Learning to Harm: The Intergenerational Transmission of Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Using administrative data from Sweden and the United States, this paper provides the first large-scale estimates on the intergenerational transmission of violence against women (VAW) and evidence on how this cycle can be broken. We show that sons of fathers suspected of VAW are more than twice as likely to become suspected perpetrators of VAW, and daughters exposed to violent fathers are almost twice as likely to partner with VAW men. We then examine whether removing fathers who commit VAW from the household weakens this transmission. To address identification concerns, we use three complementary identification strategies: a judge instrumental variables approach that exploits quasi-random variation in father removal, a family-fixed effects model, and a comparison across stepfathers and non-residing biological fathers. These three designs reveal that removing violent fathers significantly *decreases* sons' later perpetration of VAW and daughters' victimization risk, while removing non-violent fathers *increases* sons' later perpetration of VAW. Together, these results indicate that VAW is a learned behavior developed during childhood and that reducing exposure to VAW fathers can meaningfully weaken its intergenerational persistence.

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1 Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) is a widespread social problem. Approximately one in three women are directly impacted, and the costs are conservatively estimated to reach $4.1 trillion (in 2021$), with $1.5 trillion attributed to productivity losses and reductions in lifetime earnings (Bhuller *et al.*, 2024; Adams *et al.*, 2024; Sardinha *et al.*, 2022; Peterson *et al.*, 2018; Adams *et al.*, 2024). Yet despite the prevalence and large costs of VAW, its underlying causes are still poorly understood. Is the likelihood of perpetrating VAW an innate and immutable characteristic, or is it a learned behavior developed over childhood and adolescence through exposure to male role models? Understanding the answer to these questions is key to preventing and reducing VAW.

In this paper, we use rich administrative data from Sweden and the United States, along with a series of complementary research designs, to provide two key insights. First, we provide evidence that children learn to either perpetrate or become victims of VAW through childhood exposure to negative male role models. Second, we provide evidence that this transmission channel can be broken, reducing the extent of VAW perpetrated by young men, and causing young women to seek out partners less apt to commit violence against them.

To provide this evidence, we use rich nationwide administrative data from Sweden and the United States and first estimate whether children exposed to fathers who perpetrate VAW are more likely to become perpetrators or victims themselves. Our analysis employs population-wide linked register data covering all individuals born between 1970 and 2000, as well as their biological or adoptive fathers. In Sweden, these data link demographic and socioeconomic records from Statistics Sweden with comprehensive criminal justice information from the Swedish Conviction Register and Crime Suspicion Register. [The U.S. data is in progress]. Together, these data sources allow us to construct precise measures of fathers' involvement in VAW—including suspicions of assault, unlawful threats, harassment, violations of restraining orders, and sexual violence—as well as children's subsequent perpetration or victimization risk in adulthood.

Using this linked, nationally representative dataset, we provide the first large-scale descriptive evidence on the intergenerational transmission of violence against women (VAW) across two

countries. Raw correlations show that boys exposed to fathers suspected of VAW are nearly three times as likely to become suspected perpetrators of VAW themselves. We further document that daughters of fathers suspected of VAW are approximately twice as likely to form relationships with partners suspected of perpetrating VAW. These patterns remain remarkably stable after conditioning on a rich set of observable characteristics and matching, suggesting that even among otherwise similar children, exposure to a father who commits VAW substantially increases the likelihood of later perpetrating VAW (for sons) or cohabiting with a partner who perpetrates VAW (for daughters). In Sweden, we use hospitalization data to confirm that cohabiting with a VAW partner translates to experienced violence: daughters of VAW fathers are significantly more likely to be hospitalized with an intimate partner violence flag, suggesting an even larger intergenerational transmission than police reports capture.

These descriptive findings may not reflect sons *learning* to commit VAW from their fathers. Perpetration of VAW could be an innate and immutable characteristic that cannot be altered by policy interventions. Alternatively, perpetration of VAW could be linked to other observable and unobservable characteristics of the family, rather than to the father's presence. Even if sons do learn to perpetrate VAW from their fathers, it is not clear if removing violent fathers may cause even greater harm. While removing VAW fathers could reduce children's exposure to harmful social learning mechanisms (Bandura, 1977; Ehrensaft and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2022), it will also lead to negative income shocks, which are associated with adverse developmental outcomes, including increased aggression and antisocial behavior (Evans, 2004). We find in an event study design that VAW fathers leaving the household (for any reason) leads to a 40% reduction in household income, which may cause the child to experience heightened economic stress, exacerbating behavioral problems and ultimately increasing the risk of perpetrating VAW in adulthood. Thus, while limiting exposure to abusive behavior may be protective, the economic strain resulting from such interventions could act as a competing mechanism that reinforces negative outcomes.

To test whether reduced exposure to VAW fathers breaks the intergenerational cycle of VAW, we implement three complementary identification strategies. First, we estimate a judge instrumental variables (IV) design that leverages quasi-random assignment of cases to judges who differ

in their propensity to incarcerate and remove defendants from the household. This approach compares observationally identical households where one experiences a removal of the VAW father due to a harsher judge. We find that quasi-random removal of VAW fathers significantly reduces sons' risk of perpetrating VAW in adulthood, and these impacts are large. For sons, father incarceration reduces the likelihood of perpetrating VAW by 52.3 percentage points, corresponding to a 93 percent decline relative to the complier control mean. For daughters, the probability of cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW declines by 64.6 percentage points, equivalent to an 82 percent reduction relative to baseline risk.

Surprisingly, the large impacts of father removal occur even though the median prison sentences are short, only 3 months. However, we show that these short prison sentences translate into persistent increases in the likelihood that couples remain separated in the long run, well beyond the incarceration period. In particular, the probability of cohabitation declines by 73.4 percentage points by five years after the conviction, corresponding to an 80 percent reduction relative to the complier control mean. This suggests that providing women with "breathing room" from abusive partners can facilitate permanent separations. Moreover, we find that these women generally do not repartner with other VAW men.

We further find that these longer separations result in improved outcomes for mothers. We observe significant declines in mothers' alcohol disorders and addiction care utilization. These findings suggest that removing abusive partners can improve maternal well-being and household environments, even in the absence of detectable changes in labor market outcomes. This evidence points to two complementary mechanisms – reductions in children's direct exposure to VAW and improvements in the caregiving environment – both of which contribute to weakening the intergenerational transmission of VAW.

These findings indicate that the intergenerational transmission of VAW is not merely correlational but is shaped by childhood exposure and that policy-induced reductions in exposure to VAW fathers can disrupt this cycle. However, these results may not generalize to a broader range of families. Specifically, we find that families where fathers commit crimes that lead to incarceration are negatively selected, even relative to other VAW families.

To address concerns regarding the external validity of our judge IV estimates, we conduct two additional empirical exercises. First, we leverage variation in exposure to biological fathers and other male role models in a descriptive analysis. The results suggest that limiting exposure to fathers who committed VAW substantially reduces, and in some cases eliminates, the intergenerational transmission of VAW. Exposure to positive male role models is likewise associated with lower rates of transmission.

Last, we exploit within-family variation by including family fixed effects and comparing siblings who experienced the removal of a VAW father at different ages. This design absorbs all time-invariant family characteristics, including parental preferences, parenting styles, and unobserved neighborhood selection. The results show that earlier removal of a VAW father leads to statistically significant reductions in sons' likelihood of perpetrating VAW in adulthood and daughters' victimization risks. The family fixed-effects evidence therefore reinforces the interpretation that exposure to VAW fathers during early childhood plays a particularly important role in shaping sons' later violent behavior, and that reducing such exposure can meaningfully weaken intergenerational transmission within abusive families. Moreover, we find further evidence that positive male role models help prevent VAW: earlier removal of non-VAW fathers increases the likelihood of VAW in the future.

We contribute to three main strands of literature. First, we contribute to the economics literature on early-life environments and the role of violence and family disruption in shaping long-run outcomes. A large body of work demonstrates that early-life shocks, and in particular exposure to violence, maltreatment, and other adverse family conditions, have persistent effects on children's human capital, health, and later-life economic outcomes (Aizer, 2011; Currie, 2009; Currie and Almond, 2011; Currie and Tekin, 2012). We add to this literature by focusing on how children learn to commit or experience VAW from their fathers. We further connect to the literature on the consequences of removing children from harmful environments (Bald *et al.*, 2022; Chyn, 2018; Doyle, 2007, 2008). Relative to this work, our setting highlights a distinct and policy-relevant margin: rather than removing children, we study the removal of VAW fathers, and we show that reducing exposure during early childhood can substantially weaken intergenerational transmission of

violence even in the presence of economically meaningful household income losses.

Second, we contributed to the literature on VAW by providing the first large-scale evidence on intergenerational transmission of VAW and estimating whether the removal of VAW fathers disrupts or reinforces this cycle. Previous studies on this topic have been limited to survey-based measures (Ehrensaft *et al.*, 2003; Fergusson *et al.*, 2008; Brown *et al.*, 2015; Ehrensaft and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2022). A limited set of papers in the broader domestic violence literature has documented that children who were abused by their parents are much more likely to abuse and maltreat their own children as adults (Erten and Keskin, 2020; Armfield *et al.*, 2021). These studies are limited by small samples, potentially inconsistent definitions of childhood exposure, and reporting biases, particularly underreporting by perpetrators (Heckert and Gondolf, 2000). By leveraging longitudinal administrative records, our study overcomes these limitations. This approach allows us to construct objective measures of exposure to VAW, link them to long-term outcomes, and provide novel causal evidence on whether childhood exposure increases adult perpetration or victimization, and whether the exit of a violent father and/or criminal justice policy interventions can break this cycle.

Last, our study relates to the broader literature on the intergenerational transmission of criminal behavior. Using Swedish administrative data, Hjalmarsson and Lindquist (2012) show that children with criminal fathers are twice as likely to have a criminal conviction as those with non-criminal fathers. Using Swedish adoption data, Hjalmarsson and Lindquist (2013) find that both pre-birth factors and post-birth factors contribute to parent-son associations in crime.[1] Causal evidence on the impacts of incarceration of fathers on children is mixed and suggests that context is important: Norris *et al.* (2021) find that parental incarceration in Ohio reduces children's later incarceration and improves neighborhood quality and Arteaga (2023) also finds positive impacts in Colombia. In contrast, Bhuller *et al.* (2018) find no effects on children's crime or schooling in Norway, and Grönqvist *et al.* (2025) show that parental incarceration in Sweden increases teen crime and pregnancy and reduces early employment. We extend this work by focusing specifi-

[1] A meta-analysis of 23 samples shows that children of criminal parents face substantially higher risks of criminal behavior themselves (pooled odds ratio = 2.4), and underscores the need for policies that disrupt the intergenerational cycle of crime (Besemer *et al.*, 2017).

cally on VAW, quantifying its intergenerational transmission and testing whether removing VAW fathers – including through quasi-random incarceration – reduces children's later risks of perpetrating or experiencing VAW.

2 Data

Swedish Data We use data from multiple administrative sources, including the individual-level register data maintained by Statistics Sweden and the National Council for Crime Prevention. The data from Statistics Sweden span the entire Swedish population born between 1972 and 2022, covering demographic characteristics such as birth year, country of origin, and gender. These records include annual information on place of residence, formal sector earnings and employment, educational attainment, and detailed household information, such as household composition and family linkages. The family linkages allow us to link parents with children.

We further link these data to information from the Swedish Conviction Register and Crime Suspicion Register, which are maintained by the National Council for Crime Prevention. The Conviction Register includes all criminal convictions in Sweden from 1973 onward for individuals aged 15 and older. It provides details on the type of crime, the date of the crime, and court-imposed sentences, with each conviction potentially encompassing multiple crimes. This allows us to construct a complete criminal history for individuals.

The Crime Suspicion Register contains information on individuals aged 15 or older identified as suspects following police or prosecutorial investigations from 1995 onward. Since only a very small proportion of cases involving violence against women result in criminal convictions, we primarily focus on data indicating criminal suspicions of violence against women. This approach allows us to capture a broader spectrum of cases that might not progress to convictions.

This register includes data on the type of crime, dates of crime and suspicion, and outcomes such as indictments or convictions. Additionally, since the introduction of "Gross Violation of a Woman's Integrity" (*Kvinnofridskränkning*) to the Swedish Penal Code in 1998 and the mandatory recording of victim gender for certain crime types, the register provides data on the gender of victims. For specific crimes, it also includes information on the relationship between the victim

and the perpetrator, as well as the location of the crime. This enables us to identify cases of violence against women.

Using these sources of information, we construct two large-scale administrative datasets linking children to their fathers. First, we link men born in Sweden between 1970 and 2000 to their registered fathers. After restricting the sample to cases where both father and son were ever registered residents in Sweden during the period 1995–2020, we obtain a sample of 1,713,236 unique father-son pairs. Fathers may appear more than once if they have multiple sons in the eligible birth cohort. Second, we link women between 1970 and 2000 to their registered fathers. We have a sample of 1,624,681 unique father-daughter pairs after dropping pairs where one individual was not a registered resident during 1995–2020. Fathers may appear multiple times in the sample if they have more than one daughter born 1970-2000.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for sons and daughters in our sample. We find that sons and daughters with fathers suspected of committing VAW are negatively selected on demographic, socioeconomic, and neighborhood characteristics. Their parents are more likely to be foreign-born, less likely to attain education levels higher than high school, less likely to be employed prior to child birth, and earn less on average. They are also more likely to live in more violent neighborhoods compared to children with non-violent fathers.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

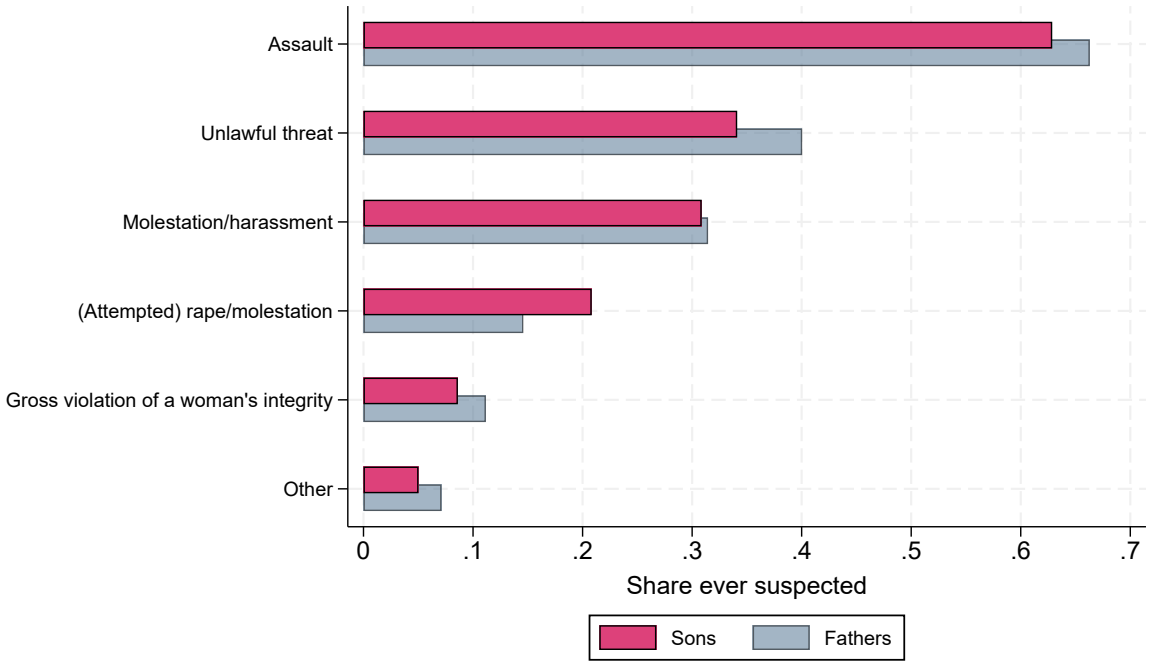
	Sons		Daughters	
	Violent Father	Non-violent Father	Violent Father	Non-violent Father
Panel A: Demographics				
Mother age at birth	26.676	28.234	26.698	28.253
Father age at birth	29.888	31.097	29.920	31.117
Mother foreign born	0.327	0.170	0.331	0.167
Father foreign born	0.375	0.175	0.375	0.172
Child foreign born	0.131	0.083	0.133	0.082
Live with father at birth	0.808	0.937	0.812	0.936
Panel B: Baseline socioeconomic status				
More than HS education mother	0.255	0.374	0.254	0.374
More than HS education father	0.188	0.306	0.188	0.307
Employment mother in the year of birth	0.656	0.713	0.657	0.712
Employment father in the year of birth	0.781	0.921	0.783	0.921
Earnings mother in the year of birth	124016.272	138637.164	123853.168	138647.812
Earnings father in the year of birth	189504.083	253348.604	189499.137	253346.290
Earnings father one year before birth	180755.127	241957.890	181123.289	242064.415
Panel C: Baseline neighborhood characteristics				
Population	9,851	8,855	9,861	8,858
Share of immigrants	0.161	0.110	0.161	0.110
Employment rate	0.778	0.778	0.779	0.777
Mean earnings	194364.461	195503.087	194446.431	195329.794
More than HS	0.260	0.251	0.260	0.251
Number of offenders per 100,000 inhab	1,196.462	841.423	1,183.435	840.213
Assault rate per 100,000 inhab	123.892	66.845	129.061	66.712
Obs.	124,181	1,589,055	119,519	1,505,162

Notes: This table reports the mean values of variables for sons and daughters born between 1970 and 2000. Columns (1)–(2) report statistics for sons with violent vs. non-violent fathers, while columns (3)–(4) report statistics for daughters with violent vs. non-violent fathers. The violence is defined as being suspected of committing VAW.

