidensohn 1989). Second, the age distribution for IPV perpetrators appears shifted rightward relative to non-partner violent offenders: the mean age of those who perpetrate IPV is higher than that of offenders who commit violence outside intimate relationships (Herrenkohl et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2015). One plausible explanatory hypothesis for this shift is that more severe forms of IPV may develop and escalate over time within (stable) intimate relationships. Consequently, individuals convicted of partner-directed offences may begin offending at older ages and exhibit later desistance than those convicted of non-partner violent offences (Rodríguez-Menés and Ruiz-Vallejo 2021).

Regarding victims/survivors, literature mainly identifies increasing age as a protective factor in IPV (Bellot et al. 2024; Capaldi et al. 2012). Consequently, younger women are generally considered more vulnerable to IPV than older women (WHO 2021). A cross-regional study of formerly married women in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe reported that the mean age at first IPV experience is approximately 22 years (Rivara et al. 2009). The World Health Organization (2021, 21) similarly estimates that

roughly 25% of ever-partnered women have experienced at least one episode of physical or sexual IPV by age 20.

This concentration of risk in early adulthood partly explains the common public misconception that victimhood is primarily a young-woman phenomenon; yet this framing risks obscuring the violence experienced by older and married women, who may face distinct and, in some cases, greater vulnerabilities when subjected to partner abuse. As populations age partner (Pathak et al. 2019), addressing IPV in later life and contesting the myth of the "ideal victim" (Christie 1986) become urgent matters of social justice.

Although prevalence is higher among younger women, numerous studies demonstrate that many women experience IPV later in life (Bonomi et al. 2007; Pathak et al. 2019; Zink et al. 2005), and that non-physical forms of IPV (such as, stalking, economic abuse, vicarious violence, and controlling behavior) do not necessarily decline with age (Jacobson et al. 1996; Mezey et al. 2002; Shepard and Campbell 1992; King et al. 2021; Palmer et al. 2024; Stöckl and Penhale 2015). A U.S. study found that the risk of IPV victimization peaks between ages 26 and 30 and declines after age 50 (Peterman et al. 2015).

Some authors contend that IPV may have more detrimental among older women—a finding that challenges the notion of age as a uniformly protective factor (Sanz-Barbero et al. 2019). Research suggest that IPV can emerge at older ages as a consequence of economic shocks such as job loss (Anderberg et al. 2016; Dugan et al. 2003), changes in relationship status (e.g., marriage or separation; Barbier et al. 2022; Miedema et al. 2016), or other stressing events like childbirth (D'Angelo et al. 2023), or infertility (Wang et al. 2022). IPV risks may be exacerbated by changing gender norms or patriarchal attitudes linked to migration or refugee experiences, more common at middle ages (Sabri et al. 2018). Economic dependency may undermine women's ability to exit relationships

characterized by severe and asymmetric violence (Anderson 1997) causing the perpetuation of an abusive relationship. Later-life IPV has significant consequences for mental health (Ali et al. 2016; McGarry et al. 2017) and physical health, including gastrointestinal, psychosomatic, and pelvic complaints (Stöckl and Penhale 2015).

Older women also encounter more complex barriers to help-seeking—such as physical disability and economic dependence on the partner—which complicate detection and intervention (Pathak et al. 2019). The concept of the "ideal victim" has informed public policy and the formulation of IPV interventions, leading services and programs that focus predominantly on younger women to neglect the needs of middle-aged and older women. Specifically, the "one-size-fits-all" has proven ineffective (Murphy-Geiss et al. 2015), precisely because women's risks of victimization are not uniform across ages and types of violence (Swartout et al. 2012). These blanket strategies fail to significantly reduce recidivism—and in some cases may even exacerbate it (Cantos and O'Leary 2014; Renauer and Henning 2005). To be effective, interventions should be diverse and individually assessed (Davis 2008, 257), tailored to the changing risks affecting individuals over the life-course (Kelly and Johnson 2008), and more sensitive to women and men's different involvement in IPV (Melton and Belknap 2003; Muftić and Bouffard 2007).

Typological diversity: beyond a single story of violence

The second dimension that captures IPV's heterogeneity is its diversity in incidents, forms, and actors. There is no single prototypical narrative of violence; rather, numerous distinct trajectories and configurations exist. Attempts to classify these patterns are longstanding: both scholars of family violence and the feminist perspectives have developed typologies. However, these two traditions diverge sharply on the phenomenon's fundamental nature, treating IPV respectively as rooted in individual

predispositions or in patriarchal social structures. Within the first approach, often dominated by psychologists, many scholars have sought it. Gottman et al. (1995) distinguished between Type-1 (the more violent) and Type-2 batterers. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994), and Holtzworth-Munroe (2000) used severity, generality of violence, and personality pathology, to propose three perpetrator types ("family-only," "dysphoric-borderline," and "generally violent/antisocial"). Monson and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (1998) subsequently added a fourth category, "sexually obsessive" batterers. Murphy et al. (2007) identified three partner-violence profiles they labelled pathological anger, low anger control, and normal anger.

Johnson's work (1995; 2005; 2006; 2008; Kelly and Johnson 2008) similarly attempted to classify IPV into classes, but from an opposite, more social, approach. He proposed a pivotal framework to explain why researchers continue to produce apparently discordant empirical findings on the nature of IPV. Johnson (2008) proposed a four-class typology, but here we only focus on two of them. Situational Couple Violence (SCV) is closer to what the family violence perspective conceptualizes as just one of several forms of intrafamilial abuse—against women, children, the elderly, or siblings (Gelles 1985; Lawson 2012; Rodríguez-Menés and Safranoff 2012). This typology of IPV is seen by Johnson as less rooted in gendered power dynamics and hence more gender-symmetric (i.e., women are just as violent as men). What distinguishes this violence from coercive controlling behavior is that situational couple violence typically emerges as an intermittently response to occasional conflicts that escalate beyond control. Hence, it does not primarily function to establish a partner's domination through a pattern of power and control (Johnson 1995).

According to Johnson (2006), SCV is the form of IPV most commonly detected in population surveys—and is likely underrepresented in clinical and criminal-justice

registries—because it tends to be of lower severity and due to higher nonresponse and nondisclosure among survivors (owing to shame, fear of partner retaliation, or the perpetrator's exertion of control that suppresses disclosure).

In contrast, Coercive Controlling Violence (CCV)—first termed "Intimate Terrorism" (Johnson 1995)—is the form of abuse that feminist scholars used to refer to as "battering" (Martin 1981). According to Johnson, this form typically (though not always) reflects the influence of patriarchal or sexist traditions aimed at asserting power and control over women. It is characterized by a systematic use of violence by men combined with tactics of subordination, coercion, and surveillance, often escalating over time (Johnson 1995). In this typology, violence is instrumentalized by the perpetrator as a means to establish and sustain power and control over their intimate partner. Because it is the most severe, this type of IPV is most commonly documented via court records, shelter logs, police reports, and hospital admissions (Kelly and Johnson 2008).

