

How has COVID19 Changed Parents' Division of Domestic Labor in the U.S.?

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COVID19 and Domestic Labor

- Dramatic Changes for Families
 - Closing of schools, childcare centers, and domestic service providers
 - Increase in unemployment and telecommuting, reductions in work hours
- Opportunity to test theories on gendered division of labor
 - Relative resources, time availability, gender perspective
- How has the division of, and time spent in, domestic labor changed for mothers and fathers?
 - Does this vary by fathers' length of leave?

COVID19: Exacerbating Gender Inequality

- Gender perspective
 - Uncertainty of pandemic may lead couples to adhere to traditional gender norms
- Time availability and relative resource hypotheses
 - Women more likely to lose job during pandemic
 - Women more likely to reduce work hours during pandemic
- Autonomy theory
 - Inability to outsource domestic labor may thrust these tasks back onto mothers

COVID19: Reducing Gender Inequality

- Gender perspective
 - Most men disagree with notion of separate spheres ideology and support a more egalitarian arrangement
- Time availability hypothesis
 - Reduced workplace barriers to involvement at home
 - Increased time at home due to telecommuting, greater access to paid leave, limited travel and leisure options

Domestic Labor and Fathers' Leave-Taking

- Fathers' leave-taking and domestic labor
 - Taking longer leaves associated with greater housework and childcare over time
 - Fewer workplace barriers may enable these fathers to be even more involved
- Exposure to domestic labor among fathers who did not take leave
 - Consistent with time availability hypothesis, greater time at home may reduce gaps in domestic labor between fathers who do not take leave and those who do

Data

- Online survey conducted in April 2020 through Prolific
 - U.S. parents who reside with a spouse/partner and a biological child
 - N = 1,157 after data quality checks
 - Excluded respondents with gender other than male/female and same-sex couples
 - Final sample size = 1,025
- Estimates weighted to be representative of co-resident American parents on gender, age, race/ethnicity
 - Sample comparable with national estimates on many sociodemographic characteristics
 - College-educated parents, parents with no religious affiliation overrepresented