The primary variable of interest is an indicator for whether an individual (father or son) was ever suspected of any offense involving violence against women. This includes gross violation of a woman's integrity; physical assault; attempted or completed murder of a woman; unlawful threats; harassment; violations of restraining orders; and sexual violence, including rape and mo-

lestation. The categorization captures both intimate partner violence and violence against female acquaintances or strangers. Appendix Table A1 presents descriptive statistics on the prevalence and composition of VAW suspicions among fathers and sons in our sample. It reports the share of individuals ever suspected of specific offenses, separately for sons and fathers, and then conditions these distributions on having any criminal suspicion. Figure 1 plots these conditional distributions in a bar chart. These exhibits highlight two key patterns. First, across both generations, the most common categories of suspected offenses are assault of a woman, unlawful threats, and harassment, which together account for the majority of VAW suspicions. Second, fathers have slightly higher prevalence rates than sons for most of the categories, which is consistent with their longer time at risk of perpetration since they are older.

Figure 1: VAW Among Fathers and Sons Conditional on Suspicion



Notes: This figure shows the share of fathers and sons suspected of each category of VAW, conditional on having been suspected of any crime. Sons are born between 1970 and 2000 in Sweden and matched with their fathers using registry information. All data come from the Crime Suspicion Register of Sweden.

Reporting Domestic violence is an underreported crime. This has several implications for our estimates. First, we will underestimate the true prevalence of domestic violence, leading to lower estimates of perpetration and victimization risks relative to actual occurrence.

Second, reporting rates may be different for daughters of VAW and non-VAW fathers, and similarly for partners of sons whose fathers committed VAW. This will have important implications for our estimates of the intergenerational transmission of VAW in the first part of the paper. On the one hand, the normalization of violence could lead daughters of VAW fathers to be even less likely to report violence, causing us to understate the share of their partners who ever commit VAW. Similarly, we will show that sons are more likely to cohabit with women whose fathers committed VAW, and a similar underreporting could occur among these women. This would cause us to understate the transmission of VAW for both sons and daughters. On the other hand, daughters who observe their mothers victimized may react to this by being more likely to report violence they experience themselves, leading us to overstate the transmission of VAW.

To address these concerns, we pair our police-reported estimates with healthcare flags for IPV. These have the drawback of being limited to more extreme events, and thus being very rare. These flags are also more likely to occur at older ages. However, these flags have the advantage that underreporting is much less likely to be skewed by whether one has a VAW father. We will show that the intergenerational transmission of VAW is even larger when using these flags, suggesting that underreporting among children of VAW is more salient and this likely causes us to understate the intergenerational transmission of VAW when only using police reports. We will use police reports as our main measure in order to be more conservative.

For the second half of the paper, establishing that the intergenerational transmission of VAW is caused by father exposure, concerns about bias from underreporting are less acute for several reasons. First, the majority of our three identification strategies compare families where fathers have all committed VAW, but where the father is removed or not. Thus, the differential bias between children of VAW versus non-VAW fathers is not relevant. Second, in some of the identification strategies, such as our family fixed effects design, the comparison is between siblings so there would need to be a reporting differential across siblings' partners (for sons) or siblings (for daughters), conditional on the same father. This is harder to justify. We describe these points in more detail when presenting the results for each of the three identification strategies below. Nonetheless, whenever sample size allows, we will show that our estimates are robust to instead

measuring VAW through healthcare IPV flags as opposed to police reports.

3 The Intergenerational Transmission of VAW

Children who witness violent behaviors towards women in and outside of their households may learn that violence is an acceptable response to interpersonal conflict and that violence and dominance towards women are normal. In this section, we leverage our data to provide the first large-scale descriptive estimates of the degree to which this intergenerational transmission of VAW occurs. We do so in two parts. First, we document the degree to which sons who are exposed to fathers committing VAW are more likely to commit VAW themselves. Second, we estimate the degree to which daughters who are exposed to fathers who commit VAW are more likely to cohabit with partners who commit VAW.

Intergenerational Transmission of Perpetration and Victimization in Sweden Figure 2 Panel A reports the raw correlation between having a father with a history of VAW and whether the son commits VAW when he becomes an adult. The incidence of violence against women among sons varies markedly by paternal history. In Sweden, 5.8% of sons whose fathers were not suspected of VAW grow up to commit violence against a woman. In contrast, 16.9% of sons whose fathers have a history of violence against women also commit violence against women as adults.

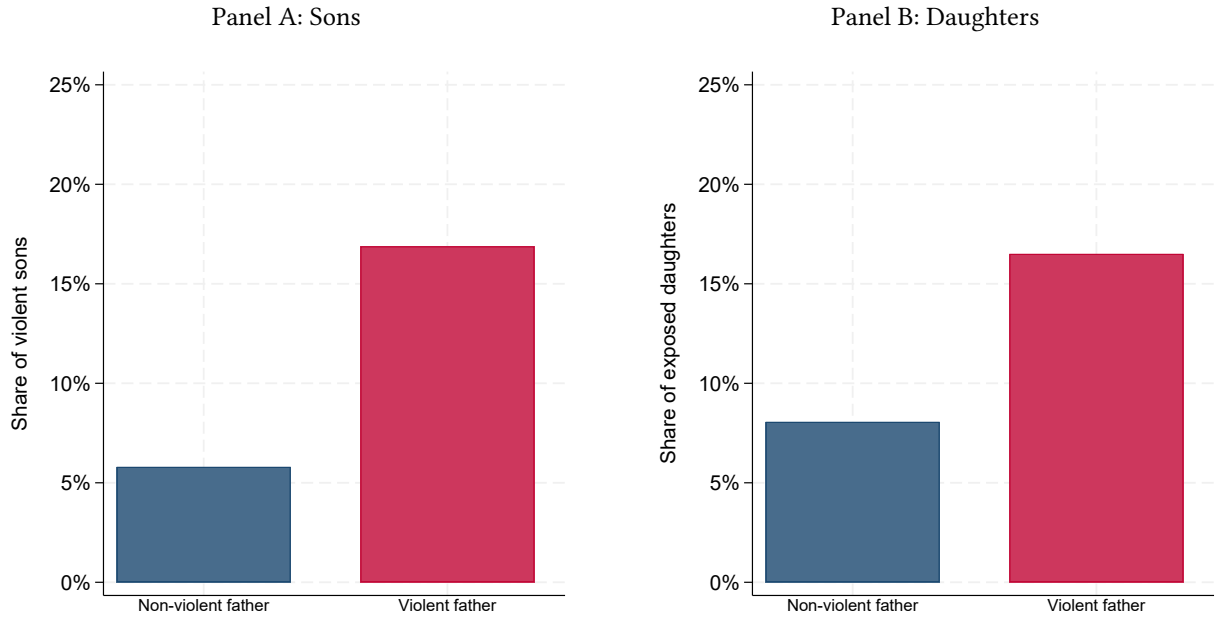
In Panel B of Figure 2, we turn to daughters. Given women very rarely commit violence against other women, we focus instead on victimization risk, estimating whether the daughter is in a cohabiting or marital relationship with a man who has ever been suspected of VAW. This outcome is measured over the years 1990 to 2020. Appendix Figure A2 complements this analysis with a more direct measure of victimization based on inpatient and outpatient health records for intimate partner violence (IPV), although these data are only available for later years.

Among all women with no paternal history of VAW, 8.1% are in relationships with a man who committed VAW. This figure more than doubles to 16.5% for women whose fathers were suspected of VAW. The health-register data reveal a similarly pronounced pattern. Although recorded IPV

diagnoses are much less common because they capture only incidents severe enough to result in healthcare utilization, daughters of fathers suspected of VAW are substantially more likely to have an IPV-related diagnosis: 0.87%, compared with 0.28% among daughters whose fathers were not suspected perpetrators (Appendix Figure A2). Thus, even when focusing only on the most severe cases of victimization, daughters exposed to VAW fathers are more than three times as likely to experience IPV requiring medical attention.

In Appendix Table A2, we test whether having a father suspected of VAW is significantly associated with the daughters' probability of ever cohabiting with a VAW partner. Roughly 80% of women in our sample have ever cohabited with a partner. Having a VAW-suspected father reduces this likelihood by 2.9 p.p. in OLS estimates with no controls added; however, the inclusion of controls as well as the estimation based on a matched sample suggests an increase in the probability of cohabitation by 1.9–2.8 p.p., which corresponds to 4% relative to the sample mean. Given the differences in cohabitation could mechanically bias victimization risk upwards, in Appendix Figure A1 we show that among women who have ever had a partner, 10.1% of women whose fathers were not suspected of VAW have been in relationships with violent partners, compared to 21.4% of those whose fathers were suspected perpetrators.

Figure 2: Intergenerational Transmission of Violence against Women



Notes: This figure shows the intergenerational transmission of VAW perpetration for sons in Panel A and VAW victimization for daughters in Panel B in Sweden. In Panel A, the blue bar plots the share of sons suspected of committing violence against women among sons whose fathers were not suspected of such offenses, while the red bar plots the corresponding share among sons whose fathers were suspected perpetrators. In Panel B, the blue bar reports the share of daughters who cohabit with a partner suspected of committing violence against women among those whose fathers were not suspected of such offenses, while the red bar reports the corresponding share for daughters whose fathers were suspected perpetrators.

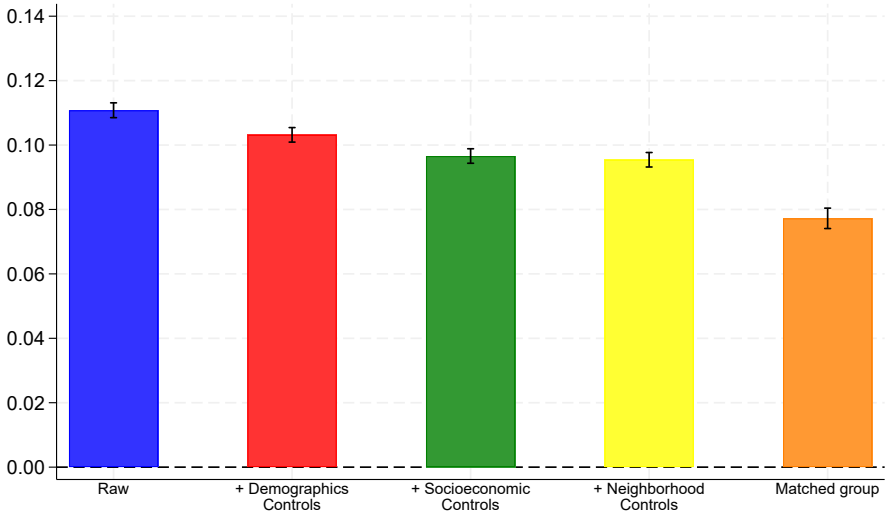
These raw correlations are striking, but as shown in Table 1, sons and daughters of VAW fathers are born into very different families compared with the general population. These families are poorer, less educated, and, on average, much less likely to be born in Sweden than other families in Sweden. To explore the degree to which these other variables explain the raw correlation, Figure 3 reports a series of linear probability models (LPM) where we progressively control for other potential drivers of the raw correlation shown in Figure 2.

Consistent with Figure 2, the blue bar in Figure 3 Panel A shows that sons whose fathers were suspected of violent offenses towards women are 11.1 percentage points (p.p.) more likely to be suspected of violence against women themselves in Sweden. This coefficient implies that having a VAW father increases the likelihood of VAW perpetration of the son by 168 percent relative to sons without a violent father. Alternatively, if we estimate the odds ratio (Appendix Figure A3), we find that sons with VAW-suspected fathers are 3.3 times more likely to be suspected of such

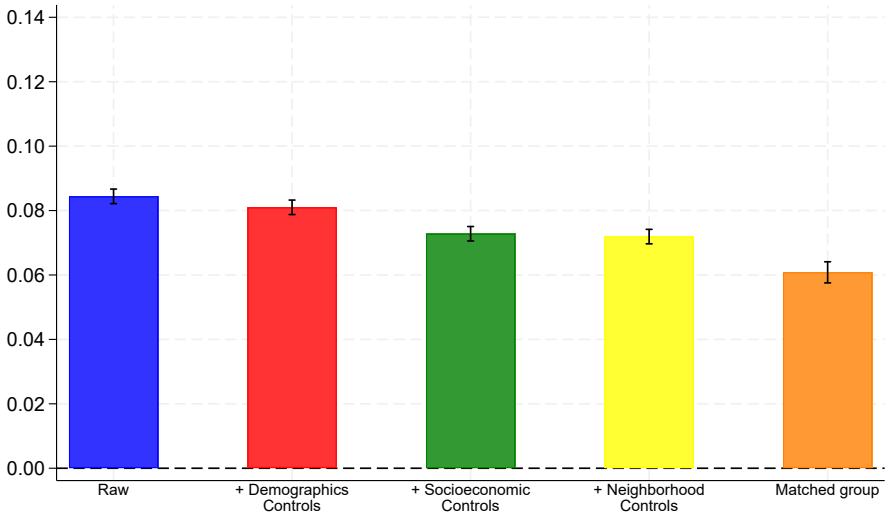
violence themselves as adults.

Figure 3: Intergenerational Transmission of VAW: LPM Estimates

(a) Sons



(b) Daughters



Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of VAW in Sweden. The blue bars report the coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW in Panel A and the daughter cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW in Panel B on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. The red bars add demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and child, indicators for whether the mother, father, or child is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. The green bars add socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. The yellow bars add neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. The orange bars use a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school), and reports the corresponding coefficient estimate. Standard errors are clustered at the father level. All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

The red bar in Figure 3 adds family demographic controls, including father's and son's birth year fixed effects, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth order indicators for both parents. The association decreases slightly but remains large: having a VAW-suspected father increases the likelihood of being suspected of VAW in adulthood by 10.3 percentage points. The green bar adds socioeconomic controls, including parental educational attainment, employment at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth, which reduces the association slightly to 9.7 percentage points. Adding neighborhood controls, including parish population size, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, and rates of offenders, assaults, and homicides per 100,000 residents, does not meaningfully change the estimate, which remains at 9.5 percentage points. The orange bar uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles at birth, birth order, parental age in five-year bins, and parental education. Even in this matched sample, which, in addition to selecting similar boys on observables, may also do a better job selecting boys who are unobservably similar, the intergenerational transmission remains substantial: sons with VAW-suspected fathers are 7.7 percentage points more likely to be suspected of VAW in adulthood. This implies that having a VAW father increases a son's likelihood of perpetrating VAW by 117% relative to a matched group of sons with similar socioeconomic characteristics but without a VAW father. In this matched sample, the odds ratio estimates in Appendix Figure A3 show that sons with VAW suspected fathers are 2.2 times more likely to be suspected of such violence in adulthood compared to otherwise similar sons who did not have a VAW father.[2]

In Figure 3 Panel B, we turn to daughters (see Appendix Figure A6 for estimates conditional on cohabitation). Beginning with the raw linear probability, consistent with Figure 2, the blue bar shows that daughters whose fathers were suspected of violent offenses towards women are 8.4 p.p. more likely to cohabit with partners who were suspected of VAW in Sweden.[3] This implies that having a violent father increases the victimization likelihood of the daughter by 97 percent

[2] Appendix Table A6 provides the corresponding odds ratio estimates.