CCV is disproportionately visible in clinical and criminal-justice records and is often underestimated in survey data due to greater severity and entrenched dynamics of coercive control (Johnson 2006). For these reasons, and given the nature of our data, our analysis will primarily capture instances of coercive-controlling behavior.

Thus, if and when a man secures control over his partner and his authority remains uncontested, the incidence of violence may decline (Atkinson et al. 2005; Gelles 1974; Hoffman et al. 1994). However, both the alignment of individual characteristics at couple formation (e.g., age differences, nationality, or an educational advantage favoring the woman) and subsequent order overturn within an established relationship (for example, a woman's acquisition of greater socio-economic status relative to her male partner due to a salary increase or promotion) can become risk factors for IPV (Stryker and Macke 1978). When this happens, the resulting violation of traditional gender norms can provoke

stress, cognitive dissonance, and feelings of inadequacy or anger in the man (Franklin and Menaker 2014; Lenton 1995; Stryker and Macke 1978). In such contexts, male partners may resort to violence as a means of reasserting conventional power hierarchies and compensating for perceived status loss (Anderson 1997; Gelles 1974; Hoffman et al. 1994). In status-inconsistent couples, repeated abuse may become entrenched because the patriarchal order is never fully restored (Anderson 2009; Stryker and Macke 1978; Yick 2001). In the feminist literature about IPV and patriarchy, this is known as status inconsistency theory (Franklin and Menaker 2014; Lenton 1995; Stryker and Macke 1978).

Do women experience alternative trajectories of IPV?

Thus far, evidence indicates that heterogeneity—both over time and by type—within IPV is greater than is commonly assumed. Yet, one important question remains. When analyses of temporal variation are combined with analyses of typological variation, we move into the study of longitudinal trajectories of violence. Do distinct longitudinal trajectories of IPV exist?

Recent evidence highlights this heterogeneous nature of IPV experiences and challenges the assumption that IPV risk is uniformly distributed across women's lifespans (Sanz-Barbero et al. 2019). While identifying life-time trajectories of IPV among perpetrators has become common in the literature (Hilton and Eke 2016; Pérez-Cámara et al. 2025; Piquero et al. 2006; Teva et al. 2023; Valdivia-Devia et al. 2021), only in the recent decades scholars begun to delineate trajectory groups among IPV victims and survivors. Although the number of studies remains limited, the most relevant findings are summarized below.

DeCamp and Zaykowski (2015) using group-based trajectory models on survey data from England and Wales, identified four victimization trajectories among people

aged 10–29 followed for four years. They reported that most IPV cases clustered in a trajectory peaking around age 20, while a substantial subgroup followed a chronically victimized trajectory associated with violent crime; because IPV was not the primary focus, further detail is lacking.

DeLong et al. (2020) examined physical IPV trajectories in a cohort of 907 adolescent girls in Mpumalanga (South African) and followed them for four years. Two trajectories emerged: a "high-risk" group whose IPV probability rose sharply in early adolescence, peaked around age 17, and then declined gradually; and a "low-risk" group with a relatively stable, low probability of IPV and only a slight increase near age 17. The study also linked trajectory membership to later health outcomes, including HIV incidence.

Kelly et al. (2024) revisiting the same Mpumalanga cohort, assessed the association between physical IPV trajectories and stress. Using group-based trajectory modelling, they again identified two groups: both showed an early adolescent increase in IPV probability followed by a decline in late adolescence or early adulthood, but the higher-risk group peaked later and declined more slowly than the lower-risk group.

Swartout et al. (2012) applying latent class growth analysis to longitudinal data from roughly 1,500 U.S. college women across five waves from adolescence into the college years, identified five victimization trajectory classes from low or no IPV to high and increasing IPV.

Together, these studies contradict the stereotype of the uniformly "young" IPV victim and the notion of a homogenous, life-long risk profile. Instead, they show that IPV risk is dynamic, can peak at different life stages, and may present with varying severity. The evidence therefore supports the need for prevention and intervention strategies tailored to distinct trajectory groups and age cohorts. However, these studies share

important limitations, such as, context-restricted or relatively small samples, inconsistent IPV measures, reliance on self-report, and relatively short follow-up windows. This constrain the generalizability of their trajectories and the ability to link them robustly to long-term outcomes.

The Spanish context

The Spanish context represents a particularly salient case in the study of IPV. During Franco dictatorship (pre-1975), women possessed minimal legal rights and domestic violence was regarded as a private matter (Moraga García 2008). The 1978 Constitution marked a major institutional step forward toward gender equality, paving the way for significant reforms such as the legalization of divorce (Law 30/1981; Aguilera Arilla 2003) and a new Criminal Code, Organic Law 14/1999 (Laurenzo 2012), which criminalized routine domestic violence and introduce protective orders for victims.

A watershed moment occurred with Organic Law 1/2004–Spain's landmark law on gender-based and intimate-partner violence. The law reframed such violence as an act directed at women on the basis of their gender, thereby elevating IPV from a private issue to a matter of public concern. It established specialized courts and prosecutors for crimes against women, expanded social and psychological support services for victims, increased penalties on aggressors, and integrated preventive educational measures. As a result, Spain leapt forward in progressive gender-violence legislation compared with many other European states and went on to ratify the Istanbul Convention in 2014.

Subsequent reforms further strengthened legal protections: Organic Law 1/2015 limited protected status exclusively to women and imposed harsher sentences for repeat offenders (Marí Farinós 2018), while the Organic Law 10/2022) *"Solo sí es sí"* ("only yes means yes") law broadened the definition of sexual crimes and reinforced gender-violence provisions.

Correspondingly, public discourse has undergone a dramatic transformation. High-profile cases such as those of Ana Orantes and Rocío Carrasco (Bernal Triviño 2023), along with mass demonstrations and social-media campaigns (#NiUnaMenos, #MeToo), have brought IPV into the national spotlight (Garrido Ortolá 2022). Yet, as in the rests of the western world, recent survey data indicated that in Spain there has been a backlash and a return of conservative views on gender equality, especially among young men while young women hold increasingly gender-progressive views (Valdés 2024). Using data from the "Encuesta de Fecundidad" on young Spanish women and men, van Damme (2024) shows that gender-attitude gaps between men and women are larger among the highly educated, with women holding substantially more egalitarian gender attitudes than their male counterparts. On consequence is that roughly one-third of highly educated women with egalitarian gender values are unlikely to find a partner who matches those characteristics and are effectively constrained to search among men with less egalitarian attitudes or lower educational attainment.

