Specialized Domestic Violence Courts and the Effects on Access to Justice for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence *

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Abstract

We study the impacts of the large-scale implementation of a system of specialized domestic violence courts (SDVCs), an innovation in access to justice programs for potential victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) and offenders. Using data from the universe of civil domestic violence cases in Puerto Rico during the period 2014-2021, we leverage the staggered opening of SDVCs across judicial regions to examine the consequences for victims' judicial protection as well as offender recidivism. Access to SDVCs leads to a considerable 8 percentage points increase in the probability that judges issue judicial protection via a protection order and a 1.7 percentage point (15 percent) decrease in victim and offender reappearance rates within one year of the start of the case. Effects are more pronounced for cases in which parties have children in common and in which access to SDVCs is more limited. Linking the case data to administrative and survey data on judges handling these cases, we show that the judges assigned to SDVCs play a prominent role in explaining these outcomes.

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1 Introduction

Violence against women, particularly that perpetrated by intimate partners, constitutes a serious public health concern and a violation of women's human rights. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most prevalent form of violence against women worldwide, with approximately 30% women experiencing it at some point in their lives. This form of violence has been internationally condemned as a critical human rights, public health, and personal security issue (Devries et al., 2013). Among the numerous detrimental consequences of IPV are the negative impacts on survivors' physical and mental health, as well as the fact that it is the leading cause of homicide-related deaths among women globally (Devries et al., 2013; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Kapiga et al., 2017). Despite the severity of this problem, most assaults are not reported to authorities (Morgan and Thompson, 2021). Victims' reluctance to report is often attributed to limited trust in both law enforcement and the judicial system (e.g. Jubb et al., 2010). Consequently, low reporting rates underscore unequal access to law and justice for these individuals, who are overwhelmingly women. In addition, the persistent underrepresentation of women in law enforcement and the judiciary may exacerbate existing inequalities in access to justice (Miller and Segal, 2019).

In response to this global issue, a growing number of national and local governments, including those in the United States, Canada, Spain, and the United Kingdom, have introduced specialized domestic violence courts (SDVCs). These courts represent an innovation in access to justice programs for domestic violence cases, relying on trained judicial officers and providing enhanced safety and support services (Dawson and Dinovitzer, 2001; Gutierrez et al., 2016; Cissner et al., 2013; Pinchevsky, 2017). Despite these efforts, the causal impacts and consequences of such access to justice programs for addressing IPV remain inadequately understood. SDVCs may be more effective at promoting access to justice because they (a) include the improved selection and training of judicial officials on IPV-related issues, and/or (b) offer additional social, psychological, and legal support to IPV survivors (e.g., Cissner et al. (2013)).

In this paper, we examine the effects of establishing SDVCs on judicial outcomes for individuals involved in domestic violence cases in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico, a U.S. territorial jurisdiction with high levels of intimate partner violence, has emerged as a global leader in implementing these specialized courts.[1] The Specialized Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC) system has been

[1]The 1989 Law No. 54 of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been recognized as a pioneering statute, making Puerto Rico one of the first jurisdictions to enact special legislation to address this social issue. See various domestic violence laws available in Domestic Violence Laws of the World at https://cyber.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.htm (last accessed February 25, 2021).

operational since 2007 and is now implemented in most judicial regions of the territory. We use private, confidential administrative micro-data on the universe of civil domestic violence cases handled through the PR Judicial Branch during the period 2014 to 2021, which allows us to rigorously examine the consequences of the establishment and implementation of SDVCs on access to justice for IPV victims, including effects on case management, sentencing, the judicial protection of parties, and the accountability of offenders. We leverage the staggered introduction of SDVCs across judicial regions of the territory over this period to implement a differences-in-differences design to estimate the causal effects of interest. In addition, we use granular geo-referenced data on the residential location of each petitioner for judicial protection to implement a geographic discontinuity design, which helps us provide additional credibility to the empirical analysis.

Our study provides rigorous evidence suggesting an important link between access to such specialized courts and the judicial protection of IPV victims. The opening of an SDVC in a victim's judicial region increases the likelihood that they are provided judicial protection by the courts by 8.3 percentage points, a substantial increase of 19 percent. Furthermore, we observe analogous effects among women whose cases are handled in SDVCs as a result of the system's expansion: an increase in the issuance of judicial protection by 9.4 percentage points, a substantial increase of 22 percent. Consistent with the view that SDVCs tend to provide more judicial protection and more robust supports for IPV victims, we observe a 2.4 percentage point reduction in the reappearance of offenders in subsequent cases over the ensuing 12-month period, which amounts to a substantial decrease of 18.8 percent in proportional terms. Similarly, we observe a 1.7 percentage point reduction in the court reappearance of petitioners of judicial protection over the same period, a substantial 15.2 percent decrease. In terms of heterogeneity, the effects tend to be more pronounced for cases in which the woman and the offender have borne children together and among those in which the petitioner resides in more remote locations, where access to remediation is more limited.

Additional analyses allow us to point towards the important role that judges play in explaining these results. The role of the judge could be crucial in access to protection for the petitioning parties, given that they are in charge of evaluating the evidence presented, determining the level of risk of the parties involved, and make decisions that can have a significant impact on the safety and well-being of the parties. In the context of SDVCs, one of the innovations introduced is a greater emphasis on specialized training for judges in the complexities of IPV experiences, as these can improve the management of and judicial decisions in such cases. Furthermore, greater specialization of judges assigned to these courts could improve compliance with established judicial

protocols for the evaluation of IPV cases, which could have a positive impact on judicial decisions (Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales, 2022). Attributes specific to judges, such as their gender, educational and work background, and priorities in the handling of these cases, could also contribute to judicial decisions that result in greater protection for the petitioning parties.

To improve our understanding of the role that judges may play, we combine two additional data sources: administrative data on the universe of the judges handling cases of domestic violence, and data from a specialized survey of active judges who had presided over such cases. Linking these data allows us to provide a more detailed picture of the attributes of judges that might influence such case decisions. First, we perform a decomposition analysis extending our difference-in-differences design to distinguish (a) the effects of specialized courts through the role of judges from (b) the broader impact of specialized courts independent of judge assignment. We estimate that approximately 85 percent of the overall increase in judicial protection can be attributed to the assignment of judges to SDVCs. Second, we show through a mediation analysis that certain socio-demographic characteristics of judges —- such as their gender and occupational background —- and their level of training to handle IPV cases, as well as the importance they place on restorative justice principles, are associated with their decisions to grant protection orders. This analysis underscores the importance of considering not only judicial training but also the selection and assignment of judges based on their expertise in the complexities of IPV cases.

This paper contributes to a growing literature on how innovation in the judiciary can help address and prevent violence against women and IPV. Previous studies have examined the role of SDVCs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Dawson and Dinovitzer, 2001; Gutierrez et al., 2016; Cissner et al., 2013; Pinchevsky, 2017). Although earlier work is primarily descriptive, more recent research on SDVCs is based on quasi-experimental studies that aim to identify causal effects of these judicial interventions. For instance, Golestani et al. (2024) evaluate the impact of SDVCs on the reporting of IPV as well as conviction and incarceration in criminal cases in Tennessee. Examining the staggered rollout of specialized courts across Spain, García-Hombrados et al. (2024) show that SDVCs improve judicial efficiency and increase the reporting of IPV. Our study contributes to the literature by focusing on a critical judicial instrument: the issuance of protection orders (POs). Escalation of violence is a common feature of IPV, making prompt and effective safety measures pivotal in preventing re-victimization (Amaral et al., 2023). Protection orders issued by civil courts offer one avenue for rapid judicial intervention. This paper highlights how Puerto Rico's SDVCs have succeeded in increasing the issuance of protection orders

to victims, thereby reducing their likelihood of reappearance before the court.

This line of research also relates to studies on specialized policing, which highlight the potential for improved access to justice through differentiated programming. For example, Miller and Segal (2019) and Amaral et al. (2021) show that incorporating female police officers and establishing female police stations increases IPV reporting rates and reduces the incidence of female homicides by intimate partners in the United States and India, respectively. Similarly, Sviatschi and Trako (2022) analyze the impact of All Women's Justice Centers in Peru, which employ primarily female officers and offer both police and legal services to victims of gender-based violence. Their findings suggest that these centers substantially decrease IPV, improve women's mental health, and positively affect children's school enrollment and attendance. We contribute to this growing body of literature by providing evidence from specialized courts, demonstrating that differentiated services can be an effective tool for addressing IPV.

Finally, the study contributes to one of the core research agendas in global development: the study of how judicial systems can address gender inequalities as well as enhance women's rights and wellbeing (see, for example, Heise 2011; Duflo 2012; Doepke et al. 2011; Anderson 2018; Doyle and Aizer 2018). As a result of concerns regarding barriers to justice for IPV victims, the organizational innovation of SDVCs is important from both academic and policy standpoints. Our study informs a nascent literature that points to potential gains from understanding the quality and organization of the judiciary — one of the state's most important institutions — and the consequences for improved societal-level human development (Finan et al. 2017).

The article is organized as follows: Section 2 provides contextual information of the study population and describes the system of SDVCs. Section 3 describes the main data used in the analysis, whereas Section 4 discusses the research designs and empirical methodology. Section 5 presents the main empirical results. Section 6 considers potential mechanisms for our findings, and Section 7 concludes with a discussion and broader implications.

2 Context and Background

2.1 IPV in Puerto Rico and the Introduction of SDVCs

Intimate partner violence poses a significant challenge to both public health and human rights worldwide. Latin American countries are no exception, as underscored by a recent report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CEPAL). According to

the CEPAL (2022) report, at least 4,050 women were victims of femicide across 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022 alone. Furthermore, the region ranks second globally in female homicide rates perpetrated by intimate partners or relatives, with a reported figure of 1.5 per 100,000 women (UNODC and UN Women, 2023). Although Puerto Rico has reduced its overall femicide rate in relative terms, intimate partner violence remains a critical issue within the territory: Puerto Rico ranks second in Latin America and the Caribbean -— after Chile —-in the proportion of femicides committed by intimate partners (CEPAL, 2022). Notably, at least eight out of every ten women murdered on the island were killed by their current or former partners.

To address this challenge, numerous countries in the LAC region have implemented laws aimed at criminalizing violence against women. Specifically, 18 countries have taken significant steps to criminalize such violence. In the Caribbean, Puerto Rico stands out as the jurisdiction that has achieved the most substantial advancements in this area. The enactment of Law No. 54 in 1989 marked a groundbreaking legislative effort for the prevention and intervention of domestic violence, positioning the island among the global pioneers in judicial innovation of this kind. The law recognizes that while both men and women can experience IPV, women comprise the majority of victims. Consequently, IPV is identified as one of the most significant manifestations of the adverse consequences of gender inequality (Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales, 2022).

The Puerto Rico Judicial Branch has carried out a series of assessments accompanied by various judicial evaluations aimed at introducing new initiatives to enhance both the efficiency and effectiveness of case management, while improving the level of protection provided to victims and all parties involved. In particular, an assessment in 2006 examined the PR judicial system's handling of the full spectrum of criminal and civil cases involving domestic violence and offered recommendations for improving case management (Sack, 2006).[2] The report's findings and recommendations were crucially instrumental for the introduction of specialized domestic violence courts in Puerto Rico, beginning in 2007. As Figure 1 illustrates, the implementation began with a pilot project in the San Juan judicial region in 2007 and gradually expanded across the territory's judicial regions. By the end of the study's coverage period (February 2020), ten of Puerto Rico's thirteen judicial regions had established SDVCs.[3]

[2]More broadly recognizing the persistent challenges of dismantling gender stereotypes that shape case adjudication, the Puerto Rico Judicial Branch has conducted systematic evaluations, such as (Comisión Judicial Especial para Investigar el Discrimen por Razón de Género en los Tribunales de Puerto Rico , 1995), (Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales, 2022), and (Sack, 2006).

[3]The judicial regions with SDVCs are: Arecibo, Aguadilla, Bayamón, Caguas, Carolina, Fajardo, Guayama, Ponce, San Juan, and Utuado. To enable access to specialized judicial services given resource constraints, the Judiciary created the Project for Specialized Services in Domestic Violence Cases ("Proyecto de Especialización de Servicios

Specialized domestic violence courtrooms (SDVCs) differ from traditional family and investigative courts in staffing, infrastructure, and services.[4] These courtrooms employ specially trained personnel—such as municipal and/or superior court judges, courtroom coordinators, and bailiffs—to address the legal and psychosocial complexities of IPV cases. Specifically, the judiciary places greater emphasis on specialized training of judges in the complexities of IPV experiences, as these can improve the management of and judicial decisions in such cases.[5] Furthermore, greater specialization of judges assigned to these courts can improve compliance with established judicial protocols for the evaluation of IPV cases, which could have a positive impact on judicial decisions (Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales, 2022).

SDVCs also implement specialized procedures, including exclusive hearing schedules, separate entrances and waiting areas for petitioners and petitioned parties, restricted public access, and dedicated spaces for hearings. These features aim to enhance both privacy and security for all parties.[6] Additionally, an SDVC court coordinator oversees case progress and the administrative enforcement of judicial decisions, and manages administrative tasks. Finally, the Judiciary coordinates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide legal advocates who guide petitioners through the judicial process, and some courts partner with civil society organizations to offer counseling, social work, and psychological services to petitioning parties.[7]

2.2 Judicial Procedures and Judicial Protection Orders

One of the fundamental principles of the territory's law for the prevention of and intervention in cases of domestic violence ("Ley para la Prevención e Intervención con la Violencia Doméstica", Law No. 54, 15th August 1989) lies in its recognition of the need to protect victims of domestic violence and theempowerement of authorities to issue judicial protection or restraint orders for this

en Casos de Violencia Doméstica", or PESVD), which offers a more limited range of services compared to fully specialized courtrooms. This has been implemented in two judicial regions: Aguadilla and Guayama.

[4] For a detailed description of the specialized domestic violence courtroom project, see Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales (2022) and ADD Bobonis et al. 2025 REPORT REF.

[5] While judges typically receive general training on the handling of IPV cases, those assigned to SDVCs undergo additional training tailored to their specialization in these cases. These are trained to have a (a) deeper understanding of the dimensions and causes of IPV, (b) the naturalization of violence, the victim's idealization of and dependence on the aggressor, (c) psychosocial aspects of IPV, and (d) evidenciary aspects in IPV cases; see Section 6 for details.

[6] Recognizing the unique needs of children in domestic violence cases, many SDVCs provide dedicated areas for minors accompanying petitioners, fostering a more supportive environment within the judicial setting.

[7] In judicial regions lacking fully designated SDVCs, the Projects for Specialized Services in IPV Cases (PESVD) incorporates many of the same elements. The primary distinctions include the absence of certain key SDVC features—such as designated spaces for minors and exclusive court facilities—although standard personnel (judges, coordinators, bailiffs, legal advocates) remain in place. Despite these limitations, the PESVD model aims to enhance case management efficiency and improve the level of protection afforded to those involved in IPV proceedings.

purpose.[8] A judicial protection or restraint order (PO), issued by a court, safeguards individuals by imposing restrictions on the behavior of offenders. The law defines offenses, prescribes sanctions, and authorizes courts to issue such orders promptly. Consequently, the court's authority to grant a PO stands out as one of the most significant instruments of this legislation. IPV victims can petition the courts for POs against their aggressors. If granted, these orders impose limitations on physical contact and communication between the offender and the victim. Any judge in a state court has the authority to issue a PO. The process for obtaining a PO does not require the filing of a formal complaint or the existence of a criminal charge. Additionally, the petition can be initiated by a third party to protect an employee, parent, or child. The order may include additional precautionary measures, such as the removal of child custody or the revocation of a firearm license. Notably, the law also permits the issuance of an *ex parte* PO, which can be executed without the petitioned party's court appearance and typically requires only one hearing to provide temporary protection to the petitioner.

An offender is legally obligated to comply with the terms of a PO; any PO violation constitutes a criminal offense, leading to the offender's potential arrest and prosecution. Law No. 54 also recognizes that the most severe cases—those involving evidence of serious harm, physical force, or sexual abuse—fall under the purview of criminal proceedings. In addition to the civil procedures described earlier, victims can file complaints against alleged offenders, who may then face criminal prosecution by the state. Although the criminal justice system offers protection for victims of domestic violence, these processes are often more time-consuming. As a result, court-issued protection orders remain the most prevalent judicial intervention in cases of intimate partner violence. These orders require a lower burden of proof and grant victims more expedient access to protective measures.[9]

Civil IPV cases begin with the filing of a PO request by a petitioner in their court of choice. During the initial hearing, a judge reviews the grounds for the petitioner's request and determines whether the case meets the criteria for granting an *ex parte* PO. These provisional orders are granted in approximately 65 percent of cases and are typically valid for approximately one month. Within twenty (20) days of the initial hearing, a second hearing is scheduled in a court located

[8] The types of intimate relationships covered under Law No. 54 include relationships between spouses, ex-spouses, individuals who cohabit or have cohabited, those who have maintained or previously maintained a consensual relationship, and individuals who have procreated a child together, regardless of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status of any person involved in the relationship.