[3] Appendix Table A4 reports the OLS estimates that correspond to the estimates plotted in Figure 3, which include all daughters in our sample. Appendix Table A5 reports the OLS estimates that correspond to the estimates plotted in Figure A6, which includes women who have ever cohabited with a partner.

relative to daughters without a violent father. The odds ratio estimates in Appendix Figure A4 show that daughters with VAW-suspected fathers are 2.3 times more likely to live together with violent partners compared to those without violent fathers.[4]

The remaining bars gradually add demographic controls, socioeconomic controls, and neighborhood controls, with LPM estimates only slightly declining from 8.4 to 7.2 p.p. The orange bar on the far right shows the estimate from a matched sample where we select women for the control group who are observationally identical on a wide range of variables: parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles at birth, birth order, parental age in five-year bins, and parental education. The intergenerational association declines only slightly to 6.1 percentage points in the matched sample, implying a 70 percent increase in the likelihood of experiencing VAW victimization from exposure to a VAW father. In this matched sample, the odds ratio estimates in Appendix Figure A4 show that daughters with VAW-suspected fathers are 1.7 times more likely to cohabit with violent partners in adulthood compared to otherwise similar daughters who did not have a violent father.

These findings provide the first large-scale evidence that exposure to fathers who commit VAW is a powerful predictor of both sons' and daughters' trajectories in adulthood. Sons who grow up with fathers suspected of VAW are substantially more likely to commit VAW themselves, even after accounting for a rich set of demographic, socioeconomic, and neighborhood characteristics and comparing them with observationally identical men.

Daughters exposed to paternal violence also face significantly elevated risks: they are far more likely to form cohabiting relationships with men who have histories of violent behavior, and this pattern persists even when comparing them to closely matched control groups. The consistency of these results across multiple specifications points to a potential learning mechanism through which VAW is transmitted across generations, shaping both perpetration and victimization risks. These patterns highlight how early-life exposure to VAW role models can normalize violence against women, influencing the partners children choose and the ways in which they navigate conflict in adulthood.

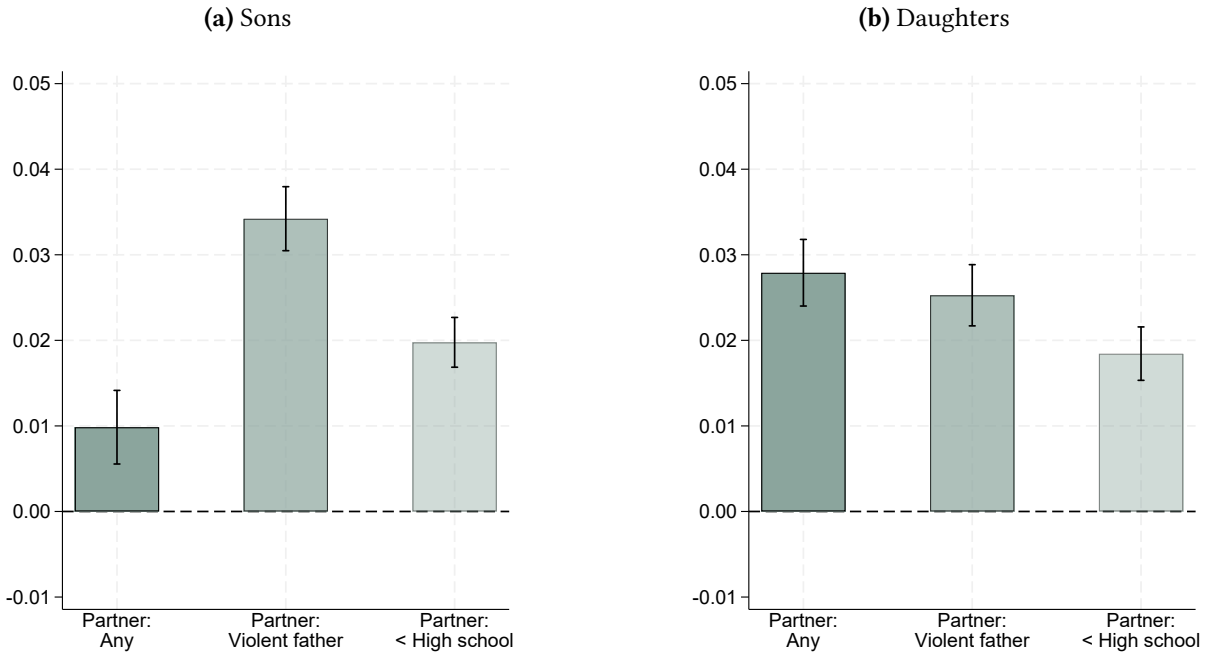
[4] Appendix Table A7 provides the corresponding odds ratio estimates. We also provide the odds ratio estimates conditional on ever cohabiting with a partner in Appendix Figure A5 and Table A8.

Partnership Quality and Risky Behaviors Beyond its direct effects on VAW perpetration and victimization risk, exposure to fathers who commit VAW may fundamentally alter how children approach romantic partnerships and their own risky behaviors.

For both sons and daughters, we observe clear assortative matching patterns in Figure 4: children of VAW fathers are more likely to partner with each other. Sons of VAW fathers are 3.4 percentage points more likely to partner with someone whose father was also suspected of VAW, while daughters are 2.5 percentage points more likely to do so. More broadly, sons are 1.0 percentage point and daughters are 2.8 percentage points more likely to be partnered overall. In addition, sons are 2.0 percentage points and daughters are 1.8 percentage points more likely to have a partner whose father did not complete high school. These are the matched estimates, see Appendix Figure A9 and Appendix Tables A9 and A10 for additional results.

In Sweden, we can also explore health outcomes for children of VAW fathers (Appendix Figure A8). The findings show that children of VAW fathers experience substantially worse health outcomes in adulthood. Both sons and daughters are about 5 percentage points more likely to have a mental health related inpatient hospitalization. They are also 4–5 percentage points more likely to have an inpatient hospitalization for somatic conditions. Finally, sons are 3.9 percentage points and daughters 2.9 percentage points more likely to receive medical care for assault injuries. Overall, these findings indicate that exposure to a VAW father is associated with persistent disadvantages in both mental and physical health well into adulthood.

Figure 4: Exposure to VAW Fathers and Children's Partnership Outcomes



Notes: This figure plots the coefficient estimates from a linear probability model regressing the outcomes (defined in text) on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW for sons in Panel A and daughters in Panel B. We match the children with VAW fathers to a control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Comparison to Intergenerational Transmission of Other Outcomes To place our estimates in context, Table A15 compares the intergenerational transmission of violence against women (VAW) with the transmission of a range of other outcomes documented in the literature. The estimates indicate that the intergenerational transmission of VAW is substantial by the standards of other well-known intergenerational associations. In our specifications with controls, sons exposed to fathers who perpetrate VAW are 9.5 percentage points more likely to perpetrate VAW themselves, while daughters are 7.2 percentage points more likely to partner with a man who perpetrates VAW. These magnitudes exceed the intergenerational transmission documented for assault victimization, domestic violence victimization, general criminal behavior, and many socioeconomic outcomes. Similarly, the corresponding odds ratios of 2.7 for sons and 2.0 for daughters are comparable to or larger than those reported for criminal behavior and low earnings. One exception is intergenerational transmission of education, where odds ratios are larger

than those for intergenerational transmission of VAW. Overall, the evidence suggests that the intergenerational transmission of VAW is among the strongest forms of intergenerational persistence documented in the existing literature, highlighting the importance of childhood exposure to violent role models in shaping later-life perpetration and victimization risks.

4 Breaking the Transmission of VAW

The correlational evidence that exposure to VAW fathers leads to greater perpetration and victimization is striking, but it may not be causal. Even with the matched comparison group, there may be other unobservable features of these families that lead to a greater risk of VAW perpetration for both fathers and sons.

Furthermore, even if there is a causal link between fathers and sons committing VAW, it is important to determine whether this correlation is explained by a genetic or innate characteristic that cannot be changed, or by learned behavior, such that reduced exposure to VAW fathers can reduce future perpetration by sons. Therefore, the impact of removing a VAW father is empirically ambiguous. If VAW is an immutable characteristic, removing fathers will have no impact. On the other hand, even if sons learn to commit VAW from their fathers, it is not clear that removing the fathers will be a net positive.

Specifically, removing a VAW father from the household may reduce children's exposure to harmful social learning mechanisms, thereby weakening the channel through which violent behavior is modeled and reproduced across generations (Bandura, 1977; Ehrensaft and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2022; Kimber *et al.*, 2018). Removing these fathers may also allow mothers to flourish, improving the child's home environment. At the same time, prior research has demonstrated extensive negative impacts on children from divorce (Johnston *et al.*, 2025) and parental incarceration (Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025). The negative impacts on household income from fathers leaving the household could be especially problematic given that several papers show that negative shocks to household income increase the risk of domestic violence (Bhalotra *et al.*, 2025; Erten *et al.*, 2022; Carr and Packham, 2021; Leslie and Wilson, 2020). In the context of Sweden, event-study estimates reported in Appendix Figure A7 reveal a sharp decline in household income following

VAW father removal for both sons and daughters.[5] At the time of separation, household income drops by roughly SEK 150,000, amounting to about half of the average pre-separation income of SEK 300,000–350,000. Although there is a small rebound of about SEK 20,000 the year after, income remains persistently low thereafter. In the long term, these children experience income declines in their primary household of approximately SEK 130,000, or 40% below baseline levels, even a decade after separation.

4.1 Impacts from Quasi-Random Father Removal

To address these questions and isolate the causal impact of removing VAW fathers on children's outcomes, we implement a judge instrumental variables design that exploits the quasi-random assignment of criminal cases to judges who differ in their propensity to remove defendants from their households. This design isolates the causal effects of father removal by comparing women who are observably and unobservably similar, but who–solely due to judicial assignment–experience separation in one case and not in the other. The approach also directly addresses concerns about whether policy can meaningfully induce separation. In Sweden, prison sentences are typically short. This implies that any long-run effects on children's subsequent perpetration or victimization of VAW is likely only possible if incarceration facilitates a more durable separation than the sentence itself would mechanically generate. We test this possibility directly.

We closely follow the approach in Grönqvist *et al.* (2025), but restrict attention to fathers suspected of perpetrating VAW and exploit quasi-random variation in the leniency of the judge assigned to their cases. Fathers whose cases are heard by less lenient judges face a higher likelihood of incarceration or court-ordered removal, whereas fathers assigned to more lenient judges are less likely to be removed. Comparing these otherwise similar fathers provides quasi-experimental variation in exposure to VAW fathers during childhood. The design identifies the local average treatment effect (LATE) of father removal for children whose fathers' household separation is sensitive to which judge hears the case, i.e., fathers at the margin of being removed.

[5] We track household income for mothers, who generally retain primary custody of children following separation. We include calendar-year fixed effects and child-birth cohort fixed effects to control for broader time trends and cohort-specific patterns in household income, and we cluster standard errors at the father level.

We focus on children aged 0-18 at the time of their fathers' trial for suspected VAW. We restrict the sample to children who were living with their father in the year before the trial. The first trials in our sample begin in 1996, and we include trials through 2000 (but not later) to ensure that we can observe children's VAW outcomes in adulthood.

Let i index children, f their father, and c the criminal case involving the father, and consider a model that relates outcomes such as son's likelihood of being suspected of VAW in adulthood to an indicator for whether the father was incarcerated during childhood, $Prison_{fct}$:

$$Y_{ifct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Prison_{fct} + \beta_2 \mathbf{X}_{ifct} + \varepsilon_{ifct}, \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ifct} is a child's adulthood VAW outcome—perpetration for sons or partnering with a violent man for daughters; $Prison_{fct}$ indicates whether the father received a prison sentence (and was therefore removed from the household) following case c; and $\mathbf{X}_{ifct}$ is a vector of controls including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial.

The main challenge for causal inference is that OLS estimates of Equation 1 are likely to be upward-biased due to unobserved characteristics transmitted across generations. For instance, VAW could be correlated across generations due to unobservable factors common to fathers and children, including attaining lower levels of education or living in a high-crime neighborhood.[6]

Instrumental Variable We construct our instrument using the as-good-as-random assignment of cases to judges within district courts following Grönqvist *et al.* (2025). During our study period, Swedish courts used a computerized system that allocated cases randomly to judges, conditional on a small set of administrative strata. Appendix A provides an overview of the Swedish court system and describes the process of judicial assignment. Judges differ substantially in their

[6]The direction of bias is, however, ambiguous since judges may view certain characteristics such as substance abuse or mental health issues as mitigating and thus opt for leniency, even though these characteristics are correlated with worse future outcomes (Agan *et al.*, 2023; Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025); conversely, judges may impose harsher sanctions on fathers perceived as particularly dangerous in VAW cases. As a result, OLS comparisons cannot credibly disentangle the causal impact of paternal incarceration from these underlying differences.

propensity to impose prison sentences, even after accounting for case composition. We construct a leave-out judge-year incarceration rate as the average probability that the judge sentenced *other* defendants to prison in the same year. This ensures that the instrument is not mechanically correlated with the child outcomes we study and avoids precision inflation that can arise when instruments are constructed using estimation-sample outcomes. Our estimates are robust, however, to various alternative approaches to constructing the instrument.

More specifically, we construct the instrument as a residualized, leave-out measure of judge stringency that aligns with the level at which random assignment occurs, i.e., court-by-year-by-randomization strata. Because cases were randomly assigned within age and crime-type groups, we partial out court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects when constructing the instrument (Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025; Agan *et al.*, 2023; Dobbie *et al.*, 2018). The randomization strata consist of five categories: juveniles under 18, juveniles aged 19-21, least serious crimes, most serious crimes, and other crimes.[7] This structure ensures that comparisons are restricted to defendants who could have been assigned to the same judges. As a result, the within-cell variation in our instrument captures differences in a quasi-randomly assigned judge's likelihood of imposing a prison sentence relative to otherwise similar cases heard in the same court and year.

First Stage Our first-stage regression examines the relationship between judge stringency Z_{fctj} and father incarceration $Prison_{fctj}$. We estimate the following specification for individual i with father f who is charged in case c and assigned to judge j using OLS:

$$Prison_{fctj} = \pi_0 + \pi_1 Z_{fctj} + \pi_2 \mathbf{X}_{ifct} + u_{ifctj}, \tag{2}$$

where Z_{fctj} is our leave-out judge incarceration stringency measure, and the vector $\mathbf{X}_{ifct}$ includes court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and, in some specifications, control variables. The control

[7] These crime categories were developed using information from interviews with court staff and a review of court records. Offenses classified as least serious are those carrying a maximum sentence of six months, whereas the most serious category includes crimes such as murder, kidnapping, arson, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, and domestic violence. Juveniles charged with these severe offenses are also placed in the serious-crime group. For roughly 5 percent of cases where the Convictions Register lacks offense details, we rely on the Suspicion Register to assign the appropriate crime category.

variables include the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. Robust standard errors are two-way clustered at the father and court section level.