The coexistence of progressive legal reforms and a growing feminist movement, together with a contemporaneous conservative backlash, complicates partner selection and may increase the risk of entering violent relationships for women. It is within this context that we carry out our analysis.

Methodology

Data

The data used in the present work was come from registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice. It encompasses a full cohort of approximately 7,000 individuals convicted of at least one IPV offense between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2014 (the "selection period"), along with a corresponding cohort of roughly 4,000 survivors and victims—defined as individuals who, at any point of their lives, were granted a protection order following an IPV crime committed by any of the aggressors mentioned before. Here, IPV is broadly defined to include any crime of domestic or gender-based violence involving a current or former partner, and encompassing physical, psychological, and all the other forms of abuse. Given that the dataset primarily consists of male perpetrators (about 95%) and female survivors and victims (approximately 99%), in this study we focus on heterosexual couples for which we have information on both the aggressor and the victim.

The data comprises the full criminal and victimological history of the members of these couples from their earliest recorded event until March 31, 2019, supplemented by some socio-demographic information such as gender, birth date or age at the end of the observation period, and nationality. To ensure the anonymous integration of these sensitive records, an innovative encrypting protocol was developed in collaboration with the Catalan Department of Justice.

Despite the strengths of this comprehensive and longitudinal dataset, it has limitations. First, it is subject to significant selection biases, as it exclusively focuses on offenders convicted for an IPV by the criminal justice system—excluding perpetrators undetected by the system—and on victims or survivors with a protection order (about half of them), thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, while it is possible to

identify the victims of multiple aggressors (and aggressors with multiple victims) the dataset omits any information on their criminal histories and dates of convictions if they never committed a crime during the selection period. This makes it impossible to place the corresponding victimizations along the lifespan of the victims (except for a subset of cases described below). To avoid this possible source of bias, the analysis is restricted to couples where the aggressor and the victim were just one and the same during the entire period of observation. Third, because we are interested in examining histories of victimization as complete as possible across all women, and they were at different points of their lifespans at the end of the observation period, we restricted our sample to those who had reached at least 40 years of age by 2019 and only analyzed their lifespan until that age. In supplementary analysis, we raise the age to 50. These age restrictions substantially reduced the sample size and statistical power of the analysis. To increase it, we included women of multiple perpetrators over their lifetimes if it could be assumed with confidence that they had been victimized by only one perpetrator up to the age of 40 (50, in the supplementary analysis). While the data did not include victimization dates from these other aggressors, it included information on the dates in which women were granted a protection order, and on whether this order was linked to the same aggressor identified in the selection period. If at the date the victim received the protection order she was older than 40 (50), we assumed that prior to that age they were victimized by a single aggressor—the one identified in the selection period. Fifth, only 1.3% (0.8%) of perpetrators in our sample committed femicide. The mean age of the female victims when they died was 36 (50) years. To maintain these women in the analysis, we treated their post-femicide time interval like that of non-dead victims without victimizations after the same age, even though the former's lifespans were truncated by their murderers. Lastly, due to the extreme sensitivity of the data, precise start and end dates of offenders and

survivors' relationship were not provided, nor do the number of children, educational attainment, or type of employment of women.

After all these restrictions and data debugging, the final analytic sample comprises 841 (359) dyads, each consisting of a man perpetrator and a woman victim or survivor.

Measures

We employ a range of variables tailored to the different stages of the analysis—trajectory construction and profiling. The dataset was originally structured in a long format: for each dyad/couple, there were 27 (37) rows—as many as victim's years of age from 14 to 40 (50)—and as many columns as variables in the analysis.

For the construction of the trajectories, we use the following variables.

Woman's age. Due to the high sensitivity of the information, we did not collect victims' and survivors' exact dates of birth, only their age as of January 1, 2018. With this information, along with the dates of the crimes, we could infer her approximate birth year and the approximate ages at which each woman experienced one or more IPV crimes.

Intimate partner violence offenses. As noted, IPV offences are defined as any crime of domestic violence or gender-based violence perpetrated by a man and experienced by a woman currently or previously engaged in an intimate relationship sentenced as a punishable offence by a court. In some cases, it was possible to classify a crime as an IPV offence directly from the data (as, for example, when offenses were labeled as "domestic violence" or "gender-based abuse" against a partner). In other, less frequent, instances, we had to rely on indirect clues as when another type of crime (such as "abandonment of minors or disabled family members," "child abduction," or "animal abuse") was accompanied by a simultaneous IPV offence. After this, a variable measuring the number of IPV victimizations experienced by each woman at each age was added to the dataset.

IPV legislation change. As noted above, Spain made a significant legal and penal advance in addressing gender-based and intimate-partner violence with the enactment of Organic Law 1/2004. To capture this legislative shift in our analysis, we constructed a time-varying binary indicator denoting whether a woman was affected by the legislative change at any age. Because we observe women from different birth cohorts, not all of them were affected by the change at the same age. This variable is incorporated into our trajectory models to assess the possible temporal impact of the law.

For the profiling of the trajectories, we use the following variables:

Place of birth/nationality. For aggressors, the dataset included their place of birth, while for survivors only their nationality was available. In both cases, the information was recoded into dummy variables (i.e., Spanish-native vs. foreign). The coding of the woman's nationality will be reversed to facilitate testing of status-inconsistency theory (i.e., cases in which the woman is native and the man is foreign).

Man's year of birth. We decided to include in the model the man's year of birth instead of his age at the selection crime, as on the contrary we did for the female (former) partner. This allows us to observe whether couples in which the woman is older and the man younger (i.e., born later) experience higher or lower levels of violence through an interaction effect between the woman's age and the man's year of birth.

Forms of Intimate Partner Violence. Our dataset also provides information on the sentences handed down by judges for the crimes committed. With this information, and assisted by the definition provided by several legal reforms and public documents on alternative manifestations of IPV–Law 5/2008 of the Catalonian Parliament, dated 24 April, on the right of women to eradicate misogynistic violence; Organic Law 1/2004 of the Spanish government, dated 28 December, on Comprehensive Measures for Protection against Gender Violence; 2019 Macro-survey of Violence against Women; and the

Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul, 2011)—we categorized IPV crimes into the following forms: femicide, sexual violence, physical, psychological, vicarious, stalking, economic, and unspecified. However, due to the low frequency of certain of these manifestation in our dataset (e.g., sexual violence, femicide, and economic violence), for analytical purposes we aggregated them into three broader categories: a) "physical violence", encompassing femicide, physical assault, and sexual violence; b) "psychological violence", including vicarious psychological abuse, stalking, and economic violence; c) "unspecified violence," comprising offenses not otherwise classified. For further details on the recoding of individual crime codes into these categories, see the *Appendix B.*

Group-based trajectory modeling

To identify distinct developmental trajectories, we employ Group-Based Trajectory Modeling (GBTM; Nagin 1999; 2005). Widely applied in psychology, criminology, and the social sciences (Nagin and Odgers 2010), GBTM has been particularly useful in research on child sexual abuse (Finkelhor 1995; Finkelhor and Dzuiba-Leatherman 1994; Turner et al. 2017), crime trends (Weisburd et al. 2004), physical aggression (Nagin and Tremblay 1999).