[9] For example, in fiscal year 2014-15, the courts received approximately 14,000 requests for protection orders, compared to only 3,000 criminal cases initiated. Even when criminal charges are filed, victims often seek additional protection through civil proceedings.

within the petitioner party's judicial region of residence. In 20.3 percent of cases in our sample, there is only one hearing, which takes place in the judicial courtroom where the petitioner initially submits the PO request. For the remaining 79.7 percent of cases with two or more hearings, subsequent hearings are assigned to a courtroom in the judicial region of the petitioner's residence. If the petitioner's region has an SDVC, the judiciary typically assigns these hearings to the SDVC courtroom. Petitioners residing in regions with SDVCs have greater access to these specialized courtrooms: 38.5 percent of initial hearings and 71.1 percent of second hearings are conducted in SDVCs.

Unlike the first hearing, the respondent is required to be present at the second hearing.[10] At this subsequent hearing, both parties present their arguments and evidence before the judge. Based on a more thorough examination of the case, the court may decide to issue a final PO, or extend, modify, or terminate the *ex parte* order. Final protection orders are issued in 41 percent of cases and have an average duration of 234 days. Most final protection orders remain in effect for a period ranging between three and twelve months. Although less common, courts can also make additional decisions regarding POs. For instance, either petitioners or respondents may request the annulment or dismissal of a petition of an existing order. Courts also hold the authority to extend existing orders; however, these extensions are not granted for violations of the order or for new acts of violence occurring after the expiration of a PO. Such incidents would require the initiation of a new case.

3 Data

3.1 Administrative Data on Protection Order Cases

The main data source for the study is administrative data from the Automated Protection Order System (APOS), managed by the Puerto Rico Judicial Branch's Office of Court Administration (OAT). The database is used to systematically and uniformly record detailed information regarding each civil domestic violence case across the territory. The data include specific details about each hearing and case, such as the socio-demographic information of the petitioner and petitioned parties (e.g., age, gender, and the number of children borne to the parties), the petitioner's residential address at the time of the protection order request, the courtroom, the date and time of each hearing,

[10] In general, judges do not issue final POs *in absentia*, though they are not prohibited from doing so. If the respondent is absent during the second hearing, judges often extend the validity of the previously issued *ex parte* PO and reschedule the hearing.

the presiding judge, the duration of each hearing, and the judge's decision, including whether an *ex-parte* or final PO was issued. Additionally, for cases in which an *ex-parte* or final protection order is granted, the system records the allegations made by the petitioner in the protection order request, as well as any aggravating factors noted in the form.

A critical aspect of this database, both for the purposes of this study and for tracking individuals within the system over time, is the use of unique numeric identifiers for each individual involved, whether as a petitioner or petitioned party, in one or multiple civil cases handled by the court. This allows for the identification of parties involved in cases over time, enabling researchers to determine whether a party reappears (and how many times) in subsequent cases, whether involving the same or a different opposing party. Additionally, the database includes a unique identifier for each judge presiding over each hearing.

The APOS database contains information on approximately 88,600 civil cases involving PO requests during the period between January 2014 and June 2021. We impose a number of sample restrictions for purposes of the analysis. First, we limit the sample to cases in which the petitioner was requesting a PO for the first time.[11] This restriction allows us to focus on the experiences of individuals exposed for the first time as petitioners. Second, we restrict the sample to cases handled by the court through February 2020, thereby excluding PO requests filed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The management of cases during the period of state-imposed mobility restrictions may have significantly altered patterns observed relative to those in the period prior to the start of the pandemic.[12] These restrictions resulted in a final analytical sample of approximately 52,202 cases.

To conduct the empirical analysis, we constructed several key variables. First, we created an indicator to identify whether a case was assigned to an SDVC, either in the first hearing or in subsequent hearings (for cases with more than one hearing). Second, we generated a variable to measure the number of hearings per case, allowing us to evaluate the speed at which protection order requests are resolved.

Regarding judicial decisions, we generated an indicator to identify whether the judge issued a final PO for the petitioner as the case's outcome.[13] Additionally, we created an indicator to identify

[11] This is determined as follows: for each case, the database is analyzed to check whether the petitioner had previously filed a request for a PO, either against the same petitioned party or against another individual, as indicated in the records or the PO application.

[12] Movement restrictions during the pandemic likely influenced patterns of petitioner recurrence and offender recidivism compared to pre-pandemic periods. This impacts recidivism metrics and the analysis of SEVD access effects.

[13] This PO may include provisions such as prohibiting the respondent from contacting the petitioner, approaching their residence, or engaging in any form of harassment. The variable does not differentiate between these provisions.

whether the judge issued an *ex-parte* protection order at any point during the judicial process to provide temporary protection for the petitioner while the case was being resolved. Finally, we constructed variables to measure the duration of the *ex-parte* PO (including any extensions), the duration of the final PO, and the total protection period for the petitioner (summing the durations of both types of POs).

To analyze the effects of access to SDVCs on respondent recidivism and petitioner recurrence, we developed metrics linking the administrative records of these cases. Specifically, we identified whether the petitioner returned to court to request a new PO within 12 months following the first hearing of the initial case under review. This analysis is limited to initial cases that began before March 2019 to allow a full 12-month observation window prior to the start of the pandemic. Similarly, we constructed a variable to measure offender or petitioned parties' recidivism within the same 12-month time frame, and whether the same petitioner and respondent were involved in a subsequent case.[14]

In cases where the court grants an *ex-parte* or final PO, the APOS system includes variables documenting the petitioner's allegations and the case's aggravating factors.[15] The allegations recorded include whether the petitioner reported being a victim of (a) fear of physical harm caused by the respondent, (b) attempted to or caused physical harm, (c) emotional or psychological harm, (d) forced sexual relations, (e) deprivation of adequate sleep and rest, and (f) the deprivation of freedom of movement, among other actions. Using this information, we construct a case severity index, which we employed to analyze heterogeneity in effects based on case severity (discussed in Section 5).

Finally, we geo-referenced the residential addresses of petitioners using ESRI ArcGIS World Geolocating services. This allows us to calculate the Euclidean distance between a petitioner's address and the judicial region boundary, allowing the implementation of a geographic discontinuity design.

[14] The 12-month time frame provides a sufficiently broad window for measuring short- or medium-term recurrence and recidivism while minimizing bias due to censoring as our data extend only to February 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic mobility restrictions. Results remain qualitatively similar when using alternative time frames.

[15] This detailed allegation information is entered into the APOS system by a court administrative officer. To reduce the administrative data entry burden, the OAT retains this information digitally only for cases where an *ex-parte* or final PO is granted.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

In this section, we present descriptive statistics that provide an overview of the data on parties and cases used in our analysis (Table 1). These statistics are presented by grouping cases into three judicial region categories based on the presence and timing of opening of SDVCs: (i) 'always treated', meaning regions with an SDVC established prior to the evaluation period (2007–2013); (ii) 'switchers', regions that introduced an SDVC during the evaluation period (2014–2019); and (iii) 'never treated,' regions without an SDVC during the evaluation period (with courts introduced in 2020 or later). The sample includes a total of 19,922 cases involving only female petitioners residing in judicial regions where specialized courts were established before the evaluation period (column 1). Petitioners in these regions—San Juan, Bayamón, Utuado, Arecibo, and Fajardo—had access to SDVC throughout the entire period of analysis. Second, the dataset comprises 7,285 cases from judicial regions where SDVCs were introduced during the evaluation period, specifically in Caguas (2014), Guayama (2016), Aguadilla (2017), and Carolina (2018). Notably, to ensure a proper comparison of baseline characteristics of individuals and cases relative to the control group, we restrict this sample to cases that took place before the introduction of the SDVCs in these regions (column 2). Finally, the sample includes 11,917 cases from judicial regions in which petitioners did not have access to an SDVC during the evaluation period, specifically in Aibonito, Humacao, Mayagüez, and Ponce (column 3).

To assess the validity of our methodology, we compare parties and case characteristics across groups. Column 4 reports the average difference between cases in the 'always treated' regions and those in the 'never treated' regions (column 1 vs. column 3), adjusting for time trends in all cases.[16] Since these cases may systematically differ—since the SDVC program initially targeted the judicial regions with a greater need to handle these cases—we refrain from drawing causal conclusions from these observed differences. However, the patterns suggest potential causal effects of SDVC access. Similarly, column 5 presents the average difference between cases in 'switchers' regions and cases in 'never treated' regions (column 2 vs. column 3), again adjusting for time trends. Since our difference-in-differences analysis relies on comparing changes in patterns across these groups, this serves as a balance test between the treatment and control groups. Demonstrating that there are no significant baseline differences strengthens the credibility of our findings by supporting the assumption that post-introduction differences reflect causal effects of SDVC implementation. For both comparisons, we report the p-values computed using the randomization inference procedure

[16] Differences are estimated using a linear regression model with period fixed effects to control for time trends.

described in Section 4 below.

We begin by characterizing the socio-demographic characteristics of both petitioners and petitioned parties in the study, reporting the mean and standard deviation for each key variable. The average age of female petitioners is approximately 33 years; approximately 6 percent of female petitioners are over the age of 55, with the majority in the 15 to 34 age range. In contrast, petitioned parties are predominantly male (roughly only 3 percent of these are female), with most falling within the 15 to 44 age range. In particular, petitioners and petitioned parties have borne children in over one-third of cases (42 percent). The socio-demographic profiles of the parties are highly similar across judicial regions with and without specialized courts. Differences between these groups are statistically insignificant, indicating that any observed variations in case outcomes are unlikely to be driven by observable demographic differences between petitioners and petitioned parties across judicial regions.

The table also presents key characteristics of the judicial cases. Looking at the number of hearings, our analysis indicates that the average number of hearings per case is higher in 'always treated' regions, with an average of 2.46 hearings per case, compared to 2.09 hearings in 'never treated' regions. This difference of 0.38 appearances is statistically significant ($p = 0.04$). However, when comparing the number of court appearances between the 'switchers' and control regions, we do not observe a systematic difference; the estimated difference of 0.17 appearances is small and not statistically distinguishable from zero.

When looking at the share of cases in which the first and second hearings are conducted in SDVCs, the table shows how this varies significantly across cases in treated and control regions. In 'always treated' regions, 35 percent of first hearings take place in an SDVC, whereas in 'never treated 'regions, this figure is essentially zero (0.1 percent). Note that in 'switchers' regions—where SDVCs were introduced at a later stage—the likelihood of a first hearing occurring in an SDVC is minimal, at just 0.01 percent. The pattern becomes even more pronounced for second hearings. In 'always treated' regions, 71 percent of cases have their second hearing in an SDVC, compared to only 0.2 percent in 'switchers' regions and 0.1 percent in 'never treated' regions. This evidence strongly suggests that once an SDVC is introduced, the probability of subsequent hearings taking place in these specialized courts increases substantially.

In terms of judicial protection, an *ex-parte* PO is issued in 72.3 percent of cases in regions with an SDVC, compared to 65.8 percent in control regions. The adjusted difference of 6.5 percentage points suggests a possible variation, but this difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.21$).

With regards to final POs, approximately 42 percent of cases result in such an order being granted to the petitioner, with no systematic variation between cases in regions with and without SDVC. These findings indicate that for both *ex-parte* and final POs, the differences between treatment and control groups are small and not statistically significant. When they are awarded, the average duration of *ex-parte* POs is 28 days, while final POs last an average of 224 days, including any extensions determined by the presiding judge. Overall, petitioners receive an average of 144 days of judicial protection. Notably, *ex-parte* orders last 9 days longer in regions with SDVCs compared to those without ($p = 0.04$). Additionally, 22 percent of *ex-parte* orders in regions with SDVCs exceed six weeks in duration, which is 9 percentage points higher than in regions without an SDVC ($p = 0.04$).

Finally, we compare differences in petitioner reappearance and offender recidivism. Approximately 12.4 percent of petitioned parties reappear in court in a new civil case within a 12-month period. Similarly, around 10.5 percent of petitioners return to court seeking a new protective order. However, we do not find statistically significant differences in reappearance and recidivism rates across the three regional groups under analysis. These findings suggest that while SDVCs may influence case outcomes, including the number of court hearings and the duration of POs, any differences in longer-term reappearance and recidivism remain inconclusive.

4 Empirical Strategy

4.1 Differences in Differences Design

To estimate causal effects of access to SDVCs, we leverage the staggered introduction of SDVCs across judicial regions to implement a differences-in-differences design. Staggered treatment settings, such as the one we study, pose unique challenges for traditional differences-in-differences estimators. In particular, dynamic and heterogeneous treatment effects may introduce bias in canonical Two-Way Fixed Effects (TWFE) models, when already treated units serve as controls (Goodman-Bacon, 2021; Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021; Borusyak et al., 2024).

To address these concerns, we use the fixed effect counterfactual (FECt) estimator proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024), which is specifically designed for staggered differences-in-differences designs. This approach leverages imputation-based methods to construct potential untreated outcomes for treated units using the comparison group's outcomes and trends. The imputed potential untreated outcomes are then compared to the observed outcomes of treated units, allowing for the estimation

of a treatment effect for each treated unit and time period. Finally, these region-level treatment effects are aggregated to provide an overall estimate of the Intent-to-Treat (ITT) treatment effect. Note that the ITT effects estimates using the TWFE methodology are remarkably similar to those computed using the preferred FECt approach, indicating that any bias arising from dynamic or heterogeneous treatment effects in the TWFE model is minimal in our context (see Figure 2). To examine heterogeneous treatment effects based on individual and case characteristics, we stratify samples and use the framework above to generate ITT effects by these characteristics. Note that based on this estimation procedure, although we are able to report estimates of heterogeneous average effects along those dimensions, we are unable to formally test for significant differences in these heterogeneous effects.

To estimate the Average Treatment Effect among the Compliers (ATEC) for cases that were handled in SDVCs, we implement an instrumental variable approach. Using a TWFE model as the first stage, we use the exogenous variation in the opening of SDVCs across judicial regions over time as an instrument for whether an individual case is handled in an SDVC.[17] In particular, we estimate the following first stage:

$$\text{Case}_{SDVC,irt} = \delta_1 \text{SDVC}_r \times \text{POST}_{rt} + X_{irt}\beta + \gamma_r + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{irt} \tag{1}$$

where $\text{SDVC}_r \times \text{POST}_{rt}$ is the standard differences-in-differences interaction term, which takes value 1 if a region r has an SDVC in time t and 0 otherwise. $\text{Case}_{SDVC,irt}$ is an indicator for a case having been handled in an SDVC.[18] The second stage we estimate is thus:

$$y_{irt} = \delta_2 \widehat{\text{Case}}_{SDVC,irt} + \beta \mathbf{X_{irt}} + \gamma_r + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{irt} \tag{2}$$

where $\widehat{\text{Case}}_{SDVC,irt}$ is the predicted SDVC status of a case. δ_2 is the ATEC/LATE estimate of interest for the complier population –parties whose cases were handled in an SDVC, but would not have done so in the counterfactual.

One challenge we face for inference is that our analysis is based in a setting with few clusters of heterogeneous size. At the level of treatment, the judicial region, we have 4 treatment and

[17] While the Borusyak et al. (2024) methodology is well-suited for estimating treatment effects in staggered DiD settings, it is not directly applicable for use in the first stage of a 2SLS/IV framework. Unlike standard TWFE or DiD-based first-stage estimators, it does not provide a fitted treatment probability that can serve as an instrument to identify the ATE among compliers.

[18] In our estimation, we consider a case to be seen in an SDVC if Hearing 2 of the case is in a specialized court. For cases with only one hearing we use the court assignment of the first hearing.

4 control units. To mitigate the poor asymptotic properties of standard cluster robust variance estimators with few clusters, we follow recommendations of MacKinnon and Webb (2020) and rely on a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure to compute p-vlaues for our reduced form (ITT) results. For our 2SLS estimates, we compute p-values using a wild cluster WCRE bootstrap-t procedure, as proposed by MacKinnon (2019).

4.2 Geographic Discontinuity Design

The introduction of SDVCs in select judicial regions provides an opportunity to hone in on the identification of local treatment effects for individuals in more dispersed locations using a geographic discontinuity design (GDD). This design leverages the fact that judicial regions vary in their access to SDVCs, creating plausibly exogenous variation in treatment exposure for individuals residing near regional boundaries. Specifically, we compare outcomes for petitioners residing on either side of borders of judicial regions, under the assumption that individuals in close geographic proximity are similar in all respects except for their belonging to a jurisdiction with and SDVCs or one without.

To implement the GDD, we define treatment status based on whether a petitioner's residence falls within a judicial region with an SDVC. We then estimate the following local average treatment effect:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \tau D_i + f(Distance_i) + \gamma_b + \epsilon_i \tag{3}$$

where $f(Distance_i)$ is a flexible function of the petitioner's distance to the nearest judicial boundary, and the other variable have the same definitions as above. In our analysis, we include border-segment fixed effects γ_b to ensure that the comparisons are made between observations lying along the same border, rather than across different border segments of judicial regions. Following Calonico et al. (2014), we employ a local linear regression framework with optimal bandwidth selection and bias correction to estimate τ.[19]

Identification in this setting relies on the assumption that outcomes would evolve smoothly across judicial boundaries, but for differences in access to SDVCs. To evaluate the plausibility of this assumption, we focus our analysis on the subset of borders where SDVCs were introduced during our analysis period. This allows us to estimate discontinuities in petitioner, petitioned

[19] In particular, we follow the optimal bandwidth selection procedure to pin down the optimal bandwidth for our estimated effects of SDVC access on reappearances of female petitioners and use this same bandwidth of 5.266 km for all other outcomes to ensure a stable analysis sample.

parties, and case characteristics along identical boundaries, but prior to the onset of treatment. We report results from this pre-treatment balance exercise in Appendix Table A10, finding no significant differences in demographics or case outcomes across judicial region borders prior to the introduction of SDVCs.

