

Gauging the Gap: Inequality of Time Use When Seeking Government Services

Andrea Briceno-Mosquera
Sharon Mastracci

Seeking government services and interacting with the administrative state require time and waiting. However, the use of time while interacting with the administrative state is unevenly distributed across racialized groups. Using data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) 2003–2022, we examine inequities when seeking and waiting for government services. Blacks wait 1.7 times longer, and Hispanics wait 1.6 times longer than Whites when seeking government services. Individuals without a partner, with more household children, and the unemployed also devote more time waiting for government services. This article contributes to the scholarship on administrative burdens by arguing that uneven wait time distribution may result from racialized administrative procedures. Those who spend more time seeking government services and waiting experience higher opportunity costs that interfere with their lives, reproducing and normalizing injustices. Uneven wait times may also engender animosity toward the administrative state among already marginalized individuals.

While waiting, powerless groups learn the opposite of citizenship. They learn to be patients of the state.

(Auyero 2012)

Bearfield et al. (2023) explore how institutional racism is perpetuated by government agencies, highlighting how the administrative state reinforces racial hierarchies in the United States. They examine the role of policy designs and how street-level bureaucrats interpret and apply public policies in maintaining these structures. Institutional racism is expressed through laws, regulations, requirements, mechanisms for allocating and accessing resources, and through political and institutional actors responsible for enforcing laws and implementing policies (Ray et al. 2023).

Making people wait is an example of institutionalized racism when wait times systematically differ across race/ethnic groups. Interactions with the administrative state happen throughout an individual's life, from birth until death. Requesting a birth certificate, social security card, driver's license, passport, registering to vote, enrolling in a public school, or filing for social security benefits, unemployment, or any public program requires interaction with the ad-

ministrative state. Indeed, daily concerns that could be considered private matters—such as attending school, working, driving, traveling, running errands, and shopping—would be impossible without documents issued by the state. Ultimately, the individual exercise of civil, social, economic, and political rights is intertwined with the government's delivery of goods and services.

Seeking and receiving government services require allocating time and waiting. Scheduling appointments with public officials, gathering documents, paying fines or fees, and mailing or bringing documents in person to an office require time. Alongside the time necessary to gather and process the necessary paperwork, people stand in line to receive services, wait for official mail or other communication from a public servant to exercise their rights (e.g., from a social worker or judge), wait to be enrolled in a program, or to meet with an official to address an issue that arose as they undertook any of these or other actions.

Wait time can become onerous while seeking government services, particularly because the relationship between the government and its citizens is asymmetrical and power imbalanced (Mastracci 2022). The need

to allocate time and waiting are the most noticeable features of interactions with the administrative state (Auyero 2012; Cohen 2018; Pettigrew 2017). Yet, neither the use of time nor waiting is experienced similarly across race/ethnic groupings. Previous empirical work has demonstrated that wait time is unevenly distributed by socioeconomic status, gender, race, and ethnicity across various activities (Holt and Vinopal 2023; Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). Holt and Vinopal (2023) demonstrated time discrimination in various activities involving wait times, with disparities based on income and race. In this article, we argue that time discrimination occurs in interactions with the administrative state when individuals seek government services, many of which are not optional. The institutional racism evidenced by uneven time burdens that arise in interactions with the administrative state sustains social inequity because there are no substitute providers for government services.

By analyzing nationally representative data from the American Time Use Survey (2003–2022), we present empirical evidence of the race-ethnicity gap in the time spent seeking government services, with disparities between Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. We also find that single individuals with more household children and the unemployed spend considerably more time seeking and waiting for government services. We contend that the differences across individuals' wait-time experiences are not random. Our evidence suggests that uneven distribution in wait times when seeking government services may indicate the presence of racialized administrative burdens (Humphrey 2023; Ray et al. 2023). Policies and benefits, their design, practices, resources, and the requirements to access government services may result in longer use of time and waiting, which in turn normalizes and reproduces existing patterns of racial inequality. Indeed, the uneven distribution of wait times results in "fragmented forms of state power and citizen agency" (Carswell et al. 2019, 598).