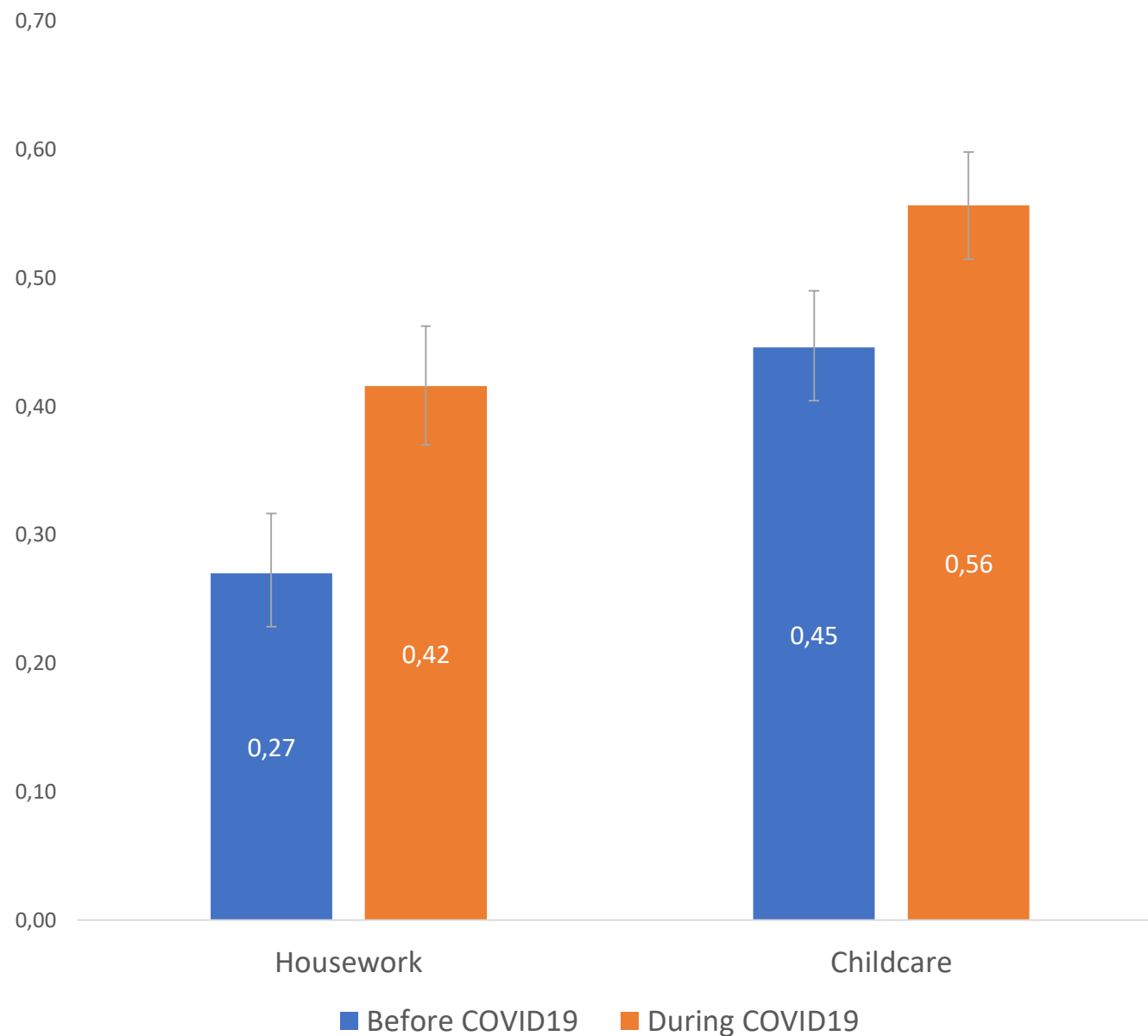
Domestic Labor

- Housework: meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, dishes, cleaning
- Childcare (age specific, asked about youngest child): physical care, talking/listening to child, looking after child, putting child to bed, read, playing, organizing, enforcing rules, attending events, picking up/dropping off, helping with homework
- Respondents reported on division of domestic labor before and during pandemic
 - Mother/father does all, mother/father does more, shared equally
 - Mean scales for housework and childcare, then create categories for mother does majority (>60%), shared equally (each partner does 40-60%), father does majority (>60%)
- Respondents reported on how time in domestic tasks changed for them and their partner since the pandemic
 - Doing much less/more, somewhat less/more, no change
 - Combined estimates for mothers and fathers; Mean scales for housework and childcare, then create categories for father/mother doing more, father/mother doing less, and no change

