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Research Article

Living in fear: perceptions and responses of Tijuana women to violence

Vivir con miedo: percepciones y respuestas de las mujeres de Tijuana ante la violencia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the pervasive sense of fear experienced by women aged 18 to 55 in Tijuana, focusing on their responses to violence and criminality. Drawing on 196 in-depth interviews, the research documents women's fears, experiences, and coping strategies in relation to urban insecurity. Findings reveal that violence in Tijuana manifests through structural, symbolic, and cultural forms that perpetuate patriarchal behaviors and shape public spaces with distinctly masculinized characteristics. The results also show that younger women (18–25 years) express heightened fears of physical and sexual aggression, whereas older women (46–65 years) are more concerned about their children's safety and tend to restrict their mobility, adopting more secluded lifestyles. The participants' narratives offer not only a rich anthropological account but also highlight women's resilience, adaptability, and resistance in the face of adversity, providing a compelling call to address the entrenched problem of gender-based violence in Tijuana.

Keywords: violence; fear; insecurity; resilience; Tijuana.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar la omnipresente sensación de miedo que experimentan las mujeres de entre 18 y 55 años en Tijuana, centrándose en sus respuestas a la violencia y la delincuencia. A partir de 196 entrevistas en profundidad, la investigación documenta los miedos, experiencias y estrategias de afrontamiento de las mujeres en relación con la inseguridad urbana. Los resultados revelan que la violencia en Tijuana se manifiesta a través de formas estructurales, simbólicas y culturales que perpetúan comportamientos patriarcales y configuran espacios públicos con características claramente masculinizadas. Los resultados también muestran que las mujeres más jóvenes (18-25 años) expresan un mayor temor a las agresiones físicas y sexuales, mientras que las mujeres mayores (46-65 años) están más preocupadas por la seguridad de sus hijos y tienden a restringir su movilidad, adoptando estilos de vida más recluidos. Las narraciones de las participantes no sólo ofrecen un rico relato antropológico, sino que también ponen de relieve la capacidad de recuperación, la adaptabilidad y la resistencia de las mujeres frente a la adversidad, lo que constituye un llamamiento apremiante para abordar el arraigado problema de la violencia de género en Tijuana.

Palabras clave: violencia; miedo; inseguridad; resiliencia; Tijuana.

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INTRODUCTION

Most women in Mexico express fear of living in urban environments; nationally, 64% consider their city unsafe (INEGI, 2024). This article analyzes the experiences of fear among women aged 18 to 55 in the border city of Tijuana, focusing on their encounters with violence and the ways they navigate public space. It builds on the premise that perceptions of insecurity and violence shape women's behaviors and spatial practices.

While national statistics reveal that most Mexican women feel unsafe in their cities (INEGI, 2024), such perceptions cannot be fully understood through quantitative data alone. In cities like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez, the urban landscape has evolved into a gendered space of exclusion, molded by unequal infrastructure, weak institutional protection, and pervasive practices of harassment and violence (Recio Saucedo, 2020). Public space, far from being neutral, emerges as a site of embodied fear and social vulnerability, where women continuously negotiate their presence and safety (Pérez-Rincón Fernández, 2020). Fear, therefore, is not only the outcome of direct victimization but also of symbolic and structural forms of violence that configure the city as a hostile environment. From this perspective, the study seeks to understand how women in Tijuana construct meaning around their fear, how it shapes their daily routines and spatial strategies, and what this reveals about the broader gendered dynamics of urban (in)security (Gutiérrez et al., 2018).

Understanding fear as a gendered urban experience requires attention not only to the material manifestations of violence but also to the affective, symbolic, and spatial mechanisms that organize women's everyday lives. As feminist urban scholars have emphasized, fear functions as a form of social regulation that limits mobility, suppresses claims to the city, and reinforces unequal power relations in public space (Moreno Toledano & Moreno González, 2021). In Tijuana, this regulation is intensified by intersecting factors such as militarized policing, economic precarity, and spatial fragmentation—conditions that heighten women's sense of vulnerability and restrict their right to inhabit the city with autonomy and dignity (Ayala-Macías, 2022; Hernández & Trujillo, 2021). Building on these insights, this research situates women's lived experiences not merely as empirical evidence of urban insecurity but as epistemological vantage points from which to interrogate the structures that normalize fear as part of daily urban life (Acuña Valverde & Arellano Gálvez, 2024).

To address this issue, a gender perspective has been considered to understand the specific experiences of women in Tijuana. These experiences are not only related to incidents of violence and crime in their environment but also to the subjective perceptions of insecurity, fear, and vulnerability they experience in their daily lives.

This paper is organized into four sections. Following the introduction, the second section outlines the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study. Violence is approached as a structural, symbolic, and cultural phenomenon that shapes women's perceptions of public space as dangerous—instilling fear and leading them to avoid certain places or times. Public space is also examined as masculinized, a setting in which social relations reproduce and sustain machismo as a cultural pattern. The section concludes with an analysis of fear and its consequences, emphasizing avoidance as a coping strategy adopted by women.

The third section presents the methodological framework that guided the research process. The fourth section discusses the findings derived from fieldwork, including women's perceptions, experiences, and practices in navigating urban space in Tijuana. These dimensions reveal how women interpret and participate in a city characterized by high levels of violence and crime. Finally, the fifth section offers the study's conclusions and broader reflections.

Structures of violence: analysis of physical, psychological, and sexual violence in women

The General Law on Women's *Access to a Life Free of Violence* (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión et al., 2024) defines gender-based violence against women as any action or omission based on their gender that causes them psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic, sexual harm, suffering, or death, whether in the private or public sphere (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión et al., 2024, Art. 5). Community violence is defined as individual or collective acts that violate the fundamental rights of women and lead to their denigration, discrimination, marginalization, or exclusion in the public sphere (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión et al., 2024, Art. 16).

Empirical evidence demonstrates that women experience higher levels of violence in private spaces and at the hands of those close to them (Rodó-de-Zárate et al., 2019). Living in violent environments is associated with deterioration of both physical and mental health (Gaitán-Rossi & Shen, 2018). However, violence in public spaces has grown significantly and has become a pressing social problem requiring governmental intervention. Rates of family and sexual violence against women in Mexico have consistently risen each year, doubling since 2015. In 2022, 27 of the country's 32 states recorded increases in sexual violence rates (Institute for Economics and Peace , 2025).

Recent data indicate that four sexual assaults occur every hour in Mexico (Durán, 2024). Sexual violence accounts for approximately two-thirds of all violence experienced by women in public spaces, and about the same proportion of these incidents are perpetrated by strangers. In 2022, a record number of 6,977

emergency calls related to sexual violence was registered—representing a 13.1% increase compared to 2021 and nearly double the figure reported in 2017 (Institute for Economics and Peace , 2025).

In public spaces, gender-based violence manifests differently depending on the victim's characteristics—such as age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or physical appearance. Sexual violence takes multiple forms, many of which remain underreported, normalized, and socially tolerated (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014). These incidents are often not classified as severe, lack appropriate legal sanctions, and are rarely treated as a public health concern (Pabst et al., 2022). Women's differential engagement with public space—when compared to men—is shaped by heightened concerns for personal safety and bodily integrity. Factors such as nighttime, specific urban zones, and public transportation often represent greater threats, underscoring the spatial and temporal dimensions of women's vulnerability (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022).