Moreover, uneven use of time when seeking government services may disproportionately affect individuals' exercise of economic and social rights. Our argument is twofold. First, unlike market-driven transactions driven by capitalist reasoning in which individuals feel entitled to quality and prompt availability of purchased goods or services, market logic does not govern requests, or claims, for public services. Other aspects of government services undermine market logic, such as

the monopolistic character of the administrative state (Batley 2004; Hasenfeld, Rafferty, and Zald 1987) and the stratification of public services delivered (Fountain 2001). Second, wait times when seeking government services intersect and constrain other activities for those affected, suggesting that those individuals who bear disproportionately high wait times also bear higher opportunity costs relative to other similarly situated citizens.

The following sections connect the literature on administrative burdens with wait time when individuals seek government services. We contend that wait times reify and reproduce power imbalances confronting minoritized groups, perpetuating existing social inequities. We also argue that the uneven distribution of time spent seeking government services is particularly problematic given the monopolistic role of the administrative state in providing goods and services. We provide empirical evidence of the racial gap in wait times between Whites and individuals from other racial and ethnic groups when interacting with the administrative state and explore the implications of our findings for both the theory and practice of public administration.

We argue that one of the often overlooked aspects of defining and measuring inequality in public administration is the use of time and waiting and their unequal impact on different groups. When analyzing inequality and poverty, most theoretical and empirical frameworks focus on tangible resources, such as income and assets. However, our findings suggest that time should also be considered a key indicator of inequality, as it plays a crucial role in assessing the satisfaction of needs and the agency of individuals (e.g., Boltvinik 2023; Sen 1981).

Administrative Burdens of Waiting Time While Seeking Government Services

Members of the general public may seek government services to request an official document, seek and exercise rights, claim a public benefit, complain, appeal a decision, and so on. Interactions between citizens and the administrative state routinely occur via street-level bureaucrats (SLBs), who manage and deliver government goods and services (Lipsky 1980). SLBs-citizen encounters are power imbalanced; frontline workers possess administrative power and discretion that citizens do not (Mastracci 2022). SLBs routinely interpret laws, eligibility requirements, procedures, and institutional rules, and those activities inevitably result in

the exercise of administrative discretion (Lipsky 1980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000).

SLBs employ a variety of coping strategies to manage their workloads and reduce stress (Tummers et al. 2015). Those include establishing routines, simplifying procedures, sticking to laws and rules, limiting resources, establishing waiting lists, shorter appointment durations, not responding to calls, and creaming or skimming relevant files, among others (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000; Maynard et al. 2003; Mikkelsen et al. 2024; Tummers et al. 2015). SLBs may also use their discretion to bend existing rules to help people or to invest more effort in those they perceive as more deserving (Baekgaard et al. 2021; Bell et al. 2021).

Previous administrative burdens scholarship has highlighted the fact that individuals experience learning, compliance, and psychological costs when seeking public benefits and interacting with SLBs (Herd and Moynihan 2019). Learning costs include the time and effort necessary to understand a policy benefit, including requirements, application procedures, and deadlines (Barnes 2021; Herd and Moynihan 2019; Moynihan et al. 2015). Not all individuals, however, face the same costs of learning. The language in which materials appear, their format, and how they may be accessed all affect the costs implicit in securing and completing them. In addition, those costs are shaped by individuals' prior information, cognitive capacity, human and social capital, as well as network support (Christensen et al. 2020).

Compliance costs refer to gathering the required information and documents, which usually requires engaging in additional requests with originating organizations (Moynihan et al. 2015). While gathering documentation and satisfying application requirements, individuals also incur intangible costs that may include making arrangements for someone to care for family members or dependent children, paying for document issuance, paying transportation costs to travel to deliver documents or participate in eligibility interviews, or making telephone calls (Herd and Moynihan 2019). Psychological costs refer to the emotional states of those seeking services, including feelings of stress, uncertainty, frustration, lack of agency, and stigma, as well as perceptions of disrespect and mistreatment (Christensen et al. 2020; Herd and Moynihan 2019).

Seeking and receiving government services often require spending time while waiting to apply for and receive specific outcomes. People wait for services but

also wait to be interviewed by public servants (e.g., social workers, court case specialists, etc.), for return calls or messages after requests for information, and so on. Some individuals already in disadvantaged situations wait for decisions concerning their eligibility for unemployment assistance, Medicaid approvals, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), childcare subsidies, or other support from the Social Security Administration. Wait times and unreasonable, arbitrary, or ambiguous procedures and rules are commonplace experiences for members of powerless groups when interacting with the administrative state (Auyero 2012; Briceno-Mosquera 2023; Herd and Moynihan 2019; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2008). About 40% of eligible people miss out on SNAP due to perceived paperwork and delays, and from 2008 to 2019, around 110,000 people died awaiting Social Security disability decisions after initial denials (Schweitzer 2022).

