

# Trends in African-American Time Use and the COVID-19 Pandemic

QAC Summer 2022 Angelina Chang, Faculty Sponsor: Professor Karl Boulware

## Motivation

- It is well documented that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market were disproportionate across race and ethnicity.
- For example, from 2019 to 2020 the annual unemployment rate rose by 4 percentage points for Whites, 5.3 percentage points for African-Americans, 8.7 percentage points for Asians, and 6.1 percentage points for Hispanics/Latinos. (BLS Reports, 2021)
- At the same time, little is known about how the pandemic affected time spent doing unpaid non-market work, aka, the opportunity cost of working.
- The goal of this project is to explore in more detail the initial impact of COVID-19 on the labor market, specifically its impact on the time use of African Americans in 2020.

## Data

### Sample

- We construct time use estimates for African-Americans using the 2020 American Time Use Survey (ATUS) sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- The ATUS is a nationally representative survey of how Americans spend their time broken down into work and non-work related activities.
- Individuals are randomly selected from a subset of households that have completed their eighth month of interviews for the Current Population Survey (CPS).
- ATUS respondents are interviewed only one time about how they spent their time on the previous day, where they were, and whom they were with.
- In 2020, African-Americans comprised 1,068 out of 8,782 respondents (or 12%).
- The time use for each diary activity is coded into 13 major activity categories and is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Work and Non-Work Major Activities in 2020**

Major Activity	Examples of Activities listed in Major Activity
Working and work related activities	Working, work-related activities, and job search and interviewing.
Personal care	Sleeping and grooming.
Leisure and sports	Socializing, relaxing and leisure, watching TV, and walking.
Household activities	Laundry, food preparation and cleanup, household management, and lawn and garden care.
Travel	Travel associated with all other major activities
Eating and drinking	Eating and drinking and any travel associated with these types of activities.
Caring for and helping household members	Physical care for household children, helping household children with homework, physical care for household adults, and travel related to caring for and helping household members.
Purchasing goods and services	Grocery shopping, vehicle maintenance and repair services (not done by self), government services (including waiting), and travel associated with these types of activities.
Organizational, civic, and religious activities	Attending religious services and volunteer activities.
Other activities, not elsewhere classified	Security procedures related to traveling, traveling not elsewhere classified, refusal to provide information, and unable to code activity.
Educational activities	Attending class and homework and research.
Caring for and helping non-household members	Caring for and helping non-household children and adults.
Telephone calls, mail, and e-mail	

## Describing Trends in African-American Time Use in 2020

- In order to see if African-Americans' time use changed on average due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we construct t-tests for each major activity in 2020 before and after the start of the pandemic in March (see Table 2).
- We also explore how the average time use of African-Americans changed in 2020 by month (Figure 1).
- We do this by regressing each major activity on monthly dummy variables with February as the reference month.