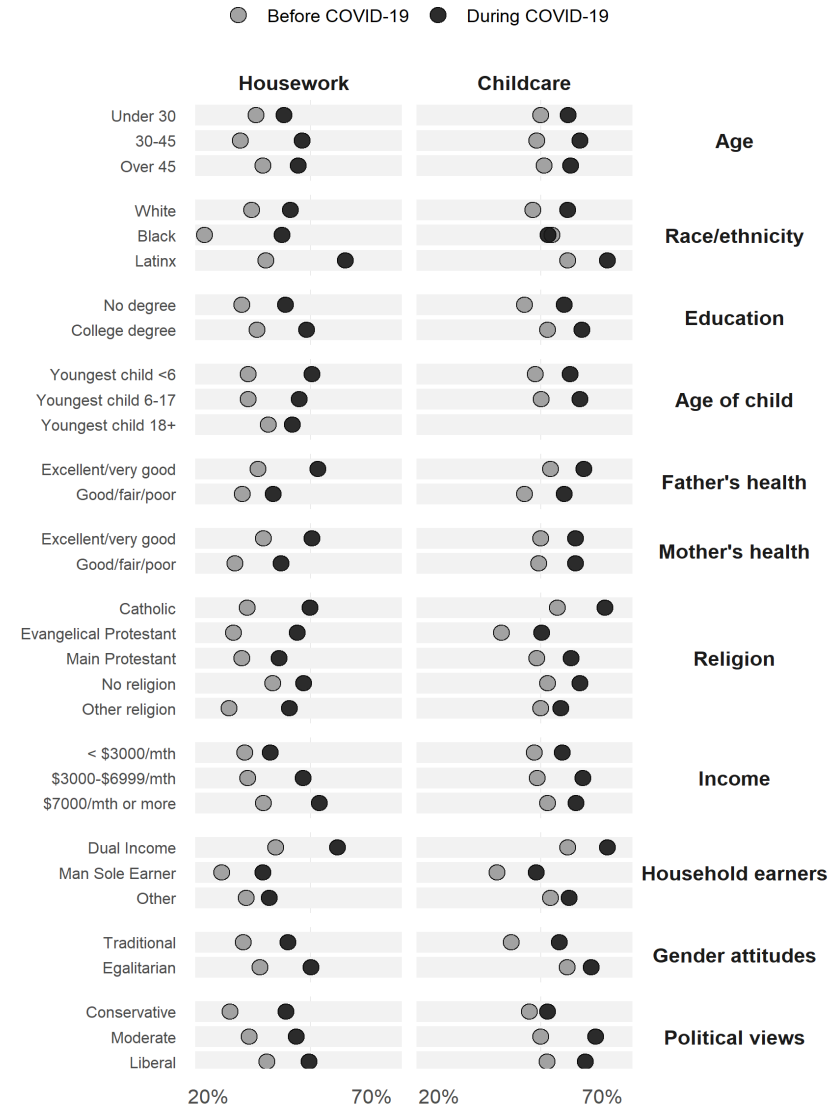
Fathers' Leave-Taking and Controls

- Focus on length of time taken off work for birth of youngest child
 - No leave (44%)
 - 1 week or less (22%)
 - 2-3 weeks (22%)
 - One month or more (12%)
- Multivariate models include controls for:
 - employment status, household income, gender attitudes, job loss, whether either parent is essential worker, working from home, reduced work hours, childcare hours (pre-pandemic), creating e-learning content, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, religious affiliation, health, child age, number of children, education, timing of stay-at-home order (state-level)