Waiting time intersects with these learning, compliance, and psychological costs. For example, individuals may wait longer if they are unaware of all applicable eligibility requirements and procedures, if they fail to complete forms or follow protocols correctly; if the guidelines and paperwork are not clearly written or may be interpreted in multiple ways; or if they require document translation or interpreters if materials in their preferred language are unavailable (Herd and Moynihan 2019; Heinrich 2016). Wait times can increase if relevant forms are not designed to ensure their ready use by individuals with disabilities, or if those potentially eligible for services must make several calls to officials because no one is available to respond promptly (Holler and Tarshish 2024).

While waiting, frustration may arise from one's sense of powerlessness and lack of control over their own time (Auyero 2012). Applicants also experience frustration when they perceive that those nominally assisting are not responding to their needs or status in an organized or systematic manner (Barnes and Henly 2018; Lipsky 2010; Meyers and Nielsen 2012). Citizens and community members may also experience uncertainty about vital outcomes, such as access to financial or food assistance or health or housing services (Herd and Moynihan 2019). In other cases, applicants may experience uncertainty concerning receiving a driver's license, passport, work permit, visa, or financial aid to attend college (Briceno-Mosquera 2023; Moynihan,

Gerzina and Herd 2022). Ultimately, waiting time may restrict individuals' pathways to social, economic, political, and, in some cases, legal integration into society. Multiple factors may intersect to exacerbate these time costs. In such cases, potentially eligible people may wind up paying expedited fees to receive government services, taking days off from work, or paying for unplanned childcare. While experiencing these learning and compliance costs, individuals may also cope with emotional distress, sadness, hopelessness, anger, feelings of arbitrariness, frustration, or a diminished sense of agency and efficacy (Auyero 2012; Herd and Moynihan 2019).

The Monopolistic Role of the Administrative State in Providing Goods and Services

Seeking services from the state does not follow market logic. In market transactions, consumers have a range of preferences and face budget, location, and time constraints, which means they choose between different alternatives to maximize their utility and well-being (Friedman 2018). When individuals seek any good or service (e.g., shoes, cell phones, laptops, spa services, restaurants, tourism, etc.), they have a range of choices and can choose to pay more for additional quality or speed of service. Despite New Public Management prescriptions, citizens should not be viewed as consumers. That view conceives of citizens as consumers who will seek to maximize their utility in their approach to public services (Bryson et al. 2014). Yet, this conflation of citizens with consumers is problematic.

Individuals participating in the market are buyers and consumers of goods and services. In the public sector, however, individuals are entitled to certain social, economic, and political goods. When people approach the state, their interests cannot be limited only to their perceived personal satisfaction based on the services they receive (Aberbach and Christensen 2005). People approach and interact with the administrative state as a key source to guarantee their rights and/or meet their needs. That is, individuals cannot choose from several providers that issue or approve government documents, welfare enrollments, program registration, or subsidies, among many other public services. Although for-profit organizations are increasingly involved in delivering public goods and services—often through partnerships or contracts with government agencies—the govern-

ment ultimately retains a monopoly over the provision of goods and services that enable the full exercise of individuals' political, civil, or economic rights (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011; Fountain 2001; Hasenfeld 1972; Kear 2013; Mastracci 2022).

Moreover, the sellers in the market seek to maximize profit and provide a range of goods to secure that end. In the public sector, in stark contrast, the fundamental goal is to benefit the public good. That aspiration implies an equitable distribution of services, even if achieving that end implies less efficient decisions from a market logic perspective. More profoundly, serving the public requires viewing individuals as rights-bearing agents rather than consumers of rights. The ascendance of market logic in government reforms in recent decades—at least in the United States—has introduced a logic of price differentiation for some public goods, which may exacerbate existing inequities (Fountain 2001; Wolf 1993). For instance, people can pay more for expedited passports or driver's licenses and inspection services, construction licenses, airport screening, and some visa and residency approvals. While some can afford to pay these fees, others cannot.