5 Results

5.1 Effects on Access to SDVCs

We begin by examining the effects of introducing SDVCs in a region on the likelihood that cases are processed in these specialized courts rather than traditional ones. Figure 2 provides graphical evidence of these changes. We aggregate cases at the monthly level, centered around the time of an SDVC opening, and examine the share processed in these specialized courts. The figure reveals a sharp increase at the time of these openings: for initial hearings, the share rises from nearly zero to 55 percent, while for second hearings it reaches almost 80 percent.

Table 2 presents the regression results for all petitioners and breaks them down by petitioner's gender. We find that the opening of an SDVC increases the probability of a first hearing being held in an SDVC by 57 percentage points ($p < 0.001$) among female petitioners, with similar effects observed for male petitioners (60.7 percentage points; $p < 0.001$) (columns 1 and 4). For second hearings, where most final determinations occur, the estimated effects are larger. The opening of an SDVC increases the probability of a second hearing taking place in a specialized court by 79.4 percentage points for female petitioners, with nearly identical increases among cases with male petitioners (77.9 percentage points) (columns 2 and 5). Not surprisingly, the estimates of the pooled effects are very simliar in magnitude and precision (columns 7-9). For both hearings, the baseline probability in the control group of having a case seen in an SDVC is 1.0-1.4 percentage points. This might thus represent a significant change in how IPV cases are processed, to the extent that SDVCs have consequences of case management and judicial determinations.

5.2 Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection

We next examine the impact of increased access to SDVCs on judicial protection, beginning with the likelihood of receiving a final PO. These orders, typically decided during the second or final hearing, represent the most powerful tool available to civil courts for protecting petitioners from future violence. Table 3 presents these findings: Panel A reports the reduced-form results, showing

the estimated Intent-to-Treat (ITT) effects of SDVCs, while Panel B shows the average treatment effects among the compliers obtained from the 2SLS estimates.

We estimate that access to an SDVC increases the probability of receiving a final PO for women by 8.3 percentage points ($p = 0.056$), representing a 19.3 percent increase relative to the baseline mean. To estimate the average treatment effect for compliers, we refer to the 2SLS analysis presented in Panel B. The results indicate that for cases among the compliers handled in an SDVC increases the probability of receiving a final PO by 9.4 percentage points, which corresponds to a 21.8 percent increase ($p = 0.047$).

When we examine the results for male petitioners, we find effects of similar magnitude. In the reduced form, the estimate of the increase in the probability of receiving a final PO is 7.5 percentage points. The average effect among the compliers in this case is 10.2 percentage points. Given the lower baseline probability of receiving a final PO among men in the control group , these effects are proportionally larger, representing increases of 23.1 and 31 percent, respectively. While the reduced-form ITT effect estimate for men is not statistically significant at conventional confidence levels, the average effect among the compliers is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. In overall terms, we find that access to an SDVC increases the probability of receiving a final PO for both men and women by 7.9 percentage points, representing a 19.4 percent increase relative to the baseline mean ($p = 0.030$). Among the compliers, the results indicate that the overall probability of receiving a final PO increased by 9.3 percentage points, which corresponds to a 22.8 percent increase. Both estimates are statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Given that the objective of POs is to safeguard petitioners from further instances of violence and to deter offenders from committing future acts of aggression, in Table 4 we investigate whether access to SDVCs and the increased likelihood of receiving POs result in reduced levels of recidivism and court reappearance of petitioners. We estimate that access to an SDVC in the female petitioners' region of residence leads to a 1.7 percentage points (15.5 percent; $p = 0.033$) decrease in the probability of court reappearance among these (column 1). The estimate of the average effect among the compliers is 2.2 percentage points, a 19.3 percent decrease in proportional terms ($p = 0.008$). Regarding offender reappearance, we observe similar reductions. Access to an SDVC causes a 2.4 percentage points decrease in the probability that offenders are petitioned in a new case within the subsequent 12-month period ($p = 0.028$), a 18.5 percent decrease relative to the mean for the control group (column 2). The estimated impacts for cases among the complier population show a similar reduction of 2.3 percentage points or 17.7 percent.

Examining results among male petitioners reveals a more nuanced pattern. In contrast to the findings for women described above, the estimates are positive and statistically indistinguishable from zero (columns 3 and 4). The point estimates suggest there is an increase in the court reappearance of both male petitioners and female offenders, with an increase of 4.1 percentage points (57 percent; $p = 0.050$) among the latter (column 4). Although male petitioners represent a small minority of the overall number of cases (approximately 20 percent), this suggests the patterns of judicial protection and recidivism are distinct for this population. We reiterate that due to sample size limitations, we are unable to confidently state that these differences in patterns are considerable.[20] In any case, we find in overall terms that the access to SDVCs in the petitioner's region of residence tends to decrease both the court reappearance of petitioners and the recidivism of petitioned parties, particularly among the subpopulation of cases induced to be seen in a specialized court. The estimates indicate a 1.5 and 1.6 percentage points reduction in reappearance of petitioners and petitioned parties, respectively (columns 5-6).

5.3 Heterogeneous Effects

To gain deeper insight into the mechanisms driving the observed increases in protection and the subsequent declines on reappearance, we conduct a series of heterogeneity analyses. Specifically, we stratify the sample based on whether the parties have borne children together, the petitioner's distance from the judicial branch's Regional Judicial Center (the main courthouse in the judicial region, where SDVCs are located), and the predicted severity of the case. This permits an assessment as to whether the potential risk of contact between the parties, heterogeneity in the access to the SDVCs within judicial regions, and the severity of the IPV case, are relevant dimensions for differential improved access to justice effects among potential IPV victims.

These analyses focus exclusively on the sample of female petitioners, as the sample of male petitioners is too small to carry out credible heterogeneity analyses. Nonetheless, the results for cases with female petitioners and those among the pooled sample among petitioners of both genders are qualitatively and quantitatively similar; the latter results are reported in the online appendix. Finally, recall that since we estimate heterogeneous treatment effects based on sample stratification,

[20] Among a small subset of cases, there is a phenomenon in which both parties make requests for judicial protection on the same calendar day, arguably as a tool for judicial negotiation in a related case (e.g., divorce proceedings). We evaluate our results among the sample of cases in which we remove from these cases from the analysis sample and show the results described above are quantitatively similar in the case of the issuance of final POs and even more pronounced for the reappearance of female and all petitioners; see effect estimates in Appendix Tables A15 and A16.

although we are able to report estimates of such heterogeneous effects along these dimensions we are unable to formally test for statistically significant differences in these heterogeneous effects.

5.3.1 Heterogeneity by Family Composition

A first important margin of heterogeneity in cases, is whether the parties involved have borne children together. This is the case in 41 percent of the cases in our sample. The presence of dependent children may require extra arrangements, such as custody and visitation rights, and pose additional challenges for the court when considering no-contact orders as part of the PO. Given this added complexity to the interactions between parties, it is important to account for this potential heterogeneity in how cases are handled in SDVCs compared to traditional courts.

In Table 5, we present the results of this heterogeneity analysis. The point estimates suggest that SDVCs have strong effects among cases in which parties have with dependent children. Specifically, the average ITT effects on the probability of receiving a final PO are 11.2 percentage points in such cases ($p = 0.051$) compared to 5.4 percentage points for cases in which parties do not have children in common ($p = 0.114$) (columns 1 and 4). We find similar patterns for estimates of the average effect among the compliers: a 13.7 percentage points increase in the probability of a final PO issuance among the former group ($p = 0.047$) versus 5.2 percentage points among the latter ($p = 0.078$). Similarly, the estimated effects on the reduction in reappearance rates for both petitioners and petitioned parties are stronger in cases where the parties have children together. For petitioners, the declines in court reappearance are 2.5 percentage points among the former group ($p = 0.068$) compared to 1.1 percentage points among the latter ($p = 0.290$) in the reduced-form ITT results, and 3.7 percentage points ($p = 0.020$) versus 0.87 percentage points ($p = 0.625$) among the complier population (columns 2 and 5). We find similar patterns in the case of petitioners' recidivism (columns 3 and 6).

5.3.2 Heterogeneity by Access to Regional Judicial Center (RJC)

Second, we are interested in understanding possible heterogeneity in the petitioning party residence's distance to the SDVC, as it may reflect heterogeneity in access to legal protection and local judicial institutions. Specifically, individuals who reside relatively near the judicial region's RJC would typically attend such court for their legal proceedings, which, depending on the region, could be an SDVC or a traditional court. However, those in more peripheral areas are more likely to go to a local municipal or superior court. When an SDVC is opened in a judicial region, the judicial

protocols require that such cases be handled in a specialized court (following the first hearing). As a result, for petitioners in more peripheral areas, the opening of an SDVC might have a compounded effect, as their cases are now being handled in an SDVC in the RJC. Figure 3 provides empirical evidence consistent with this pattern. These figures illustrate how the probability of a case being handled in the RJC varies before and after the opening of an SDVC as a function of distance to the court. While the difference in the share of cases handled in the RJC for their second hearing is under 10 percentage points for cases within a 3 km radius of the court, this gap increase systematically to approximately 40-50 percentage points among cases in which petitioners reside farther away.

This motivates stratifying our sample into two groups: cases where petitioners reside below vs. above the median distance to the RJC. In Table 6, we show the estimates of average effects for these two sub-samples. The point estimates suggest that the effects are marginally larger for cases in which the petitioning party resides further away from the RJC. The ITT effects estimates suggest an increase in the probability of receiving judicial protection (final PO) of 10.8 percentage points among cases where the distance from the petitioner's residence to the RJC is above the median ($p = 0.069$), compared to 5.9 percentage points among cases whose residents live closer to the RJC ($p = 0.078$) (columns 1 and 4). However, this can be partly explained by differences in the compliance rates to have cases handled in SDVCs, as the average effects among the compliers are quantitatively more similar – 11.0 percentage points ($p = 0.074$) and 8.2 percentage points ($p = 0.039$), respectively.

In terms of court reappearance, we observe a similar pattern. The point estimates of the ITT effects suggest the decline in petitioner reappearance is twice as large for petitioners residing further from the RJC (2.5 percentage points) compared to those residing closer to the court (1.2 percentage points); the latter estimate is not statistically distinguishable from zero (columns 2 and 5). An even stronger pattern appears for the reappearance of petitioned parties: cases above the median distance show a decline of 3.5 percentage points ($p = 0.049$), while those below show only a 1.4 percentage points decline ($p = 0.153$), with this last estimate not statistically different from zero (columns 3 and 6). The patterns of estimated effects among the compliers confirm these results. Overall, the heterogeneity analyses highlight how effects are more pronounced among cases where the petitioner resides farther away from the SDVC, and may entail a greater change in exposure to the RJC and an SDVC. In the following subsection, we further study the spatial heterogeneity, exploiting the discontinuous change in access that occurs at the border of the treated regions.

5.3.3 Effects at the Border (Geographic Discontinuity Design)

Figure 4 presents evidence of a sharp discontinuity in SDVC access at judicial region boundaries, providing support for the validity of the design. Panel A reports the proportion of cases with an initial hearing in an SDVC, while Panel B extends this analysis to include subsequent hearings. In both cases, we observe a discrete increase in the likelihood of SDVC assignment at the boundary, consistent with a first-stage effect of approximately 30 percentage points for initial hearings and 50 percentage points for subsequent hearings.[21]

In Figure 5 we show graphical evidence of the GDD estimates of effects on judicial protection. The figures shows a clear discontinuity at the border. Specifically, cases originating near the border of a region where an SDVC has been introduced exhibit higher rates of final POs being granted (Panel B) and also a considerable increase in the total duration of judicial protection (Panel C). In terms of the point estimates of these changes, Table 7 shows that the discontinuity in the issuance of final POs is 10.8 percentage points. We also estimate a discontinuity of 7.1 percentage points in the probability of issuance of an ex parte PO, and an increase in overall protection of 30.8 days, on average. The stark discontinuities in SDVC access also result in substantial declines in petitioner and petitioend partyies' court reappearance rates of 10.3 and 7.5 percentage points, respectively; we confirm these patterns via graphical evidence in Figure 6. This further provides support to the argument that the improvements in judicial protection and the declines in recidivism are concentrated among cases in which petitioner parties reside in more peripheral locations, for whom the establishment of an SDVC represents a more pronounced change in terms of access to judicial resources and institutions. It also underscores the importance of addressing the unequal access to justice faced by peripheral communities.

5.3.4 Heterogeneity by Case Severity

Finally, we examine possible heterogeneity in how access to and handling of cases in SDVCs may affect their resolution and the court reappearance of parties for cases with different levels of severity of the allegations of the petitioning party. Although it is not obvious ex-ante that the effects may vary for these different groups of cases, it is plausible that these would be heterogeneity in judicial

[21] Appendix Figure A1 shows estimates of the density of cases around the cutoff, estimated using the local polynomial density estimator from Cattaneo et al. (2018). The test fails to reject the null hypothesis of a discontinuity ($p = 0.13$). Similar results hold for density tests using the population of cases including both female and male petitioners (See Appendix Figure A2). We also report estimates of border discontinuities in observable covariates for cases from such border regions in the period preceding the opening of SDVCs (See Appendix Table A10). We fail to reject the null hypothesis of continuity in covariates for 37 of 39 tests.

decisions given the varying risk of violence. On one hand, the granting of a final PO should be more justified among higher severity cases. The parties require very effective evaluations and these must be done quickly; SDVC structures could recognize the need for prioritization. On the other hand, cases that on paper suggest to be less severe may be those that require a higher level of training and knowledge of the dynamics of IPV to appropriately establish the level of risk and the necessary judicial protection. Therefore, we do this exercise to seek to identify possible differences.

To construct a measure of the severity of a case, we use detailed data on case allegations and aggravating factors. Examples of these are whether the petitioner has been a victim of violence due to the offender having: caused the petitioner to fear physical harm (67.5% of cases), attempted to cause or caused physical harm to the petitioner (53.7% of cases), caused emotional or psychological harm to the petitioner (82.3% of cases), forced the petitioner into a sexual relationship (6.8% of cases), deprived the petitioner of adequate rest (37.8% of cases), or restricted the petitioner's freedom of movement (24.5% of cases), among other possible actions. There is also the possibility of adding aggravating factors, such as whether minors were present (5.8%), whether the respondent used a weapon (firearm or otherwise) (1.5%), whether medical attention was required (1.4%), or whether a protection order had previously been issued against the respondent (2.8%), among others.[22] We use these data to train a logit model that predicts the probability of final protection order being issued in the control group, and we split cases above or below the median of severity using these predictions. By estimating our differences-in-differences model for these groups separately, we can evaluate treatment effects at different regions of the case severity distribution.

We present the results of this analysis in Table 8. The findings suggest that the effects of SDVCs are primarily concentrated in cases with severity below the median. For these lower-severity cases, we estimate a 9.5 pp ($p = 0.167$) increase in the probability of final protection order issuance in the reduced-form analysis, and a 14.2pp ($p = 0.090$) increase in the 2SLS results. These effects are substantially larger compared to those observed for high-severity cases, where the corresponding increases are 6.5pp ($p = 0.052$) and 4.6pp ($p = 0.387$), respectively.

Similarly, when examining petitioner reappearance, we find that most of the reduction is driven by low-severity cases. For those cases, being seen in an SDVC leads to a 2.4 pp statistically significant decline (22.6%) in reappearance in the reduced-form analysis, compared to a smaller 0.9pp decrease (8.7%) in high-severity cases. In the 2SLS, the decline in the low severity cases is

[22]Such allegations data is only recorded for cases where a judge considers awarding a final protection order - we thus restrict to those cases.

3.4pp (32%) compared to 1.0pp (9.5%). In contrast, offender reappearance does not exhibit such pronounced differences between low- and high-severity cases. In general, these findings support the notion that judicial interventions have the greatest potential to improve outcomes in less severe or more marginal cases, as the risks associated with them may need a deeper understanding of the complexity and multidimensionality of intimate partner violence.

6 Mechanisms - The Role of Judges

Judges play a crucial role in ensuring access to protection for petitioning parties, as they are responsible for evaluating the evidence presented, assessing the level of risk faced by the parties involved, and making decisions that can significantly impact their safety and well-being. One of the key innovations introduced by SDVCs is a greater emphasis on judicial training in the complexities of domestic violence. Such training can improve judges' understanding of the topic, leading to more effective case management and decision-making. Additionally, greater judicial specialization in these courts may lead to better adherence to established judicial protocols and strengthen judges' learning on the dynamics of domestic violence, thereby influencing case outcomes.

6.1 Decomposition Analysis

To asses the role of judges in the estimated effects of SDVCs we perform a decomposition analysis. Specifically, we extend our difference-in-differences specification to distinguish (a) the effects of specialized courts through the role of judges from (b) the broader impact of specialized courts independent of judge assignment. Specifically, we estimate:

$$y_{irkt} = [\delta_{\mathbf{k}}\mathbf{I_k}] + [\delta_1 \text{SEVD}r \times \text{POST}rt] + \beta\mathbf{X_{irt}} + \gamma_r + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{irkt} \tag{4}$$

where y_{irkt} represents the outcome variables of interest –final protection orders or petitioner reappearance, for case i, in region r, handled by judge k, with the first hearing held in period t. $[\delta_{\mathbf{k}}\mathbf{I_k}]$ captures judges' fixed effects, and the rest of the regression follow the notation of Equation 1.