Outside the home, women are frequently assaulted for appearing in public spaces "dressed inappropriately," being unaccompanied by a man, "being out at inappropriate hours," or behaving "outside the standards of feminine conduct"—for instance, "the way they apply makeup" or "engaging in men's work." Such judgments make women feel guilty for experiencing harassment, responsible for their own safety, and personally accountable for confronting violence (Dunckel Graglia, 2016). Cultural patterns and everyday gendered practices continue to legitimize and justify violence against women (Menjívar & Drysdale Walsh, 2017).

The origins of violence against women lie within the symbolic and material structures that sustain patriarchy (Galarza Fernández et al., 2016; Piedra Durán, 2019). Structural, symbolic, and cultural forms of violence generate inequality, exclusion, and social injustice in public spaces. Although these forms vary in their visibility, each is equally detrimental to women's well-being, safety, and citizenship.

a) Structure violence: is less visible and indirect, yet deeply embedded within social organization (Galtung, 2016). It refers to the systemic discrimination, exclusion, and inequality produced by social, economic, and political structures, which constrain women's access to resources and opportunities. This form of violence limits women's economic, personal, and professional development, exposing them to enduring relations of subordination. Women's leadership and political participation are particularly hindered by structural and symbolic barriers that restrict their full social inclusion (Valdivia, 2018).
b) Symbolic violence: according to Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic violence refers to domination exercised without physical force, but through the internalization of authority and power. Its manifestations are subtle and often imperceptible, to the extent that they are accepted by both the

dominant and the dominated. In public space, symbolic violence appears in the design and use of the urban environment, which privileges certain groups while marginalizing others, thus reinforcing inequality (Bourdieu cited by Delgado & Aguerri, 2018). “Symbolic violence ensures dominance, justifies, and legitimizes structural violence and direct violence” (Plaza, 2007, p. 134). Both men and women participate in this cultural framework that naturalizes gender hierarchies and renders violence almost unquestionable (Araiza Díaz & González Escalona, 2016). Through socialization, individuals internalize asymmetric power relations—particularly those based on gender—which appear as natural and immutable (López Safi, 2015).

c) Cultural violence: encompasses social beliefs and practices that normalize or render invisible the mistreatment of women, including the tendency to blame victims for their appearance, dress, or behavior while glorifying aggressive masculinity. Such norms make the abuse of women in public spaces appear acceptable or inevitable, as if provoked by their own actions. Violence against women is not accidental; it stems from deeply ingrained discrimination that often goes unnoticed (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres [INMUJERES], 2020). Institutions, reflecting dominant cultural patterns, often perpetuate and reinforce gender-based violence through their practices and omissions (Chapa Romero et al., 2022).

Cultural and symbolic forms of violence in public space normalize sexual harassment, understood as unwanted sexual attention from strangers in public settings (Quinones, 2020) and experienced by women worldwide (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018). Harassment takes multiple forms—verbal (whistling, catcalling, lewd comments), nonverbal (gestures, indecent exposure, public masturbation), proxemic (stalking or following), and physical (unwanted contact, groping, or touching intimate areas) (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022). These actions are wrongly naturalized, making offensive remarks, leering, or unsolicited touching everyday occurrences in public spaces (Gaytán Sánchez, 2007; Lebugle, 2017) that as Quinones (2020) notes, “condition women’s daily decisions” (p. 54).

Deeply embedded in cultural and social codes, these practices reinforce stereotypical gender norms that dictate how women should behave in public. Consequently, they perpetuate systems of domination and discrimination, fostering urban environments marked by fear, self-censorship, and inequality in women’s access to and participation in public life (Rodó-de-Zárate et al., 2019).

Public space and gender violence: inequalities and exclusions in the urban environment

Public spaces—defined as open, communal areas intended for collective use

and social interaction—offer unrestricted access and mobility. They serve as essential venues for socialization, facilitating gatherings, encounters, and exchanges. Yet these spaces are far from neutral: they constitute arenas of exclusion and power, where inequalities are enacted and observed (McDowell, 2000).

Because access to public space is unequally distributed, such spaces frequently become sites of ongoing contestation (Borja, 2024). It is the city, and, as such, it is culture and memory (Borja, 2024). The city itself embodies both culture and memory, a space where power relations intersect and confront one another. It is within these intersections—spaces of convergence and exchange between men and women—that, as Zúñiga Elizalde (2014) observes, "women become visible as bodies of desire but invisible as subjects of rights and freedoms within the public sphere" (pp. 78-79).

Historically, urban space has been designed and constructed by men, projecting a masculinized logic (Dunckel Graglia, 2016) in which women are judged, stigmatized, and controlled. Male dominance over public territory has normalized violent behaviors intended to preserve power and status (Pabst et al., 2022) to protect their place of power and dominance. Women, largely excluded from urban policy and planning (Borja, 2024), often find the streets transformed into domains of male authority, where deviations from normative femininity are sanctioned. Consequently, women adapt their conduct to mitigate the risk of harassment (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022).

Traditionally, the public sphere has been idealized as the domain of men, while the private sphere has been reserved for women. In this binary logic, the street and the city belong to men, whereas the home, a refuge from tension, belongs to women (Martínez Garrote, 2003). This division has historically limited women's participation in public life and culturally legitimized domestic confinement—the expectation that women remain at home with children while men work and provide. Restricted access to the city undermines women's economic, educational, and emotional opportunities, constraining their potential as leaders and public actors (Dunckel Graglia, 2016). Although the right to the city has materialized in access to and enjoyment of public space, the configuration, location, and use of that space reproduce hierarchies and inequalities.

Public space has thus become a primary setting for expressions of sexist and patriarchal violence—forms often subtle and symbolic—that generate discomfort and fear. These dynamics transform the urban commons into threatening and uncertain territories, lacking safety and freedom, where women fear emotional, moral, physical, or sexual assault by men. This reality severely limits their right to urban security (Marchand, 2024).

The use and experience of public space affect men and women differently. Men

typically enjoy broader freedom of movement, whereas women experience heightened perceptions of danger that both restrict and violate their ability to carry out everyday tasks. The absence of safety and control in public environments leads women to live in a constant state of fear, reinforcing perceptions of insecurity and latent threat. From the moment they leave their homes—walking in the street, using transportation, going to work, and returning home—women encounter multiple forms of violence that limit their autonomy (Toro & Ochoa Sierra, 2017).

Fear, as Toro and Ochoa Sierra (2017) argue, is socially learned and culturally reproduced. Women are socialized to fear crime and public exposure (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022). From an early age, girls and young women are taught to fear the world beyond the home (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014; Condon et al., 2007). Fear may be triggered not only by traumatic experiences but also by the perceived threat of violence or the media's amplification of insecurity (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022). Living in fear profoundly affects how women think about, inhabit, and use the city.

