

CALL FOR ARTICLES

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences

Issue on:

Social and Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated many of the structural inequalities in the United States. Within a few months of the first documented community transmission, nearly one quarter of the workforce filed for unemployment benefits, with low-income workers and those with less flexibility in scheduling and the ability to work remotely disproportionately experiencing job loss. Meanwhile, workers deemed essential, from health care providers, to supermarket employees, to delivery workers, bore the brunt of exposure to infection while others sheltered in place under state and local orders. These unequal labor market experiences may have exacerbated existing inequalities in material hardship, household economic insecurity, and poverty, but the impacts of the pandemic may have also exposed previously economically secure groups to insecurity.

Together, the labor market shocks of COVID-19 combined with the disruption to childcare and K-12 schooling have likely also altered the amount and division of household labor with respect to housework and care-work. Such dynamics may have affected gender inequalities in labor market persistence and re-entry.

We know that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted institutionalized and marginalized populations who are resource poor and, in some instances, politically disenfranchised. African Americans and Latinos are disproportionately represented among documented Covid-19 cases and fatalities, due in part to pre-existing disparities in health problems, differential access to health care, and differential exposure to essential work. Many of the largest outbreaks have occurred in institutionalized settings, such as nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, state and federal prisons, and local jails. The pandemic has hit Native American communities particularly hard, as they tend to be located in rural areas with poor access to sufficient health services.

In this issue, we invite original research contributions pertaining to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on socioeconomic inequality in the United States and in particular how pre-existing inequalities may have mediated the impact of the pandemic and in turn been exacerbated by the current crisis. We are particularly interested in studies that focus on how institutions, ranging from the health care system, corrections and criminal justice, childcare policies, social safety net programs, and labor market policies have either mitigated or exacerbated the impact of the pandemic on social and economic outcomes as well as studies that focus on the likely longer-term impacts of the pandemic on inequality in the United States.

The pandemic has also spurred numerous efforts at innovative data collection, from the novel use of new sources of private sector data, to experiments with rapid-turnaround and high frequency household surveys, to quickly implemented qualitative and ethnographic studies. We invite papers that makes use of these new sources of data, as well as established secondary data sets.

Among areas of inquiry, the following list provides examples of research questions that lie within the purview of this call. The list is partial and meant to motivate researchers. We anticipate a broader spectrum of proposed topics.

- The pandemic appears to have negatively affected household economic insecurity and heightened deprivation. How have these shocks played out differently across dimensions of household economic security and deprivation? How have the effects of the pandemic manifested over time and across different places? To what extent have these shocks been felt differently by race/ethnicity, nativity, class, and other axes of difference?
- What have been the short run effects of the pandemic on income and wealth inequality? How has divergence between equity, housing, and labor markets affected inequality in this period?
- What is the role of new (such as the supplemental UI and PUA policies as well as the economic stimulus payments) and previously existing public safety net and social insurance programs (such as TANF and Medicaid) in moderating these shocks? Have administrative burdens reduced the effectiveness of these programs? Has the effectiveness of the safety net changed over the course of the pandemic?
- How have households drawn on private safety nets to offset and manage these economic shocks? How have workers understood their experiences of unemployment and economic insecurity against the context of COVID?
- How have existing exposures to precarious work shaped workers' experiences of the pandemic? Have company or local/state/federal paid sick leave or PFML policies effectively buffered workers?
- What consequences has the pandemic had for job quality and employment relations? Has the pandemic led to more e-commerce, automation, or remote work? To improvements in job quality for "essential workers"? To greater equality or inequality between higher and lower-SES workers? What effects has the pandemic had on worker organizing and worker power?
- What have been the consequences of the pandemic for gender inequality? How have limitations on childcare and remote schooling affected women's labor force participation? Gender inequality in household labor and care work?

Anticipated Timeline

Prospective contributors should submit a CV and an abstract (up to two pages in length, single or double spaced) of their study along with up to two pages of supporting material (e.g., tables, figures, pictures, references that don't fit on the proposal pages, etc.) no later than 5 PM EST on March, 10 2021 to:

<https://rsf.fluxx.io>

NOTE that if you wish to submit an abstract and do not yet have an account with us, it can take up to 48 hours to get credentials, so please start your application at least two days before the deadline. All submissions must be original work that has not been previously published in part or in full. Only abstracts submitted to <https://rsf.fluxx.io> will be considered. Each paper will receive a \$1,000 honorarium when the issue is published. All questions regarding this issue should be directed to Suzanne Nichols, Director of Publications, at journal@rsage.org and **not** to the email addresses of the editors of the issue.

A conference will take place at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City on **December 10, 2021** (with a group dinner the night before). The selected contributors will gather for a one-day workshop to present draft papers (due a month prior to the conference **on 11/12/21**) and receive feedback from the other contributors and editors. Travel costs, food, and lodging for one author per paper will be covered by the foundation. Papers will be circulated before the conference. After the conference, the authors will submit their revised drafts by 4/6/22. The papers will then be sent out to three additional scholars for formal peer review. Having received feedback from reviewers and the RSF board, authors will revise their papers by 9/13/22. The full and final issue will be published in the fall of 2023. Papers will be published open access on the RSF website as well as in several digital repositories, including JSTOR and UPCC/Muse.