Figure 7 presents the results of these decompositions. We estimate that approximately 85 percent (6.5 percentage points) of the overall increase in judicial protection via POs can be statistically attributed to the assignment of judges to SDVCs. In terms of recidivism, 55 percent of the effect — a 1.0 percentage point decrease – can be attributed to the assignment of judges to specialized courts.

These results indicate that judges play a crucial role in driving the improvements observed in SDVCs. To explore this further, we surveyed judges on their views regarding domestic violence, training, and case procedures, among other factors. Additionally, we collected data on their demographics and professional backgrounds.

6.2 Characteristics of Judges Assigned to SDVCs

6.2.1 Data

To enhance our understanding of the role that judges play in adjudicating civil domestic violence cases, we use two additional data sources. The first source is administrative data obtained from files available through the OAT, covering all judges active in Puerto Rico in 2019. The second source comes from a survey administered by the OAT to a sample of judges during July–August 2019. The administrative data on judges comprises socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, marital status, education, and professional background, of all these public servants active in 2019. In contrast to the administrative data, which primarily provide information on the demographic backgrounds of the judges, the survey data delve into multifaceted aspects that may shape their judicial approaches.

The survey was designed to collect information on the background, preferences, priorities, and perceptions of judges about the handling of domestic violence cases. By integrating both survey data and background information from the administrative dataset, this study aims to elucidate the role of potential mediators in the adjudication of cases. This includes an investigation into whether the characteristics of a judge influence case outcomes. Furthermore, we seek to determine whether there are notable differences in the assignment of judges to specialized versus traditional courtrooms, as well as in the decision-making environments in which they operate.

The survey was distributed to all judges who presided over domestic violence cases, civil or criminal, between January 2014 and November 2018. From a total population of 325 judges, two inclusion criteria were applied: judges had to have handled more than 15 cases (civil or criminal) and had to be active as of January 2, 2019. These criteria yielded a population of 167 judges, of whom 102 responded to the survey (for the questionnaire, see Appendix 18 of the OAT report). The questionnaire was administered in July 2019 using the *SurveyMonkey* platform, with follow-ups sent by email and telephone during the same period.

In order to utilize the information from the administrative and survey data for our analysis, we

proceed to link these data with the case-level records from the OPA system. This linkage is made possible through the unique, anonymized identifier assigned to each judge by the OAT. Regarding the linkage with the administrative data—and based on the OPA's civil case records—we are able to match the corresponding judge for 87.6% of the *cases*. In terms of the proportion of *judges* we can link, this figure is 57.5%. The discrepancy between the case-level and judge-level linkage rates reflects the fact that the judges for whom linkage is achieved handle a larger number of cases compared to those for whom linkage is not possible. With respect to the survey data on judges, we find that for 56.82% of the cases the corresponding judge can be linked with a survey respondent; however, the corresponding linkage rate at the judge level is only 34.75%.

These linkage rates fall short of 100 percent for several reasons. First, the OPA data begin in 2014, meaning that a substantial number of judges were not active at the time the survey was administered in 2019. Second, as noted previously, the survey was distributed only to judges who had handled at least 15 cases of this type. Third, the response rate among judges was 59.3%. Finally, the linkage rates for the administrative data are higher than those for the survey data, as the administrative records pertain to the entire universe of judges active in 2019. Once these linkages have been established, we use case-specific information—such as region, court, date, and time—to determine whether the case was handled in SDVC or traditional courtrooms. As detailed below, this approach allows us to describe the socio-demographic characteristics as well as the preferences, priorities, and perceptions of judges in cases handled in SDVC compared to traditional courtrooms.

6.2.2 Descriptive Statistics

This subsection presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the judges presiding over domestic violence cases. First, we present descriptive statistics of the characteristics of these public officials derived from administrative databases linked to the data set of domestic violence cases (see Table **??**). First, we observe that the proportion of female judges presiding over cases in SDVCs is 76 percent, a figure that is substantially higher than the 58 percent estimated for cases handled in traditional courtrooms. Regarding the age distribution of the judges, the average age in the SDVC cases is slightly lower (45.4 years) compared to traditional settings (47.1 years), which yields an average difference of 1.7 years. An analysis by age groups further clarifies this disparity: the share of cases presided over by judges aged 45 to 54 is 12 percentage points higher in SDVC (49%) than in traditional courtrooms (37 percent), whereas the proportion of cases overseen by judges aged 55

to 64 is higher in traditional courtrooms (20% compared to 13% in SDVC).

Next, we describe several dimensions of the educational and professional backgrounds of these public servants. First, the proportion of judges with a master' degree (in law or another discipline) is 13 percent in SDVC cases versus 17 percent in traditional courtrooms, indicating that cases handled in SDVC are not presided over by judges with generally higher academic credentials. However, in terms of professional background, SDVC cases show a higher share of judges with experience in the public sector or the third sector (65% and 12%, respectively) compared to those in traditional courtrooms (56% and 3.7%, respectively). Conversely, judges presiding over SDVC cases have less private sector experience than their SDVC in traditional courtrooms (13% versus 28%).[23]

In Table **??**, we present the socio-demographic characteristics of the judges who responded to the survey, which can be linked to civil domestic violence cases. This sample enables us to study differences between the detailed characteristics collected and the views on domestic violence held by judges handling cases in SDVC versus traditional courtrooms. Notably, the proportion of cases presided over by female judges remains similar within this sample, with 76% in SDVC compared to 57% in traditional settings. Regarding the age of the judges, the distribution tends to be somewhat higher in SDVC cases relative to traditional courtrooms. The proportion of judges over 55 years of age is 16% in SDVC and 12% in traditional settings, while the share of judges aged 45 to 54 is 50% in traditional courtrooms compared to 45% in SDVC. Finally, we observe differences in the legal academic backgrounds of the judges: SDVC cases feature a higher representation of judges graduating from the University of Puerto Rico (62%) compared to 34% in traditional courtrooms; in contrast, cases managed by judges with law degrees from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico (19%) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (42%) are more prevalent in traditional courtrooms than in SDVC (6.4% and 24%, respectively).

6.3 Analysis

SUMMARY: Leveraging the administrative data and the survey of judges we were able to examine potential causal differences in key characteristics of judges presiding over cases both in SDVC and non SDVC regions. The analysis finds that judges' characteristics, such as gender and academic qualifications, are broadly similar between specialized domestic violence courts and traditional courtrooms, with no statistically significant differences overall. While there are observable

[23] Background information on professional experience is not available for all judges in the dataset; consequently, in some cases, we are unable to categorize their occupational backgrounds.

variations in age and professional background – with specialized settings tending to have somewhat older judges and a different mix of professional backgrounds – these differences do not reach statistical significance.

Although we do not have sufficient statistical power, we then conducted a descriptive exercise to quantify whether any of these characteristics help explain a component of the gap in adjudications—specifically, in the issuance of final protection orders to petitioning parties. By estimating correlations to assess whether these judicial characteristics predict the likelihood of a petitioning party's reappearance in court, we find that certain judicial attributes are correlated with the likelihood of issuing final protection orders, suggesting they may partially explain why specialized courts appear more effective in providing protection for domestic violence victims, even though they do not seem to affect the frequency of petitioners' later court appearances. Next, additional descriptive survey data offer insights into judges' training, judges' perspectives on managing domestic violence cases and finally judges knowledge and/or perspectives regarding intimate partner violence.

Next, we present additional analyses using the survey data from judges. We focus on patterns in (a) the training received by judges regarding various dimensions of domestic violence; (b) aspects that judges consider important in the management of domestic violence cases; and (c) the knowledge and/or perspectives of judges regarding intimate partner violence. These analyses are descriptive in nature; we do not present causal analyses of these patterns, given that the statistical power to detect such patterns is even more limited in the case of the survey data.

Judge Training

SUMMARY: Judges in both specialized domestic violence courts and in traditional court-settings receive substantial training on domestic violence issues, with participation in the overall amount of training or time devoted to studying these topics being similar. However, judges in specialized domestic violence courts tend to have more focused training on the dynamics and underlying causes of domestic violence, including its psychosocial aspects and evidentiary issues, compared to their counterparts in traditional courtrooms. In contrast, training related to case management and judicial administration is comparably consistent across both settings. These results suggest that the enhanced specialization observed in domestic violence courts pertains primarily to substantive knowledge rather than to procedural training.

Perspectives regarding IPV Case Management

SUMMARY: In order to examine the variation in judicial priorities regarding domestic violence case management between specialized domestic violence courts and traditional courtrooms, we exploit the information provided in the judges' survey. Using survey responses, judges evaluated aspects of both restorative and punitive justice, including approaches that emphasize rehabilitation and community engagement as well as those that focus on accountability and consistent punishment. The findings reveal that judges in specialized courts tend to favor a more restorative approach, emphasizing community awareness, efficient case processing, and coordinated responses. In contrast, judges in traditional settings place more emphasis on punitive measures, such as holding aggressors accountable and ensuring consistency in sentencing. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that these divergent priorities are systematically associated with judicial outcomes. A stronger focus on restorative justice correlates with a higher likelihood of issuing protective orders and with a reduced frequency of petitioning parties returning to court. These findings imply that distinct approaches to judicial decision making contribute significantly to differences in case management outcomes in court settings.

Perspectives regarding IPV

SUMMARY: Finally, we want to investigate whether differences in the training and preparedness of judges are reflected in their understanding of intimate partner violence. Drawing on survey responses based on an established conflict measurement framework – based on the Conflict Tactics Scale (**??**), judges were asked to evaluate a variety of behaviors, spanning controlling actions, psychological abuse, physical aggression, and sexual coercion as to whether they constitute violence. Evidence indicates that judges in both specialized and traditional court settings are inclined to recognize overt forms of violence, while more ambiguous behaviors, such as certain controlling actions, receive less consensus. Notably, judges in specialized courts exhibit a marginally broader interpretation of violent behavior. Given these differences, we then examine whether they help explain the gaps in judicial determinations in these cases – specifically, the tendency to issue final protection orders to petitioning parties. A more expansive recognition of domestic violence correlates with an increased likelihood of issuing protection orders and a reduced probability of subsequent court appearances by petitioning parties. Although statistically significant associations are found – especially with the perception of physical violence – these judicial perspectives account for only a modest portion of the differences in outcomes observed between specialized and traditional court settings.

7 Conclusion

Intimate partner violence remains a significant global issue – experienced by 1 in 3 women, IPV leads to detrimental effects on women's physical and mental health, as well as their overall well-being. Addressing this pervasive problem requires effective policies and interventions that promote access to justice for IPV victims. In this paper we study the large-scale implementation of a system of specialized domestic violence courts in Puerto Rico, an innovation in access to justice programs for potential victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) and offenders. Using data from the universe of civil domestic violence cases in Puerto Rico during the period 2014-2021, we leverage the staggered opening of SDVCs across judicial regions to examine the consequences for victims' judicial protection as well as offender recidivism. Access to SDVCs leads to a considerable 8 percentage points increase in the probability that judges issue judicial protection via a protection order and a 1.7 percentage point (15 percent) decrease in victim and offender reappearance rates within one year of the start of the case. Effects are more pronounced for cases in which parties have children in common and in which access to SDVCs is more limited.

Linking the case data to administrative and survey data on judges handling these cases, we show that the judges assigned to SDVCs play a prominent role in explaining these outcomes. Specifically, we conduct analyses to elucidate and quantify the role of judges in adjudicating cases in SDVCs. First, our findings indicate that the assignment of judges to these cases accounts for a significant portion of both the increased protection afforded to petitioning parties and the reduced recidivism among petitioned parties — a consequence attributed to the establishment of specialized courts. Second, we investigate the attributes and perspectives of judges that correlate with judicial decision-making favoring the issuance of protection orders. Our analysis provides evidence that certain socio-demographic characteristics, notably gender and professional background, together with the extent of specialized training in managing domestic violence cases and the emphasis placed on restorative justice principles in case management, are significantly associated with judicial determinations to grant protection orders. These findings underscore the importance of considering not only the training of judges, but also their selection and assignment to courts, ensuring that such decisions reflect a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in domestic violence experiences and case management. Such strategic assignment is likely to optimize adherence to established

judicial protocols for case evaluation and the provision of judicial protection when appropriate.

These results have important implications and suggest avenues for future research. One key question involves the multifaceted ways in which this reform may affect victim's well-being. We show that this judicial innovation substantially increases judicial protection, at least in the short and middle run. Whether judicial protection is effective at protecting victims both physically and psychologically in this context and more broadly are important directions for future research.

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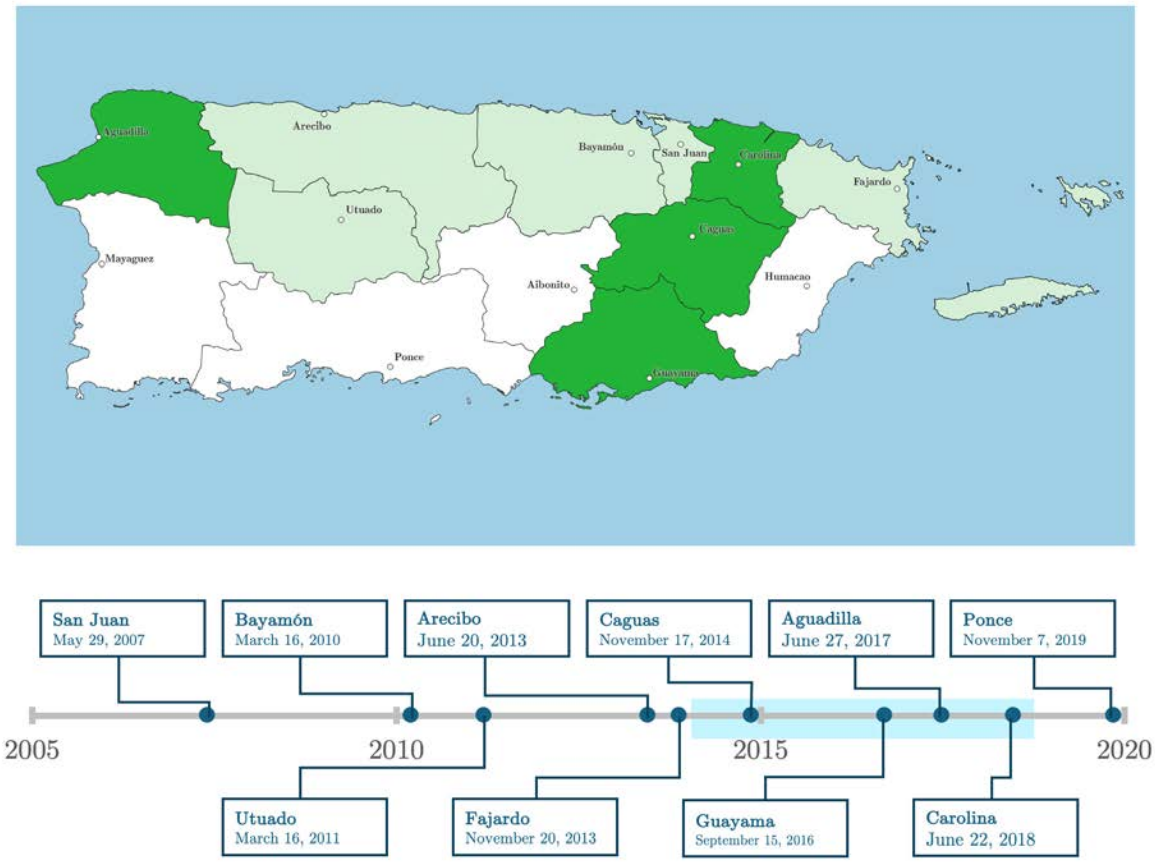
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8 Figures and Tables

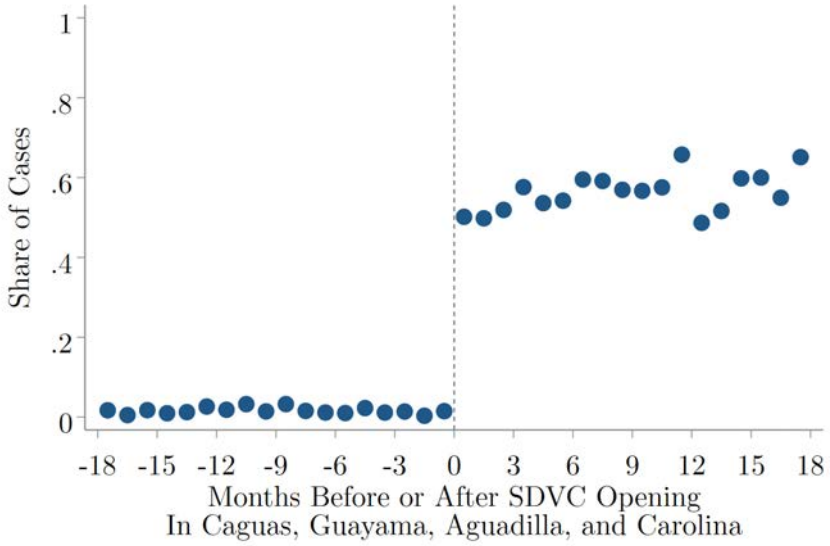
Figure 1: Map and Timeline of Opening of SDVCs across Judicial Regions



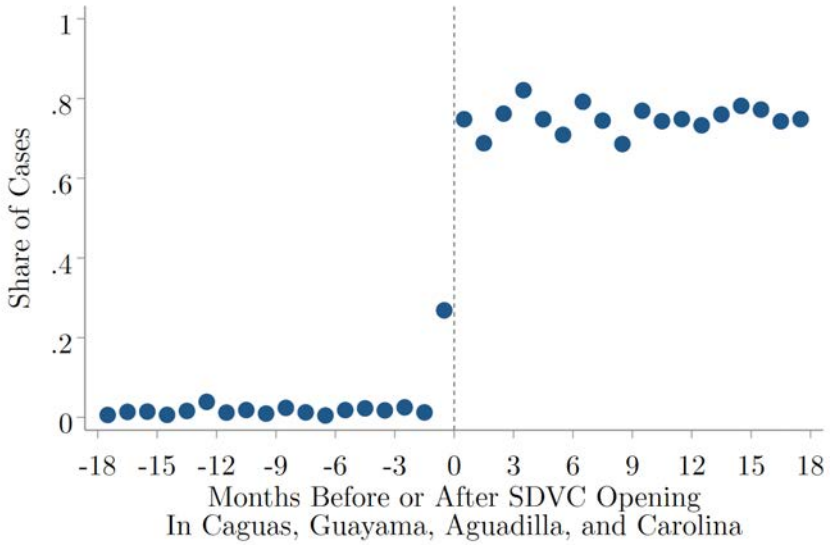
Note: The figures depict the gradual expansion of the system of Specialized Domestic Violence Courts across judicial regions in Puerto Rico. The SDVCs in the judicial regions depicted in light green opened preceding the study's time period (San Juan, Bayamon, Utuado, Arecibo, and Fajardo). During our study period, SDVCs were opened in four (4) judicial regions, depicted in dark green: Caguas, Guayama, Aguadilla, and Carolina. The region of Ponce opened its SDVC in Nov. 2019; see reasons for its exclusion from analysis in the text. Points on the map indicate locations of Regional Judicial Centers.