Time is a fixed resource and, although intangible, the outcomes of its use are not. Those who spend less time seeking and waiting to obtain government services can dedicate more time to other personal and professional activities than their counterparts who have no choice. Furthermore, those who wait less time to obtain needed government services may more expeditiously plan personal activities that depend on receiving such assistance. An overlapping factor that conflates with race and ethnicity while waiting is socioeconomic status (Holt and Vinopal 2023). Low-income individuals with lower educational attainment also lack social capital, and their networks are less capable of navigating highly bureaucratic government systems, which could result in longer wait times and more uncertainty (Christensen et al. 2020; Herd and Moynihan 2019). In contrast, individuals with higher educational attainment, incomes, and denser social networks enjoy more resources to identify and address government service requirements and procedures, comply with eligibility requirements, interact with street-level officials, pay differentiated prices when they wish, and exert influence more generally (Harvey 2015; Moynihan and Herd n.d.).

People who lack resources are generally constrained by time. They also tend to have greater workloads, in-

cluding domestic work, informal and inflexible jobs, and a relative dearth of social capital (Holt and Vinopal 2023). In such situations, seeking government services may decrease the amount of time available for these individuals to work and earn money. For instance, caregivers and single parents, particularly women, often cannot leave their jobs to seek state services, nor can they readily pay for a babysitter (Herd and Moynihan 2019; Martin 2024). They are more likely to sacrifice work hours to manage these administrative burdens, resulting in significant opportunity costs and lost wages. Seefeldt (2017) demonstrated that U.S. women from low- and middle-income families endure long wait times while seeking public benefits. Previous empirical studies have suggested this trade-off can result in a significant loss of money or even mental exhaustion for those lacking resources. In consequence, otherwise entitled individuals may decide to postpone their applications or give up, even though doing so results in losing vital resources or rights to which they are entitled, and that could hinder their fulfillment of individual needs (e.g., Briceno-Mosquera 2023; Halili 2020; Herd and Moynihan 2019; Masood et al. 2021).

Because time is a scarce resource, it has economic value. Implicitly, the value of anything is equivalent to the amount of time required to make it or the time someone is willing to spend to acquire it. Since Becker (1965) first published his seminal theory of the allocation of time, the economic value of time has been associated with individual earnings and consumption as a result of activities distributed in a time frame. It follows that the use of time in waiting while seeking government services results in foregone earnings. Time that is not compensated could even be considered wage theft (Carswell et al. 2019; Kennedy 2015).

Long wait times intersect with other factors, such as immigration status. Immigrants, regardless of their socioeconomic status, credentials, and social capital, expend considerable amounts of time gathering documentation and waiting for visas, work authorizations, asylum or residence approvals that affect, among other elements of their lives, employment opportunities, social mobility, and access to housing and health services (Gonzales 2022; Obinna 2020). It is one thing for a citizen or permanent resident to look for work and participate in the labor market with broad mobility across sectors and positions. It is, however, quite another and far more complicated challenge for an immigrant or ref-

ugee who depends upon state recognition of that status and legal authorization to apply for and accept a job offer (Bier 2019; Obinna 2020). Furthermore, immigration measures to enter or remain in the United States have become far more complex regarding the documentation and fees required in recent years and now also often involve long wait times to obtain decisions (Moynihan et al. 2022). Despite the importance of time, the uneven distribution across population groups of wait times for government service delivery is often normalized or taken as given.

Racialized Administrative Burdens and Use of Time While Seeking Government Services

Administrative red tape refers to unnecessary inter- and intra-administrative bureaucratic procedures that can increase wait and response times for applicants (Brewer and Walker 2010). Instead, racialized administrative burdens are the result of both program designs and procedures as well as SLB discretion that may favor certain groups or discriminate against specific group members. Most studies of biases in wait times across races have focused on access to public health services (e.g., Andaya 2019; Lu et al. 2021; Ohlson 2020) and voting (Pettigrew 2017). Yet, if empirical studies were carried out using wait times specifically in other settings, that gap might also be evident in other realms. From an organizational perspective, the gap in wait times may result from the fact that the programs, procedures, and paperwork for accessing government services may reflect a propensity to favor Whiteness. Ray (2019) observed that the administrative state relies on organizations to operate and deliver services, and those organizations prioritize Whiteness in their bureaucratic structures, hierarchy, rules and practices, resources, and policy decision-making. Thus, when non-Whites seek government services, they may find more roadblocks, including language barriers, additional procedures and paperwork, and a biased exercise of administrative discretion. Racialized burdens normalize and reinforce patterns of racial inequality in public services, simultaneously reproducing disparate treatment while obscuring discrimination because bureaucratic actors are “just following the rules” (Ray et al. 2022, 139).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that Black and Hispanic applicants to government services experience discrimination and barriers because of their race (Ober-