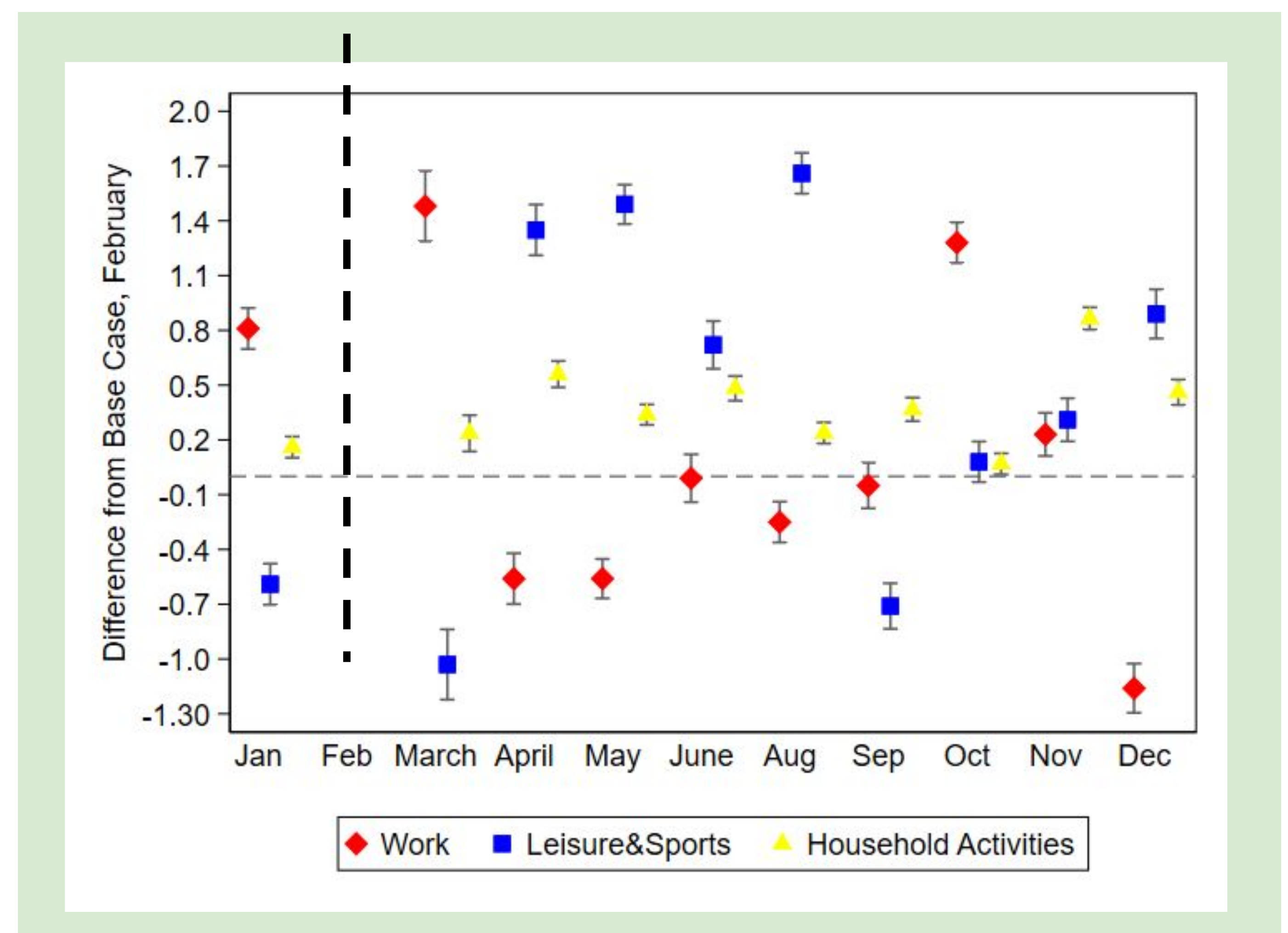
## Results

**Table 2 - Average Daily Hours African-Americans Engaged in Major Activities in 2020**

Activity	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID	Difference	p-value
Working and work-related activities	3.35	2.92	-0.42	0.21
Personal Care activities	10.32	10.02	-0.31	0.21
Leisure and Sports	5.12	6.03	0.91	0.01
Household activities	1.28	1.57	0.30	0.08
Travel	0.83	0.78	-0.05	0.53
Eating and Drinking	0.78	0.83	0.05	0.35
Caring for and helping household members	0.52	0.42	-0.10	0.36
Purchasing goods and services	0.43	0.38	-0.05	0.47
Other activities, not elsewhere classified	0.42	0.19	-0.21	0.09
Organizational, civic, and religious activities	0.41	0.30	-0.11	0.03
Educational activities	0.27	0.19	-0.08	0.33
Caring for and helping non-household members	0.19	0.16	-0.03	0.70
Telephone calls, mails and emails	0.13	0.25	0.11	0.04
<b>Observations</b>	205	863		

- Work and work-related activities - No significant difference between two periods (although economically significant).
- Non-work activities:
  - Statistically significant increase in leisure/sports (1%), communication (telephone/mail/email) (5%), and household activities (10%).
  - Statistically significant decrease in organizational, civic, and religious activities (5%) and other activities (10%).

**Figure 1 - Average Daily Hours by Month African-Americans Engaged in Selected Major Activities in 2020**



- Relative to February, on average African-Americans spent less of their time engaged in work and work-related activities in April, May, August and December, and more time in March, October, and November.
- There is significant increase in time spent on Leisure & Sports relative to February after March.
- The increased time spent on Household Activities relative to February before the start of the pandemic is persistent throughout the first year of the pandemic.

## Conclusion

- The detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on underrepresented racial and ethnic groups continues to this day.
- This project explores COVID-19's impact on African Americans' time use and gives other researchers a high level overview of the differences pre and after COVID on both market and non-market activities.