Figure 2: Cases Handled in SDVCs Before and After Opening of Courts

(a) First Hearing

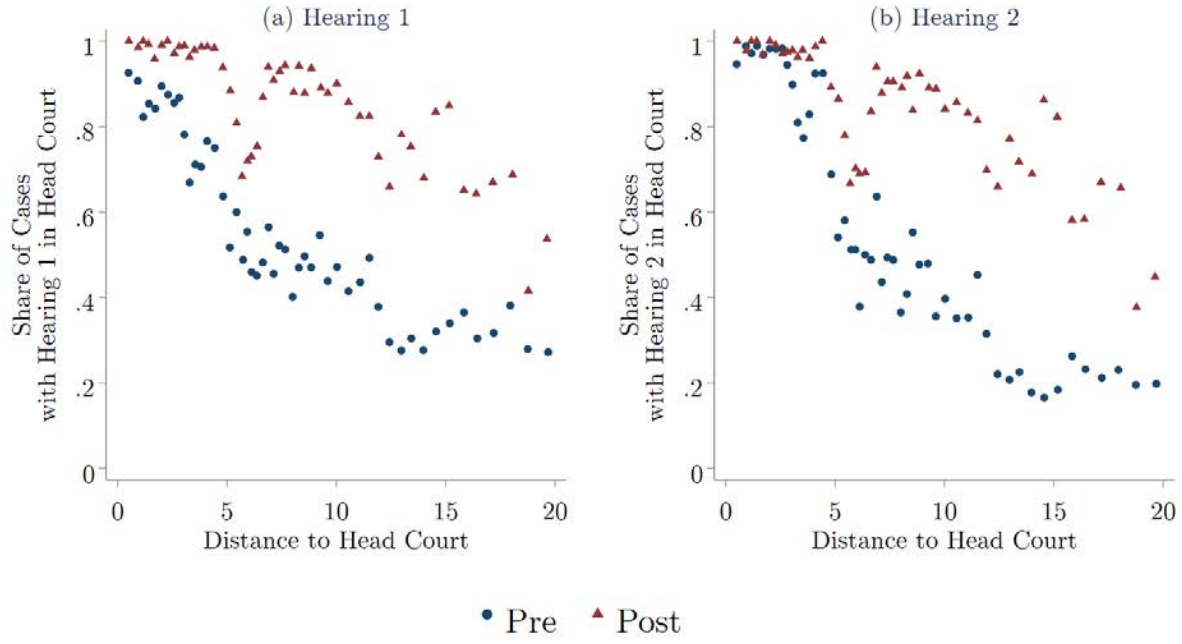


(b) Second Hearing



Notes: The figures show trends in the share of cases handled in SDVCs by petitioners who reside in the region with access to an SDVC, during the period up to 18 months before and after the opening of said court. For each case, the reference date is the date of the first hearing. Panel A reports the share of cases with the first hearing handled in an SDVC, while Panel B shows the share with second hearing handled in an SDVC.

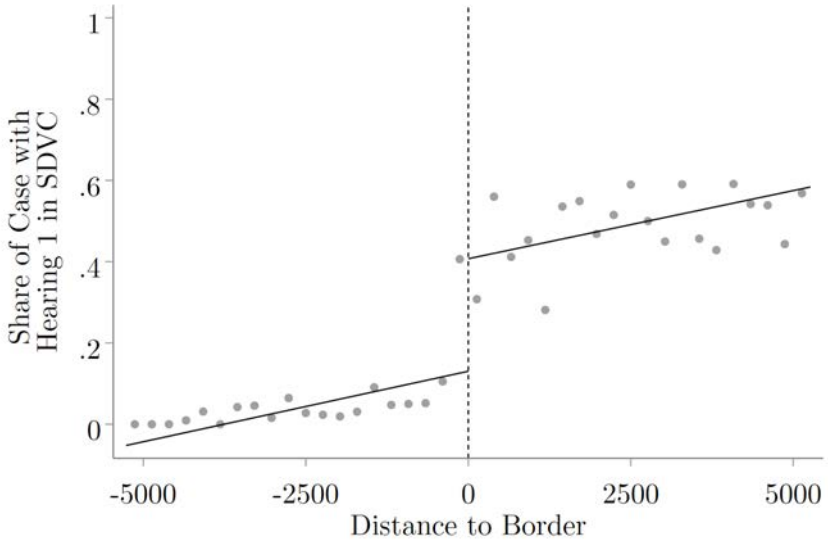
Figure 3: Share of Case Handled in Regional Judicial Center - Judicial Regions with SDVC



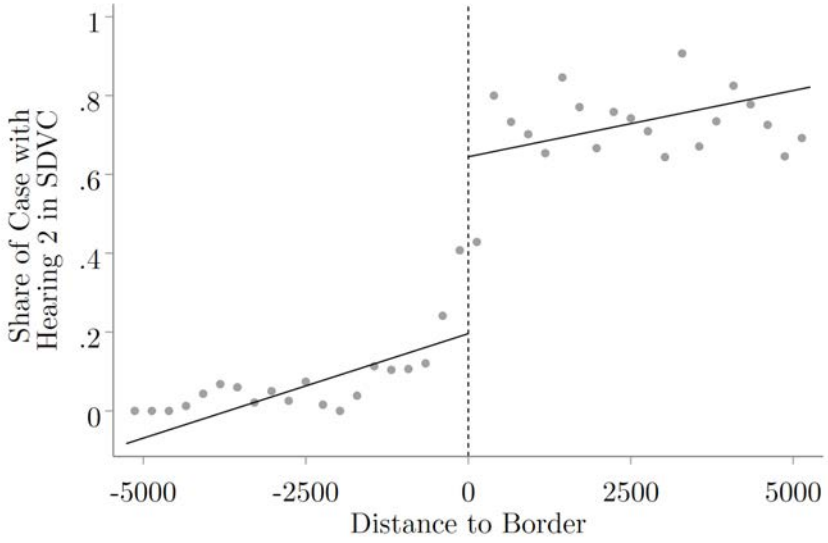
Notes: Sample restricted to cases in regions with an establishment of an SDVC. The figures show the share of cases handled in the Regional Judicial Center (RJC) as a function of the petitioner's residence distance to such center, before and after the opening of the SDVC. The horizontal axes of each panel represents the distance (in meters) from the residence of the female petitioner to the RJC. Panel A reports the share of cases with the first hearing handled in the RJC, while Panel B shows the share with the first or subsequent hearing handled in the RJC. The dots represent binscatter plots of the shares for cases at different distance ranges of the RJC. The cases taking place before the establishment of the regional SDVC are shown in (blue) cirlces while those taking place after the establishment of such court are shown as (red) triangles.

Figure 4: Cases by Female Petitioners Handled in SDVCs after Opening of Courts – Geographic Discontinuity Design

(a) First Hearing



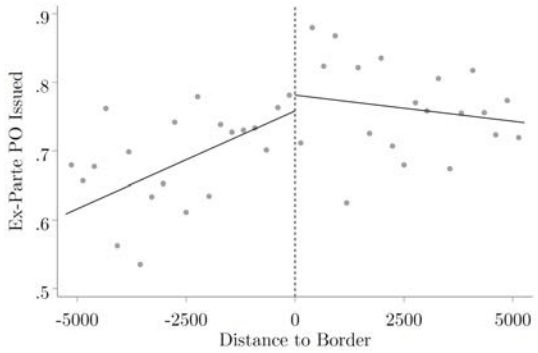
(b) Second Hearing



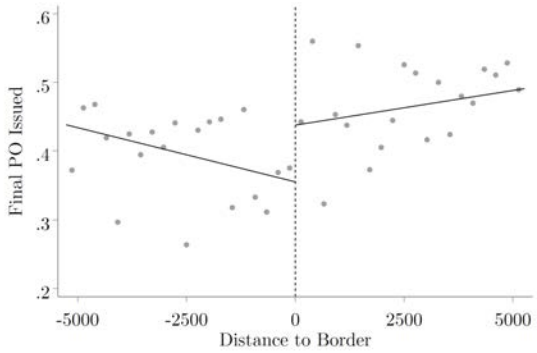
Notes: The figures show RD plots that illustrate the geographic discontinuity design. The horizontal axes of each panel represents the distance (in meters) from the residence of the female petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC; the border (threshold) is represented by the vertical line. The petitioners residing within the border of the judicial region with an SDVC are depicted to the right of the threshold while those residing outside of the judicial region are depicted to the left of the threshold. Panel A reports the share of cases with the first hearing handled in an SDVC, while Panel B shows the share with the second hearing handled in an SDVC. The dots represent binscatter plots of the shares for cases at different distance ranges of the threshold. The figures are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Figure 5: Effects of Access to SDVCs on the Judicial Protection of Female Petitioners

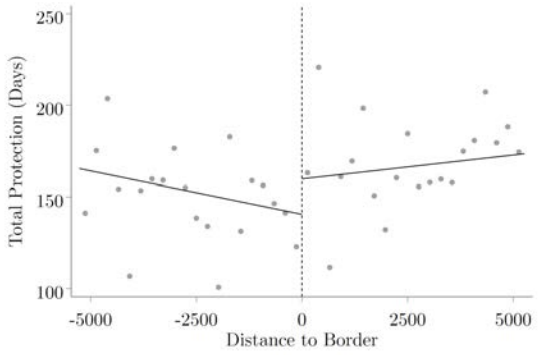
(a) Issuance of Ex-Parte PO



(b) Issuance of Final PO



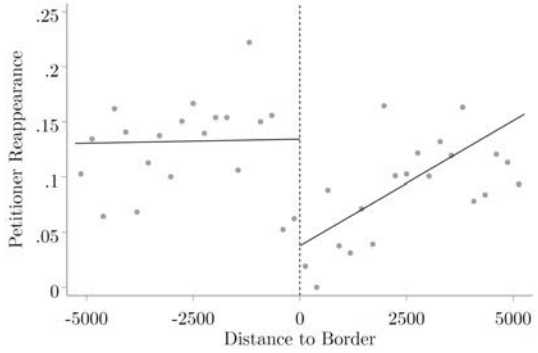
(c) Duration of Protection



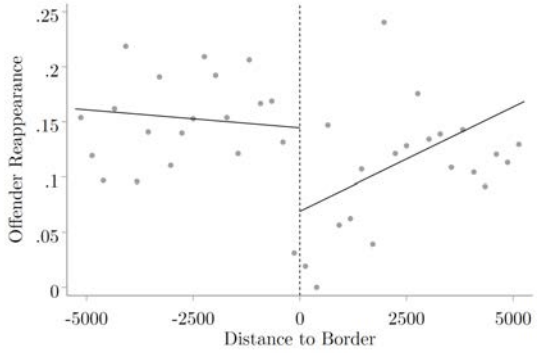
Notes: The figures show RD plots that illustrate the geographic discontinuity design (GDD) effects. The horizontal axes of each panel represents the distance (in meters) from the residence of the female petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC; the border (threshold) is represented by the vertical line. The petitioners residing within the border of the judicial region with an SDVC are depicted to the right of the threshold while those residing outside of the judicial region are depicted to the left of the threshold. Panel A reports the share of cases for which a judge issues a temporary *ex-parte* protection order, while Panel B shows the share of cases for which a judge issues a final protection order. Panel C reports effects on the duration of protection among cases that receive protection orders. The dots represent binscatter plots of the shares for cases at different distance ranges of the threshold. The figures are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Figure 6: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Petitioner and Petitioned/Offender Reappearance Among Cases with Female Petitioners

(a) Petitioner Reappearance

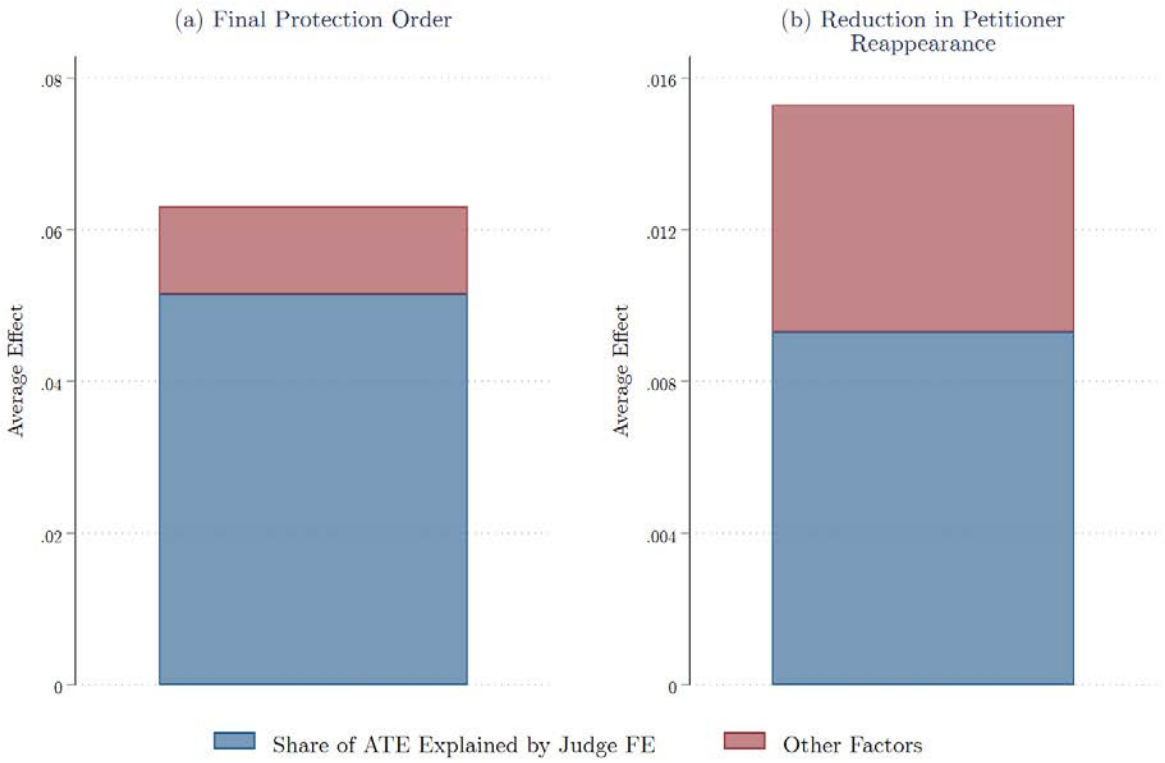


(b) Petitioned/Offender Reappearance



Notes: The figures show RD plots that illustrate the geographic discontinuity design (GDD) effects. The horizontal axes of each panel represents the distance (in meters) from the residence of the female petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC; the border (threshold) is represented by the vertical line. The petitioners residing within the border of the judicial region with an SDVC are depicted to the right of the threshold while those residing outside of the judicial region are depicted to the left of the threshold. Panel A shows the share of cases for which the petitioner reappears in a subsequent case within 12 months of the start of the first case, while Panel B shows shares of cases where the petitioned/offender reappeared in a subsequent case. The dots represent binscatter plots of the shares for cases at different distance ranges of the threshold. The figures are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Figure 7: Share of Treatment Effect Attributable to Judge Assignment



Notes: This figure presents results from the decomposition analysis of the estimated effects of SDVCs, as described in subsection 6.1. The left panel (Panel A) reports the average effect of access to SDVC on the share of cases resulting in a final protection order. The right panel (Panel B) shows the average reduction in petitioner reappearance due to access to SDVC. The portion of the average effect attributed to judge assignment is shown in blue, while the remaining effect, independent of judge assignment, is shown in red.