Women's use of public space is determined not only by their gender but also by their age ranges and sociocultural characteristics. Older people, ethnic minority groups, and young women feel more vulnerable because they notice more insecurity and fear of physical, verbal aggression or sexual assault (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018).

Urban configurations themselves often exacerbate vulnerability through failures in planning and governance. For example, Astorga (cited in Bezares Buenrostro, 2019) portrays the border city of Tijuana as "an anarchic space full of homosexuals, heroin, traffickers, and drug dealers". Echoing this imagery, one woman interviewed described downtown Tijuana as: "There are many drug addicts and homeless people looking for asylum or begging for spare change, muggers, drug dealers, prostitutes, everything there; I think it is the area most prone to violent situations in the city." Bezares concludes his description of the cityscape that instills fear by noting the following: "Tijuana as a lawless space where everything is allowed" (Bezares Buenrostro, 2019, p. 240)[1].

The deteriorated condition of many avenues, the absence of sidewalks, abandoned and criminalized parks, lack of recreational areas, and poor street lighting—combined with rugged topography marked by canyons and steep

[1] For a comprehensive understanding of Tijuana's socio-spatial dynamics, border condition, and patterns of violence and exclusion, see López Hernández, O. N. (2022). Los estudios de la(s) violencia(s) en la frontera noreste de México. *Frontera Norte*, *34*. https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.2253 and Sabo, S., Shaw, S., Ingram, M., Teufel-Shone, N., Carvajal, S., De Zapién, J., Rosales, C., Redondo, F., Garcia, G., & Rubio-Goldsmith, R. (2014). Everyday violence, structural racism and mistreatment at the US-Mexico border. Social science & medicine, 109, 66-74, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.02.005. These works explore how the militarization of the border, economic inequalities, and institutional precariousness intersect to shape the lived experiences of fear, particularly for women.

slopes—make Tijuana a city structurally predisposed to danger (Bezares Buenrostro, 2019). The urban model characteristic of northern Mexico thus facilitates the daily reproduction of gendered violence. In this sense, cities are not designed for women to circulate freely, safely, and comfortably (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014).

The impact of fear on social interaction and the use of public space

The fear provoked by violence is closely tied to the perception of imminent danger. Fear of crime exerts tangible and profound effects on social interaction, the use of public space, and overall quality of life—particularly among populations experiencing exclusion or marginalization (Pain, 2001). Fear itself constitutes a social problem independent of crime, given its detrimental impact on well-being (Gaitán-Rossi & Shen, 2018). Indeed, its perception is often more powerful than the crime itself (Stafford et al., 2007), affecting lives as severely as actual victimization (Byun & Ha, 2023). It erodes social cohesion and trust, restricts freedom of movement, and shapes cognitive and behavioral responses, frequently leading to psychological distress and illness (Bruton-Smith & Jackson, 2012; Romero Mendoza et al., 2018; Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022).

Individuals and communities respond to fear through a wide range of emotional and practical strategies, which in turn reproduce and reinforce exclusion from social life and specific urban spaces (Pain, 2001). Fear thus becomes a “field of conflict” (England & Simon, 2010, p. 203).

According to Koskela Hille, "fear of crime constantly modifies women's spatial realities, in spaces that are not only media for interaction, but are also produced by these interactions" (cited by Kern, 2010, p. 212). The fear women experience on deserted streets stems not merely from poor lighting, but from the broader system of gender inequality that permeates public life (Dunckel Graglia, 2016). Public spaces are consequently perceived as threatening environments (Toro & Ochoa Sierra, 2017), where fear functions as a mechanism of control over women’s freedom (Rodó-de-Zárate et al., 2019). As a result, women’s mobility becomes restricted, leading many to self-limit their movements or avoid certain areas altogether (Dunckel Graglia, 2016; García-Carpintero et al., 2022).

Unlike men, women engage with urban spaces differently: men typically traverse wider urban radii, while women’s circulation tends to be limited to their immediate neighborhoods (Monárrez, 2011). Women’s fear often centers on the potential threat of male aggression, reflecting a heightened sense of vulnerability (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018). This fear is especially pronounced among younger women, who face greater exposure to sexual violence (Pain, 2001; Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022) and are “more at risk of being raped” (Lebugle, 2017, p. 3; Mellgren & Ivert, 2018, p. 4). Women aged 16 to 24 express the highest concern about becoming victims of sexual crime (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018), as sexual

violence inflicts severe emotional, moral, and physical harm (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014). The threat of sexual assault thus becomes a central determinant of fear (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018; Macmillan et al., 2000; Chataway & & Hart, 2018). This fear is rational rather than irrational, given women's disproportionate risk of victimization and the deep psychological toll of sexual violence (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018). Women's perceptions reflect an understanding of a patriarchal social order based on inequality and domination (Delgado & Aguerri, 2018).

Women experience greater insecurity in isolated public spaces, especially at night, due to insufficient lighting, neglect, or abandonment. In contrast, they often prefer controlled and monitored environments, such as shopping centers, which provide a sense of protection and serve as alternative spaces of social interaction (Monárrez, 2011). The perception of fear and insecurity is shaped by the visual and socioeconomic characteristics of urban landscapes: beauty, cleanliness, order, and affluence are associated with safety, while poverty, disorder, and decay evoke feelings of danger (Toro & Ochoa Sierra, 2017).

In Tijuana, the combination of violence, neglect, and urban abandonment intensifies perceptions of fear. The city's deteriorated public spaces are often linked to drug trafficking and criminality, reinforcing its reputation as a dangerous and violent environment (Bezares Buenrostro, 2019).

Adaptation and resistance: female strategies in the face of urban insecurity

Perceptions of both the physical and social environment, as well as individual behavior, are conditioned by feelings of insecurity (Calonge Riello, 2022). The fear experienced by women in public spaces leads them to self-restrict their mobility and autonomy, producing behavioral changes aimed at avoiding harmful encounters with strangers (Bastomski & Smith, 2017). Direct exposure to violence or criminal harm diminishes personal agency, undermines one's sense of safety and freedom, and encourages the perception of others as potential threats (Gaitán-Rossi & Shen, 2018).

Within this climate of fear and caution, women act as urban agents who must continually navigate potentially hostile environments. Rather than diminishing their citizenship, this dynamic compels adaptation through strategies of survival and resistance (Delgado & Aguerri, 2018). Stanko (1995) notes that women frequently modify their routines to avoid perceived threats, a pattern that reflects a pervasive and internalized fear. Their responses to crime include practices of "spatial avoidance" (Pain, 2001; Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022), which in turn erode social confidence and collective trust (Gaitán-Rossi & Shen, 2018).

hese avoidance strategies are spatial responses rooted in the relationship between individuals and their environment. Such relationships are mediated by

subjective perceptions and valuation processes embedded within contexts of unequal power distribution (Bourdieu, cited by Delgado & Aguerri, 2018). Within public space, women resist victimization while simultaneously acknowledging that this sphere has been historically constructed as a masculine domain—one that discriminates against and excludes them.

METHOD

In the initial phase, an "ethnographic glossary" was developed, focusing on the items addressed during the in-depth interviews. Each item constituted a section of the glossary, and each section included a description of specific exploration criteria and guiding questions (Flick, 2018). This stage lasted two months (May–June 2022) and involved collaborative meetings among researchers specializing in the corresponding thematic items.