GBTM is based on finite mixture models, which analyze outcomes from a population containing a finite number of homogeneous subpopulations that cannot be identified a priori (Nagin and Odgers 2010, 115). This approach identifies and quantifies differences among clusters of individuals who follow similar developmental trajectories. Although trajectories are often modeled as polynomial functions of age or time, this is not a strict requirement (Nagin and Odgers 2010). Instead of assuming a specific distribution for the entire population, GBTM approximates the unknown distribution using group trajectories. Importantly, GBTM does not incorporate random effects within

each trajectory group because doing so would increase within-group variability, which contradicts the goal of minimizing such variability to achieve a clearer approximation.

To identify distinct trajectories of victimization we incorporate only the IPV events occurring from the victim's/survivor's age of 14 to 40. This decision was imposed by the structure of our data: unlike many GBTM implementations, our study does not follow an age homogeneous cohort of individuals over time, and instead contains instances of multiple women sharing the same age at different observation points. Without restricting our sample to victims fully observed until the age of 40 and without delimiting the trajectories to the life course spanning from 14 to 40 for all women—also for women observed at older ages—the dataset would include many truncated trajectories for participants never reaching the age of 40 in our study. We further excluded women over 60 as of March 2019 to avoid possible omissions and inconsistencies in their official records at young ages, during a period when data collection by the judiciary may have not been as systematic as in the present. Finally, in complementary analyses aimed at reconciling the results from the two trajectory analyses, we searched for trajectories within two alternative subsamples drawn from our dataset that restricted the age range to 45–60 or 50–60 years.

We used GBTM in a data-driven, exploratory manner to identify latent patterns of victimization without imposing a priori expectations about the number or shape of trajectories. The GBTM technique requires the data to be in a wide-format with only one row per dyad to be applied. Hence, we restructured the originally long-format of the dataset into a wide-format before carrying out the analysis. To determine the optimal number of latent groups, GBTM employs several model selection criteria. Detailed information on how we applied them can be found in *Appendix A.*

Results

Trajectories of intimate partner violence victimization against women

As shown in the main sample (40 y.o.) of Table 1, on average women experienced 1.8 IPV events (SD = 1.2, range 1–8) up until the age of 40. Psychological IPV was the most common event (it was present in 91% of all IPV victimizations), while physical IPV occurred in 27% of cases. The average age at first victimization among these women was 35.6 years. In the supplementary sample (50 y.o.), women also experienced 1.8 IPV events on average, but the dispersion was larger than in the previous sample (SD = 1.3, range 1–12). Psychological IPV was again the most frequent type (M = 0.93, SD = 1.17), followed by unspecified IPV (M = 0.59, SD = 0.83) and physical IPV (M = 0.27, SD = 0.47). The average age at first victimization among women in this sample was 45.3 years.

Regarding the trajectory analyses, a two-group model specified by cubic and quadratic polynomic functions was selected as the best trajectory solution in both samples, based on standard selection criteria and fit to the data (see *Appendix A* for details).

Figure 1 depicts the two trajectories identified in the first sample of women whom we observed from age 14 to 40. Age is on the x-axis and the mean IPV crimes rates (up to 0.5) on the y-axis. The first trajectory, which we label “moderate/decreasing” was experienced by 48.5% of the women in this sample. It is flat from age 14 until age 25 when it begins to rise, peaking at around age 35, and subsequently declining. The duration of this trajectory is approximately 15 years. The second trajectory, which we labeled as “violent/increasing” was experienced by 51.5% of the sample. The trajectory does not rise until after age 30, reaching its apex near age 39, and it shows no downturn within the examined age range. This violent trajectory endures for roughly 10 years. It is not clear

whether the small decline observed between ages 39 and 40 in this trajectory reflects a short-term fluctuation or the beginning of a longer-term trend. The supplementary analysis reported in Figure 2, which extends the observation window to age 50 might provide some light on this issue. The trajectories depicted in Figure 2 are based on a much smaller sample of women fully observed from 14 to 50 years. To avoid confounding differences between women with differences within women over time, we have eliminated the very few couples that were also included in the 14-40 sample. In short, the results shown in Figures 1 and 2 correspond to two independent samples.

TABLE 1. *Descriptive statistics*

Variable	Main sample (40 y.o.)				Suppl. sample (50 y.o.)			
	Obs	Mean	SD	Range	Obs	Mean	SD	Range
Categorical variables								
Woman – Foreigner	833 (31%)				352 (26%)			
Man – Foreigner	795 (31%)				359 (28%)			
Continuous variables								
Total IPVs	841	1.78	1.21	1–8	359	1.78	1.33	1–12
Total Physical IPVs	841	0.27	0.48	0–2	359	0.27	0.47	0–2
Total Psychological IPVs	841	0.91	1.06	0–7	359	0.93	1.17	0–11
Total Unspecified IPVs	841	0.60	0.79	0–5	359	0.59	0.83	0–7
Woman – Age at first victimization	841	35.6	3.14	22–40	359	45.3	2.61	36–50
Woman – Age in 2019	841	43.9	2.87	40–56	359	53.3	2.47	50–60
Woman – Birth year	841	1975.09	2.87	1963–1979	359	1965.76	2.47	1959–1969
Man – Age in 2019	840	46.8	6.93	24–80	358	53.2	7.51	32–76
Man – Birth year	840	1972.2	6.93	1939–1995	358	1965.8	7.51	1943–1987

Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.
Note: The total number of crimes (IPV, physical, psychological, and unspecified) is calculated up to the woman's age of 40 in the main analysis, and up to 50 in the supplementary analysis.