Table 1: Summary Statistics and Balance Tests – Cases with Female Petitioners

	Regions			Differences (Adjusted)	
	Always Treated	Switchers	Never Treated	AT - NT	S - NT
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Petitioner Age	33.41	33.64	33.83	-0.39	0.14
	(11.55)	(11.60)	(11.79)	[0.190]	[0.757]
Petitioned/Offender Gender – Female	0.029	0.027	0.027	0.002	0.001
	(0.169)	(0.161)	(0.163)	[0.825]	[0.829]
Petitioned/Offender Age	36.00	36.10	36.22	-0.19	0.22
	(12.41)	(17.29)	(13.74)	[0.437]	[0.814]
Number of Children	0.65	0.71	0.68	-0.03	0.00
	(0.93)	(0.97)	(0.99)	[0.500]	[0.857]
Number of Hearings	2.46	2.19	2.09	0.38**	0.17
	(1.66)	(1.34)	(1.07)	[0.040]	[0.143]
Hearing 1 in SDVC	0.35	0.01	0.01	0.35***	0.01
	(0.48)	(0.11)	(0.08)	[0.008]	[0.100]
Hearing 2 in SDVC	0.71	0.02	0.01	0.71***	0.02*
	(0.45)	(0.14)	(0.08)	[0.008]	[0.071]
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.723	0.700	0.658	0.065	0.044
	(0.447)	(0.458)	(0.474)	[0.206]	[0.443]
Final PO Issued	0.419	0.420	0.419	-0.000	-0.004
	(0.493)	(0.494)	(0.493)	[0.976]	[0.857]
Ex-Parte PO Duration	35.4	31.3	26.4	9.0**	6.0
	(41.1)	(36.1)	(24.4)	[0.040]	[0.186]
$<$ 2 weeks	0.12	0.13	0.14	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.35)	[0.675]	[0.629]
2 – 3 weeks	0.31	0.39	0.44	-0.12	-0.06
	(0.46)	(0.49)	(0.50)	[0.254]	[0.486]
3 – 6 weeks	0.34	0.31	0.28	0.05	0.03
	(0.47)	(0.46)	(0.45)	[0.238]	[0.586]
$>$ 6 weeks	0.22	0.17	0.13	0.09**	0.05
	(0.42)	(0.38)	(0.33)	[0.040]	[0.171]
Final PO Duration	247.9	231.1	213.8	34.2	17.5
	(165.7)	(147.7)	(154.5)	[0.254]	[0.543]
$<$ 3 months	0.08	0.08	0.14	-0.06*	-0.06*
	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.35)	[0.063]	[0.086]
3 – 6 months	0.49	0.54	0.53	-0.04	0.01
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	[0.524]	[0.857]
6 – 12 months	0.38	0.35	0.29	0.09	0.06
	(0.49)	(0.48)	(0.45)	[0.103]	[0.500]
$>$ 12 months	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.01	-0.02
	(0.22)	(0.17)	(0.21)	[0.690]	[0.529]
Petitioner Reappearance	0.105	0.113	0.114	-0.009	-0.002
	(0.307)	(0.317)	(0.318)	[0.143]	[0.643]
Petitioned/Offender Reappearance	0.124	0.128	0.130	-0.005	-0.001
	(0.330)	(0.334)	(0.336)	[0.413]	[0.886]
Observations	19,922	7,285	11,917	31,839	19,235

Notes: Columns 1-3 report the average (and the standard deviation, in parentheses) of the characteristics of the cases for the three groups of judicial regions: those where SDVCs are introduced in the period 2007-2013 (Always Treated); those where SDVCs were introduced in 2014-2019, our study period (Switcher Regions); and those where SDVCs were not introduced before the end of our study period (Never Treated Regions). For Switcher Regions in column 2, we report means from their pre-treatment period. Column 4 presents the average difference between cases in Always Treated and Never Treated regions (col. 1 - col. 3). Column 5 presents the average difference for cases in Switcher Regions (prior to the introduction of SDVCs) and Never Treated Regions. Both columns 4 and 5 report differences adjusted for time trends (regressions including fixed effects for each month and year). The p-values, reported in columns 4-5 in brackets, are estimated using a randomization inference procedure. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Effect of SDVCs Opening on Access to Specialized Courts

	Female Petitioners			Male Petitioners			All Petitioners		
	Hearing 1 in SDVC	Hearing 2 in SDVC	Hearing 1 or 2 in SDVC	Hearing 1 in SDVC	Hearing 2 in SDVC	Hearing 1 or 2 in SDVC	Hearing 1 in SDVC	Hearing 2 in SDVC	Hearing 1 or 2 in SDVC
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: First Stage Results – Borusyak et al. (2024)									
SDVC Region × Post	0.570	0.794	0.781	0.607	0.779	0.762	0.577	0.792	0.777
	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.001]***	[0.000]***	[0.001]***	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.001]***
Panel B: First Stage Results – TWFE Estimator									
SDVC x POST	0.512	0.653	0.671	0.536	0.646	0.660	0.517	0.652	0.669
	[0.000]***	[0.004]***	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.000]***	[0.004]***	[0.000]***	[0.004]***
Victim Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.00949	0.0140	0.0158	0.0139	0.0133	0.0183	0.0104	0.0139	0.0163
Observations	23615	18145	23615	5899	4014	5899	29514	22159	29514

Notes: This table reports estimated effects of SDVC openings in a region on assignment of case hearings to specialized courts. In Panel A, these effects are estimated using the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). In Panel B, the analogous estimates from a canonical TWFE model are reported. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Average Effect of Access to SDVCs on Issuance of Final Protection Orders

	Final PO Issued		
	Female	Male	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects			
SDVC Region × Post	0.083	0.075	0.079
	[0.059]*	[0.157]	[0.030]**
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)			
Case in SDVC	0.094	0.102	0.093
	[0.047]**	[0.008]***	[0.016]**
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.418	0.311	0.396
Observations	23,615	5,899	29,514

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Average Effect of Access to SDVCs on Court Reappearance

	Female Petitioners		Male Petitioners		All Petitioners	
	Petitioner Reappearance (1)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (2)	Petitioner Reappearance (3)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (4)	Petitioner Reappearance (5)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	-0.017	-0.024	0.030	0.041	-0.010	-0.013
	[0.033]**	[0.028]**	[0.207]	[0.050]*	[0.146]	[0.114]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	-0.022	-0.023	0.020	0.022	-0.015	-0.016
	[0.008]***	[0.016]**	[0.359]	[0.375]	[0.078]*	[0.023]**
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.115	0.130	0.0715	0.0715	0.106	0.118
Observations	23,615	23,615	5,899	5,899	29,514	29,514

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table 5: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Family Comp. (Female Petitioners)

	Have Children			Do Not Have Children		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.112	-0.025	-0.037	0.054	-0.012	-0.013
	[0.051]*	[0.068]*	[0.008]***	[0.114]	[0.290]	[0.251]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.137	-0.037	-0.039	0.052	-0.009	-0.009
	[0.047]**	[0.020]**	[0.199]	[0.078]*	[0.625]	[0.496]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.504	0.116	0.128	0.357	0.114	0.130
Observations	9,789	9,789	9,789	13,826	13,826	13,826

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table 6: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Distance to Regional Judicial Center [RJC] (Female Petitioners)

	Below Median Distance to RJC			Above Median Distance to RJC		
	Final PO Issued (1)	Petitioner Reappearance (2)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (3)	Final PO Issued (4)	Petitioner Reappearance (5)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.060	-0.012	-0.014	0.108	-0.025	-0.035
	[0.078]*	[0.155]	[0.153]	[0.069]*	[0.080]*	[0.049]**
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.082	-0.013	-0.016	0.110	-0.030	-0.029
	[0.039]**	[0.426]	[0.051]*	[0.074]*	[0.066]*	[0.313]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.426	0.114	0.129	0.410	0.116	0.132
Observations	11,444	11,444	11,444	11,588	11,588	11,588

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 7: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – Female Petitioners [GD Design]

	GDD/RDD Estimate (1)	Control Mean (2)
Number of Hearings	-0.05	2.32
	(0.12)	(1.42)
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.071**	0.685
	(0.028)	(0.465)
Final PO Issued	0.108**	0.397
	(0.047)	(0.489)
Total Protection (Days)	30.8*	153.4
	(16.0)	(179.7)
Total Ex-Parte Protection (Days)	-7.0	34.4
	(5.4)	(38.6)
Total Final Protection (Days)	28.6	247.4
	(18.9)	(178.7)
Petitioner Reappearance	-0.103***	0.129
	(0.022)	(0.335)
Petitioned/Offender Reappearance	-0.075***	0.150
	(0.027)	(0.357)
Eff. Obs (L)	1,503	
Eff. Obs (R)	1,660	
(p) Order Loc. Poly.	1	
(q) Order Bias	2	
(h) BW Loc. Poly.	5,266	
(b) BW Bias	12,281	

Notes: Column 1 reports GDD/RDD estimates of the discontinuity in each of the outcome variables of interest; each coefficient and standard error is generated from a separate regression. Column 2 reports the mean for the control group in the estimation sample. The running variable is the distance (in meters) from the residence of the female petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC. The estimates are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

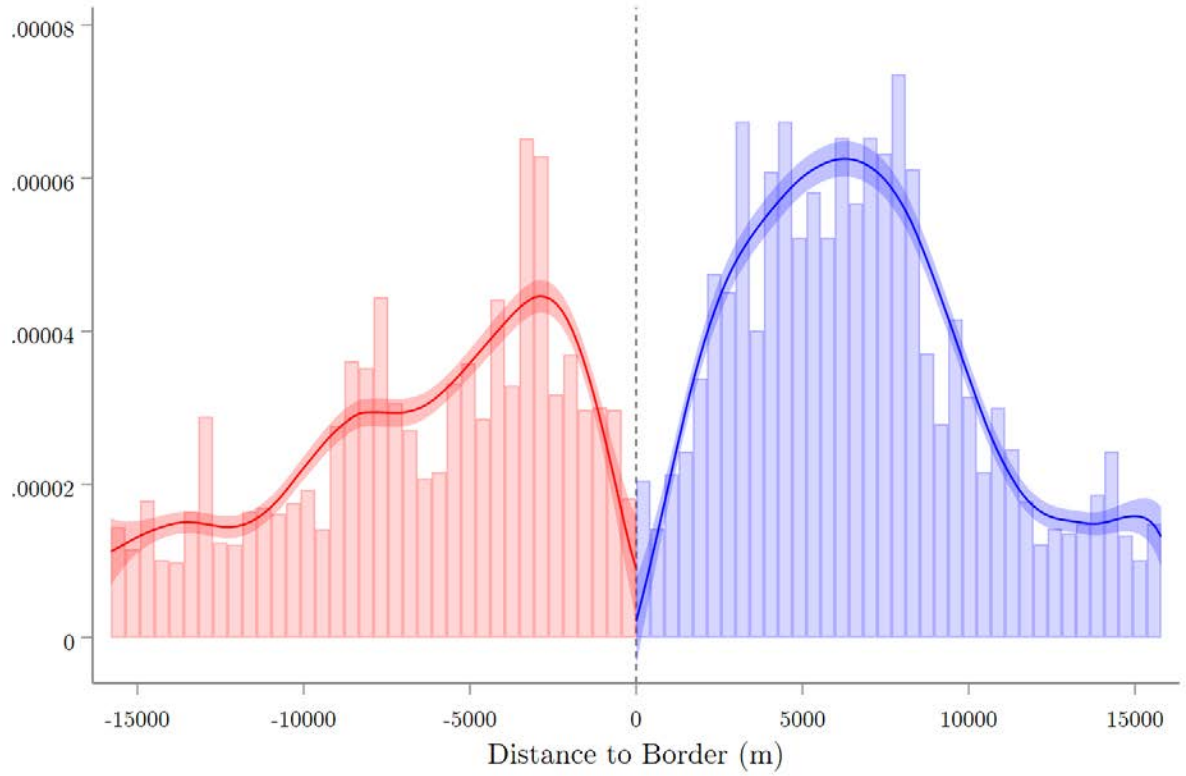
Table 8: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Case Severity (Female Petitioners)

	Low Severity			High Severity		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.095	-0.024	-0.022	0.065	-0.009	-0.025
	[0.167]	[0.010]**	[0.007]***	[0.052]*	[0.559]	[0.095]*
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.142	-0.034	-0.015	0.047	-0.010	-0.026
	[0.090]*	[0.004]***	[0.059]*	[0.387]	[0.438]	[0.074]*
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.487	0.108	0.124	0.542	0.109	0.126
Observations	8,897	8,897	8,897	8,826	8,826	8,826

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

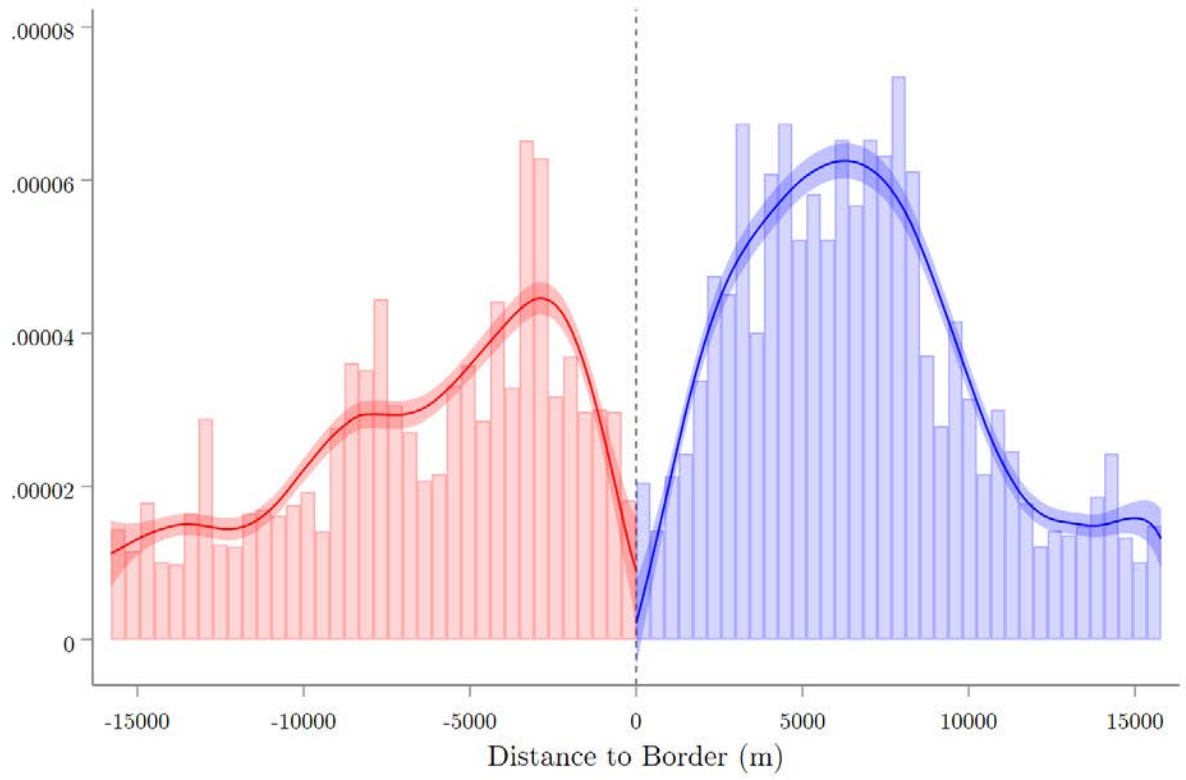
A Appendix Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Regression Discontinuity Manipulation – Female Victims



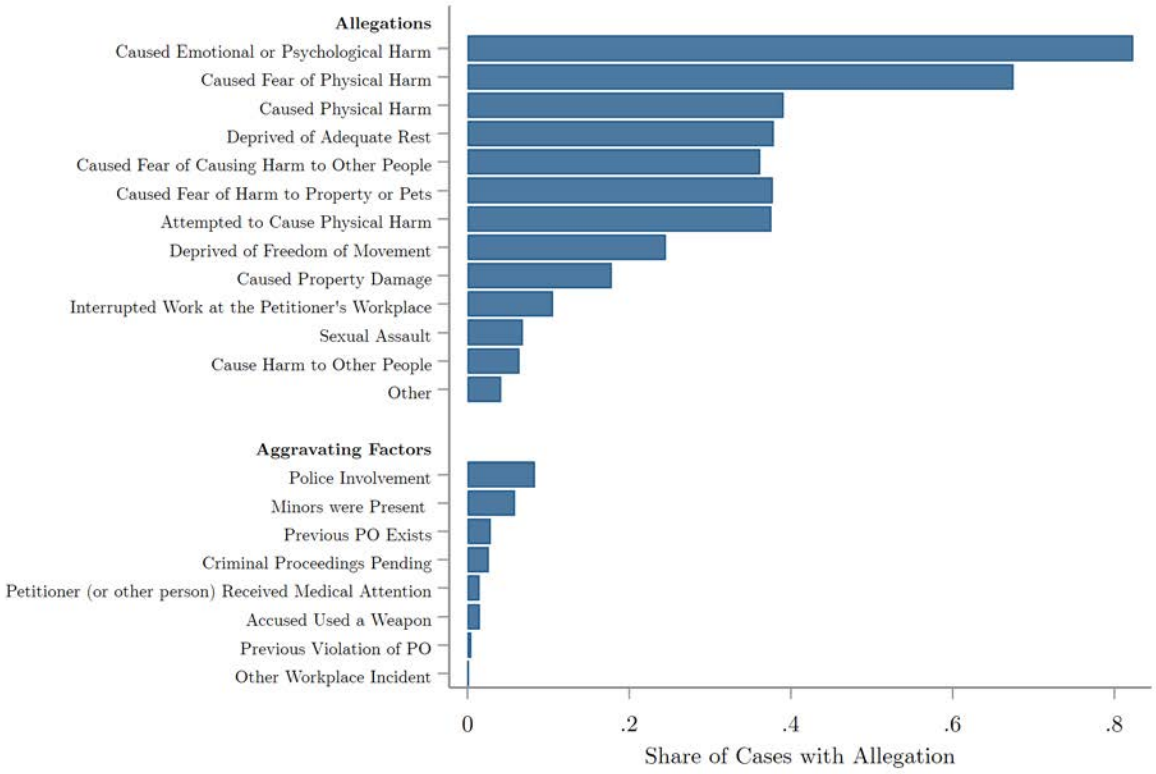
Notes: This figure presents the density of the running variable around the cutoff, estimated using the local polynomial density estimator from Cattaneo et al. (2018). The histogram represents the empirical distribution of the running variable, the distance to judicial border where an SDVC operates. The solid lines depict local polynomial estimates of the density on either side of the threshold. Shaded regions indicate 95% confidence intervals. The vertical dashed line marks the judicial region border, with SDVCs present to the right of the cut-off.