Couples
Sharing
Domestic
Labor
Relatively
Equally Before
and During
Pandemic

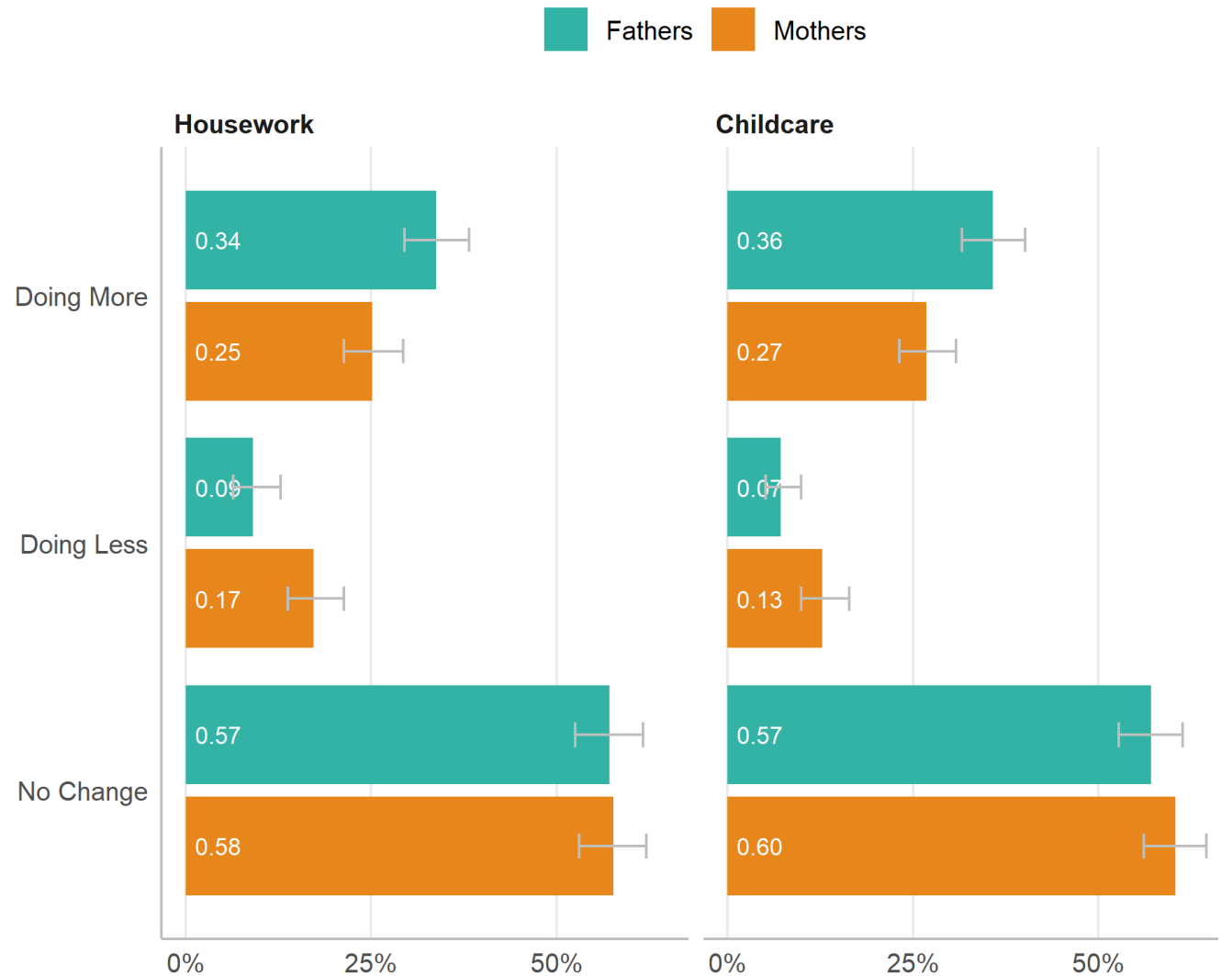


Prevalence of Sharing Domestic Labor Relatively Equally, by Sociodemographic Characteristics