Two trajectories are displayed in Figure 2. Both start, peak, and end at older ages than those in Figure 1. A full interpretation is left to the discussion, but we note here that the absence in Figure 2 of the trajectories identified in Figure 1 may reflect the older

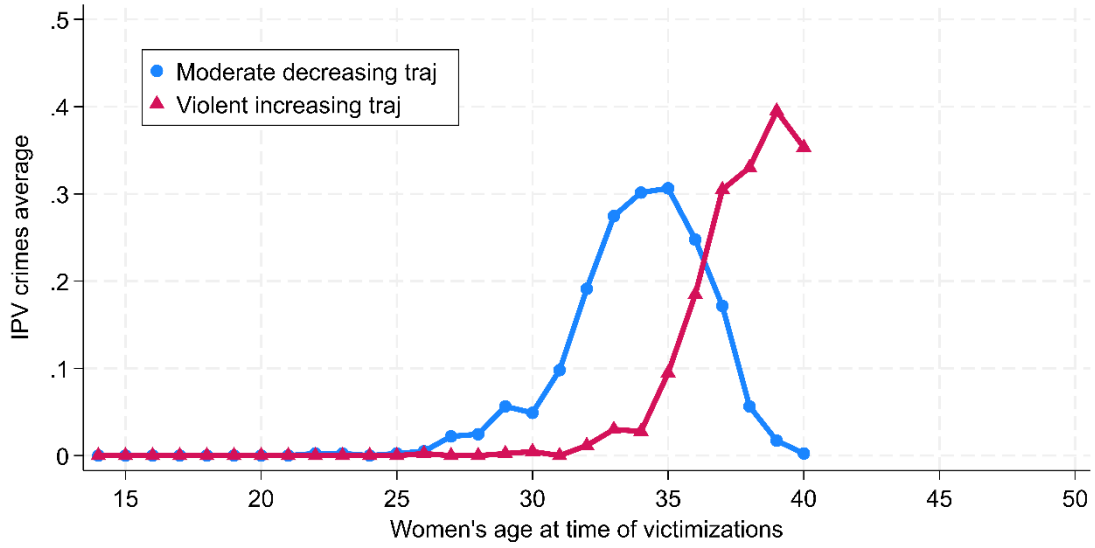
cohort composition of the 14–50-year sample compared with the 14–40-year sample. Women in the former were born on average earlier than those in the latter (1968 vs. 1976) and were therefore less exposed to the 2004 legislative reforms that redefined intimate partner violence against women as a distinct offence, together with the associated decline in social tolerance. The trajectories in Figure 2 may in fact correspond to those in Figure 1, but only become visible at older ages in the criminal justice system, depending on when women encountered these societal shifts. They may have begun earlier yet surfaced in the penal system only once social conditions made disclosure of abuse more feasible.

We see the first trajectory in Figure 1 as one of "mid-age-peak and desistance". It follows an approximately normal distribution: beginning around age 40, it raises in a curvilinear fashion to peak near age 44, and then declines through age 50. The "early-peak desistance" trajectory therefore spans roughly 10 years.

The second trajectory in the 50-year sample, which we term the "late-onset escalation," begins around ages 41–43 and reaches its peak at age 49. Like the "violent-increasing" trajectory in Figure 1, the "late-onset escalation" trajectory shown in Figure 2 is truncated within our observation window and shows no clear post-peak decline. Its duration is approximately 10 years. It is characterized by a higher level of violence than the "early-peak desistance" trajectory (mean count of IPV incidents ≈ 0.5), much like the "violent-increasing" trajectory exhibited higher counts of violent offences than the "moderate-declining" in the 14-40-year sample. This pattern further suggests that we may be observing the same trajectories manifesting in different cohorts.

Figure 1

Trajectories of IPV across women's age. (Sample: 40 years old sample; main analysis)



Source: Authors' calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice

Figure 2

Trajectories of IPV across women's age. (Sample: 50 years old sample; supplementary analysis)

Source: Authors' calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice

Profiles of couples in each trajectory

The following analyses are only based on the 40-year old sample, which has a substantially larger *N* and, therefore, greater statistical power for extrapolation. Table 2 reports the results from a logistic regression predicting membership in the "violent-increasing" trajectory relative to the "moderate-decreasing", based on the type of violence

experienced by the women, and the couple's basic socio-economic characteristics (woman's age at the first victimization, man's year of birth, and woman and man's national status), and "balance of power" (as measured by partner's relative ages and homogamous or heterogamous national statuses).

This higher severity of the violence-increasing trajectory also manifests qualitative, in the forms of violence experienced. While all forms of violence are more likely to be experienced by women in the violent-increasing trajectory, this is especially the case for physical (almost four times as likely: OR = 3.72, $p < 0.001$) and unspecified violence (OR = 3.14, $p < 0.001$), and less so for psychological violence, which nevertheless women in the violent-increasing trajectory are almost twice as likely to experience (OR = 1.75, $p < 0.01$),

Among the sociodemographic covariates, and as expected from the visual display in Figure 1, women's age at first victimization is a strong predictor: each additional year of delay in the onset of victimization increases the odds of being in the violent trajectory by more than two and a half times (OR = 2.68, $p < 0.001$). As for the perpetrator's year of birth, a one-year increase in his birth year (i.e., being one year younger) is associated with a 12% decrease in the odds of violent-trajectory membership (OR = 0.89, $p < 0.001$). In other words, women who are older when experience the first victimization and who have older male partners have a higher likelihood of experiencing the violent-increasing trajectory of victimization.

After a careful examination of the model, we found that the age at first victimization was highly correlated with the woman's age; therefore, we decided to exclude the latter from the final model. We then tested the interaction term between the woman's age at first victimization and the man's year of birth to study the status inconsistency theory, but

under this specification both these variables and the others included in the model lost statistical significance. Consequently, we decided to remove the interaction term.

As for mixed couples (native woman and foreign man), none of the coefficients (including the interaction term) proved to be statistically significant. This is likely due to the presence of missing values in the nationality/country-of-origin variables. However, what appears noteworthy is that, despite the lack of statistical significance, there seems to be a higher proportion of native-woman/foreign-man couples within the violent-increasing trajectory. In any case, it was not possible to test the status inconsistency theory to assess whether the woman's native status could represent a risk factor for IPV.