The ethnographic glossary functioned as both a conceptual and operational tool, integrating principles of grounded theory (Bryant, 2014) and ethnographic sensitivity (Harrison, 2014) to guide the interview process. Rather than serving as a rigid script, it operated as a flexible matrix that allowed for thematic depth while respecting the emic perspectives of participants. Each glossary item emerged through a process of analytical induction, informed by previous exploratory work and refined through interdisciplinary dialogue. This ensured that the guiding questions reflected not only theoretical concerns—such as fear, mobility, gendered space, and perceived risk—but also local vernacular and contextual nuances. The glossary established epistemological coherence by balancing structure with openness, allowing interviewers to probe deeply while remaining attentive to emergent meanings. In this way, the instrument did not merely organize content but fostered an ethical and dialogical space in which participants could articulate their experiences of the city in their own terms (Traianou, 2014).

Building on the ethnographic glossary, the second phase consisted of 196 in-depth interviews, the primary method of data collection (Patton, 2014), conducted over four months (August–November 2022). The sample focused on women aged 18 to 65 residing in Tijuana. Although the home is not always a neutral or safe environment—particularly for women who may experience domestic violence—it was selected as the primary interview site after careful ethical and epistemological deliberation. Drawing on feminist qualitative principles (McHugh, 2014), this decision prioritized participants' comfort, familiarity, and control over the setting. In each case, the interview space was negotiated with the participant, allowing her to choose where she felt safest and most able to speak freely—either within her home or in a nearby location. This approach minimized external distractions while recognizing the ambivalence of domestic space and preserving the integrity of women's narratives (Denzin,

2018).

The interviews sought to explore the subjective meanings of violence and the perception of danger zones across the city. These perceptions were shaped by factors such as criminal activity, personal experiences, shared stories, and collective imaginaries of urban risk. The spatial and sensory configurations of the city profoundly influenced how women perceived safety or threat (Dymén & Ceccato, 2011).

Within the violence item of the ethnographic glossary, particular emphasis was placed on how women perceived danger in specific streets and neighborhoods. Localized experiences of fear and crime provided the analytical scale at which marginalized voices gained visibility and interpretive agency. This micro-level focus reflected the broader context of rapidly escalating crime that has outpaced local government capacity to ensure public safety.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured and dialogical approach, consistent with an interpretive ethnographic framework (Brinkmann, 2014). Rather than following a fixed questionnaire, the glossary served as a flexible guide, enabling an open-ended exploration of participants' lived experiences (Thorne, 2014). The design fostered co-construction of meaning throughout the interview process, allowing for the emergence of situated narratives around fear, security, and spatial negotiation. The analysis followed a thematic strategy grounded in applied interpretive methodologies (Thorne, 2014), identifying patterns and experiential categories across narratives while remaining attentive to context, voice, and affective expression. The interviews thus prioritized depth and reflexivity, capturing not only women's descriptions of urban space but also their embodied perceptions, silences, and emotional responses to everyday insecurity (Denzin, 2018).

The overarching objective of this qualitative fieldwork was to achieve a rich, detailed understanding of the complexities and nuances of women's experiences in the studied context (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), while amplifying individual narratives that collectively reveal the social texture of women's realities (Patton, 2014).

Data from participants were analyzed to understand the specific dynamics of gendered violence in urban environments. Data were analyzed under the following criteria: type of violence (physical, psychological, sexual), context of occurrence (private vs. public), and perceptions of normalization and consequences of violence.

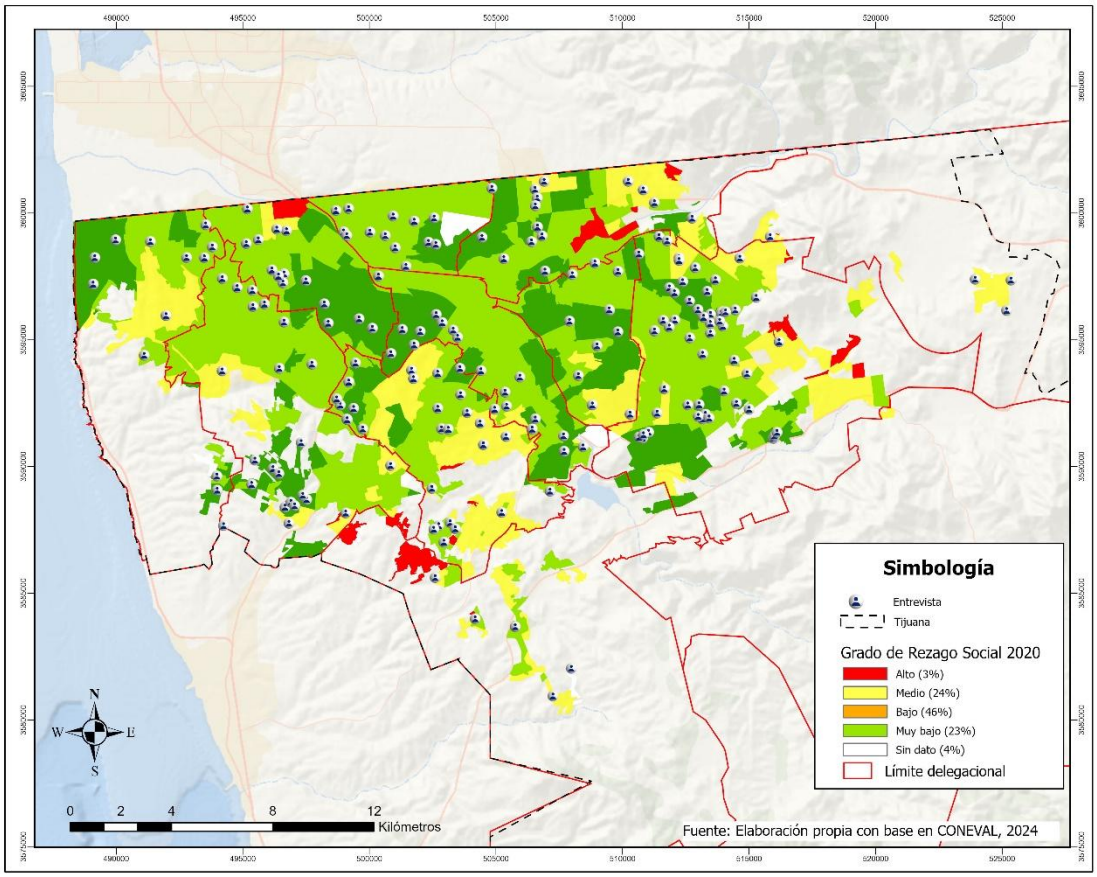
Sample

The in-depth interviews analyzed in this section were drawn from a purposive

sampling strategy designed to capture the complex and heterogeneous composition of the female population residing in Tijuana. The selection criteria prioritized geographic dispersion across multiple urban zones, encompassing neighborhoods with varying degrees of social disadvantage and socioeconomic stratification.