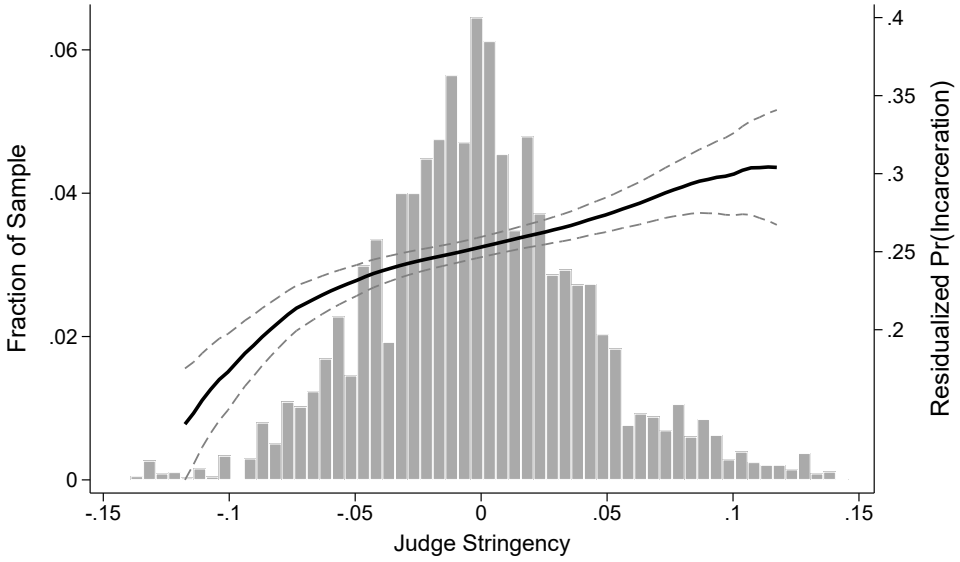
Table 2: First Stage Results

	Sample Mean	Judge Stringency	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Paternal Incarceration	0.171	0.457***	0.464***
	(0.377)	(0.131)	(0.134)
Sanderson-Windmeijer F-stat			12.06
Cragg-Donald F-stat			32.12
Court x Year x Strata FE	–	Yes	Yes
Controls	–	No	Yes
Observations		16,684	16,684

Notes: This table reports first stage results. Judge stringency is estimated using data from other cases assigned to a section in the same year. Column 1 reports the mean and standard deviation of the dependent variable (father incarceration). Column 2 reports estimates from an OLS regression of father incarceration on judge stringency, controlling for only court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects. Column 3 adds controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. All regressions are run at the child level. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the father and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table 2 presents the first-stage results from estimating Equation 2. Column 1 reports the average incarceration rate among fathers suspected of VAW in our estimation sample. Column 2 presents first-stage results controlling only for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects. Column 3 adds the baseline characteristics reported in the table notes and indicators for any missing baseline characteristics. The estimate including all controls (column 3) shows that having a father assigned to a judge who is 10 percentage points more likely to incarcerate increases the probability of incarceration by 4.64 percentage points. The Sanderson-Windmeijer and Cragg Donald F statistics are both high, suggesting that the instrument is a strong predictor.

Figure 5: Distribution of Judge Stringency and First Stage



Note: This figure displays the distribution of the judge stringency measure, which is constructed using data from other cases assigned to the same judge in a given year, following the method outlined in Section 4. The solid line reports a local linear regression of incarceration on judge stringency. The dashed lines show 90 percent confidence intervals.

Figure 5 presents a nonparametric visualization of the same first-stage relationship. The figure shows that the residualized judge instrument strongly predicts parental incarceration, with the likelihood of incarceration rising monotonically and roughly linearly with judge stringency. In line with prior studies (e.g., Bhuller *et al.*, 2020; Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025), the probability of incarceration does not increase one-for-one with our measure of judge stringency, likely reflecting attenuation from measurement error. For instance, judge stringency may vary over the course of the year, or decisions may be partly influenced by lay jurors, both of which can introduce noise into the leave-out measure. Overall, the evidence reinforces that judge assignment is a strong predictor of parental incarceration in our context.

Independence and Exclusion An additional condition required to interpret our two-stage least squares estimates as the LATE of incarcerating VAW fathers is that judge assignment affects child outcomes only through its impact on the probability that the father is incarcerated. Table

3 provides evidence consistent with this exclusion restriction. In Column 1, we estimate a linear probability model to examine whether baseline characteristics of the child, their father, or the case predict the father's incarceration. Column 2 tests whether these same characteristics predict our residualized judge stringency measure using the same specification. Both models include court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and two-way clustered standard errors at the family and court-section level. As expected, observable characteristics strongly predict incarceration, but they are not systematically related to judge stringency. These results indicate that judges with different incarceration tendencies are assigned very similar cases, consistent with the randomized assignment process described earlier.

The exclusion restriction may still be violated if judge assignment affects child outcomes through channels other than the father's incarceration. This assumption is fundamentally untestable, and our estimates should be interpreted with this caveat in mind. Nonetheless, we argue that the exclusion restriction is plausible in our context. The Swedish criminal justice system places strict limits on judicial discretion: judges must choose from a narrow set of punishment types, and sentence lengths are guided by mandatory national sentencing guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and the Prosecutor Authority. These institutional features reduce the scope for judges to systematically affect defendants in ways unrelated to the incarceration margin.

Table 3: Test of Randomization

	Father Incarcerated	Judge Stringency
	(1)	(2)
Child is male	0.00518	-0.00008
	(0.00650)	(0.00059)
Child is foreign born	-0.00240	0.00070
	(0.01884)	(0.00168)
Child age at trial	-0.00060	0.00014
	(0.00107)	(0.00010)
Child is a second child	0.00484	0.00021
	(0.00570)	(0.00051)
Child is a third child	0.00604	0.00029
	(0.00965)	(0.00089)
Child is a fourth child or higher child	0.00405	0.00356**
	(0.01529)	(0.00147)
Father age at trial	-0.00030	-0.00005
	(0.00090)	(0.00008)
Father has at least some college	-0.00059	0.00077
	(0.02915)	(0.00280)
Father has high school degree	-0.00859	0.00073
	(0.02607)	(0.00241)
Father has education up to compulsory school	0.02805	0.00210
	(0.02457)	(0.00248)
Father earnings in 3 years before trial	-0.00001	0.00000
	(0.00001)	(0.00000)
Family disposable income in 3 years before trial	0.03109**	-0.00181
	(0.01552)	(0.00146)
Father employment in 3 years before trial	0.00858	-0.00094
	(0.02106)	(0.00225)
Father conviction in 3 years before trial	0.08532***	0.00063
	(0.01114)	(0.00092)
Average court processing time	0.00019	-0.00003
	(0.00015)	(0.00004)
Joint F-Test	[0.00000]	[0.48448]
Observations	16,684	16,684

Notes: This table reports reduced-form tests of the random assignment of cases to court sections. Column 1 presents OLS estimates from regressing father incarceration on the listed covariates, controlling for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects. Column 2 presents analogous OLS estimates where the dependent variable is judge stringency. Both regressions also include indicators for missing values. The p-values at the bottom of Columns 1-2 correspond to F-tests of the joint significance of all listed covariates and missing-value indicators. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Furthermore, other courtroom actors such as prosecutors and lay jurors are assigned independently of the judge. This institutional separation makes it unlikely that judge assignment is correlated with the assignment of other actors who might independently affect defendants or their families. While we cannot completely rule out all alternative channels, such as small differences in how quickly judges process case paperwork, we view them as unlikely to meaningfully bias our two stage least squares estimates.

Short Prison Sentences Facilitate Longer Separations A common refrain is that "nothing works" to encourage women to exit abusive relationships. Women are often implicitly blamed for returning to partners, and short-term separations are frequently followed by reunification (Goodmark, 2012; Anderson *et al.*, 2003). However, there are several reasons why it is difficult for women to leave these men. Research shows that women in abusive relationships are often economically dependent on their partners and have limited access to affordable housing and fears of financial instability following separation, all of which reduce the feasibility of leaving (Farmer and Tiefenthaler, 1997; Baker *et al.*, 2010; Adams *et al.*, 2024). Psychological factors, including trauma bonding, diminished self-efficacy, and manipulation by the abuser, can further impede exit (Dutton and Painter, 1993; Lahav, 2023). Stigma towards separation, cultural norms on gender relations, or legal barriers against divorce can also deter women from leaving abusive relationships (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2006).

This literature has two implications. First, it suggests that it may be difficult for policy levers to accomplish separations from abusive partners. Second, it suggests that women who are able to unilaterally initiate a divorce or separation may be unobservably different from women who are not. In particular, they may have more confidence, greater access to resources, or more supportive social networks. These unobserved factors could also lead to more favorable outcomes for their children. If this is true, then any reductions in sons' VAW perpetration among a sample of women who endogenously leave an abusive marriage could fail to generalize to a broader sample of women where separations are generated via policy interventions, emphasizing the importance of our judge IV approach to identify the impacts of exogenous separations.

Second, this literature suggests the importance of interpreting our judge IV estimates as intent-to-treat estimates: if we define treatment as exposure to VAW fathers, not all children will be treated if mothers quickly return to the same partners after the prison sentence is completed. This is especially important given that the median prison sentence in our sample is short: three months. As a result, any estimated effects will not be mechanically driven by prolonged physical separation due to incarceration itself.

Therefore, our first impact of interest is whether prison sentences lead to longer-term separations in VAW families. If the prevailing narrative that "nothing works" is correct, even a state-mandated short-term separation may fail to generate lasting change. Alternatively, a short but externally imposed separation may provide critical breathing room, giving women time to relocate, adjust finances, or sever ties with the abuser's broader social network. This may, in turn, enable women in abusive relationships to achieve more durable separations from abusive partners.

We test this hypothesis in Table 4. We find clear evidence that father incarceration substantially increases the likelihood of sustained separation. In the first row, we report the impact on whether the child lives with their VAW biological father in the five years post trial. We observe that the probability of living with the father declines by 52.4 p.p., corresponding to a reduction of 62% relative to the complier control mean.

The second-row estimates show that the probability to live with the father in year 5 after conviction are even larger, as expected. These findings indicate that even relatively short prison sentences can generate durable household separations, reducing long-term exposure to VAW fathers during childhood.

One concern with these estimates is that mothers could re-partner with other VAW men. The third-row estimates in Table 4 indicate this is not the case. Instead, VAW father incarceration generates durable changes in family environments. In particular, incarceration substantially reduces the likelihood that mothers subsequently cohabit with another man was suspected of committing VAW. These results suggest that externally induced separations reduce exposure to VAW men in general, including the father.

In the last row, we examine whether the reduction in partnership with VAW men results in lower experienced IPV for mothers. If sons and daughters learn to perpetrate or tolerate VAW from their fathers, we would expect them to observe VAW or misogynistic attitudes towards women. This is difficult to measure directly as we do not observe how the father talks about women, and most IPV goes unreported. However, in Sweden we observe a flag in the healthcare data for whether injuries are consistent with IPV. This is a very rare outcome, as generally only very severe injuries will lead to a healthcare visit, and not all IPV injuries will be flagged as such by healthcare workers. Nonetheless, we find that a quasi-random prison sentence not only results in the mother being significantly less likely to cohabit with any VAW man, but also results in a decrease in experienced IPV measured by the healthcare visit flags, significant at the 11% level.

Table 4: Father Incarceration and Exposure to VAW Men

	All	Sons	Daughters
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Average probability child lives with bio VAW father 5 years after trial	-0.524**	-0.719**	-0.254
	(0.245)	(0.351)	(0.307)
Outcome mean	[0.539]	[0.555]	[0.521]
CCM	*0.847*	*1.162*	*0.479*
Probability child lives with bio VAW dad in year 5 after trial	-0.734**	-0.934**	-0.514
	(0.321)	(0.457)	(0.385)
Outcome mean	[0.453]	[0.476]	[0.428]
CCM	*0.921*	*1.324*	*0.491*
Probability mom cohabits with any VAW man 5 years after trial	-0.713**	-1.017**	-0.381
	(0.344)	(0.518)	(0.365)
Outcome mean	[0.407]	[0.412]	[0.402]
CCM	*0.805*	*1.015*	*0.600*
IPV health care for mom	-0.062	-0.044	-0.080
	(0.039)	(0.045)	(0.056)
Outcome mean	[0.008]	[0.007]	[0.009]
CCM	*0.038*	*0.040*	*0.038*
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	16,684	8,771	7,913

Notes: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on the mother's average probability of separating within 5 years after father's imprisonment in row 1, the mother's probability of separating at year 5 after father's imprisonment in row 2, and the mother's probability of cohabiting with another man who was ever suspected of committing VAW in row 3. Columns 1-3 report two-stage least squares estimates that instrument for paternal incarceration using judge stringency. The p-values for mothers' IPV-related care are 0.115 (column 1), 0.333 (column 2), and 0.158 (column 3). All regressions control for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are in square brackets. The complier control means (CCM) are italicized and listed in the rows below outcome means. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the father and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Impacts on VAW Perpetration and Victimization Table 5 presents two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of incarceration of fathers suspected of VAW on an indicator of the son being suspected of any violence against women (Panel A), and an indicator of the daughter cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW (Panel B). Across all estimates, judge stringency is used as an instrument for incarceration of fathers suspected of VAW. The dependent variable means are

reported in square parentheses under the coefficient estimates, and complier means are reported in italics.

In Panel A of Table 5 we find that that being separated from VAW fathers due to the father's incarceration reduces the probability of the son being suspected of any VAW by 52.3 percentage points (93% compared to the control complier mean). In Panel B, we find that removal of VAW fathers also reduces victimization risks for daughters. We observe 64.6 p.p. decline in the probability of cohabitation with a VAW partner, an 82% decline relative to the complier mean.

Table 5: Father Incarceration and VAW Outcomes in Adulthood

	(1)
Panel A: Sons	
Suspected of any violence against women	-0.523*
	(0.302)
Outcome mean	[0.215]
CCM	*0.564*
Observations	8,771
Panel B: Daughters	
Cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW	-0.646**
	(0.318)
Outcome mean	[0.188]
CCM	*0.788*
Observations	7,913
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes

Notes: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on children's outcomes. Column 1 reports two-stage least squares estimates that instrument for paternal incarceration using judge stringency. All regressions control for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are in square brackets. The complier control means (CCM) are italicized and listed in the rows below outcome means. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Appendix Table A11 reports estimates of the impacts of incarceration of VAW-suspected fathers during ages 0–12 on a broad set of adolescent outcomes, including criminal behavior, health, substance abuse, and educational achievement.

Panel A examines criminal outcomes. For sons, father incarceration reduces the probability of any criminal conviction by 54.4 p.p, corresponding to an 83 percent decline relative to the complier control mean. We also find reductions in criminal suspicions, with the point estimate implying a 44.7 p.p. decline. While the latter estimate is imprecisely estimated, the consistently negative coefficients suggest that early removal of VAW fathers substantially reduces sons' involvement with the criminal justice system. For daughters, the estimates are also negative but smaller in magnitude and statistically insignificant.

Panel B reports health outcomes. For sons, we find a statistically significant decline of 3.7 p.p. in inpatient psychiatric care, corresponding to approximately a 100 percent reduction relative to the complier control mean, but no evidence of changes in inpatient physical care or assault-related injuries. For daughters, we find no evidence of changes in psychiatric care, but removal of VAW fathers leads to statistically significant reductions in inpatient physical care and injuries resulting from assault. These findings indicate a substantial reduction in severe victimization of daughters requiring inpatient treatment.

Panel C examines alcohol-related outcomes. We find no statistically significant effects on either alcohol use disorder diagnoses or alcohol addiction treatment for sons or daughters. Similarly, Panel D provides no evidence that father incarceration affects educational achievement as measured by standardized grade point averages at age 16. Although the estimated effects on GPA are positive, they are imprecisely estimated for both boys and girls.

Maternal Capacity While removing a VAW father reduces the degree to which children learn to embrace or tolerate violence against women, it could also lead to better outcomes for the child's mother, improving her ability to care for her child. This improved maternal capacity could be a key mechanism underlying our main result. On the other hand, removing the father through a quasi-random prison sentence could lead to worse labor market and mental health outcomes as she struggles to care for a child on her own, consistent with prior papers demonstrating the precarity of single motherhood.

To test this mechanism directly, Table 6 examines impacts on mother's outcomes. Reassur-

ingly, we find no negative impacts on her economic or health outcomes, suggesting this is unlikely to be a key mediating mechanism (either positive or negative).

We do, however, observe suggestive evidence of improved maternal capacity when it comes to risky behaviors. Mothers whose VAW partners are quasi-randomly removed are less likely to have alcohol disorders and seek alcohol addiction care, and these results are significant for the sample of mothers with sons.