TABLE 2. *Logistic regression (sample: 40 years old)*

VARIABLES	Odds ratio	Std. Err.
Outcome		
Violent-increasing trajectory (ref='Moderate-decreasing traj')		
Total Physical IPVs	3.724***	(0.989)
Total Psychological IPVs	1.751***	(0.217)
Total Unspecified IPVs	3.143***	(0.537)
Woman's age at first victimization	2.683***	(0.189)
Man's birth year	0.894***	(0.0169)
Woman's native	1.128	(0.476)
Man's foreigner	0.619	(0.285)
Woman's native#Man's foreigner	1.611	(1.020)
Constant	1.632e+80***	(6.015e+81)
Observations	786	
Wald chi2	573.1	
Pseudo R2	0.526	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice**.**

Discussion

Our findings indicate that IPV can persist into mid- and later life and that partner violence may also begin well beyond adolescence. These observations challenge the stereotypical "ideal victim" framework (Christie 1986; Roberts et al. 2019; Kavanaugh 2013) and the common assumption that increasing age necessarily functions as a protective factor (Bellot et al. 2024; Capaldi et al. 2012; Rivara et al. 2009; WHO 2021). Conversely, we align with prior work indicating that older cohorts can and do experience IPV (Bonomi et al. 2007; Peterman et al. 2015; Zink et al. 2005). Indeed, in our primary analysis the mean age at first victimization is approximately 35 years (45 years in the supplementary analysis). Taken together, these results imply that media coverage, public awareness efforts, and prevention and intervention programs should broaden their focus to include older women rather than treating IPV as chiefly a problem of youth (Cantos and O'Leary 2014; Murphy-Geiss et al. 2015; Renauer and Henning 2005; Swartout et al. 2012).

Temporal variation matters not only across generations but also within birth cohorts. This is evident in both the main sample (followed to women's age 40) and the supplementary sample (followed to women's age 50), where we identify two distinct victimization trajectories in each dataset. Thus our findings align with the growing literature that has identified victimization trajectories resulting from intimate partner violence (DeCamp and Zaykowski 2015; DeLong et al. 2020; Kelly et al. 2024; Swartout et al. 2012). In the primary sample the trajectories are best described as "moderate–decreasing" and "violent–increasing"; in the supplementary sample they appear as "early-peak desistance" and "late-onset escalation." In both samples the trajectory groups show a similar pattern: one trajectory begins earlier and has an approximately normal distribution across age, while the other begins later and reaches a higher peak. This pattern

suggests a possible period effect. Maybe if we had examined trajectories by year of incident rather than by age, some trajectories might have overlapped. One plausible explanation of this is the 2004 reform of Spain's Organic Law 1/2004 on gender violence: by introducing protection orders and expanding legal definitions of gender and domestic violence, the reform likely increased detection and institutional recording of incidents that previously remained unseen by the justice system. We therefore interpret the non-significant effect of a legislative-change indicator in the group-based modeling (see Appendix A) as possibly stemming from limited age/cohort separation between groups in our samples. With greater cohort variation (or with all four trajectories estimated within a single model), the legislative change might have registered as statistically significant.

Power and control dynamics are central to the heterogeneity we observe in IPV histories. Johnson's (2008) typology of IPV remains a useful framework for clarifying the ongoing debate about gender symmetry in perpetration. Based on our analysis of court-sentencing data, we believe the trajectories we identify can be conceptualized as specific manifestations, or subtypes, of what Kelly and Johnson (2008) terms "coercive-controlling violence". Our logistic models reveal characteristics that distinguish the two principal trajectories in the main sample. The "moderate–decreasing" trajectory is characterized by an earlier onset of victimizations and, on average, lower levels of violence across all recorded forms (physical, psychological, and unspecified) compared with the "violent–increasing" trajectory. This pattern of more "limited" and declining violence is consistent with Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) and Holtzworth-Munroe's (2000) "dysphoric-borderline" batterer profile: moderate levels of violence, emotional instability, and traits resembling borderline pathology (e.g., emotional lability). In such cases the violence may be reactive, linked to the perpetrator's insecurity or perceived inferiority. A possible power imbalance favoring the woman—for instance,

greater autonomy or resources on her part—may have prevented an escalating, recurrent pattern of violence and, in many instances (we observe the trajectory declining by age 40), facilitated the woman's exit from the violent relationship. However, our variables studying status inconsistency theory were not able to detect it.

By contrast, the "violent–increasing" trajectory begins later, involves a greater frequency of violent episodes of all types, and concentrates the majority of severe outcomes (notably physical assaults, sexual violence, and femicides as captured in our "physical violence" category). This dynamic aligns with Johnson' (1995) "intimate terrorism" concept and with Holtzworth-Munroe' (2000) "violent-antisocial" subtype: perpetrators who use instrumental, often cold and calculated violence; who display higher overall levels of aggression; and who exhibit antisocial or criminal tendencies and poor conformity to social norms. In these partnerships the power imbalance likely favors the man and may be preexisting rather than developing over time. An antisocial perpetrator may also select or groom a more "vulnerable" partner in order to establish and sustain control, dependence, and coercion.

Beyond speculation about perpetrator personality profiles, our results point to the existence of meaningful subcategories among intimate terrorists—groups that employ different coercive and power-based tactics, as described by Johnson (2008). These distinctions have implications for policy and practice: tailored risk assessment, prevention, and intervention strategies that account for timing (age at onset), trajectory shape (escalating versus desisting), and the relative contributions of partner characteristics are needed. Future research should examine the interplay between partners' attributes and violence dynamics within relationships, and should investigate the downstream health consequences for women across these distinct victimization trajectories.

Conclusions

This study examined latent trajectories of IPV experienced by women and identified sociodemographic and criminological features associated with distinct life-course patterns. Using linked sentencing and protection-order records, we uncovered reproducible trajectory types up to ages 40 and 50—most notably a "moderate–decreasing" and "violent–increasing", and "early-peak desistance" and "late-onset escalation" trajectory respectively—and documented that later onset of victimization is associated with greater severity.

Our findings have three core implications. First, age should not be assumed to be uniformly protective (Bellot et al. 2024; Capaldi et al. 2012; Rivara et al. 2009; WHO 2021): later-onset victimization can mark more severe and escalating patterns, so prevention and outreach must explicitly include older women. Second, the heterogeneity of trajectories (DeCamp and Zaykowski 2015; DeLong et al. 2020; Kelly et al. 2024; Swartout et al. 2012) points to different underlying dynamics of power and control (Johnson 2008; Kelly and Johnson 2008; Dobash and Dobash 1979); interventions that target reactive, relationship-stress–linked violence will require different assessment and treatment approaches than those aimed at instrumental, coercive, or antisocial perpetrators (Murphy et al. 2007; Renauer and Henning 2005; Cantos and O'Leary 2014). Moreover, within Kelly and Johnson's (2008) category of coercive-controlling violence, our trajectory analysis reveals meaningful subtypes—an earlier-onset, lower-severity/desisting form and a later-onset, escalating/instrumental form—indicating that coercive-controlling violence is not monolithic and may require differentiated assessment and responses. Third, analyses that rely solely on adjudicated records capture only a subset of IPV (the "tip of the iceberg") and therefore risk overlooking subtler, earlier, or non-adjudicated forms of abuse.