Participants included recently arrived migrants, internally displaced women, and long-term residents, representing a wide spectrum of economic activities such as domestic work, informal commerce, maquiladora employment, caregiving, and professional occupations. This diversity reflects the multilayered urban and migratory dynamics of Tijuana and provides a rich empirical basis for understanding how women from different social segments interpret, experience, and navigate urban violence in distinct ways.

Fig. 1. Distribution of Social Deprivation and Interview Coverage in the Municipality of Tijuana (2020)



Source: Facultad de Economía y Relaciones Internacionales (FEYRI), Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). (2022). Territorial distribution of interviews by socioeconomic level, degree of social backwardness and AGEB in Tijuana, Baja California. [Mapas temáticos]. Own elaboration based on data from CONEVAL, AMAI y ENIGH.

Interviews were conducted in participants' homes in accordance with ethical protocols ensuring confidentiality and informed consent. Carried out between

August and November 2022, the interviews explored women's subjective interpretations of violence, safety, and mobility within the urban environment. The ethnographic and constructivist orientation of the study foregrounds the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of women—highlighting their cognitive maps, emotional responses, and adaptive strategies in confronting everyday insecurity.

The following section outlines the analytical framework used to categorize responses by age group, with the aim of identifying intergenerational continuities and contrasts in women's experiences of urban fear and violence.

The responses obtained were categorized by age group, resulting in the following distribution: up to 25 years (36 participants), 26–30 years (12), 31–35 years (11), 36–40 years (28), 41–45 years (45), 46–50 years (28), 51–55 years (24), and 56–60 years (12). After data collection, all interviews were transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Using MAXQDA Analytics Pro (version 24.3.0), a process of open coding and thematic analysis was conducted on the transcripts. This stage focused particularly on the categories defined under the violence item, with a targeted search for the terms fear and violence. Following categorization and coding, the material was curated by age group, highlighting narratives that offered the most salient insights into women's firsthand experiences of urban violence in Tijuana.

The analytic rubric structured the data into several interrelated categories:

1. Description of violence,
2. Context of violence,
3. Perceptions of safety,
4. Avoidance strategies, and
5. Institutional responses.

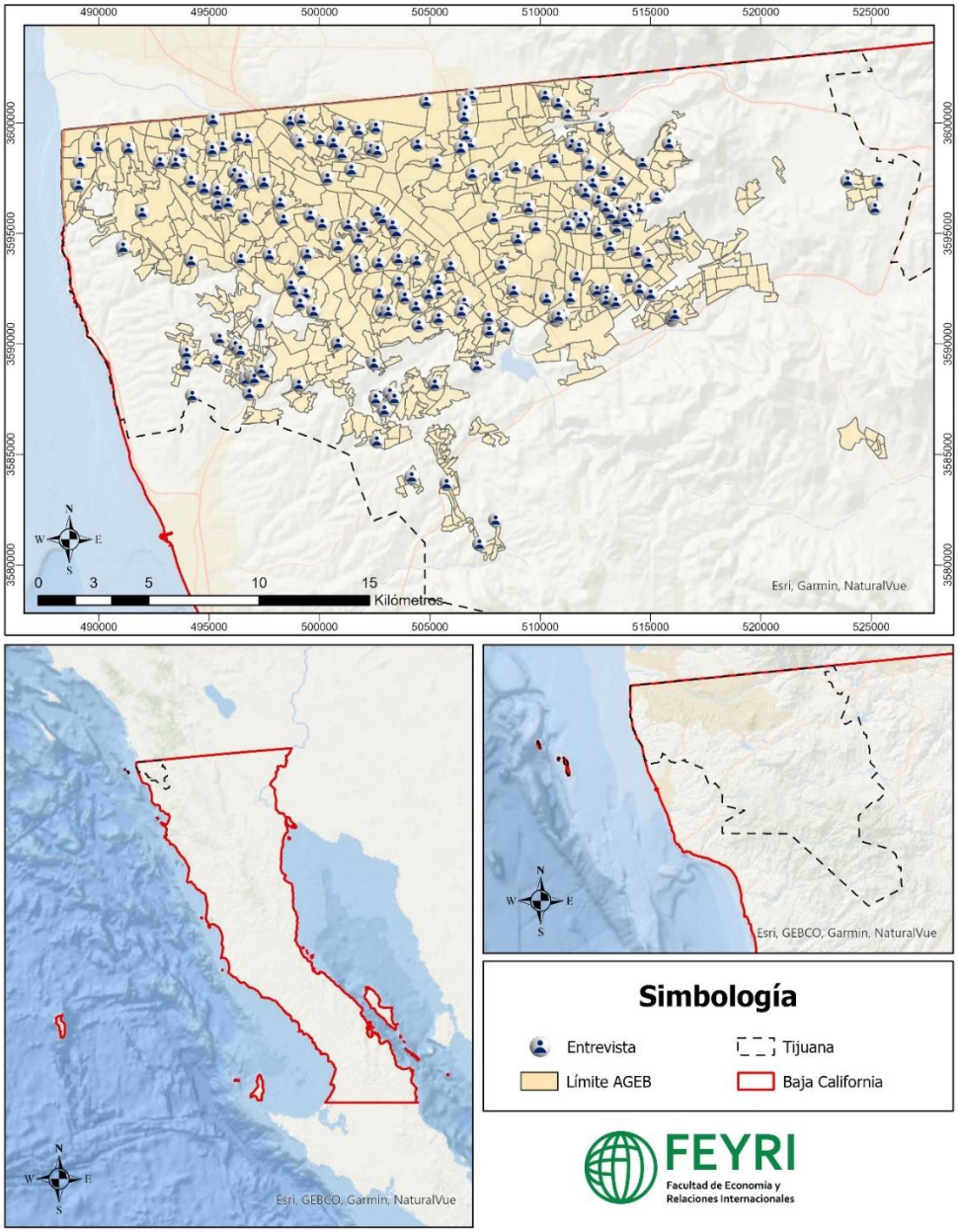
These dimensions emerged from a broad corpus of individual interviews that together constitute a rich body of empirical material, essential for developing an in-depth anthropological understanding of women's lived experiences. The theoretical framework underpinning the analysis draws on:

- Romero et al. (2018), defining violence against women as any intentional use of physical force or power—actual or threatened—that results in injury, psychological harm, or deprivation;
- Pain (2001), conceptualizing fear of crime as both emotional and practical responses to the perceived threat of crime and disorder; and
- England and Simon (2010), along with Dunckel Graglia (2016), interpreting avoidance and coping strategies—such as spatial avoidance and mental

mapping of fear—as mechanisms through which women make daily decisions to minimize harassment and violence.

By including participants across a wide age range, the study captured a spectrum of experiences and generational perspectives, revealing both shared patterns and distinctive realities among different demographic groups.

Fig. 2. Geographic Distribution of Interviewed Women by AGEB in the Municipality of Tijuana, Baja California



Source: Facultad de Economía y Relaciones Internacionales (FEYRI), Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). (2022). Territorial distribution of the sample of interviews conducted by AGEB in Tijuana, Baja California [Thematic map]. Own elaboration based on data from INEGI y Esri, GEBCO, Garmin, NaturalVue.