Table 6: Father Incarceration and Maternal Outcomes

	All	Sons	Daughters
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Economic outcomes			
Earnings	-29.312	-219.805	338.378
	(696.265)	(671.821)	(1,086.433)
Outcome mean	[1,124.371]	[1,113.813]	[1,136.019]
CCM	*1,350.681*	*1,615.566*	*1,186.981*
Employment	-0.060	-0.197	0.199
	(0.279)	(0.341)	(0.365)
Outcome mean	[0.623]	[0.617]	[0.628]
CCM	*0.680*	*0.808*	*0.551*
Social assistance	0.391	0.319	0.478
	(0.248)	(0.297)	(0.332)
Outcome mean	[0.613]	[0.604]	[0.622]
CCM	*0.280*	*0.428*	*0.079*
Panel B: Health outcomes			
Psychiatric care	0.026	0.083	-0.030
	(0.112)	(0.148)	(0.153)
Outcome mean	[0.047]	[0.046]	[0.048]
CCM	*-0.097*	*-0.161*	*-0.045*
Physical care	-0.089	-0.114	-0.119
	(0.205)	(0.256)	(0.259)
Outcome mean	[0.122]	[0.126]	[0.117]
CCM	*0.139*	*0.034*	*0.266*
Panel C: Substance abuse			
Alcohol use disorder	-0.064	-0.150**	0.038
	(0.047)	(0.075)	(0.063)
Outcome mean	[0.010]	[0.010]	[0.010]
CCM	*0.018*	*0.090*	*-0.080*
Alcohol addiction care	-0.065	-0.079*	-0.025
	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.060)
Outcome mean	[0.011]	[0.012]	[0.011]
CCM	*-0.025*	*-0.016*	*-0.075*
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	16,684	8,771	7,913

Note: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on mothers' outcomes. Columns 1–3 report two-stage least squares estimates for father incarceration for all children, sons, and daughters, respectively, instrumenting for father incarceration using judge stringency. All regressions control for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are in square brackets. The complier control means (CCM) are italicized and listed in the rows below outcome means. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Deterrence Another possible mechanism for our main findings is deterrence. If daughters and sons observe that there are negative legal repercussions for crimes against women, they may update their beliefs about the costs of offending and adjust their future behavior accordingly. For sons, observing a father being investigated, prosecuted, and incarcerated for VAW crimes may increase the salience of legal sanctions and reduce the likelihood that sons engage in similar behaviors later in life. For daughters, observing a father face sanctions for VAW may reinforce the unacceptability of such behavior and increase awareness of warning signs associated with abusive men, making them less likely to have relationships with partners who exhibit violent tendencies.

To assess the relevance of this mechanism, we omit court cases where the offense involves VAW, which account for 16% of our sample. If deterrence is an important channel, we would expect the effects to weaken when children no longer observe their father being sanctioned specifically for VAW. The results, reported in Appendix Table A12, reveal a striking difference between sons and daughters. For sons, the estimated effect remains large and statistically significant: father incarceration reduces the probability of later being suspected of VAW by 47.8 p.p, corresponding to a 93 percent decline relative to the compliers. This persistence suggests that deterrence is unlikely to be the primary mechanism for boys. Instead, the results are more consistent with reductions in exposure to a VAW father and the associated disruption of learning harmful behaviors towards women.

In contrast, the estimated effect for daughters declines substantially in magnitude and becomes statistically insignificant once VAW cases are excluded. While the estimate remains negative, the attenuation suggests that observing sanctions specifically for VAW may be particularly important for daughters. This finding suggests that VAW-specific prosecutions and incarcerations provide information about the consequences and unacceptability of abusive behavior, making daughters less likely to tolerate or partner with men who exhibit violence towards women. Taken together, these findings suggest that deterrence or belief updating may play a larger role in explaining daughters' outcomes, whereas reductions in exposure to a harmful male role model appear to be more important for sons.

Child Abuse Our estimates could capture removal of fathers who are violent not only against women, but also against their sons. A large literature demonstrates the extensive negative consequences of exposure to child abuse and the implications of removal from these homes, although these papers have not explicitly explored VAW as an outcome. While abuse against daughters is another form of violence against women, abuse against sons may suggest a separate mechanism.

To explore whether our main effects are driven by exposure to child abuse, we examine its prevalence and provide robustness to interacting exposure to father incarceration with the child abuse cases. In our sample, we observe that 13% of men are both violent against women and violent against a child under the age of 14 who is likely within the same household. Appendix Table A13 presents the results. For sons, the estimate for father incarceration remains large and economically meaningful, reducing the probability of later perpetrating any violence against women by 51.3 p.p. Moreover, the interaction term is small and statistically insignificant, and we cannot reject that the main effect is similar in magnitude to the estimates reported in Table 5. For daughters, father incarceration continues to substantially reduce the likelihood of cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW, with an estimated effect of 64 p.p. that remains statistically significant. The interaction term is again statistically insignificant and small relative to the main effect. Taken together, these findings suggest that the protective effects of father incarceration are not driven by differential exposure to childhood abuse. Instead, the results indicate that reduced exposure to a violent father weakens the intergenerational transmission of VAW even among children with similar histories of childhood abuse.

4.2 Learning from Male Role Models

The preceding analysis provides a clear causal estimate for families with VAW fathers on the margins of incarceration. However, Appendix Table A14 demonstrates that among all families with VAW fathers, these families are particularly negatively selected. Both the mother and father are less likely to complete high school, less likely to participate in the labor market, and have lower earnings. They also live in more disadvantaged neighborhoods with a higher share of immigrants, lower employment rate, and higher rates of crime. This leads to concerns about

external validity. Perhaps reduced exposure to VAW men does not decrease VAW perpetration and victimization risk for the broader population.

To address this question, we examine how the relationship between fathers' violent behavior and children's later VAW outcomes changes across family environments with differing levels of exposure to the VAW men. While these results are largely descriptive, in contrast to the causal estimates from the judge IV design, they help strengthen the takeaways for the broader population of VAW exposed children.

Specifically, we progressively restrict the sample to children who had limited or no co-residence with their biological father and to sons who were instead raised by a long-term stepfather or adoptive father. If intergenerational transmission primarily reflects exposure to violent role models and social learning within the household, then the association between violent biological fathers and sons' later behavior should weaken substantially as exposure to the biological father declines and alternative paternal role models become more prominent.

Table 7: Intergenerational Transmission from Violent Biological Fathers

	All	Never cohabited with biological father	Has stepfather	Was adopted by stepfather
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sons				
Violent biological father	0.111***	0.063***	0.045***	0.027
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.017)
	[194.9%]	[55.4%]	[42.2%]	[26.7%]
Mean dep. var.	0.065	0.129	0.116	0.106
Observations	1,693,434	69,238	15,302	2,369
Panel B: Daughters				
Violent biological father	0.085***	0.038***	0.036***	0.041**
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.019)
	[105.8%]	[25.9%]	[22.8%]	[29.1%]
Mean dep. var.	0.087	0.156	0.166	0.147
Observations	1,601,004	69,748	15,678	2,553

Notes: The outcome variable is an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW. The table reports the results from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW on an indicator for the biological father being suspected of VAW. The first column includes the full sample where both father and son were ever registered residents in Sweden during the period 1995–2020. The second column restricts the sample to sons who did not cohabit with their biological father after their year of birth. The third column restricts the sample to sons with a stepfather. A stepfather is defined as a non-biological male partner of the mother who began cohabiting with the child before age 6 and lived with the child for at least five years before the child turned 19. The fourth column restricts the sample to sons with a stepfather who adopted them. Brackets show the coefficient of violent biological father divided by the share of violent sons among those with a non-violent biological father. Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Panel A of Table 7 presents evidence on the relationship between biological fathers' violent behavior and sons' later perpetration of VAW across different family structures. Column 1 reports the baseline intergenerational correlation in the full sample. In the full sample, having a violent biological father is associated with an 11.1 percentage point increase in the probability that the son is later suspected of VAW, corresponding to a 195% increase relative to sons of non-violent fathers. The remaining columns progressively restrict the sample in ways that reduce sons' exposure to their violent biological fathers and increase exposure to alternative male role models. Column 2 focuses on sons who never cohabited with their biological father after their year of birth. In this sample, the coefficient declines substantially to 6.3 percentage points, suggesting

that reduced direct exposure to the biological father weakens the intergenerational transmission of violence.

Column 3 further restricts the sample to sons who were raised with a stepfather. Here, the estimated relationship declines further to 4.5 percentage points, consistent with the presence of a different long-term male role model attenuating the transmission of violent behavior. Finally, Column 4 examines sons who were adopted by their stepfather. In this most restrictive specification, the coefficient becomes small and statistically insignificant. Taken together, these patterns suggest that intergenerational transmission is strongest when sons are exposed to violent biological fathers and weakens considerably as that exposure declines and alternative male role models become more prominent in the household.

Panel B of Table 7 presents analogous results for daughters. In the full sample, having a violent biological father is associated with an 8.5 p.p. increase in the probability of cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW, corresponding to a 106% increase relative to daughters of non-violent fathers. As with sons, the estimated relationship declines substantially when daughters have less exposure to their violent biological father. Among daughters who never cohabited with their biological father after birth, the coefficient falls to 3.8 p.p., a reduction of more than one-half relative to the full sample estimate. The estimate remains similarly attenuated among daughters raised by a stepfather, at 3.6 p.p. Unlike the results for sons, however, the coefficient remains statistically significant even among daughters who were adopted by their stepfather, with an estimated effect of 4.1 p.p. Thus, while reduced exposure to violent biological fathers substantially weakens the intergenerational transmission of victimization risk, it does not eliminate it entirely. One possible explanation is that daughters may continue to be affected by broader family characteristics and relationship dynamics associated with having a violent biological father, even when direct exposure is limited. Nevertheless, the sharp decline in the magnitude of the estimates as exposure to the biological father decreases is consistent with the view that male role models and childhood exposure to violent men play an important role in shaping daughters' future relationship outcomes.

The Mediating Influence of Non-VAW Dads Table 8 examines whether the type of stepfather present in the household mediates sons' later perpetration of violence against women among children who never lived with their biological father after their year of birth. The omitted category consists of sons who were not raised with a long-term stepfather. Across all specifications, the results reveal a striking contrast between the influence of non-VAW and VAW male role models within the household.

Column 1 shows that sons raised with a stepfather who was not violent against women are 2.1 percentage points *less* likely to later perpetrate violence against women relative to sons without a stepfather, a 16% decrease relative to baseline rates of 13.1 percent. In contrast, sons raised with a violent stepfather are 3.3 percentage points *more* likely to later perpetrate violence against women, a roughly 25% increase relative to the baseline mean.

Focusing on column 2, we observe that among boys whose biological fathers are suspected of VAW, exposure to a non-VAW stepfather can counteract the transmission of VAW, although this mediating effect is absent for daughters. In column 3, we observe the converse: for boys whose biological father is never suspected of VAW, exposure to a new male role model who is suspected of VAW is associated with a 3.9 percentage point increase in the probability the son is suspected of VAW in adulthood, a 34% increase relative to the dependent variable mean.

In sum, these findings complement our IV results and provide additional evidence that VAW is not simply an immutable or inherited trait. Instead, the evidence strongly supports a social learning mechanism whereby children exposed to violent male role models are more likely to adopt similar behaviors later in life. Moreover, consistent with the judge IV estimates, these descriptive results suggest that these norms can be broken through both the addition of positive male role models and the removal of negative male role models, especially for sons.

Table 8: Intergenerational Transmission in the Presence of Non-VAW vs VAW Stepfathers

	(1) All	(2) Biological father violent against women	(3) Biological father not violent against women
Panel A: Sons			
Stepfather not violent against women	-0.0213***	-0.0378***	-0.0135***
	(0.00293)	(0.00764)	(0.00328)
Stepfather violent against women	0.0331***	0.0101	0.0392***
	(0.00994)	(0.0195)	(0.0116)
Observations	88,656	16,031	53,207
Mean dep. var.	0.131	0.178	0.114
Panel B: Daughters			
Stepfather not violent against women	0.0169***	0.00199	0.00661*
	(0.00329)	(0.00802)	(0.00380)
Stepfather violent against women	0.0903***	0.0568***	0.0822***
	(0.0109)	(0.0196)	(0.0132)
Observations	93,021	16,259	53,489
Mean dep. var.	0.145	0.185	0.147

Notes: The sample is restricted to sons who never lived with their biological father after their year of birth. The outcome variable is an indicator for the son being suspected of violence against women. The omitted category consists of sons who did not have a stepfather according to our definition. A stepfather is defined as a non-biological male partner of the mother who moved in before the child turned six and who lived with the child for at least five years before the child turned 19. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

4.3 Family Fixed Effects Design

In our last design, we exploit within-family variation to examine whether longer exposure to a VAW father during childhood increases the intergenerational transmission of violence against women. Specifically, we compare siblings within the same family who experienced different lengths of cohabitation with their father because he left the household at different points during childhood. This design absorbs all time-invariant family characteristics, including parental preferences, socioeconomic background, parenting styles, and genetic endowments, thereby isolating the role of exposure duration.

We first estimate the following specification, restricting the sample to fathers ever suspected

of committing VAW:

$$Y_{ifc} = \alpha + \beta \,\text{Years of cohabitation}_{if} + \delta X_i + \gamma_f + \gamma_c + \varepsilon_{ifc}, \tag{3}$$

where Y_{ifc} is an indicator for whether son i in family f and birth cohort c is ever suspected of committing violence against women (or, alternatively, whether daughter i ever cohabits with a partner suspected of VAW). Years of cohabitation$_{if}$ measures the number of years the child lived with the father between birth and age 18. X_i includes birth-order indicators and father birth-year fixed effects. We include family fixed effects (γ_f) and child birth cohort fixed effects (γ_c), and cluster standard errors at the father level.

We then estimate a pooled specification including both abusive and non-VAW fathers:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{ifc} = \alpha + \beta_1 \,\text{Years of cohabitation}_{if} + \beta_2 \,(\text{Years of cohabitation}_{if} \times \text{Non-VAW Father}_f) \\ + \delta X_i + \gamma_f + \gamma_c + \varepsilon_{ifc}, \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

where Non-VAW Father$_f$ is an indicator equal to one if the father was never suspected of committing VAW. Because family fixed effects absorb the main effect of Non-VAW Father$_f$, the coefficient β_1 measures the association between years of cohabitation and the outcome among VAW fathers, while β_2 captures the differential association for non-VAW fathers. The total association for non-VAW fathers is therefore given by $\beta_1 + \beta_2$.

Table 9 presents the corresponding estimates. Columns (1) and (3) report estimates from the first specification, restricting the sample to VAW fathers, while columns (2) and (4) report estimates from the pooled specification.

For sons, column (1) shows that each additional year of cohabitation with a VAW father increases the probability of later perpetrating VAW by 0.22 percentage points. Column (2) demonstrates that this relationship is entirely driven by VAW fathers: the interaction term is nearly identical in magnitude but opposite in sign, implying essentially no relationship between years of cohabitation with non-VAW fathers and later VAW perpetration. Thus, prolonged exposure to VAW fathers appears to drive the intergenerational transmission of violent behavior.

The results for daughters are similar. Column (3) indicates that each additional year of cohabitation with a VAW father increases the likelihood of later cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW by approximately 0.16 percentage points. The interaction term in column (4) reverses this association, implying that earlier removal of non-VAW fathers increases daughters' subsequent victimization risk. Taken together, these within-family estimates provide strong evidence that prolonged exposure to VAW fathers increases the intergenerational transmission of violence against women, whereas longer exposure to non-VAW fathers does not. If anything, the point estimates suggest that non-VAW fathers may be protective, reinforcing the interpretation that it is exposure to VAW male role models that contributes to the persistence of violence across generations.

Table 9: Effects of Father Removal: Family Fixed Effects Estimates

	Sons		Daughters	
	VAW fathers	All	VAW fathers	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Years of cohabitation	0.00216***	0.00216***	0.00160**	0.00160**
	(0.000658)	(0.000657)	(0.000724)	(0.000724)
Years of cohabitation × Non-VAW dad		−0.00216***		−0.00227***
		(0.000699)		(0.000774)
Observations	73,523	512,971	72,918	535,750
Number of fathers	53,047	394,093	53,026	416,628
Mean dep. var.	0.163	0.0955	0.175	0.129

Notes: The sample is restricted to children who lived with their fathers at birth and separated at some point before age 19. The table reports the estimates for the effects of father removal on sons' VAW perpetration in columns 1 and 2; and daughters' VAW victimization proxied by their cohabitation with a partner suspected of committing VAW by their age at separation in columns 3 and 4. The coefficient estimates in columns 1 and 3 reflect the estimated effects of father removal within abusive families, comparing siblings whose VAW father was removed at a younger age vs older age. Columns (2) and (4) additionally include families without a history of paternal VAW and interact years of cohabitation with an indicator for a non-VAW father. Consequently, the coefficient on years of cohabitation measures the effect of later father removal among VAW fathers, while the interaction term reports the differential effect for non-VAW fathers relative to VAW fathers. Standard errors are clustered at the father level.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper provides the first large-scale administrative evidence that VAW is transmitted across generations through childhood exposure. Using linked population-wide data from Sweden, we show that sons of fathers suspected of VAW are more than twice as likely to commit VAW themselves, and daughters exposed to violent fathers are almost twice as likely to partner with violent men. These patterns persist after controlling for rich demographic, socioeconomic, and neighborhood characteristics and when comparisons are restricted to closely matched families. The magnitude and robustness of these associations underscore a strong social learning mechanism through which violent behaviors are imitated and victimization risks are shaped early in life.

