

PEOPLE

When Love Hurts: The Long-Term Impact of Intimate Partner Violence

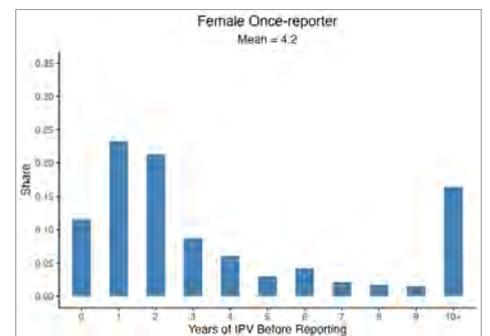
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Press conference held by the Department of Protective Services, Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2025.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widespread albeit often hidden social problem. In Taiwan, despite the existence of well-established legal protections and formal reporting systems, many victims do not seek help immediately. Based on their survey of administrative data collected nationwide, a team of NTU researchers has examined how IPV reshapes victims' lives over time and argue that the act of reporting marks a critical turning point—one that often goes far beyond a purely administrative act.

Taiwan criminalized IPV in 1998 and was among the earliest countries in Asia to establish a comprehensive legal framework to address domestic abuse. Nevertheless, IPV remains highly prevalent-- and substantially underreported. Approximately one in four women in Taiwan experiences IPV in her lifetime, yet fewer than one in thirty-two comes forward. Fears of social stigma and economic dependence, as well as concerns about family stability frequently discourage victims from seeking formal help, obscuring both the true scale of violence and its long-term consequences.



While on average, victims take 4.2 years to report, most reports are made within two years of violence onset.

When such cases are finally reported, they trigger a wide range of institutional responses, including protection orders, emergency shelters, legal assistance, and referrals for medical and psychological care. Crucially, reporting is seldom immediate. On average, women delay reporting their cases for more than four years after violence begins; however, more than half of those who seek official help report within two years of IPV onset.

Across multiple dimensions of life, the analysis reveals that IPV disrupts victims' trajectories well before reporting, while the act of reporting itself marks a turning point in outcomes. Employment, for instance, declines substantially following the onset of violence, reflecting the victims' reduced work capacity, instability, and constrained opportunities. After reporting, however, employment gradually recovers, given the improved access to institutional support and greater personal confidence and stability.

Fertility responses further underscore the delayed but consequential role of reporting. IPV does not lead to an immediate decline in fertility, suggesting that family formation decisions may remain unchanged in the short run despite ongoing violence. Following reporting, however, fertility drops markedly—particularly among younger victims—pointing to a rational reassessment of family planning once formal support becomes available.

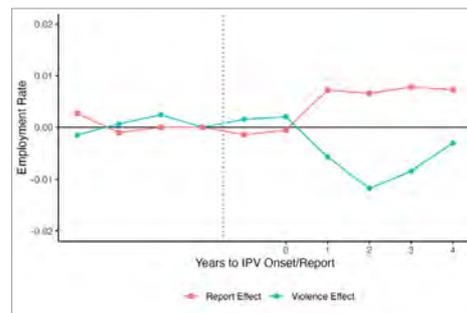
Mental health outcomes provide additional evidence. Depression-related outpatient visits increase sharply at the time of reporting, reflecting both heightened psychological distress and increased engagement with care. These mental health burdens remain elevated for several years after violence begins, underscoring the enduring psychological scars of IPV even as victims transition into formal support systems.

Overall, the study demonstrates that IPV has profound and lasting effects on victims' economic, family, and mental health trajectories—many of which unravel long before victims manage to seek formal assistance. Accordingly, reporting is not merely an administrative record of past abuse, but a pivotal moment that reshapes survivors' lives by unlocking access to legal protections and social services, including mental health services. These findings highlight the importance of policies that lower barriers to reporting and expand early access to support, since timely intervention helps mitigate the long-term consequences of violence.

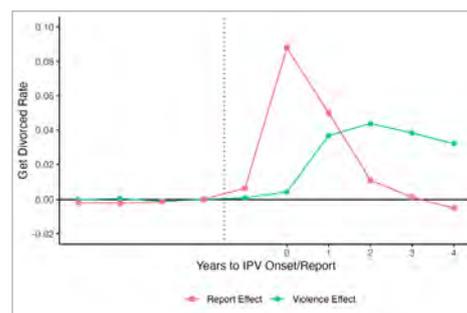
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Results published in Liberty Times on June 25th, 2025.



IPV significantly compromises labor market outcomes among female reporters; their employment rates rebound following reporting.



Female reporters are more likely to divorce after reporting, but seldom file for divorce in the same year the violence occurs.