field and Icantalupo 2021; Pratt and Hahn 2021). Rothstein (2017) demonstrated through several case studies how even the personal discretion exercised by real estate agents, as well as broader residence and mortgage policies, were upheld by government policies designed to favor Whites and segregate African Americans. Scholars also have demonstrated how African American and Hispanic veterans have experienced higher scrutiny and greater resistance to accessing benefits compared to White veterans (e.g., Logue et al 2010; Ortiz 2009; Skocpol 1992). Schram et al. (2009) demonstrated that social workers penalized Black and Hispanic applicants more heavily when failing to complete paperwork or for missing an appointment compared to Whites who had behaved similarly. Historically, African American women have been disparaged as “welfare queens” and subjected to greater scrutiny when applying for government services (Cammett 2016; Nadasen 2007; Powell and Rich 2020). Briceno-Mosquera (2023) demonstrated that some undocumented students who were entitled to benefits from in-state resident tuition policy could not access higher education, were delayed in doing so, or had to pay out-of-state tuition because of the administrative burdens and long wait times they experienced when applying for such support from several higher education institutions.

Longer wait times experienced by racialized minorities have also been used as a political weapon to portray people of color as those who most often seek social services and who benefit disproportionately from them (Avery and Peffley 2003). In fact, Whites apply for government services at a higher rate and benefit the most from them (Gilens 2009; Hero and Preuhs 2007; Schram 2005). However, their wait times to obtain such support may be shorter because organizational policies and procedures, language access, paperwork, and documentation are designed for them, and they do not face the same scrutiny as Blacks and Hispanics in those processes.

Data and Model

We analyze nationally representative cross-sectional data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) spanning 2003 to 2022 to examine the time use disparities across

racial groups when seeking government services. ATUS is conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as a part of the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS). CPS ATUS respondents complete time diaries to report time spent in several activities, including government services. It is administered by telephone and asks respondents to share how they spent their time in the previous 24 hours across various activities (e.g., working, training, sleeping, childcare, education, seeking government services). Respondents are randomly selected from CPS households. BLS staff send selected respondents a letter informing them of the day and time that they will be contacted. The survey questions require 15 to 20 minutes.

Holt and Vinopal (2023) used ATUS data to demonstrate differences in time use among individuals focusing on socioeconomic status and its impact by race. Other scholars have used the ATUS survey to explore racial and ethnic differences in seeking health care (Carr, Ibuka, and Russell 2010), in unpaid household work (Krantz-Kent 2009), and in medical leave (Goodman et al. 2022), among others. We took a different approach by focusing on time spent seeking government services specifically. We conducted linear and probabilistic regression analyses to test whether race, ethnicity, and other economic and sociodemographic factors were associated with longer wait times when seeking government services, and to estimate the likelihood of waiting based on those variables.

Dependent Variable

For the linear multiple regression model (OLS), the dependent variable was the total amount of time spent in minutes seeking government services such as social services (e.g., applying for unemployment benefits, applying for welfare, food assistance benefits, talking to or meeting a social worker); obtaining licenses and paying fines, fees, taxes (e.g., driver’s licenses, passports, paying property taxes at government offices), using police and fire services; waiting associated with using government services; travel related to using government services, and time spent in calls to and from public officials.¹

Since the ATUS reports time in daily minutes, we estimated the time per week for easier and clearer in-

1. Those categories refer to ATUS 2022 Lexicon, Code 10-01 “Government Services and Civil Obligations.” Categories used: 01, 02, 03; Code 10-03 “Waiting Associated with Government Services” subcategories 04, 05.

terpretation. We multiplied the daily time reported by seven days to obtain a weekly estimate. Modifying the variables in the same proportion, either weekly, monthly, or annually, in no way affects the coefficients' significance. Please see Appendix A for an analysis of different time frames. For the probabilistic regression model, we categorized the dummy variable as zero (0) for those who did not report seeking and waiting for government services and one (1) for those who reported spending more time than zero waiting for any government service. The probabilistic regression model was used primarily to estimate the likelihood of wait times across races.