Findings

Women across different age groups in Tijuana experience violence in distinct yet interconnected ways, reflecting a broad continuum of physical, psychological, and sexual aggressions that profoundly shape their everyday lives. This section examines the perceptions and responses of women aged 18 to 60, illustrating how their experiences and coping strategies vary according to their stage of life. From the extreme violence and resignation reported by younger women to the caution and pragmatic adaptation of older women, these narratives provide a detailed account of the pervasiveness of fear and violence in urban contexts. Collectively, they reveal not only the depth and persistence of gender-based violence, but also women's resilience, agency, and adaptive capacity in confronting a hostile environment—highlighting the urgent need for public policies that address these diverse and complex realities.

Among women aged 18 to 25, violence is most frequently described in terms of physical and psychological aggression, occurring in both domestic and public settings. Participants commonly attribute the roots of such violence to sociocultural inequalities, limited access to education, and restricted economic opportunities. The narratives emphasize the emotional and psychological consequences, including fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Notably, violence appears to be partially normalized, perceived as an unavoidable condition of urban life, with minimal expectation of meaningful change in the short term.

When asked about their perception of Tijuana and what it does to them, the younger women (18 a 25 years) answered:

- "I always walk around in fear wherever I go out, even here, I always go everywhere in fear, because insecurity is everywhere" (19).
- "The first thing that comes to mind with violence is fear, one would be afraid to go out on the street, for fear of being robbed, kidnapped, or killed" (19).
- "Being in constant fear and not being able to develop freely or do what you want to do because of this same fear" (19).
- "We run into those kinds of situations all the time that are unpleasant" (20).
- "Whenever I am away from home, I feel a little uncomfortable, and I am always thinking about what is going to happen to me or what could happen to me" (20).
- "I always walk around afraid, wherever I go" (23).
- "To live here is to live in fear of going out into the street" (24).
- "Well, everything that is happening right now, what is happening with the women who are being stolen, who are found dead, already burned" (24).
- "Fear of going out on the streets" (25).
- "It's fear of being hurt" (25).

Among women aged 26 to 30, experiences of psychological and sexual violence are particularly prominent, often occurring alongside physical aggression. Their narratives also highlight forms of institutional and structural violence, including corruption, impunity, and the inadequate response of authorities to complaints or reports of abuse. Participants express heightened concern for personal safety in public spaces and describe a persistent sense of insecurity in densely populated urban areas.

Notably, several women articulate a clearer awareness of the links between violence and broader power structures, identifying drug trafficking networks, political corruption, and gender inequality as interrelated systems that perpetuate urban violence. The consequences most frequently mentioned include fear, self-imposed mobility restrictions, and diminished personal freedom, reflecting both the internalization of insecurity and its impact on women's everyday autonomy.

Their perception of the city is:

- "I think the first thing that causes me to hear this word (violence) is fear of being hurt" (26).
- "For me, it is a very violent city" (28).
- "Well, I can't even go out of my house safely, like doing everyday things. For me it is a very violent city" (28).

Women in the 18–30 age group describe violence as an omnipresent condition of their daily lives, though they differ in how they perceive their agency and the strategies available to cope with it. Among women aged 18 to 25, violence is often normalized and internalized as an inevitable aspect of urban life. In contrast, those aged 26 to 30 express a stronger expectation of institutional accountability and a belief in the possibility of community-driven change.

While younger participants (18–25) tend to focus on extreme and overt forms of violence—such as kidnappings, assaults, and public harassment—women aged 26 to 30 articulate a broader understanding that includes corruption, impunity, and structural violence as integral dimensions of their lived experience. Despite the profound impact of violence on both groups, the latter cohort demonstrates incipient forms of civic awareness and mobilization, signaling an emergent collective consciousness that envisions social transformation.

About their experiences with violence, some excerpts from the interviews are distinguished:

- "One night I left the university and took the cab, and when I got downtown to go home, two guys were chasing me, and one hit my back, and they wanted to take me with them" (24).

- "After a mugging I had years ago, I look a lot at the people behind me, who look suspicious" (29).
- "When they entered my house without my consent, I felt very vulnerable because it is my home, so at that moment I did feel very threatened, and still do, because to this day I am afraid that it will get dark" (30).

This group develops various avoidance strategies. They begin to gradually limit their presence in potentially dangerous public spaces. They increase precautions in transportation and workplaces. One participant commented as a strategy: "Set schedules for activities. Like, after 08:00 at night at home, because it's not safe out there or not going out alone or having to go out accompanied" (29). "You have to keep an eye out for any situation that could arise, because you would have to be more alert at any time because you wouldn't know at what point something could happen to you" (26).

Among women aged 31 to 40, the interviews reveal a widespread perception of violence encompassing assaults, shootings, and femicides, as well as subtler psychological and emotional aggressions. Violence is described as pervasive and multidimensional, cutting across both public and private spheres. Participants frequently identify both acquaintances and strangers as perpetrators, reflecting an omnipresent sense of vulnerability and a perception that danger can emanate from any social interaction. This awareness underscores a deeply internalized sense of insecurity, where the boundaries between safety and threat appear blurred in women's everyday experiences.

In relation to their perception of safety, one participant in this age group explained: "Not being able to go out on the street. You are afraid to go out to do your errands, to meet your daily needs" (Participant 37). The experiences shared by women in this cohort occur in both private and public settings, though they emphasize public spaces—particularly streets, markets, and transit areas—as the most common sites of aggression.

Women in this group express a heightened and persistent sense of insecurity, which significantly affects their quality of life and emotional well-being. Violence is perceived as both a normalized and neglected social problem, reflecting a mixture of resignation and distrust in institutional protection mechanisms. This normalization is evident in narratives that minimize serious incidents as ordinary occurrences: "There on the corner, they killed one of them. Well, that's all it was, but that's as far as it goes."

The analysis reveals a multifaceted perception of violence, encompassing physical, psychological, and sexual forms perpetrated by both acquaintances and strangers. Several women explicitly refer to gender-based violence as a central concern, underscoring its systemic and cross-contextual nature in their daily lives. The narratives convey a profound sense of normalization and

emotional fatigue, suggesting that violence has become an inescapable condition of existence. As one participant noted, “Violence is something we live with day by day,” illustrating the worrying internalization of violence as part of the social fabric.

Fear emerges as a structuring emotion that governs women’s relationship with the city. Participants describe avoidance strategies—such as limiting movement, changing routes, or avoiding certain times of day—as essential mechanisms for self-preservation. Fear intensifies in dimly lit or sparsely populated areas, indicating that environmental factors such as lighting and social presence can mitigate but not eliminate the perceived risk inherent in occupying public space.

The experience of this group with violence has been direct and traumatizing. For example, one participant describes an attempted assault where she was attacked, evidencing the physical brutality in public spaces:

- "On one occasion, they tried to mug me, they broke my window and hit me in the arm, because they hit me with a cement block" (31).
- "They've come, and they steal what you have, and you can do absolutely nothing" (36).