We then examine whether this intergenerational cycle can be disrupted by reducing children's exposure to VAW fathers. Leveraging quasi-random assignment of cases to judges with differing incarceration propensities, we provide causal evidence that quasi-random removal of VAW fathers weakens the intergenerational transmission of VAW. The judge-IV results show that incarceration of VAW fathers during childhood significantly reduces sons' VAW perpetration risk and daughters' victimization for VAW in adulthood. These findings demonstrate that VAW is not solely an innate or fixed trait, but rather a behavior that is learned and reinforced through early-life exposure. Family fixed-effects estimates confirm this pattern more broadly within all abusive families, showing that siblings separated from violent fathers at younger ages experience substantially lower risks later in life. For daughters, we also observe a significant decline in victimization risks from the family fixed-effects estimates.

Although household income declines substantially following separation, which could have caused an increase in VAW and worse child outcomes more broadly, we find that in addition to a reduction in sons' perpetration of VAW, children of VAW fathers experience improvements in behavioral outcomes, including reductions in adolescent criminal activity, as well as gains in some health outcomes. At the same time, maternal well-being improves, with reductions in substance-related mental health issues, suggesting that changes in the caregiving environment constitute an additional mechanism through which these effects operate, beyond just reduced exposure to

VAW fathers.

Taken together, our results highlight two key mechanisms underlying the intergenerational persistence of VAW: direct exposure to violent behavior towards women and the broader household environment in which children are raised. By reducing children's exposure to VAW fathers and improving maternal well-being, removal of VAW fathers meaningfully weakens the transmission of VAW across generations. More broadly, our findings imply that VAW is not an immutable trait but a learned behavior shaped by childhood environments. Policies that safely reduce children's exposure to VAW fathers, while mitigating the associated economic harms, have the potential to meaningfully weaken the persistence of VAW across generations.

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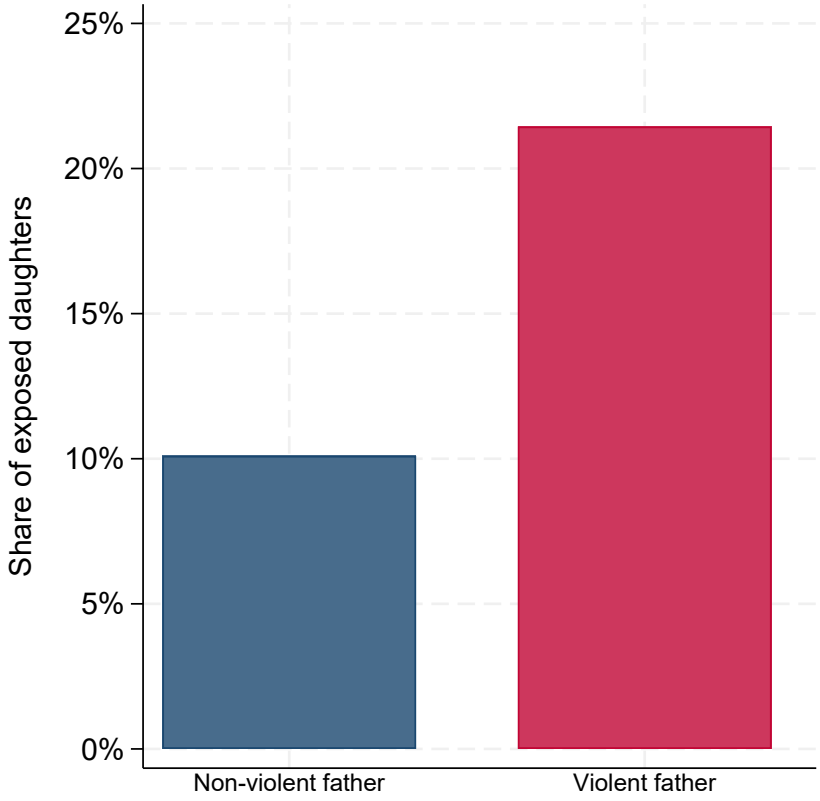
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Online Appendix

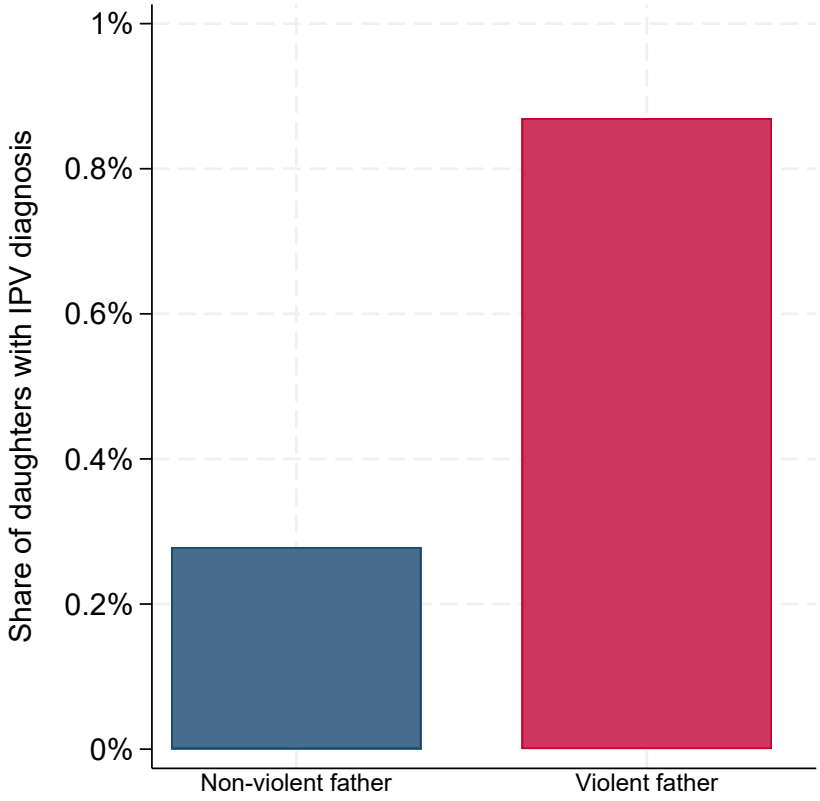
A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Raw Correlation for VAW Victimization Conditional on Cohabitation



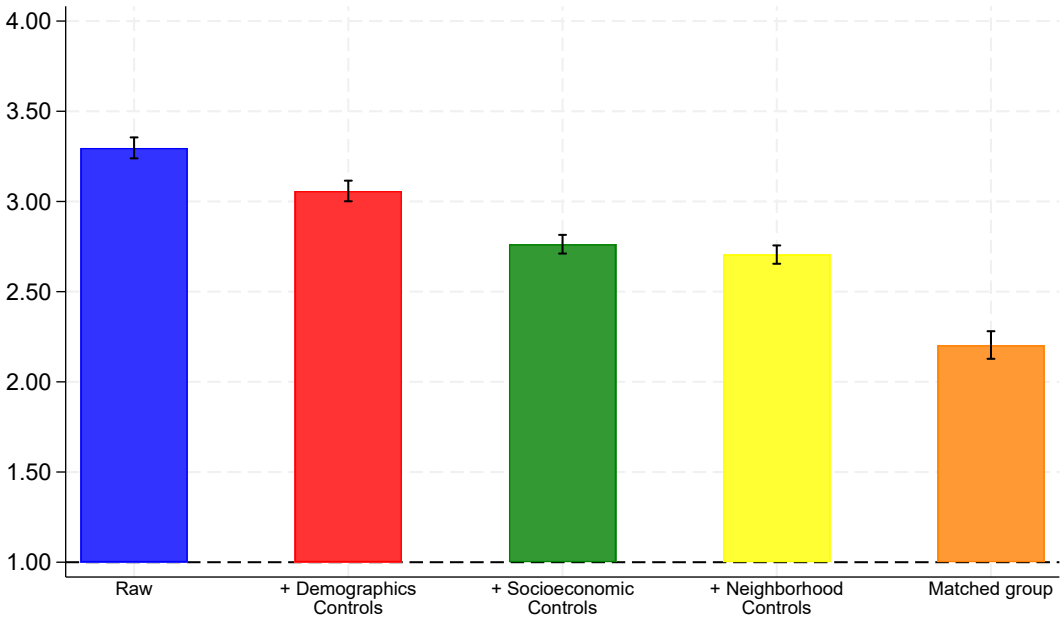
Notes: This figure shows the intergenerational transmission of VAW victimization in Sweden. The sample includes daughters who have ever cohabited with a partner. The blue bar reports the share of daughters who cohabit with a partner suspected of committing violence against women among those whose fathers were not suspected of such offenses. The red bar reports the corresponding share for daughters whose fathers were suspected perpetrators.

Figure A2: Raw Correlation for IPV Victimization using Health Data



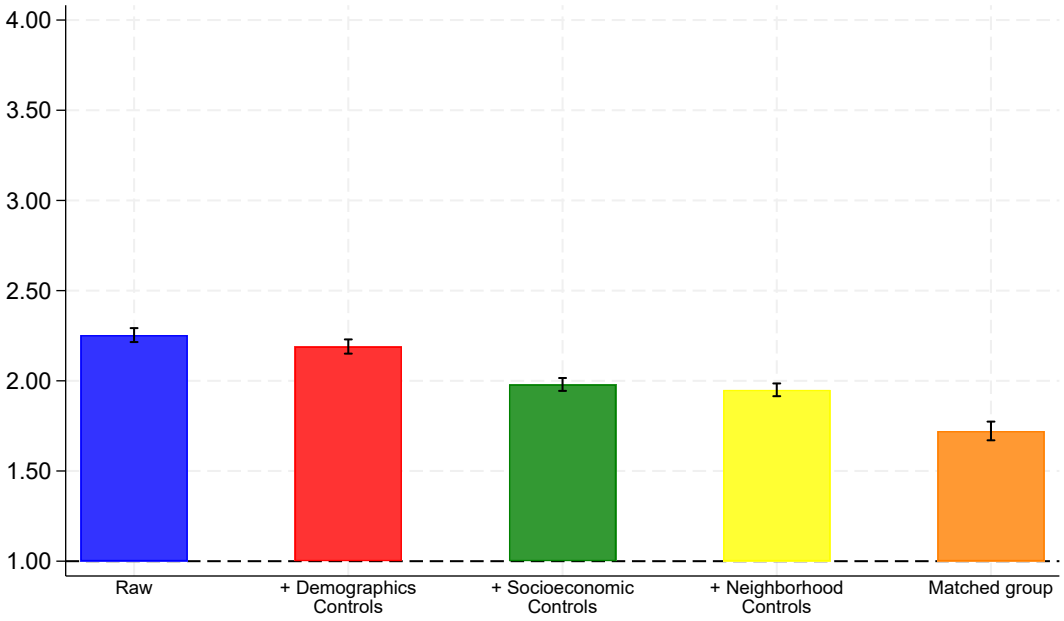
Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization using Swedish health register data. The sample includes all daughters. The outcome is an indicator equal to one if the daughter has an IPV-related flag in the inpatient or outpatient health registers. The blue bar reports the share of daughters with an IPV-related health record among those whose fathers were never suspected of violence against women. The red bar reports the corresponding share among daughters whose fathers were suspected perpetrators of violence against women.

Figure A3: Odds Ratios for Sons' VAW Perpetration



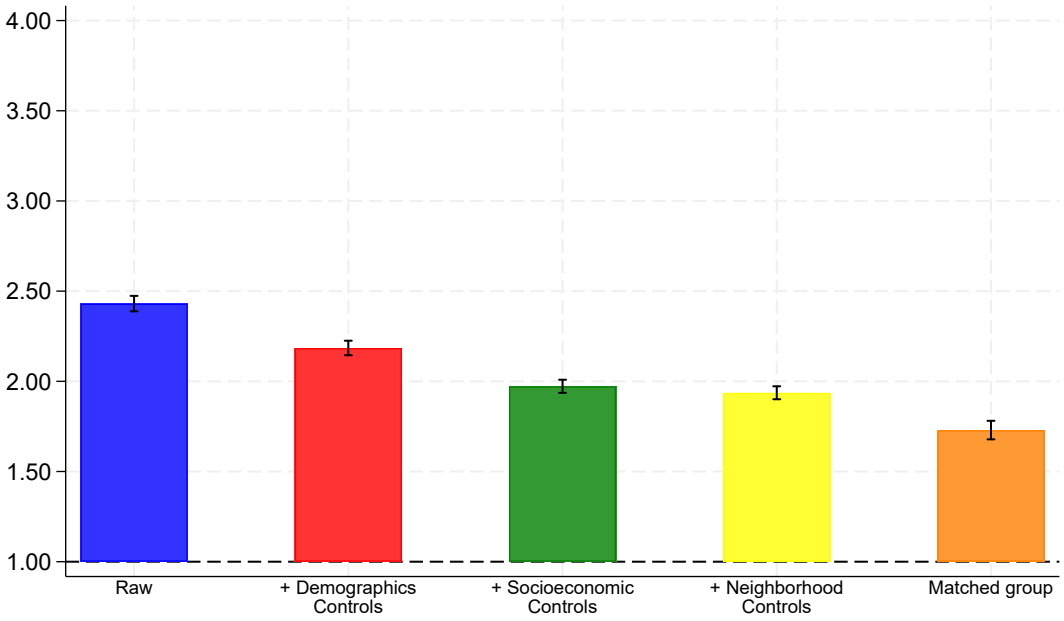
Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of VAW perpetration in Sweden. The blue bar reports the odds ratio for an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW based on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. The red bar adds demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and son, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. The green bar adds socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. The yellow bar adds neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. The orange bar uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school), and reports the corresponding coefficient estimate. All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A4: Odds Ratios for All Daughters' VAW Victimization



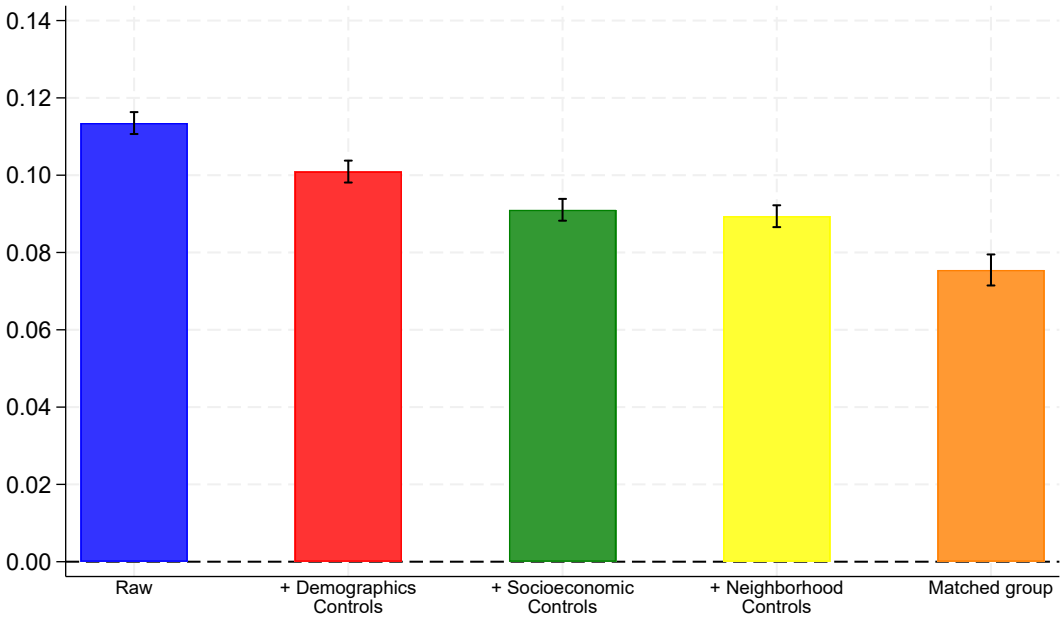
Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of VAW victimization in Sweden. The sample includes all women born from 1970 to 2000 in Sweden. The blue bar reports the odds ratio for an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW based on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. The red bar adds demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. The green bar adds socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. The yellow bar adds neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. The orange bar uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school), and reports the corresponding coefficient estimate. All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A5: Odds Ratios for Daughters' VAW Victimization Conditional on Having Ever a Partner



Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of VAW victimization in Sweden. The sample includes women born from 1970 to 2000 in Sweden who ever cohabited with a partner. The blue bar reports the odds ratio for an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW based on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. The red bar adds demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. The green bar adds socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. The yellow bar adds neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. The orange bar uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school), and reports the corresponding coefficient estimate. All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

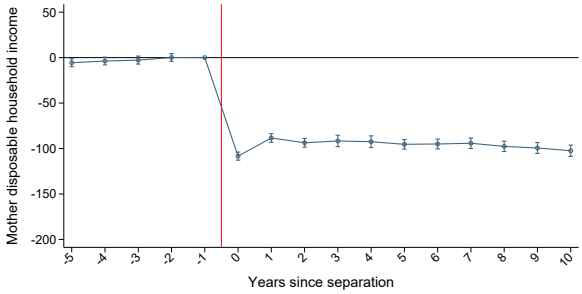
Figure A6: Intergenerational Transmission of VAW Victimization: Linear Probability Estimates



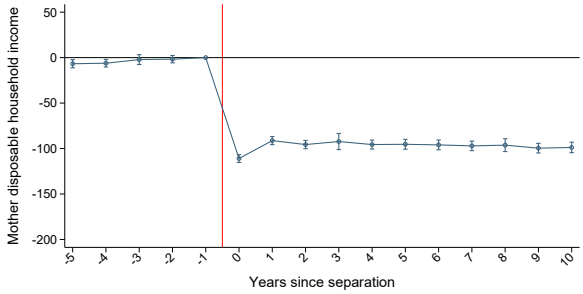
Notes: This figure illustrates the intergenerational transmission of victimization based on VAW in Sweden. The sample is restricted to women who have ever cohabited with a partner. The blue bar reports the coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner who was suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. The red bar adds demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. The green bar adds socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. The yellow bar adds neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. The orange bar uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school), and reports the corresponding coefficient estimate. Standard errors are clustered at the father level. All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A7: Household Income Around Father Removal

(a) Sons with VAW fathers

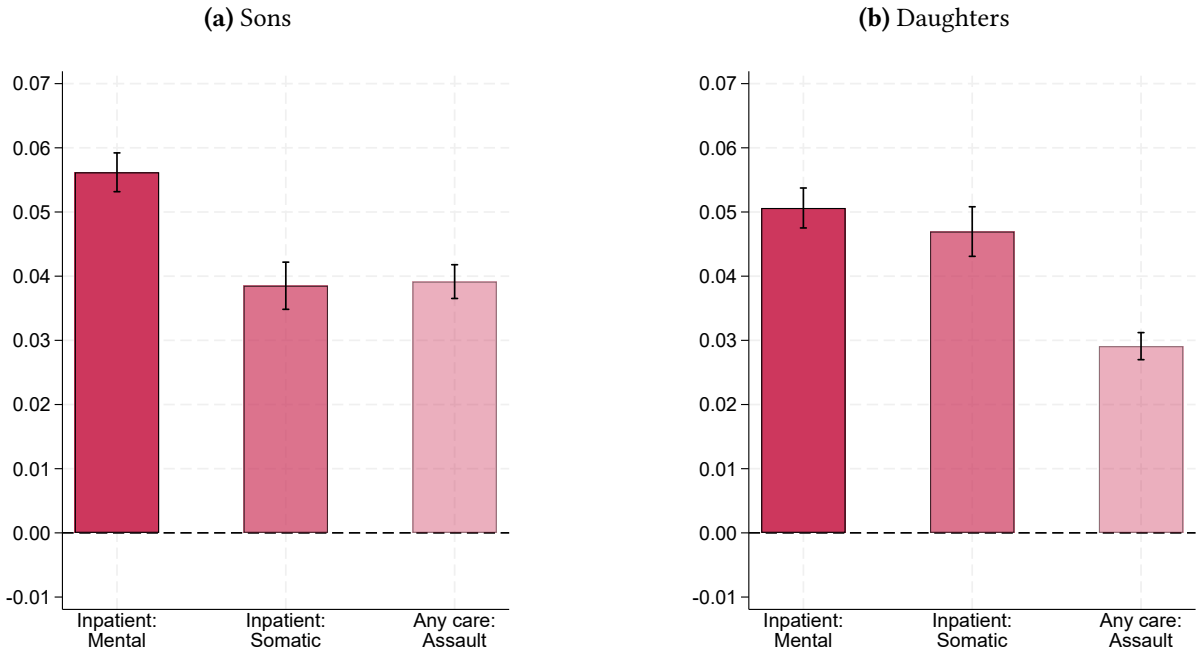


(b) Daughters with VAW fathers



Notes: The figures track household income around the time of father's separation from the household for children born between 1970 and 2000. The outcome is annual disposable household income in 2020 Swedish kronas. Panel A shows the changes in household income for sons with fathers suspected of VAW. Panel B shows changes in household income for daughters with fathers suspected of VAW. The x-axis represents years relative to separation, with 0 marking the year of separation (indicated by the red vertical line). The omitted category is the year before separation. The regression includes calendar year fixed effects and child birth year fixed effects. The standard errors are clustered at the father level. Disposable income measure includes household income from labor, capital, and transfers minus taxes, plus non-taxable benefits, including child allowance, social assistance, social security benefits, and other transfers. The coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals are plotted.

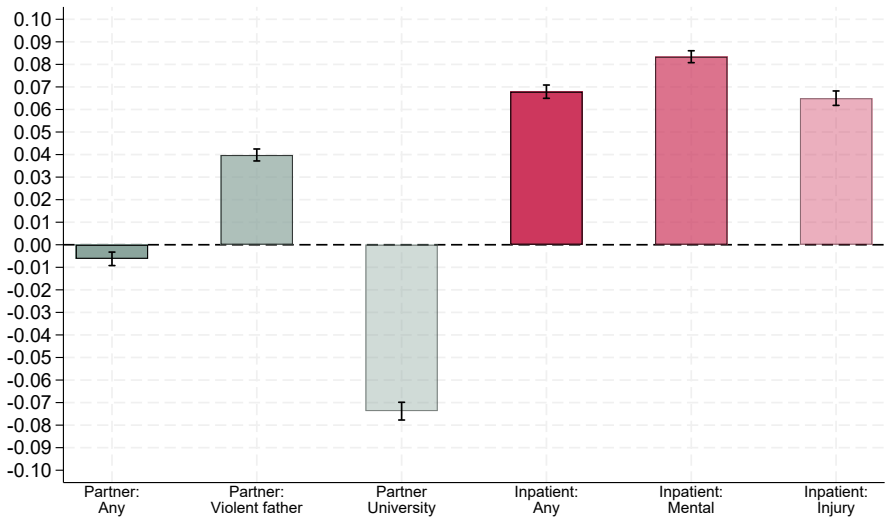
Figure A8: Exposure to VAW Fathers and Children's Health Outcomes



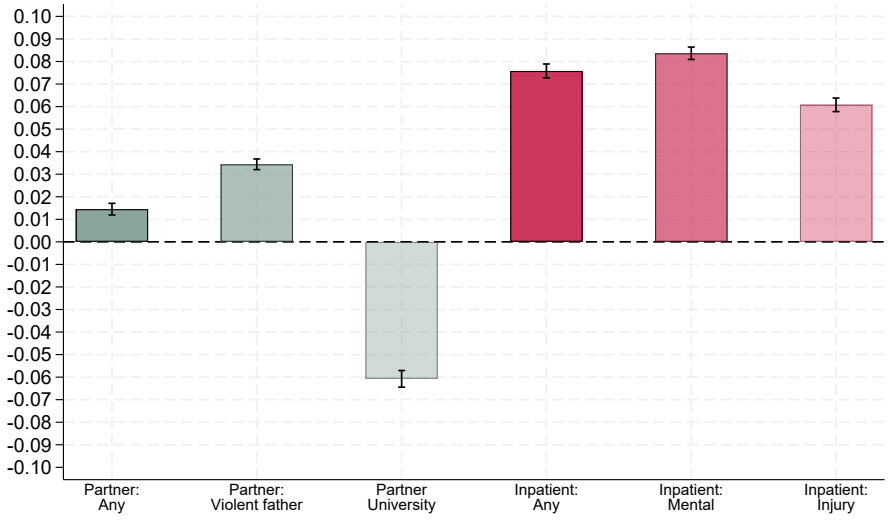
Notes: This figure plots the coefficient estimates from a linear probability model regressing the health outcomes (defined in text) on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW for sons in Panel A and daughters in Panel B. We match the children with VAW fathers to a control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Figure A9: Exposure to VAW Fathers and Partnership and Health Outcomes: Linear Probability Estimates

(a) Sons



(b) Daughters



Notes: This figure plots the coefficient estimates from a linear probability model regressing six outcomes (defined in text) on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW for sons in Panel A and daughters in Panel B. We use the full sample, but includes demographic controls (birth-year fixed effects for father and son, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents), socioeconomic controls (parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth), and neighborhood controls (parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates). All bars display 95% confidence intervals.

Table A1: Distribution of Crime Categories among Fathers and Sons

Crime category	% Suspected sons (1)	% Suspected fathers (2)	% Susp. sons |Any suspicion (3)	% Suspected fathers |Any suspicion (4)
Gross violation of woman's integrity	0.006	0.008	0.086	0.112
Assault of woman	0.042	0.048	0.629	0.663
(Attempted) murder of woman	0.001	0.001	0.012	0.011
Unlawful threat of woman	0.023	0.029	0.341	0.401
Molestation/harassment of woman	0.019	0.019	0.282	0.265
Molestation/harassment, unspecified gender	0.002	0.005	0.032	0.065
Violation of restraining order against woman	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.001
Violation of restraining order, unspecified gender	0.002	0.004	0.034	0.060
(Attempted) rape/molestation of woman	0.009	0.005	0.144	0.063
(Attempted) rape/molestation, unspecified gender	0.005	0.007	0.073	0.090
Stalking	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.001

Note: This table reports the distribution of VAW across crime categories for fathers and sons in our sample. Sons were born between 1970 and 2000 in Sweden and matched with their fathers using registry information. Column 1 reports the proportion of suspected sons in each crime category, column 2 reports the proportion of suspected fathers in each crime category, column 3 reports the proportion of suspected sons conditional on any suspicion, and column 4 reports the proportion of suspected fathers conditional on any suspicion. All data come from Crime Suspicion Register of Sweden.

Table A2: Probability of Ever Cohabiting with a Partner

	Outcome mean	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	0.797	-0.029***	0.022***	0.019***	0.022***	0.028***
	(0.402)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	
		[-4]	[3]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Demographic controls		–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls		–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls		–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample		–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.		1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	393,540

Note: This table reports the probability of ever cohabiting with a partner in relation to having a father suspected of VAW in Sweden. The outcome is an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner. Column 1 reports the OLS coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW. Column 2 reports OLS coefficient adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports OLS coefficient adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports OLS coefficient adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports OLS estimate based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A3: Linear probability model estimates for sons

	Outcome mean	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violent father	0.066	0.111***	0.103***	0.097***	0.095***	0.077***
	(0.248)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
% relative to outcome mean		[168]	[156]	[146]	[145]	[117]
Demographic controls		–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls		–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls		–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample		–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.		1,713,236	1,713,236	1,713,236	1,713,236	409,236

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of gender-based violence in Sweden. The outcome is an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW. Column 1 reports the OLS coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, without controls. Column 2 reports OLS coefficient adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and son, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports OLS coefficient adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports OLS coefficient adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports OLS estimate based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A4: Linear probability model estimates for all daughters

	Outcome mean	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violent father	0.087	0.084***	0.081***	0.073***	0.072***	0.061***
	(0.282)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
% relative to outcome mean		[97]	[93]	[84]	[83]	[70]
Demographic controls		–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls		–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls		–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample		–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.		1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	393,540

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of victimization based on gender-based violence in Sweden. The outcome is an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner who was suspected of VAW. Column 1 reports the OLS coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner who was suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW. Column 2 reports OLS coefficient adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports OLS coefficient adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports OLS coefficient adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports OLS estimate based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A5: Linear probability model estimates for daughters conditional on having a partner

	Outcome mean	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	0.109	0.113***	0.101***	0.091***	0.089***	0.075***
	(0.312)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	
		[104]	[93]	[84]	[82]	[69]
Demographic controls		–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls		–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls		–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample		–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.		1,294,331	1,294,331	1,294,331	1,294,331	307,652

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of victimization based on gender-based violence in Sweden. The outcome is an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner who was suspected of VAW. Column 1 reports the OLS coefficient from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner who was suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW. Column 2 reports OLS coefficient adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports OLS coefficient adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports OLS coefficient adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports OLS estimate based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A6: Odds ratio estimates for sons

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violent father	3.297***	3.058***	2.763***	2.705***	2.203***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.018)
Demographic controls	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls	–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls	–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample	–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.	1,713,236	1,713,236	1,713,236	1,713,236	409,236

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of gender-based violence in Sweden. Column 1 reports the odds ratio obtained by regressing an indicator for the son being suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, with no additional controls included. Column 2 reports the odds ratio adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and son, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports the odds ratio adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports the odds ratio adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports the odds ratio based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A7: Odds ratio estimates for all daughters

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violent father	2.253***	2.190***	1.979***	1.950***	1.721***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)
Demographic controls	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls	–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls	–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample	–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.	1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	1,624,681	393,540

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of victimization for gender-based violence in Sweden. Column 1 reports the odds ratio obtained by regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner being suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, with no additional controls included. Column 2 reports the odds ratio adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports the odds ratio adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports the odds ratio adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports the odds ratio based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A8: Odds ratio estimates for daughters who ever had a partner

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Violent father	2.431***	2.184***	1.972***	1.936***	1.729***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)
Demographic controls	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	–
Socioeconomic controls	–	–	Yes	Yes	–
Neighborhood controls	–	–	–	Yes	–
Matched sample	–	–	–	–	Yes
Obs.	1,294,331	1,294,331	1,294,331	1,294,331	307,652

Note: This table reports the intergenerational transmission of victimization for gender-based violence in Sweden. The sample is restricted to women who are born between 1970 and 1995 and who ever cohabited with a partner. Column 1 reports the odds ratio obtained by regressing an indicator for the daughter cohabiting with a partner being suspected of VAW on an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW, with no additional controls included. Column 2 reports the odds ratio adding demographic controls, including birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents. Column 3 reports the odds ratio adding socioeconomic controls: parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth. Column 4 reports the odds ratio adding neighborhood controls, including parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates. Column 5 reports the odds ratio based on a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Standard errors are clustered at the father level. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A9: Sons' Exposure to VAW Fathers: LPM Estimates for Partnership and Health Outcomes

	(1) Partner: Any	(2) Partner: Violent father	(3) Partner: University	(4) Inpatient: Any	(5) Inpatient: Mental	(6) Inpatient: Injury
Panel A: Matched Sample						
Violent father	-0.00146	0.0286***	-0.0614***	0.0549***	0.0706***	0.0597***
	(0.00232)	(0.00203)	(0.00317)	(0.00231)	(0.00206)	(0.00257)
Observations	317,672	242,270	240,778	317,672	317,672	317,672
R-squared	0.061	0.015	0.014	0.016	0.011	0.015
Mean dep. var.	0.763	0.107	0.589	0.747	0.138	0.317
Panel B: Demographic, socioeconomic, neighborhood controls						
Violent father	-0.00625***	0.0398***	-0.0738***	0.0679***	0.0834***	0.0650***
	(0.00153)	(0.00135)	(0.00201)	(0.00150)	(0.00135)	(0.00163)
Observations	1,440,626	1,113,563	1,106,671	1,440,626	1,440,626	1,440,626
R-squared	0.064	0.017	0.070	0.031	0.013	0.017
Mean dep. var.	0.773	0.0812	0.658	0.700	0.0956	0.281