Independent Variables

Our primary explanatory variables of interest were race and ethnicity. In our first specification model, race/ethnicity was a categorical variable. We created dummy variables for each category: White only non-Hispanic, Black only non-Hispanic, Asian only non-Hispanic, Other races non-Hispanic, and Hispanic only.² In our second model, we added predictor variables that prior research has suggested are associated with variations in wait times: Age, gender, and educational attainment (Carr et al. 2010; Wight et al. 2013). Age was a continuous variable; age squared captured the nonlinear effects of age on time use, if any; that is, whether younger and older people wait longer than people in the middle of the age distribution do. Sex was a dummy variable (women = 1, men = 0). The ATUS does not distinguish among individuals based on gender identity but only reported sex measured binarily. Educational attainment was an ordinal variable measuring the individual's highest educational level. We also added control variables such as weekly earnings, having a partner—whether the individual lives with a partner or is married—the number of children in the household (a continuous variable); employment status (a dummy variable unemployed (1) or employed (0)), and whether the individual was actively looking for work or not (1 = looking, 0 = not looking). For each regression, we added year-fixed effects, and we employed ethnicity/race weights in all regressions.

Our specifications for the OLS models follows:

$$Y_{ti} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Race/Ethnicity}_{i+} + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$Y_{ti} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Race/Ethnicity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Age}_i + \beta_3 \text{Age}^2_i + \beta_4 \text{Sex}_i + \beta_5 \text{Educ.Attainment}_i + B_6 \text{SES} + B_7 \text{PresencePartner}_i + \beta_8 \text{Children}_i + \beta_9 \text{Employment}_i + \beta_{10} \text{SeekingJob}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Our probit regression model follows:

$$\Pr(Y=1) Y_{t_i \sim dy/dx} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Race/Ethnicity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Age}_i + \beta_3 \text{Age}^2_i + \beta_4 \text{Sex}_i + \beta_5 \text{Educ.Attainment}_i + B_6 \text{SES}_i + B_7 \text{PresencePartner}_i + \beta_8 \text{Children}_i + \beta_9 \text{Employment}_i + \beta_{10} \text{SeekingJob}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (3)$$