Strategies to mitigate violence include avoiding certain areas, changing activity schedules, and staying in known, safe spaces. These tactics reflect a retreat from potentially dangerous public spaces. They increase precautions in transportation and workplaces. They adapt their daily routine to minimize risks, with a growing tendency toward self-protection. As avoidance strategies, one member of this group mentioned:

- "Staying home early, closing houses, doors, and windows very securely" (35).

The narratives from women aged 41 to 45 reveal a deeply layered and multifaceted perception of violence. Their accounts encompass physical, psychological, and sexual aggressions, experienced both within intimate and familial relationships and in interactions with strangers. Violence, in this age group, emerges as a pervasive condition that infiltrates everyday routines and domestic responsibilities alike.

One interviewee, for instance, recounted an incident in which an armed group approached her vegetable stand while she was with her children. This experience starkly illustrates the intrusion of violence into ordinary life, exposing the indiscriminate and unpredictable nature of danger that women face in public and semi-public spaces. Such accounts underscore not only the erosion of perceived safety but also the emotional toll of constant vigilance required to navigate these volatile urban environments.

On the perception of the city, they answered:

- "I describe life as full of fear, especially at night" (42).
- "Fear, terror, distress, and depression related to violence" (42).
- "Living in constant anguish that something bad will happen" (45).
- "Concern for my family's safety" (45).

Among women aged 41 to 45, perceptions of violence convey a profound sense of resignation and normalization. Violence is regarded as an inevitable element of daily life, particularly in areas of Tijuana where its presence is constant and overwhelming. As one participant remarked, violence is “the daily bread,” a phrase that encapsulates the frequency, familiarity, and emotional desensitization associated with recurring violent events. This normalization also reflects the absence of effective institutional intervention, as many women perceive that the authorities have abdicated responsibility, leaving communities to accept violence as an unsolvable condition.

Women in this age group describe a cautious and defensive relationship with public space, marked by avoidance behaviors and self-imposed restrictions. They frequently mention avoiding specific routes, public areas, or times of day—especially after dark. Environmental factors such as lighting and visibility strongly shape their sense of safety, with nighttime consistently perceived as a period of heightened vulnerability.

In the 46–50 age group, the narratives reveal a clear differentiation between violence in private and public domains. Violence in public settings is often physical and opportunistic, underscoring women’s exposure to risk in poorly monitored or unprotected environments. In contrast, private spaces may entail more psychological and relational forms of aggression. Across both contexts, the fear of violence profoundly limits participation in community and social life, reducing women’s mobility, civic engagement, and overall quality of life. The result is a gradual social isolation that compounds emotional distress and reinforces gendered patterns of spatial exclusion.

On their perception of the city, they commented:

- "Well, it is lived with anguish, mainly, the anguish of knowing that we let our children go to school or to work and knowing that there are many dangers they can face out there" (46).
- "Having to be on the lookout in case I have to walk alone in a place or if I see someone walking behind me, obviously I am going to be alarmed" (47).
- "They no longer feel the same security of going to a shopping mall, to a restaurant, or waiting for public transportation, because you can be assaulted, you can be kidnapped" (47).
- "Well, the truth is that one does live in fear" (47).

- "Unrest, uncertainty, fear, and distrust. Everywhere there is violence" (47).
- "That at any moment we can be even collateral damage or be immersed in some event that puts us in danger, either to ourselves or to our loved ones" (49).

The experiences reported by women in this cohort are often traumatizing and deeply affective, revealing the extent to which violence permeates both personal and familial spheres. One participant recounted a virtual kidnapping involving her daughter—a situation so distressing that the family seriously considered relocating. Another woman recalled: “Once I was followed by a man with a knife, but when I reached a boy and hugged him, the man just kept walking” (Participant 42). Such testimonies expose the psychological toll of constant threat and the adaptive tactics women employ to survive in a climate of pervasive insecurity.

To mitigate risk, women describe a range of avoidance and safety strategies, including avoiding specific areas, altering travel routes and schedules, and, in some cases, complete withdrawal from public spaces. These behavioral adjustments underscore a form of pragmatic adaptation—a daily negotiation with fear that enables them to function within an environment perceived as inherently hostile and unpredictable.

Among women aged 51 to 55, violence is perceived as a complex and deeply entrenched social phenomenon, often normalized by the community and rooted in broader socioeconomic and cultural factors such as youth neglect, family disintegration, and institutional inaction. Participants express a heightened concern for the safety of their family members, particularly their children and grandchildren, and describe engaging with public space in a cautious and selective manner. Specific neighborhoods, markets, and downtown areas are identified as particularly unsafe. Consequently, women in this group adopt restrictive mobility patterns and limit their participation in public life, reflecting a sustained erosion of trust in both social and institutional protection mechanisms.

On their perception of the city, they answered:

- "The first thing that comes to mind is social breakdown" (50).
- "Kidnappings, robberies, murders, more against women. Right now, there is a lot of feminicide"(50).
- "That's what comes to mind: death and theft. When I hear the word violence, I think of aggression, fear, and a lack of control. It's a feeling of constant insecurity, knowing that at any moment something bad could happen" (52).
- "I am afraid to live in a dangerous city. Those who guard the streets, instead of protecting, inspire fear" (53).

- "The first thing that comes to mind with the word violence is the lack of security, the need to always be alert" (53).
- "Right now, in Tijuana, every place is dangerous, living here is to always be on the alert, you never know when you might be the next victim of a crime" (54).
- "When I think of violence, I think of the constant fear that my children or my family might be hurt when they are away from home" (54).
- "Violence, for me is synonymous with fear. It is what I feel every day when I think about the safety of my family" (55).
- "Violence is something that unfortunately has become common, it's something that you should always be aware of, especially when you have a family, it's living with a constant level of stress and anxiety" (56).
- "Living in fear, means having to go out with courage and a knife in your hand to defend yourself" (57).

Women aged 56 to 60 tend to attribute the persistence of violence to ineffective security measures, institutional negligence, and a prevailing culture of impunity. Their narratives underscore a profound mistrust of authorities and a sense that violence has become systemic and uncontainable. As one participant recounted, “Years ago, I did suffer—twice they tried to grab me on the street when I was on my way to work” (Participant 50). Another shared a harrowing experience: “Once some people broke into my house and put guns to my head and my family’s heads for something we didn’t even know about” (Participant 57). These accounts expose the intrusion of violence into both public and domestic spheres, revealing the fragility of personal security and the emotional scars left by such incidents.

To mitigate risk, interviewees describe adaptive behaviors such as altering daily routes, modifying schedules, and avoiding certain public spaces altogether. Some women have opted for partial or complete withdrawal from public life as a precautionary measure. These strategies illustrate a form of defensive urban navigation, reflecting not only fear but also a learned pragmatism developed through years of living amid insecurity and institutional neglect. For example:

- "To go out earlier and pick me up earlier, not to walk so much at night, endangering myself and locking myself in" (53).
- "The violence has caused me to modify the routes I use to get to work, and I have had to teach my children about how to act in case they find themselves in a dangerous situation" (54).
- "Living in this city has become a constant challenge. You must always be alert, look around, not only for yourself, but also for your children" (55)."