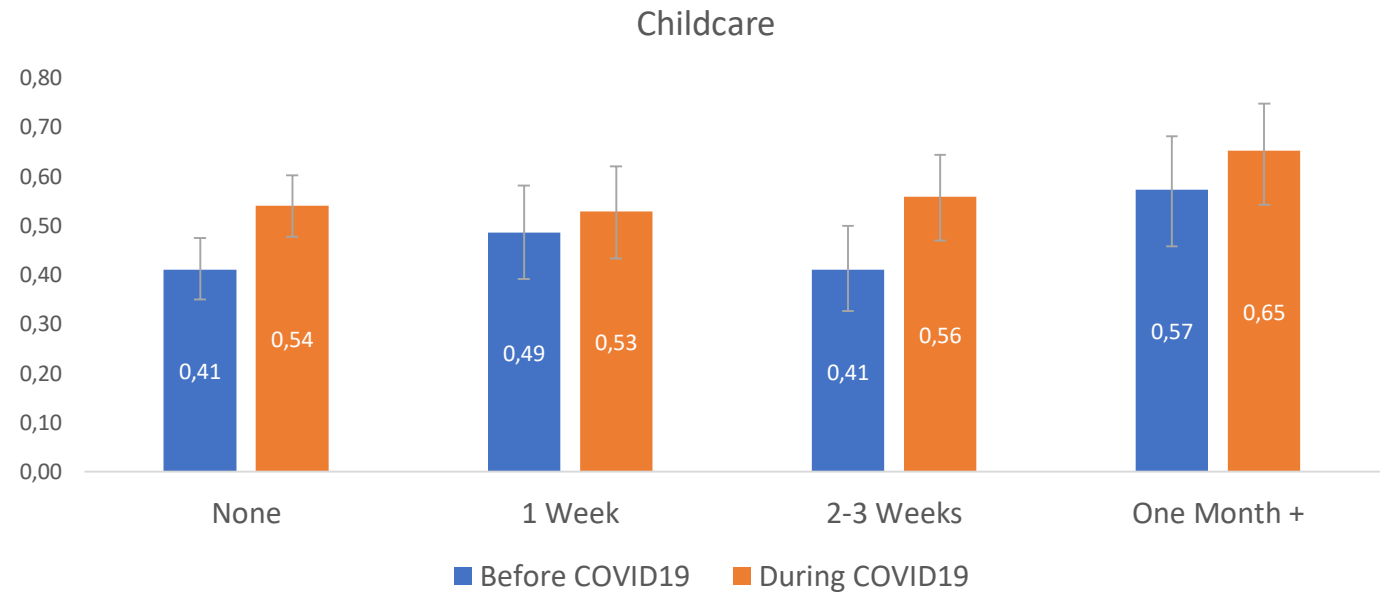
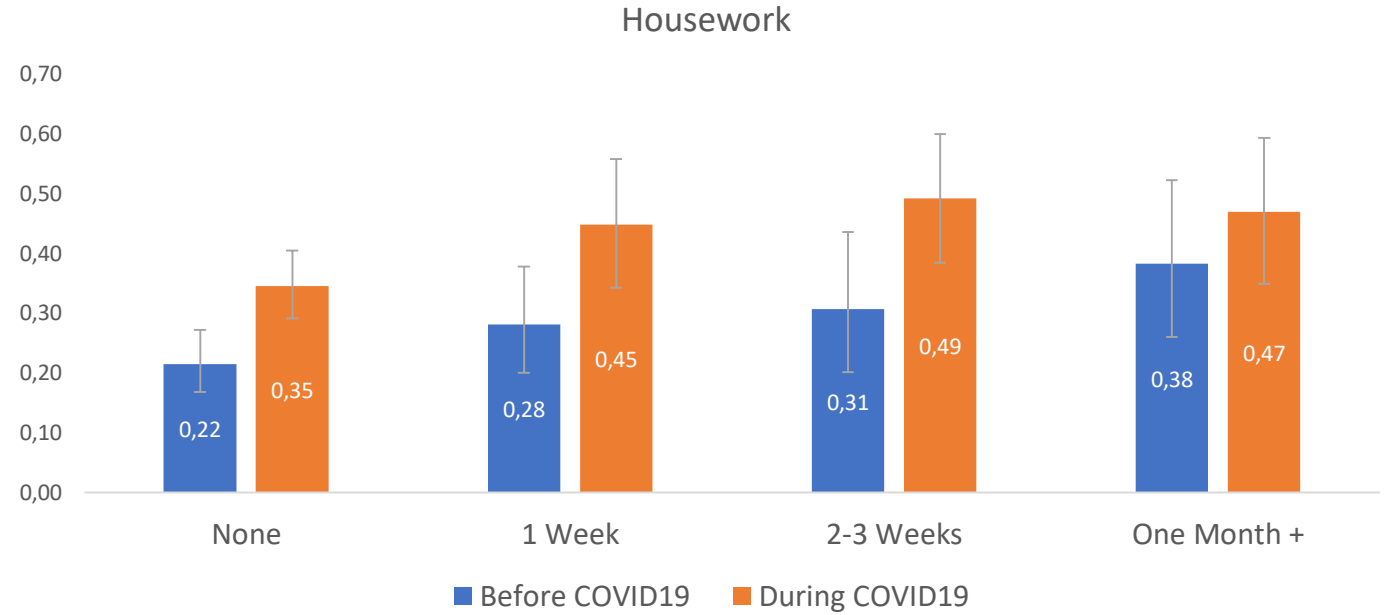