Methodological limitations shaped the conclusions. Our sample is drawn from criminal-justice records and protection orders, which restricts generalizability to non-adjudicated populations and likely underrepresents covert forms of abuse. We also limited the analytic sample to dyads with single recorded perpetrators and single recorded victims, and our data lack measures of relationship timing, perpetrators' non-intimate offending, mental health, substance use, and nuanced pre-criminal coercive tactics. Null findings for status-inconsistency and nativity should be interpreted cautiously given these measurement constraints.

We recommend three priorities for future research and policy. Researchers should replicate trajectory identification using broader community samples and alternative modeling approaches (e.g., growth mixture modeling) and should link administrative records with longitudinal data that capture relationship transitions, health, and socioeconomic trajectories. Policymakers and practitioners should design age-inclusive screening, risk-assessment, and intervention strategies that differentiate responses to desisting versus escalating trajectories. Finally, future work must be more inclusive—oversampling immigrant, racialized, and sexual/gender minority populations and extending inquiry beyond Western contexts (Banerjee and Hwang 2023; Monterrosa 2023; García-Del Moral 2020; Rao 2015)—to assess how intersectional axes of inequality shape IPV trajectories.

In sum, IPV over the life course is temporally and substantively heterogeneous. To better align policy and practice with survivors' realities, research must move beyond adjudicated snapshots toward richer, longitudinal, and intersectional data that can explain the mechanisms of onset, escalation, and desistance and inform tailored prevention and intervention strategies.

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Appendix A

Group-based trajectory modeling: Model Selection

To determine the optimal number of latent trajectory groups and their polynomial form, we followed the stepwise procedure proposed by Nagin (2005).

1. Determine the Model for dependent variable probability distribution

Group-based trajectory modeling (GBTM) allows for several choices for the dependent variable's probability distribution—namely, censored normal, logistic, and (zero-inflated) Poisson. We selected the Poisson model because it is well suited to the structure of our data, which take the form of count outcomes. We did not employ the zero-inflated variant, as our dataset does not exhibit an excess of zeros: one of the prerequisites for women to be included in the study was that at least one violent incident was experienced.

2. Determining the Number of Groups

We first specified a quadratic polynomial and estimated models with up to seven groups. In practice, estimation ceased at four groups due to convergence errors in both the three- and four-group specifications—likely a consequence of our modest sample size. Although Table A1 indicates that the single-trajectory model yields the lowest BIC (-4511.99), we computed approximate Bayes factors using the Schwarz (1978) criterion and the Kass and Wasserman (1995) approximation ($e^{BIC_i - BIC_j}$, where model i can be a 2-group model and j a 3-group model). The Bayes factor in favor of the two-group solution exceeds 10 (specifically, $9.26196E + 48$), providing very strong evidence for a two-group model under Jeffreys' scale[1].

TABLE A1. *Determining the Number of Groups*

Polynomic function	# groups	BIC (Ndata)	BIC (Nsubjects)	AIC	ll	Entrophy	Bayes factor (Ndata)	Bayes factor (Nsubject)
2	1	-4511.99	-4507.58	-4500.47	-4497.47	.		
22	2	-4399.24	-4388.93	-4372.36	-4365.36	0.504	9.26E+48	3.38E+51
222	3	Error: variance matrix is nonsymmetric or highly singular						
2222	4	Error: variance matrix is nonsymmetric or highly singular						

Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.

3. Selecting Polynomial Functions

Having settled on two groups, we compared competing polynomial functions for each trajectory. Model adequacy can be assessed against these criteria:

a. Each group must comprise at least 5% of the sample.
b. All polynomial terms must be statistically significant.
c. Group membership parameters must be significant.
d. Average posterior probabilities (APP) must exceed 0.80.

[1] To ensure the appropriate number of latent groups was identified, we also conducted the analysis using linear and subsequently cubic polynomial functions. With the cubic specification, the three-group model ran without error, and the Bayes Factor appeared to suggest that this model was the best fit. However, after estimating all possible combinations of polynomial functions across the three groups, none of the resulting models met the adequacy criteria (see the next step).

e. Odds of correct classification (OCC) must exceed 5.

As shown in Table A2, only Model II—combining cubic and quadratic polynomials for the two trajectories—satisfies all of these requirements. Coefficients can be seen in Table A4.

TABLE A2. *Selecting Polynomial Functions*

# model	Pol. funct.	BIC (N data)	BIC (N subjects)	AIC	ll	Entrophy	Smallest group	Pol. Funct.	Group Membership	APP Gr1	APP Gr2	OCC Gr1	OCC Gr2
I	33	-4387.04	-4373.79	-4352.48	-4343.48	0.544	45.05	Sig_1	Sig	0.86	0.85	7.72	4.64
II	**32**	-4386.9	-4375.12	-4356.18	-4348.18	0.566	45.5	Sig	Sig	0.88	0.85	6.34	6.38
III	31	-4513.08	-4502.77	-4486.2	-4479.2	0.881	4.39	Sig	Sig	0.98	0.87	2.44	150.96
IV	22	-4399.24	-4388.93	-4372.36	-4365.36	0.504	48.28	Sig	Sig	0.88	0.82	7.6	4.23
V	21	variance matrix is nonsymmetric or highly singular											

$_1$ Sig = All coefficient statistically significant
Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.

4. Incorporating Covariates

Despite this, the model's entropy fell below acceptable thresholds (ideally ≥ 0.80). We therefore introduced a binary cohort covariate indicating whether women were aged 40–43 (coded 0) or 44–56 (coded 1) as of 2019. This variable presented a positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.75$), so we added to the Model II (cubic/quadratic), now named Model VI in Table A3. Consequently, it exhibited substantially improved entropy (Table A3), indicating clearer group separation and minimal classification ambiguity.

We then tested a time-varying indicator for the implementation of Spain's 2005 gender-violence legislation (Model VII). However, this variable did not achieve significance in either trajectory (Table A4).

TABLE A3. *Incorporating Covariates*

# model	Pol. funct.	BIC (N data)	BIC (N subjects)	AIC	ll	Entrophy	Smallest group	Pol. Funct.	Group Membershi	Covariates: Woman age cohort	Covariates: Legislation change	APP Group1	APP Group2	OCC Group1	OCC Group2
VI	**32**	-4172.1	-4158.85	-4137.54	-4128.54	0.828	47.2	Sig_1	Sig	Sig	x_3	0.94	0.97	18.53	31.48
VII	32	-4178.37	-4162.18	-4136.14	-4125.14	0.824	46.9	Sig	Sig	Sig	NS_2	0.94	0.97	19.36	28.66

$_1$ Sig = All coefficient statistically significant; $_2$ NS = non-statistically significant; $_3$ x = Not included
Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.