Figure A2: Regression Discontinuity Manipulation – All Victims



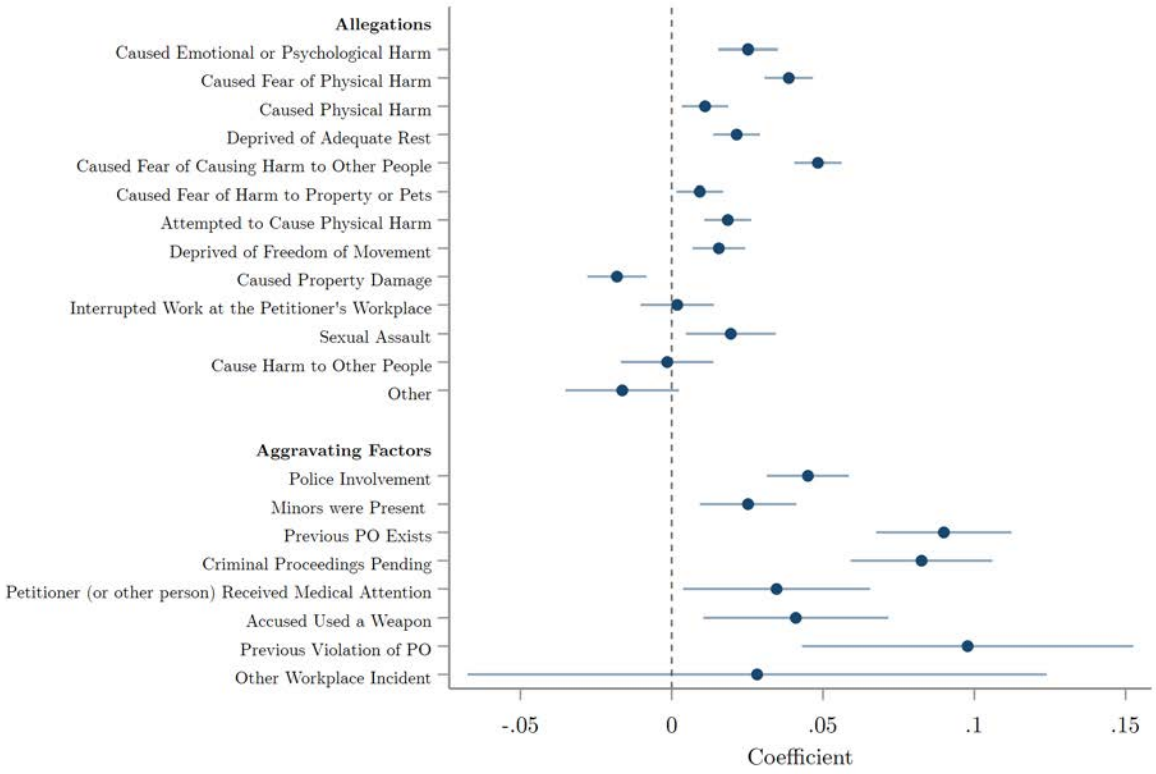
Notes: This figure presents the density of the running variable around the cutoff, estimated using the local polynomial density estimator from Cattaneo et al. (2018). The histogram represents the empirical distribution of the running variable, the distance to judicial border where an SDVC operates. The solid lines depict local polynomial estimates of the density on either side of the threshold. Shaded regions indicate 95% confidence intervals. The vertical dashed line marks the judicial region border, with SDVCs present to the right of the cut-off.

Figure A3: Share of Cases with Allegations and Aggravating Factors



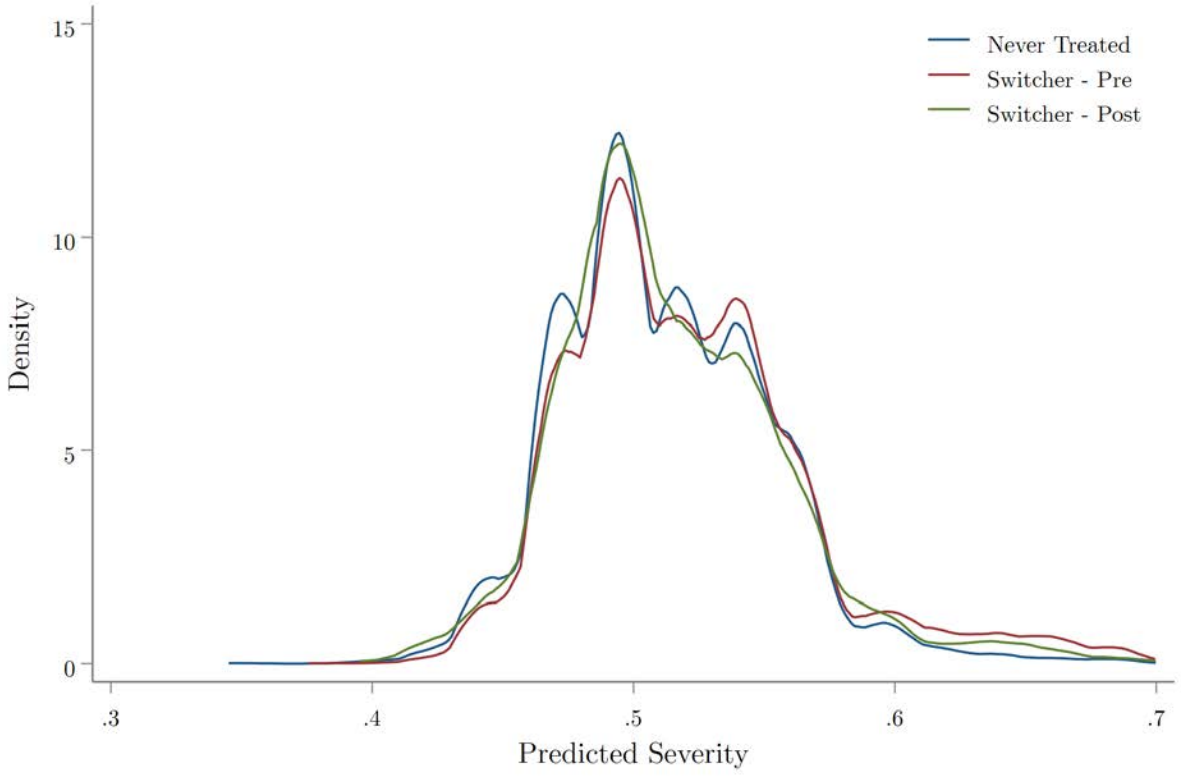
Notes: This figure depicts prevalence of allegations made by petitioners and aggravating factors. These case attributes are used for construction of the predicted severity index used in our analysis.

Figure A4: Predictive Power of Allegations and Aggravating Factors



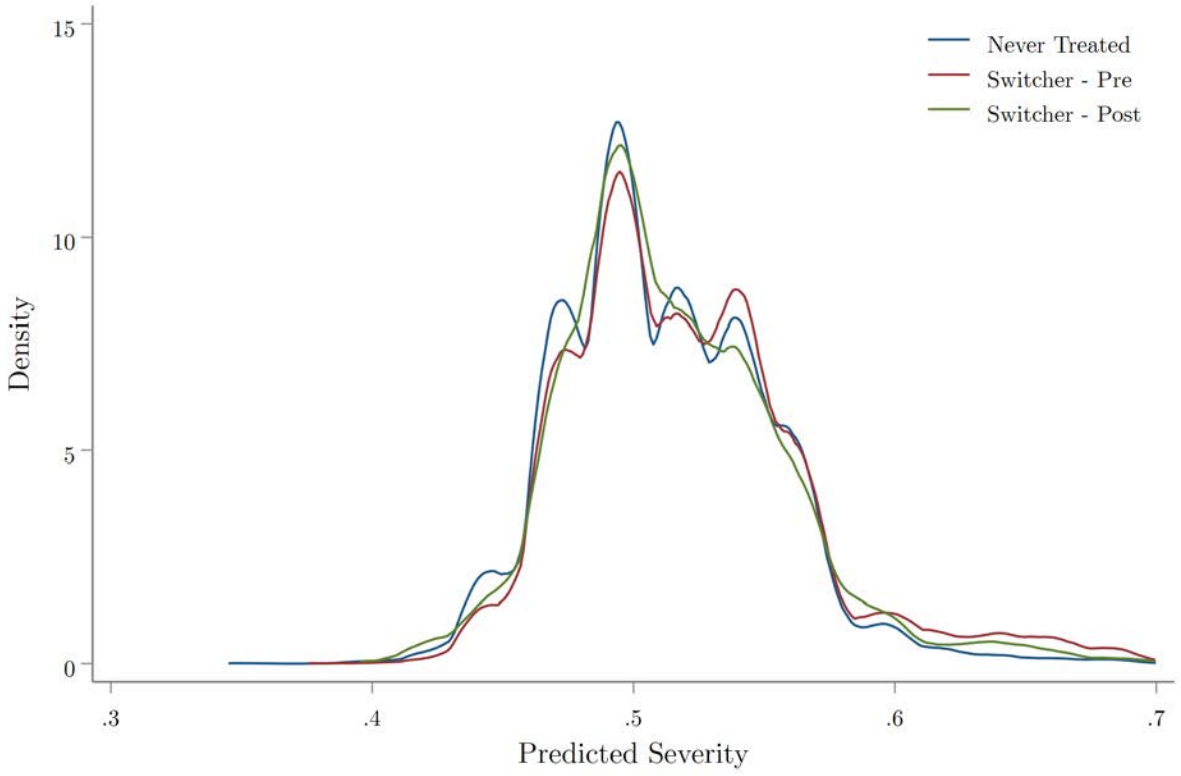
Notes: This figure illustrates the predictive power of allegations and aggravating factors. Each plotted point represents the β coefficient from a bivariate regression of Final PO Issuance on the specified allegation or aggravating factor. 95% confidence intervals are shown.

Figure A5: Distribution of Predicted Severity Among Cases with Female Petitioners



Notes: This figure illustrates the distribution of predicted severity among cases with female petitioners. In our analysis, we use predicted probability of a final protection order being issued as the measure of predicted severity. The plot shows Never Treated regions in blue. The distributions in Switcher regions before and after the introduction of SDVCs are depicted in red and green respectively.

Figure A6: Distribution of Predicted Severity Among All Cases



Notes: This figure illustrates the distribution of predicted severity. In our analysis, we use predicted probability of a final protection order being issued as the measure of predicted severity. The plot shows Never Treated regions in blue. The distributions in Switcher regions before and after the introduction of SDVCs are depicted in red and green respectively.

Table A1: Summary Statistics and Balance Tests – All Cases

	Regions			Differences (Adjusted)	
	Always Treated	Switchers	Never Treated	AT - NT	S - NT
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Petitioner Gender – Female	0.795	0.794	0.802	-0.007	-0.006
	(0.404)	(0.404)	(0.399)	[0.508]	[0.800]
Petitioner Age	34.28	34.35	34.61	-0.31	0.07
	(11.86)	(11.85)	(12.03)	[0.278]	[0.857]
Petitioned/Offender Gender – Female	0.210	0.214	0.206	0.004	0.007
	(0.408)	(0.410)	(0.404)	[0.611]	[0.700]
Petitioned/Offender Age	35.61	35.61	35.90	-0.28	0.04
	(12.22)	(16.37)	(13.31)	[0.365]	[0.986]
Number of Children	0.60	0.66	0.63	-0.04	0.00
	(0.91)	(0.95)	(0.96)	[0.452]	[0.857]
Number of Hearings	2.39	2.13	2.05	0.34**	0.15
	(1.58)	(1.29)	(1.05)	[0.040]	[0.186]
Hearing 1 in SDVC	0.35	0.01	0.01	0.35***	0.01**
	(0.48)	(0.12)	(0.08)	[0.008]	[0.043]
Hearing 2 in SDVC	0.71	0.02	0.01	0.70***	0.02**
	(0.46)	(0.14)	(0.08)	[0.000]	[0.029]
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.674	0.646	0.613	0.060	0.035
	(0.469)	(0.478)	(0.487)	[0.238]	[0.557]
Final PO Issued	0.394	0.396	0.399	-0.005	-0.008
	(0.489)	(0.489)	(0.490)	[0.746]	[0.700]
Ex-Parte PO Duration	34.6	30.7	26.1	8.5**	5.7
	(39.6)	(34.9)	(23.8)	[0.048]	[0.157]
$<$ 2 weeks	0.13	0.13	0.15	-0.02	-0.03
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.36)	[0.635]	[0.586]
2 – 3 weeks	0.31	0.39	0.44	-0.12	-0.05
	(0.46)	(0.49)	(0.50)	[0.254]	[0.514]
3 – 6 weeks	0.34	0.31	0.28	0.05	0.03
	(0.47)	(0.46)	(0.45)	[0.222]	[0.557]
$>$ 6 weeks	0.22	0.16	0.13	0.09**	0.05
	(0.41)	(0.37)	(0.33)	[0.040]	[0.186]
Final PO Duration	242.5	227.4	208.6	34.2	19.2
	(163.0)	(146.2)	(152.8)	[0.262]	[0.486]
$<$ 3 months	0.08	0.09	0.15	-0.07*	-0.06
	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.36)	[0.071]	[0.143]
3 – 6 months	0.50	0.55	0.53	-0.03	0.01
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	[0.540]	[0.829]
6 – 12 months	0.37	0.34	0.28	0.09*	0.06
	(0.48)	(0.47)	(0.45)	[0.071]	[0.486]
$>$ 12 months	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.01	-0.01
	(0.22)	(0.16)	(0.20)	[0.659]	[0.586]
Petitioner Reappearance	0.098	0.104	0.106	-0.008	-0.003
	(0.298)	(0.306)	(0.308)	[0.151]	[0.500]
Petitioned/Offender Reappearance	0.115	0.117	0.118	-0.003	-0.001
	(0.319)	(0.322)	(0.323)	[0.500]	[0.843]
Observations	25,066	9,170	14,864	39,930	24,073

Notes: Columns 1-3 report the average (and the standard deviation, in parentheses) of the characteristics of the cases for the three groups of judicial regions: those where SDVCs are introduced in the period 2007-2013 (Always Treated); those where SDVCs were introduced in 2014-2019, our study period (Switcher Regions); and those where SDVCs were not introduced before the end of our study period (Never Treated Regions). For Switcher Regions in column 2, we report means from their pre-treatment period. Column 4 presents the average difference between cases in Always Treated and Never Treated regions (col. 1 - col. 3). Column 5 presents the average difference for cases in Switcher Regions (prior to the introduction of SDVCs) and Never Treated Regions. Both columns 4 and 5 report differences adjusted for time trends (regressions including fixed effects for each month and year). The p-values, reported in columns 4-5 in brackets, are estimated using a randomization inference procedure. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A2: Summary Statistics and Balance Tests – Cases with Male Petitioners