Notes: This table reports the coefficient estimates from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW on six outcomes for sons observed in adulthood. The column 1 outcome is an indicator for having a partner at any point in time. The column 2 outcome is an indicator for the partner having a father suspected of VAW conditional on having a partner. The column 3 outcome is an indicator for having a partner who graduated from university conditional on having a partner. The column 4 outcome is an indicator for having any inpatient visits. The column 5 outcome is an indicator for having any mental health inpatient visits. The column 6 outcome is an indicator for having any injury-related inpatient visits. Panel A uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Panel B uses the full sample, but includes demographic controls (birth-year fixed effects for father and son, indicators for whether the mother, father, or son is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents), socioeconomic controls (parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth), and neighborhood controls (parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates). Standard errors are clustered at the father level and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A10: Daughters' Exposure to VAW Fathers: LPM Estimates for Partnership and Health Outcomes

	(1) Partner: Any	(2) Partner: Violent father	(3) Partner: University	(4) Inpatient: Any	(5) Inpatient: Mental	(6) Inpatient: Injury
Panel A: Matched Sample						
Violent father	0.0178***	0.0242***	-0.0556***	0.0606***	0.0684***	0.0548***
	(0.00196)	(0.00183)	(0.00295)	(0.00240)	(0.00210)	(0.00234)
Observations	306,403	259,563	257,805	306,403	306,403	306,403
R-squared	0.033	0.020	0.013	0.020	0.011	0.010
Mean dep. var.	0.847	0.0925	0.419	0.724	0.153	0.236
Panel B: Demographic, socioeconomic, neighborhood controls						
Violent father	0.0145***	0.0344***	-0.0608***	0.0758***	0.0836***	0.0608***
	(0.00132)	(0.00121)	(0.00188)	(0.00157)	(0.00140)	(0.00153)
Observations	1,368,537	1,160,542	1,152,793	1,368,537	1,368,537	1,368,537
R-squared	0.052	0.018	0.090	0.032	0.012	0.010
Mean dep. var.	0.848	0.0676	0.489	0.676	0.112	0.207

Notes: This table reports the coefficient estimates from a linear probability model regressing an indicator for the father being suspected of VAW on six outcomes for daughters observed in adulthood. The column 1 outcome is an indicator for having a partner at any point in time. The column 2 outcome is an indicator for the partner having a father suspected of VAW conditional on having a partner. The column 3 outcome is an indicator for having a partner who graduated from university conditional on having a partner. The column 4 outcome is an indicator for having any inpatient visits. The column 5 outcome is an indicator for having any mental health inpatient visits. The column 6 outcome is an indicator for having any injury-related inpatient visits. Panel A uses a matched control group based on parental immigrant status, employment at birth, earnings quintiles, birth order, parental age (in 5-year bins), and parental education (less than high school, high school, more than high school). Panel B uses the full sample, but includes demographic controls (birth-year fixed effects for father and daughter, indicators for whether the mother, father, or daughter is foreign born, and birth-order indicators from both parents), socioeconomic controls (parental educational attainment (high school and university) at birth, employment status at birth, and adjusted parental earnings at birth), and neighborhood controls (parish population, immigrant share, employment rate, average earnings, share of university-educated residents, number of offenders per 100K, and assault and homicide rates). Standard errors are clustered at the father level and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A11: Father Incarceration and Adolescent Outcomes

	All	Sons	Daughters
Panel A: Crime Outcomes	(1)	(2)	(3)
Any conviction	-0.254	-0.544*	-0.060
	(0.177)	(0.313)	(0.236)
Outcome mean	[0.204]	[0.271]	[0.131]
CCM	*0.377*	*0.654*	*0.174*
Any suspicion	-0.356*	-0.447	-0.335
	(0.203)	(0.310)	(0.285)
Outcome mean	[0.282]	[0.372]	[0.183]
CCM	*0.402*	*0.472*	*0.363*
Panel B: Health Outcomes			
Any inpatient psychiatric care	-0.004	-0.037*	0.037
	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.034)
Outcome mean	[0.003]	[0.002]	[0.003]
CCM	*0.006*	*0.037*	*-0.030*
Any inpatient physical care	-0.131	0.026	-0.365*
	(0.101)	(0.152)	(0.220)
Outcome mean	[0.068]	[0.066]	[0.070]
CCM	*0.173*	*0.015*	*0.396*
Injuries from assault	-0.059	-0.025	-0.127*
	(0.039)	(0.056)	(0.068)
Outcome mean	[0.004]	[0.006]	[0.003]
CCM	*0.003*	*-0.031*	*0.048*
Panel C: Substance Abuse Outcomes			
Alcohol use disorder	0.036	0.005	0.114
	(0.047)	(0.062)	(0.111)
Outcome mean	[0.017]	[0.016]	[0.018]
CCM	*-0.016*	*0.004*	*-0.060*
Alcohol addiction care	0.041	-0.000	0.084
	(0.033)	(0.043)	(0.057)
Outcome mean	[0.004]	[0.004]	[0.005]
CCM	*-0.016*	*-0.017*	*-0.006*
Panel D: Education Outcomes			
Grade point average(GPA)	0.519	0.185	1.379
	(0.545)	(0.664)	(1.256)
Outcome mean	[-0.610]	[-0.768]	[-0.447]
CCM	*-0.869*	*-0.684*	*-1.479*
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs	13,195	6,923	6,272

Note: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on daughters' partnership outcomes. Columns 1-3 report two-stage least squares estimates that instrument for paternal incarceration using judge stringency. All regressions control for court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and the household's disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are in square brackets. The complier control means are italicized and listed in the rows below outcome means. Standard errors are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A12: Father Incarceration and VAW Outcomes in Adulthood: Removing VAW Trials

Panel A: Sons	
Suspected of any violence against women	-0.478*
	(0.270)
Outcome mean	[0.215]
Control complier mean	*0.512*
Observations	7,389
Panel B: Daughters	
Cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW	-0.226
	(0.188)
Outcome mean	[0.188]
Control complier mean	*0.530*
Observations	6,606
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes

Notes: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on violence against women outcomes in adulthood. The sample excludes all trials in which the father committed VAW. Father incarceration is instrumented using judge stringency. All regressions include court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and balancing controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment status in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and household disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are reported in square brackets. Complier control means (CCM) are italicized. Standard errors, reported in parentheses, are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A13: Father Incarceration, Childhood Abuse, and VAW Outcomes in Adulthood

Panel A: Sons	
Suspected of any violence against women	-0.513
	(0.323)
× Child abuse	-0.153
	(0.585)
Outcome mean	[0.215]
Control complier mean	*0.565*
Observations	8,771
Panel B: Daughters	
Cohabiting with a partner suspected of VAW	-0.640**
	(0.318)
× Child abuse	-0.250
	(1.147)
Outcome mean	[0.188]
Control complier mean	*0.742*
Observations	7,913
Court x Year x Strata FE	Yes
Balancing Controls	Yes

Notes: This table reports two-stage least squares estimates of the impact of father incarceration on violence against women outcomes in adulthood. The second rows interact the father incarceration with an indicator for child abuse where the victim is aged 0 to 14 and likely a family member. Father incarceration is instrumented using judge stringency. The interaction term captures heterogeneity by childhood exposure to abuse. All regressions include court-by-year-by-strata fixed effects and balancing controls, including the child's sex, birth order, migration status, and age at trial; the number of children in the family; the father's migration status, age, education, employment status in the year before trial, and pretrial earnings; and household disposable income in the year before trial. Dependent variable means are reported in square brackets. Control complier means are italicized. Standard errors, reported in parentheses, are two-way clustered at the parent and section levels. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A14: Descriptive Statistics for Children Born 1978–1995

	Descriptive sample	Judge sample
Panel A: Demographics		
Mother age at birth	26.636	26.893
Mother aged $\leq$20 at birth	0.119	0.111
Mother aged 21–30 at birth	0.638	0.640
Mother aged 31–40 at birth	0.220	0.238
Mother aged 41+ at birth	0.010	0.011
Father age at birth	29.792	30.492
Father aged $\leq$20 at birth	0.037	0.034
Father aged 21–30 at birth	0.555	0.517
Father aged 31–40 at birth	0.348	0.373
Father aged 41+ at birth	0.060	0.076
Mother foreign born	0.323	0.339
Father foreign born	0.372	0.396
Child foreign born	0.141	0.004
Birth order (father side)	1.955	2.097
First child (mother side)	0.432	0.388
Second child (mother side)	0.315	0.323
Third child (mother side)	0.148	0.174
Fourth child or higher (mother side)	0.091	0.115
Birth order (mother side)	2.006	2.174
First child (father side)	0.434	0.380
Second child (father side)	0.308	0.308
Third child (father side)	0.151	0.174
Fourth child or higher (father side)	0.107	0.136
Panel B: Baseline socioeconomic status		
More than HS education (mother)	0.251	0.212
HS education (mother)	0.545	0.506
Less than HS education (mother)	0.199	0.271
More than HS education (father)	0.186	0.150
HS education (father)	0.529	0.529
Less than HS education (father)	0.278	0.317
Employment (mother, year of birth)	0.725	0.627
Employment (mother, one year before birth)	0.691	0.600
Employment (father, year of birth)	0.798	0.702
Employment (father, one year before birth)	0.782	0.690
Earnings (mother, year of birth)	133576.066	117201.508
Earnings (mother, one year before birth)	132079.625	115153.165
Earnings (father, year of birth)	189522.125	163852.311
Earnings (father, one year before birth)	184190.034	157965.463
Panel C: Baseline neighborhood characteristics		
Population	10,584.627	11,427.719
Share of immigrants	0.142	0.170
Employment rate	0.811	0.807
Mean earnings	199287.810	199854.134
More than HS	0.264	0.279
Less than HS	0.282	0.267
Offenses per 100,000 inhabitants	5,361.696	5,844.174
Offenders per 100,000 inhabitants	945.591	1,013.462
Assault rate per 100,000 inhabitants	87.324	97.775
Homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants	1.155	1.260
Observations	81,424	7,809

Note: This table reports means of baseline characteristics for children born between 1978 and 1995. The samples correspond to those used in the descriptive section and the judge IV analysis.

Table A15: Intergenerational Transmission of Other Outcomes

	Sons		Daughters	
Outcome	Raw	With controls	Raw	With controls
Panel A. LPM Estimates				
This Paper: Perpetration of VAW / victimization for VAW	0.111	0.095	0.084	0.072
Victimization for assault	0.115	0.038	0.089	0.036
Perpetration of any crime[a]	0.113	0.062	-	-
Mental health visits	0.098	0.093	0.098	0.093
Log earnings[a]	0.260	-	0.203	-
Log earnings[b]	0.168	-	-	-
Log income	0.260	-	-	-
Panel B. Odds Ratio Estimates				
This Paper: Perpetration of VAW / victimization for VAW	3.297	2.705	2.253	1.950
Perpetration of any crime[b]	2.064	1.288	2.657	1.570
Completed college	6.437	-	4.657	-
Did not complete high school	4.023	-	3.687	-
Earnings $<$ 25p	1.440	-	1.395	-

Note: Panel A reports the linear probability model (LPM) estimates while Panel B reports the odds ratio estimates. The victimization for assault and victimization for domestic violence (proxied by assault victimization in residential areas) estimates are from Bhalotra *et al.* (2026). The perpetration of any crime[a] estimates are from Hjalmarsson and Lindquist (2013), which only reports LPM estimates for sons. The mental health visit estimates are from Bütikofer *et al.* (2024), which do not distinguish between son vs. daughter effects. The perpetration of any crime[b], log earnings[a], college completion, not completion of high school, and earnings less than 25th percentile estimates are from Hjalmarsson and Lindquist (2012). The log income and and log earnings[b] estimates are from Björklund *et al.* (2012). All estimates are intergenerational transmission from fathers, except for the mental health visits, which are from both parents combined.

B Swedish Court System

Sweden's criminal court system is organized into three tiers: district courts, courts of appeal, and the Supreme Court. Most criminal cases are resolved at the district court level, with each district court handling cases arising within its geographic jurisdiction. There are currently 48 district courts in Sweden, and our analysis focuses on criminal cases adjudicated at this level. These courts vary substantially in size: large urban courts, such as those in Stockholm and Göteborg, may employ up to 40 judges, while courts serving more rural areas typically operate with only a small number of judges (Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025).

Swedish district courts are typically organized into divisions (*avdelningar*), which are further subdivided into sections (*rotlar*), although smaller courts may operate with sections only. Each section is staffed by a single judge, a clerk, and several administrative personnel. Judges are generally assigned to sections at the start of each calendar year. While reassignment across sections can occur in subsequent years, many judges remain responsible for the same section for extended periods. Throughout the paper, we treat each section as corresponding to a judge. District court

judges are appointed for life and may be removed from office only if they are convicted of a serious criminal offense. Appointment requires a law degree, but prior experience within the court system is not mandatory. In addition, each district court maintains a large pool of politically appointed lay jurors (*nämndemän*), who perform a role analogous to juries in the United States. Lay jurors typically serve 10–15 days per year and are assigned to cases and judges in an essentially random manner (Ahrsjö *et al.*, 2024).

In most district court proceedings, both the verdict and the sentence are jointly determined by the presiding judge and three lay jurors (Grönqvist *et al.*, 2025). After the hearing, the judge presents a summary of the facts of the case and outlines the relevant legal provisions for the lay jurors. The judge and lay jurors then deliberate over the appropriate outcome, including both the verdict and, if applicable, the sentence. When there is disagreement regarding the verdict, a vote is taken to decide the case. The judge and each lay juror carry equal voting weight, with the judge serving as the tiebreaker in the absence of a clear majority. If the defendant is found guilty, a separate vote determines the sentence. In cases where votes are evenly split across sentencing options, the least severe punishment is selected. If the relative severity of the available sentencing options is ambiguous, the judge again acts as the tiebreaker.

Our empirical approach leverages variation in sentencing severity arising from the random assignment of cases to judges with differing propensities to impose incarceration. Two institutional features of the Swedish criminal justice system make it particularly well suited to this research design. First, during our sample period, nearly all criminal cases were assigned to judges within district courts through a randomization process mandated by government regulation (Förordning (1996:381) med tingsrättsinstruktion, §9). The purpose of this assignment mechanism was to ensure equal treatment before the law. In practice, the random allocation of cases to judges was implemented using a computer system known as MÅHS.

The assignment system allowed for several exceptions, including cases involving juvenile defendants, less serious offenses (such as traffic violations), and very serious crimes (such as murder or rape). These cases were randomly allocated within restricted pools of judges; for example, traffic offenses were randomly assigned only among junior judges. In most district courts, randomization was conducted within cells defined by defendant age and offense category. Juvenile defendants were typically grouped into those under 18 years of age and those aged 19-21, although courts retained discretion over how these age thresholds were applied. Courts also varied in how they classified the severity of different offenses. As we explain in Section 4, these institutional features are incorporated into the construction of our judge stringency measure and case assignment remains random once we condition on defendant age group and offense type.

Second, institutional features of the Swedish criminal justice system substantially limit the channels through which an assigned judge can affect case outcomes aside from the incarceration decision itself. In most cases, the penal code requires judges to impose a single sanction, with only narrow exceptions, such as certain minor offenses for which both probation and a fine may be applied. Consistent with this rule, instances of multiple sanctions are extremely rare in our data, and our results are unaffected when these cases are excluded or when indicators for multiple sanctions are included as controls. Judges retain meaningful discretion over the decision to incarcerate, but sentence lengths are largely governed by guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and the Prosecutor Authority. Moreover, other courtroom actors—such as prosecutors and lay jurors—are assigned through processes that are independent of judge assignment, making it unlikely that the identity of the judge is systematically correlated with the assignment of other ac-

tors who could independently influence defendants' outcomes or those of their children. Finally, the absence of plea bargaining in the Swedish system rules out the possibility that defendants plead guilty in exchange for reduced sentences.