DISCUSSION

The present study is consistent with research that has explored the fear felt by

women interacting on public roads (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018; Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014; García-Carpintero et al., 2022; Rodó-de-Zárate et al., 2019; Yates & Ceccato, 2020; Macmillan et al., 2000; Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022), and that has found that a variety of causes trigger this feeling.

Fear as women's response to public space is fueled by patriarchal structures (Rader et al., 2020), by impunity towards aggressors (Rodó-de-Zárate et al., 2019), by the intention to make women exclusively responsible for their care in the streets (Moreno et al., 2022), by the education they have received to fear the outside (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014), by negative attitudes on the part of authorities (Menjívar & Drysdale Walsh, 2017), because violence directed towards women is not perceived as a health problem (Romero Mendoza et al., 2018), because they are perceived as more vulnerable (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018), because of their "subjective safety", that is, their perception of the physical (darkness, low visibility) and civic (presence of threatening subjects, aggressive behaviors, etcetera) environment (Delgado & Aguerri, 2018) and perhaps most importantly, because of the fear of sexual violence (Zúñiga Elizalde, 2014).

The responses of women in Tijuana corroborate the observations of other authors. For example, Toro and Ochoa Sierra, in their ethnographic study in Colombia, describe how women are educated to avoid risky situations, and some of them consider the street dangerous without indicating a specific place. Open places are more unsafe, such as parks (2017). Responses from women in Tijuana point to some specific neighborhoods, but not specific places, for example, downtown, which is a wide urban space with different characteristics. Other women expressed that anywhere in the city they felt unsafe.

Gaytán Sánchez (2007) found that beauty, age, or appearance are not determinants of sexual harassment; it can happen to any woman just because she is a woman, and the same was found in the Tijuana study. Some women expressed that "being a woman, I feel afraid" without distinction of age, physical appearance, or way of dressing.

Some testimonies given in Tijuana, such as feeling threatened, not trusting strangers, keeping the doors of the home closed, feeling fear for the simple fact of going out, being cautious, fearing for their children, etc., corroborate the feeling of physical vulnerability that Rader et al. (2020) found in their study with young university students of both sexes.

Also, avoidance strategies for physical spaces as well as social content are like those presented by Delgado and Aguerri (2018). For example, in Tijuana, women commented on "avoidance of going out after 18:00, avoidance of night, early morning, and darkness. These avoidance behaviors limit social interaction (Gaitán-Rossi & Shen, 2018), and women develop these public space avoidance strategies much more than men (Condon et al., 2007).

As in Tijuana, García-Carpintero et al. (2022), present that young woman identify fear and their experiences as determinants of the use of public space. And it could also be corroborated that the images seen affect "everyday geographies" (on the way home, work, or school) based on mental maps and the understanding of the urban (England & Simon, 2010). Seeing "drug addicts, asking for money, graffiti on the street, etc. are presented as personal experiences that influence fear of the streets of Tijuana.

Similarly, this research corroborated, with some testimonies, that the fear of criminality is associated with sexual aggression, and this restricts their personal freedom. Particularly younger women between 18 and 25 fear violence or harassment because they are more exposed to aggression.

In this study, it is evident that feelings of fear in public spaces, as well as coping mechanisms, are consistent among women in Tijuana and their counterparts in other urban centers in the developed world, a result of similar social and subjective structures. Notably, the fear associated with public spaces is also pervasive in Spain, as demonstrated by findings from Delgado and Aguerri (2018), García-Carpintero et al. (2022), and Rodó-de-Zárate et al. (2019), Sweden (Mellgren & Ivert, 2018), Scotland (Pain, 2001), France (Lebugle, 2017), or Australia (Chataway & Hart, 2018). Also in Latin America, in Colombia (Quinones, 2020), and in northeastern Mexico, as corroborated by Zuñiga Elizalde (2014), in Mexico City (Dunckel Graglia, 2016), and in the neighboring city of Mexicali (Almanza Avendaño et al., 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

Structural, symbolic, and cultural forms of violence originate within the historical and cultural evolution of society, embedding their roots in social practices that legitimize and reproduce inequality. Amplifying the voices of women who live with fear becomes essential for developing more accurate diagnoses and designing effective interventions.

The city—its streets, markets, and public spaces—constitutes the primary stage upon which social life unfolds and where gender relations are continuously negotiated. Yet these spaces, rather than fostering women’s emancipation through political, economic, and social participation, often reinforce patriarchal hierarchies that curtail their agency. In Tijuana, violence permeates the urban landscape, instilling in women a persistent fear of becoming the next victim—anywhere, at any time.

When reflecting on violence, women in Tijuana most frequently evoke verbal, physical, psychological, social, and emotional aggressions. Younger participants, in particular, associate violence with death, homicide, femicide, and kidnapping, revealing how fear has become an everyday emotional

companion that shapes their movements through public space. This pervasive feeling of oppression limits mobility, erodes trust, and conditions decision-making, compelling women to structure their daily lives around avoidance and self-protection.

Although violence affects women of all ages, the ways it is perceived, internalized, and confronted vary across generations. Younger women exhibit a greater inclination to modify their behavior and seek collective or institutional support, while older women tend to adopt more individualized and passive coping strategies, prioritizing self-preservation over social mobilization. These differences underscore the need for age-sensitive and intersectional policy frameworks that account for diverse experiences of urban insecurity.

The findings of this study reveal that, while violence is a shared experience, its manifestations and coping responses differ substantially by age and context. This highlights the importance of strengthening institutions, expanding community-based networks, and promoting contextually grounded prevention strategies. Beyond contributing to the anthropological understanding of gender-based violence, this research offers empirical and conceptual insights to guide the creation of inclusive and adaptive public policies.

Living in a state of constant alert, compounded by the absence of effective law enforcement, fosters not only fear but also avoidance behaviors that restrict women's participation in public life. These self-protective practices hinder the exercise of citizenship, constrain economic and political engagement, and stifle opportunities for cultural and community development—ultimately diminishing women's overall quality of life.

Future qualitative research must continue to examine how individuals—particularly women—navigate urban contexts characterized by chronic violence and fear. Understanding the psychological and social mechanisms through which women cope with insecurity is critical for informing evidence-based urban and social policy. Urban design and governance must incorporate gender-sensitive planning that enhances safety, accessibility, and social trust. The redesign and maintenance of public spaces should prioritize visibility, mobility, and inclusivity, creating environments where women—especially younger ones—can participate freely and confidently.

Ultimately, the narratives of Tijuana's women expose not only the pervasive impact of violence but also their resilience and capacity for adaptation. Their testimonies call for urgent, multidimensional responses that address the structural causes of violence, strengthen institutional accountability, and foster a city where fear no longer dictates the terms of women's existence.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

David Rocha Romero: study conceptualization, methodological design, fieldwork coordination, data analysis, and manuscript writing.

Jimmy Emmanuel Ramos Valencia: methodological advising, literature review, analytical support during data interpretation, critical review and editing of the manuscript, and supervision of the research process.

Priscilla Flores Grajales: support in data collection, transcription and systematization of interviews, participation in the coding process, and contributions to the revision and editing of the manuscript.

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