	Regions			Differences (Adjusted)	
	Always Treated	Switchers	Never Treated	AT - NT	S - NT
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Petitioner Age	37.71	37.14	37.79	-0.11	-0.32
	(12.43)	(12.38)	(12.51)	[0.802]	[0.743]
Petitioned/Offender Gender – Female	0.912	0.937	0.928	-0.016	0.007
	(0.284)	(0.243)	(0.258)	[0.667]	[0.571]
Petitioned/Offender Age	34.08	33.73	34.61	-0.53	-0.65
	(11.34)	(12.04)	(11.36)	[0.238]	[0.657]
Number of Children	0.38	0.47	0.44	-0.06	0.01
	(0.76)	(0.85)	(0.83)	[0.214]	[0.700]
Number of Hearings	2.09	1.89	1.90	0.18*	0.04
	(1.13)	(1.04)	(0.92)	[0.063]	[0.757]
Hearing 1 in SDVC	0.36	0.02	0.01	0.35***	0.02*
	(0.48)	(0.14)	(0.09)	[0.000]	[0.057]
Hearing 2 in SDVC	0.68	0.02	0.01	0.68***	0.02*
	(0.47)	(0.14)	(0.08)	[0.000]	[0.071]
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.481	0.437	0.431	0.049	0.003
	(0.500)	(0.496)	(0.495)	[0.452]	[0.914]
Final PO Issued	0.298	0.301	0.320	-0.020	-0.021
	(0.457)	(0.459)	(0.466)	[0.151]	[0.543]
Ex-Parte PO Duration	30.0	26.8	23.9	6.0*	3.6
	(28.6)	(25.7)	(19.3)	[0.071]	[0.214]
$<$ 2 weeks	0.15	0.12	0.19	-0.03	-0.07
	(0.36)	(0.33)	(0.39)	[0.595]	[0.186]
2 – 3 weeks	0.32	0.44	0.44	-0.11	-0.00
	(0.47)	(0.50)	(0.50)	[0.246]	[1.000]
3 – 6 weeks	0.34	0.30	0.26	0.07	0.04
	(0.47)	(0.46)	(0.44)	[0.190]	[0.514]
$>$ 6 weeks	0.17	0.12	0.10	0.07*	0.03
	(0.38)	(0.33)	(0.30)	[0.063]	[0.286]
Final PO Duration	212.7	207.1	180.3	33.7	26.3
	(143.7)	(136.4)	(140.1)	[0.103]	[0.243]
$<$ 3 months	0.09	0.12	0.20	-0.10*	-0.08
	(0.29)	(0.32)	(0.40)	[0.079]	[0.186]
3 – 6 months	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.01	0.02
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.50)	[0.921]	[0.843]
6 – 12 months	0.30	0.28	0.21	0.09	0.07
	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.41)	[0.151]	[0.500]
$>$ 12 months	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.00
	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.14)	[0.310]	[0.814]
Petitioner Reappearance	0.071	0.069	0.073	-0.002	-0.006
	(0.257)	(0.254)	(0.261)	[0.825]	[0.486]
Petitioned/Offender Reappearance	0.078	0.074	0.073	0.004	0.000
	(0.268)	(0.262)	(0.260)	[0.437]	[0.914]
Observations	5,144	1,885	2,947	8,091	4,838

Notes: Columns 1-3 report the average (and the standard deviation, in parentheses) of the characteristics of the cases for the three groups of judicial regions: those where SDVCs are introduced in the period 2007-2013 (Always Treated); those where SDVCs were introduced in 2014-2019, our study period (Switcher Regions); and those where SDVCs were not introduced before the end of our study period (Never Treated Regions). For Switcher Regions in column 2, we report means from their pre-treatment period. Column 4 presents the average difference between cases in Always Treated and Never Treated regions (col. 1 - col. 3). Column 5 presents the average difference for cases in Switcher Regions (prior to the introduction of SDVCs) and Never Treated Regions. Both columns 4 and 5 report differences adjusted for time trends (regressions including fixed effects for each month and year). The p-values, reported in columns 4-5 in brackets, are estimated using a randomization inference procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$

Table A3: Relationship Between Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance

	Petitioner Reappearance (1)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (2)	Petitioner Reappearance (3)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappearance (4)
Final PO Issued	-0.0455***	-0.0429***		
	(0.00617)	(0.00569)		
Total Protection (× 100 Days)			-0.0195***	-0.0193***
			(0.00185)	(0.00201)
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.124	0.135		
Observations	14714	14714	10762	10762

Notes: This table presents the relationship between judicial protection and court reappearance in Never Treated regions. Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$

Table A4: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Family Comp. (Male Petitioners)

	Have Children			Do Not Have Children		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.170	0.0388	0.0491	0.0558	0.0293	0.0385
	[0.014]**	[0.179]	[0.139]	[0.299]	[0.307]	[0.078]*
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.119	0.0259	0.0117	0.101	0.0219	0.0277
	[0.012]**	[0.285]	[0.723]	[0.035]**	[0.340]	[0.246]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.550	0.0641	0.0649	0.219	0.0744	0.0741
Observations	1,642	1,642	1,642	4,257	4,257	4,257

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A5: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Family Comp. (All Petitioners)

	Have Children			Do Not Have Children		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.118	-0.0160	-0.0247	0.0496	-0.00520	-0.00443
	[0.033]**	[0.214]	[0.071]*	[0.102]	[0.654]	[0.586]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.133	-0.0278	-0.0318	0.0586	-0.00390	-0.00314
	[0.027]**	[0.074]*	[0.164]	[0.016]**	[0.770]	[0.773]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.511	0.109	0.119	0.324	0.104	0.117
Observations	11,431	11,431	11,431	18,083	18,083	18,083

Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A6: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Distance to Regional Judicial Center [RJC] (Male Petitioners)

	Below Median Distance to RJC			Above Median Distance to RJC		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.0707	0.0663	0.0888	0.0785	-0.0187	-0.0162
	[0.297]	[0.026]**	[0.023]**	[0.057]*	[0.588]	[0.521]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.0863	0.0459	0.0589	0.122	-0.0278	-0.0343
	[0.176]	[0.070]*	[0.113]	[0.008]***	[0.566]	[0.324]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.317	0.0642	0.0590	0.303	0.0788	0.0841
Observations	2,897	2,897	2,897	2,754	2,754	2,754

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A7: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Distance to Regional Judicial Center [RJC] (All Petitioners)

	Below Median Distance to RJC			Above Median Distance to RJC		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.0607	0.00172	0.00449	0.101	-0.0237	-0.0316
	[0.043]**	[0.732]	[0.585]	[0.051]*	[0.130]	[0.071]*
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.0804	-0.00249	-0.00215	0.111	-0.0304	-0.0297
	[0.012]**	[0.699]	[0.668]	[0.031]**	[0.094]*	[0.234]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.404	0.104	0.114	0.389	0.109	0.123
Observations	14,341	14,341	14,341	14,342	14,342	14,342

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A8: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Additional Case Outcomes – Among Female Petitioners Residing Below Median Distance to the Regional Judicial Center

	Ex-Parte PO Issued	Num. of Hearings	Ex-Parte PO Duration	Final PO Duration	Total PO Duration
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects					
SDVC Region × Post	0.0372	0.0373	-2.004	19.11	18.45
	[0.505]	[0.829]	[0.649]	[0.296]	[0.301]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)					
Case in SDVC	0.0287	0.102	0.0873	15.67	24.94
	[0.684]	[0.313]	[0.980]	[0.277]	[0.230]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.682	2.127	29.18	219.1	140.3
Observations	11,444	11,444	7,797	5,010	9,281

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A9: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Additional Case Outcomes – Among Female Petitioners Residing Above Median Distance to the Regional Judicial Center

	Ex-Parte PO Issued	Num. of Hearings	Ex-Parte PO Duration	Final PO Duration	Total PO Duration
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects					
SDVC Region × Post	0.0260	0.0208	-2.654	4.128	23.30
	[0.473]	[0.873]	[0.415]	[0.781]	[0.323]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)					
Case in SDVC	0.0363	0.0742	-3.045	-12.32	19.07
	[0.469]	[0.652]	[0.711]	[0.801]	[0.465]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.663	2.117	27.41	221.2	139.9
Observations	11588	11588	7734	4892	9137

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A10: Summary Statistics and Balance Test in GDD Sample (Pre-Treatment Period)

	Female Petitioners		Male Petitioners		All Petitioners	
	RDD Estimate (1)	Control Mean (2)	RDD Estimate (3)	Control Mean (4)	RDD Estimate (5)	Control Mean (6)
Petitioner Sex – Female	-0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	-0.031	0.782
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.035)	(0.413)
Petitioner Age	0.46	33.26	-2.21	37.00	-0.29	34.08
	(1.21)	(11.78)	(2.66)	(12.98)	(1.05)	(12.15)
Petitioned Party Sex – Female	-0.002	0.027	-0.018	0.936	0.022	0.225
	(0.015)	(0.163)	(0.050)	(0.245)	(0.038)	(0.418)
Petitioned Party Age	0.57	35.73	-0.99	33.34	0.02	35.21
	(1.67)	(12.68)	(2.15)	(10.85)	(1.30)	(12.34)
Number of Children	0.03	0.79	0.23*	0.45	0.09	0.71
	(0.08)	(0.99)	(0.13)	(0.78)	(0.07)	(0.96)
Number of Hearings	0.09	2.04	0.11	1.81	0.07	1.99
	(0.10)	(1.19)	(0.14)	(0.95)	(0.09)	(1.14)
Ex-Parte PO Issued	-0.005	0.702	0.033	0.468	-0.015	0.651
	(0.046)	(0.458)	(0.089)	(0.500)	(0.040)	(0.477)
Final PO Issued	0.026	0.428	-0.206***	0.330	-0.009	0.407
	(0.045)	(0.495)	(0.070)	(0.471)	(0.038)	(0.491)
Total Protection (Days)	19.4	142.9	-32.7	112.7	16.0	137.9
	(13.2)	(163.1)	(21.4)	(123.6)	(13.2)	(157.5)
Total Ex-Parte Protection (Days)	1.8	26.8	-7.6	22.5	0.2	26.2
	(4.0)	(32.9)	(5.8)	(19.7)	(3.8)	(31.2)
Total Final Protection (Days)	12.0	235.4	42.6	175.6	19.3	224.9
	(14.7)	(154.3)	(34.8)	(122.8)	(14.2)	(150.9)
Petitioner Reappearance	-0.025	0.113	0.105	0.090	-0.004	0.108
	(0.031)	(0.317)	(0.066)	(0.287)	(0.028)	(0.310)
Petitioned Party Reappeaance	-0.047	0.122	0.126**	0.094	-0.017	0.116
	(0.031)	(0.328)	(0.058)	(0.292)	(0.028)	(0.320)
Eff. Obs (L)	957		267		1224	
Eff. Obs (R)	1109		217		1326	
(p) Order Loc. Poly.	1		1		1	
(q) Order Bias	2		2		2	
(h) BW Loc. Poly.	5266		5266		5266	
(b) BW Bias	12281		12281		12281	

Notes: This table reports estimates of a balancing test of covariates across judicial region borders. For this exercise, we use cases residing within the optimal bandwidth distance (5266m) of the border, prior to the opening of an SDVC. Columns 1, 3, and 5 report GDD/RDD estimates of the discontinuity in each of the outcome variables of interest; each coefficient and standard error is generated from a separate regression. Column 2, 4, and 6 report the mean for the control group in the estimation sample. The running variable is the distance (in meters) from the residence of the petitioner to the border of the judicial region where an SDVC will open. The estimates are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Table A11: RDD – Results (All)

	RDD Estimate (1)	Control Mean (2)
Number of Hearings	0.03	2.27
	(0.13)	(1.37)
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.065**	0.637
	(0.033)	(0.481)
Final PO Issued	0.063	0.382
	(0.051)	(0.486)
Total Protection (Days)	25.7	150.5
	(18.0)	(174.6)
Total Ex-Parte Protection (Days)	-4.0	33.7
	(5.321)	(37.5)
Total Final Protection (Days)	31.2*	241.2
	(18.4)	(173.9)
Petitioner Reappearance	-0.084***	0.116
	(0.023)	(0.321)
Petitioned Party Reappearance	-0.064**	0.134
	(0.028)	(0.341)
Eff. Obs (L)	1887	
Eff. Obs (R)	2027	
(p) Order Loc. Poly.	1	
(q) Order Bias	2	
(h) BW Loc. Poly.	5266	
(b) BW Bias	12281	

Notes: Column 1 reports GDD/RDD estimates of the discontinuity in each of the outcome variables of interest; each coefficient and standard error is generated from a separate regression. Column 2 reports the mean for the control group in the estimation sample. The running variable is the distance (in meters) from the residence of the petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC. The estimates are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Table A12: RDD – Results (Male)

	RDD Estimate (1)	Control Mean (2)
Number of Hearings	0.25	2.05
	(0.16)	(1.14)
Ex-Parte PO Issued	0.060	0.448
	(0.071)	(0.498)
Final PO Issued	-0.093	0.325
	(0.086)	(0.469)
Total Protection (Days)	-3.2	135.3
	(41.0)	(145.1)
Total Ex-Parte Protection (Days)	6.0	29.3
	(6.1)	(29.6)
Total Final Protection (Days)	5.7	211.0
	(37.2)	(144.9)
Petitioner Reappearance	0.013	0.066
	(0.039)	(0.249)
Petitioned Party Reappearance	0.007	0.072
	(0.036)	(0.258)
Eff. Obs (L)	384	
Eff. Obs (R)	367	
(p) Order Loc. Poly.	1	
(q) Order Bias	2	
(h) BW Loc. Poly.	5266	
(b) BW Bias	12281	

Notes: Column 1 reports GDD/RDD estimates of the discontinuity in each of the outcome variables of interest; each coefficient and standard error is generated from a separate regression. Column 2 reports the mean for the control group in the estimation sample. The running variable is the distance (in meters) from the residence of the petitioner to the border of the judicial region with an SDVC. The estimates are generated using the optimal bandwidth and estimation procedure proposed by Calonico et al. (2014).

Table A13: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Case Severity (Male Petitioners)

	Low Severity			High Severity		
	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance	Final PO Issued	Petitioner Reappearance	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.195	0.0159	0.0152	0.0159	0.0452	0.0585
	[0.015]**	[0.768]	[0.369]	[0.746]	[0.143]	[0.076]*
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.263	0.0392	0.0146	-0.0194	0.0160	0.0124
	[0.031]**	[0.309]	[0.699]	[0.688]	[0.785]	[0.844]
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.488	0.0649	0.0641	0.553	0.0653	0.0705
Observations	1,593	1,593	1,593	1,711	1,711	1,711

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A14: Effects of Access to SDVCs on Judicial Protection and Court Reappearance – by Case Severity (All Petitioners)

	Low Severity			High Severity		
	Final PO Issued (1)	Petitioner Reappearance (2)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance (3)	Final PO Issued (4)	Petitioner Reappearance (5)	Petitioned/ Offender Reappeaance (6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	0.107	-0.0177	-0.0158	0.0586	-0.000763	-0.0137
	[0.062]*	[0.002]***	[0.001]***	[0.063]*	[0.949]	[0.315]
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	0.159	-0.0232	-0.0108	0.0377	-0.00511	-0.0201
	[0.074]*	[0.023]**	[0.074]*	[0.414]	[0.527]	[0.070]*
Petitioner Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.487	0.102	0.115	0.544	0.102	0.117
Observations	10,490	10,490	10,490	10,537	10,537	10,537

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A15: Average Effect of Access to SDVCs on Issuance of Final Protection Orders – Excluding *Tit-for-Tat* Cases

	Final PO Issued		
	Female	Male	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects			
SDVC Region × Post	0.0848	0.0567	0.0783
	[0.062]*	[0.254]	[0.049]**
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)			
Case in SDVC	0.0992	0.0757	0.0930
	[0.035]**	[0.113]	[0.023]**
Victim Age	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.420	0.291	0.402
Observations	20929	3326	24255

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

Table A16: Average Effect of Access to SDVCs on Court Reappearance – Excluding *Tit-for-Tat* Cases

	Female Petitioners		Male Petitioners		All Petitioners	
	Petitioner Reappearance (1)	Petitioned Party Reappeaance (2)	Petitioner Reappearance (3)	Petitioned Party Reappeaance (4)	Petitioner Reappearance (5)	Petitioned Party Reappeaance (6)
Panel A: Intent to Treat Effects						
SDVC Region × Post	-0.0270	-0.0354	0.0321	0.0368	-0.0199	-0.0270
	[0.035]**	[0.024]**	[0.248]	[0.125]	[0.038]**	[0.024]**
Panel B: Average Treatment Effect Among Compliers (2SLS)						
Case in SDVC	-0.0269	-0.0301	0.0258	0.0192	-0.0202	-0.0244
	[0.027]**	[0.055]*	[0.203]	[0.371]	[0.188]	[0.086]*
Victim Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean of Dep. Var.	0.106	0.122	0.0559	0.0562	0.0988	0.113
Observations	20929	20929	3326	3326	24255	24255

Notes: Panel A of the table reports reduced form estimates of the Intent to Treat Effect (ITT) of SDVC access(δ_1 in Equation 1) The reported coefficients are computed following the imputation-based differences-in-differences procedure proposed by Borusyak et al. (2024). Panel B reports IV estimates of the average effect for parties who, as a result of greater access to SDVC services, have their cases handled in one of these courts (δ_2 from Equation 2) – the Average Effect among the Compliers. The p-values reported in brackets account for the possibility that model errors are correlated within each judicial region. P-values in reduced form estimates are computed using a t-statistic based randomization inference procedure. P-values in the 2SLS estimation are computed using a WCRE bootstrap-t procedure. * $p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.