Change in Time Spent in Domestic Labor During Pandemic

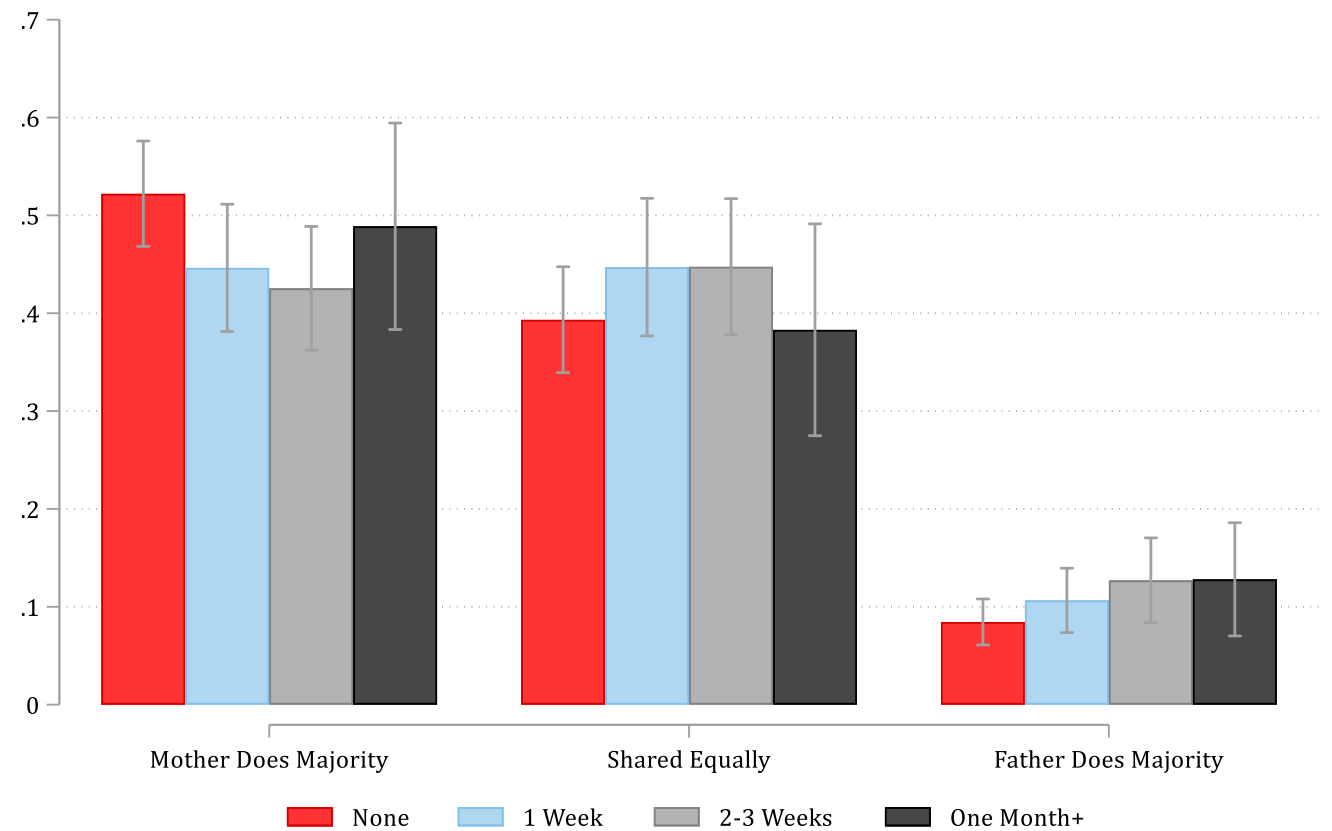
% of parents who say they are _____ housework and childcare about 1 month after COVID-19 restrictions



Couples Sharing Domestic Labor Relatively Equally, by Fathers' Length of Leave



Distribution of Housework During COVID19, by Leave-Taking



Other Key Findings

- Time availability and relative resources hypotheses
 - Parents did more domestic labor when they spent more time at home (unemployed or working from home)
 - Parents did more domestic labor when they earned less than their partners
- Gender perspective and autonomy theory
 - Loss of childcare led to increases in mothers' time in domestic labor

Conclusions

- In the U.S., the pandemic is associated with both reduced and exacerbated gender inequalities in domestic labor
 - There has been an increase in couples who share housework and childcare relatively equally
 - In couples where mothers perform the majority of housework and childcare, their burdens have increased due to greater time spent in these tasks
- Couples are more likely to share domestic labor when fathers adhere to cultural norms of leave-taking (i.e., taking 1-3 weeks off when child is born)
- Findings support time availability and relative resources hypotheses as well as gender perspective