TABLE A4. *Trajectory model, comparing base model with model with covariates*

		Model II		**Model VI**		**Model VII**	
		No covariate		Time stable cov.		Time variant cov.	
	VARIABLES	coef	se	coef	se	coef	se
Traj.							
1. Moderate-decreasing	Intercept	81.98***	(21.93)	119.8***	(22.93)	146.8***	(29.52)
	Linear	-10.30***	(2.069)	-14.18***	(2.198)	-16.59***	(2.775)
	Quadratic	0.386***	(0.0647)	0.518***	(0.0698)	0.587***	(0.0855)
	Cubic	-0.00456***	(0.000672)	-0.00603***	(0.000735)	-0.00670***	(0.000878)
	Legislation change					0.998	(0.713)
2. Violent-increasing	Intercept	-171.2***	(35.59)	-97.27***	(12.35)	-88.50***	(12.52)
	Linear	8.704***	(1.845)	4.878***	(0.664)	4.395***	(0.673)
	Quadratic	-0.111***	(0.0239)	-0.0618***	(0.00892)	-0.0555***	(0.00903)
	Legislation change					0.443	(0.303)
Group membership							
2. Violent-increasing	Constant			-2.386***	(0.316)	-2.379***	(0.319)
	Woman's age cohort (ref='40-43')						
	44-56 years in 2019			5.534***	(0.518)	5.631***	(0.615)
Observations		841		841		841	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.

5. Final Model Choice

Finally, we selected Model VI as our final specification; i.e., the model with polynomial function 32 and the women's age cohort covariate only. It distinguishes the two IPV trajectories most clearly and retains significance across all estimated parameters.

Appendix B

Table B1. Categorization of IPV crimes

Original sentence name	Translation to English	Narrow categories	Broad categories
Homicidi de violència de gènere	Homicide of gender violence	Feminicide	Physical
Assassinat de violència de gènere	Gender-based violence murder	Feminicide	Physical
Violència física sobre familiars	Physical violence against family members	Physical	Physical
Lesions VIDO	Injuries VIDO	Physical	Physical
Lesió de violència de gènere	Gender-based violence injury	Physical	Physical
Detenció il·legal de violència de gènere	Gender-based violence unlawful detention	Physical	Physical
Falta de lesions de violència de gènere	Injuries of gender-based violence	Physical	Physical
Agressió sexual de violència de gènere	Sexual assault of gender-based violence	Sexual	Physical
Abusos sexuals de violència de gènere	Sexual abuse of gender violence	Sexual	Physical
Impagament prestacions econòmiques familiars	Non-payment of family benefits	Economic	Psychological
Violència psíquica sobre familiars	Psychic violence against family members	Psychological	Psychological
Amenaces VIDO	Threats VIDO	Psychological	Psychological
Coaccions VIDO	Coercion VIDO	Psychological	Psychological
Injuries o vexacions lleus àmbit familiar	Insult or slight vexation in the family sphere	Psychological	Psychological
Injúries VIDO	Insults VIDO	Psychological	Psychological
Amenaces de violència de gènere	Threats of gender-based violence	Psychological	Psychological
Coacció de violència de gènere	Coercion of gender-based violence	Psychological	Psychological
Contra la integridad moral de violencia de género	Violence against moral integrity	Psychological	Psychological
Falta d'amenaces; coaccions; injuries de vige	Threats, coercion, insults, insults	Psychological	Psychological
Assetjament àmbit familiar	Harassment in the family	Stalking	Psychological
Trencament de condemna o mesura d'allunyament de vige	Breach of sentence or restraining order	Stalking	Psychological
Trencament deures custòdia	Breach of custody duties	Vicarious	Psychological
Sustracció de menors	Child abduction	Vicarious	Psychological
Abando.f.menors o incapacitats	Abandonment of a minor or incapacitated family member	Vicarious	Psychological
Maltractament d'animals domèstics o amansats	Mistreatment of domestic animals or tame animals	Vicarious	Psychological
Lesions al fetus de violència de gènere	Gender-based violence injury to fetus	Vicarious	Psychological
Maltracte familiar	Family abuse	Unspecified	Unspecified
Violencia domestica no habitual	Non-habitual domestic violence	Unspecified	Unspecified
Violència domèstica habitual	Habitual domestic violence	Unspecified	Unspecified

Original sentence name	Translation to English	Narrow categories	Broad categories
Maltractaments de violència de gènere	Gender-based violence abuse	**Unspecified**	**Unspecified**
Violència habitual de gènere	Habitual gender-based violence	**Unspecified**	**Unspecified**

VIDO = domestic violence; VIGE = gender violence

Table B2
Logistic regression

VARIABLES	M0	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Outcome						
Violent trajectory (ref='Moderate traj')						
Total IPVs	2.042***					
	(0.205)					
Woman's age at first victimization	2.533***	2.142***	2.090***	2.637***		
	(0.156)	(0.262)	(0.247)	(0.176)		
Total Physical IPVs		5.858***	5.111***	3.742***	1.549	1.624
		(3.051)	(2.542)	(0.926)	(0.576)	(0.621)
Total Psychological IPVs		2.300***	2.325***	1.861***	1.353**	1.330*
		(0.472)	(0.463)	(0.220)	(0.197)	(0.201)
Total Unspecified IPVs		3.204***	3.117***	2.975***	1.012	1.045
		(1.008)	(0.968)	(0.489)	(0.210)	(0.221)
Woman's age in 2019		1.483e+86***	1.876e+81***		5.771e+69***	1.777e+71***
		(9.068e+87)	(1.165e+83)		(3.331e+71)	(1.014e+73)
Man's birth year		73.50***	57.51***	0.903***	32.92***	35.51***
		(98.58)	(78.43)	(0.0156)	(41.85)	(44.68)
Woman's age in 2019#Man's birth year		0.906***	0.911***		0.923***	0.921***
		(0.0280)	(0.0286)		(0.0270)	(0.0266)
Woman's native		0.711				1.121
		(0.538)				(0.696)
Man's foreigner		0.504				0.940
		(0.415)				(0.635)
Woman's native#Man's foreigner		1.580				0.596
		(1.826)				(0.568)
Constant	0***	0***	0***	5.645e+71***	0***	0***
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(1.900e+73)	(0)	(0)
Observations	841	786	840	840	840	786
Wald chi2	541.9	899.6	964.4	591.7	904.7	838.6
Pseudo R2	0.465	0.826	0.829	0.508	0.777	0.770

Standard error in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Own calculations using data from the registries of Catalonia's Department of Justice.

Description: This table presents logistic regression results from several models that include different combinations of the covariates used in this paper. Model 0 is the baseline specification and includes only the variables used to construct the trajectories. Model 3 corresponds to the one reported in the main text. The remaining models demonstrate that the inclusion of additional sociodemographic controls leads to a loss of statistical significance for the overall model.