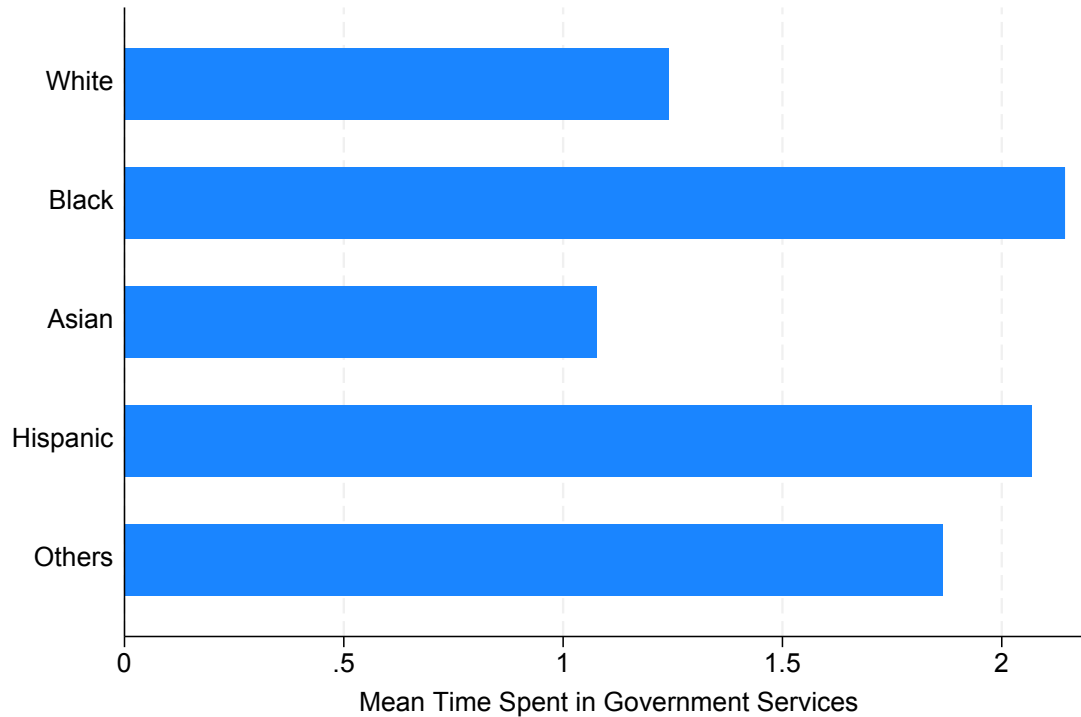
Limitations

ATUS participant time diaries record only time spent in the previous 24 hours, which may miss accumulated time seeking government services. Depending on the service, requesting public documents or seeking other specific government assistance can take several days, weeks, or even months. Since ATUS only reports the time an individual spends in one day, that fact may have limited our analysis. Our dataset had a very large number of respondents reporting zero minutes of applying and waiting for government services, which is a significant limitation in terms of variability and predictions. Yet, considering previous studies, the time reported as zero could result from respondents conflating the time and outcome of the service in two ways. First, individuals might have requested or sought government services without receiving any outcome or service, which they could conflate with nothing (Venkatesh et al. 2016). Second, respondents might conflate efficiency in the delivery of the service with a minimum amount of time, also perceived as zero (Wisniewski 1996; Zeithaml et al. 1990).

Yet, given previous work, we chose to employ OLS to analyze our model, even with a zero pile-up (Holt and Vinopal 2023; Sturman 1999; Sturman et al. 2022). Additionally, we conducted an OLS model omitting zeros and found similar results, and a probabilistic regression model that estimated marginal effects with times greater than zero minutes. We also recognize

2. We recognize that the approaches to meaningfully categorize Hispanics in data analysis continue to evolve. Our data analysis in this article follows the categories used by the U.S. Department of Labor in data gathering. Our results are therefore limited by their approach and should be read with those limitations in mind.

Figure 1. Weekly Minutes Spent Seeking and Waiting for Government Services 2003–2022 by Race and Ethnicity



the low adjusted R-squared, which could indicate that our predictor variables are not explaining the variation in the use of time when seeking government services. However, this is a common result when using ATUS data, given the high pile-up of zeros (e.g., Holt and Vinopal 2023; Wight et al. 2013).

Data Analysis Results

Table 1 reports a descriptive analysis of the weekly time used when seeking government services by race. On average, Blacks spend 1.7 times as much time and Hispanics 1.6 times more time compared to Whites when waiting for government services. Considering the maximum time in minutes reported daily, if this were estimated per week, Blacks would spend on average 3.0 hours more than Whites (2695–2520 = 175 minutes), and Hispanics 2.3 hours more than Whites (2660–2520 = 140 minutes) waiting to obtain public services of various sorts. If the analysis were estimated annually, Whites spend, on average, 11.71 hours less than Blacks and 16 hours less than Hispanics seeking and awaiting government services. See also Figure 1, which illustrates the means of weekly time spent seeking or waiting for public services.

Table 1. Weekly Minutes Spent Seeking and Waiting for Government Services 2003–2022 by Race

Race/ Ethnicity	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
White	160,704	1.240	28.836	0	2,520
Black	30,967	2.144	42.486	0	2,695
Asian	8,396	1.076	27.071	0	1,260
Hispanic	32,235	2.069	47.488	0	2,660
Others	4,289	1.865	43.344	0	2,100
Total	236,591				

Table 2 reports the time used when seeking government services by type of service and race. When analyzing time spent by type of public service, social services (e.g., Medicaid, food stamps, TANF, etc.) and waiting for calls from government officials comprised the highest wait times for all racial groups. Yet, Whites spend almost one-third less time waiting for social services (mean = 0.245 minutes) than do Blacks (mean = 0.657) and Hispanics (mean = 0.773), and about a quarter less time than other races expend in the same circumstance (1.118). In terms of waiting for calls from government officials, Whites wait an average of 5.146 minutes per

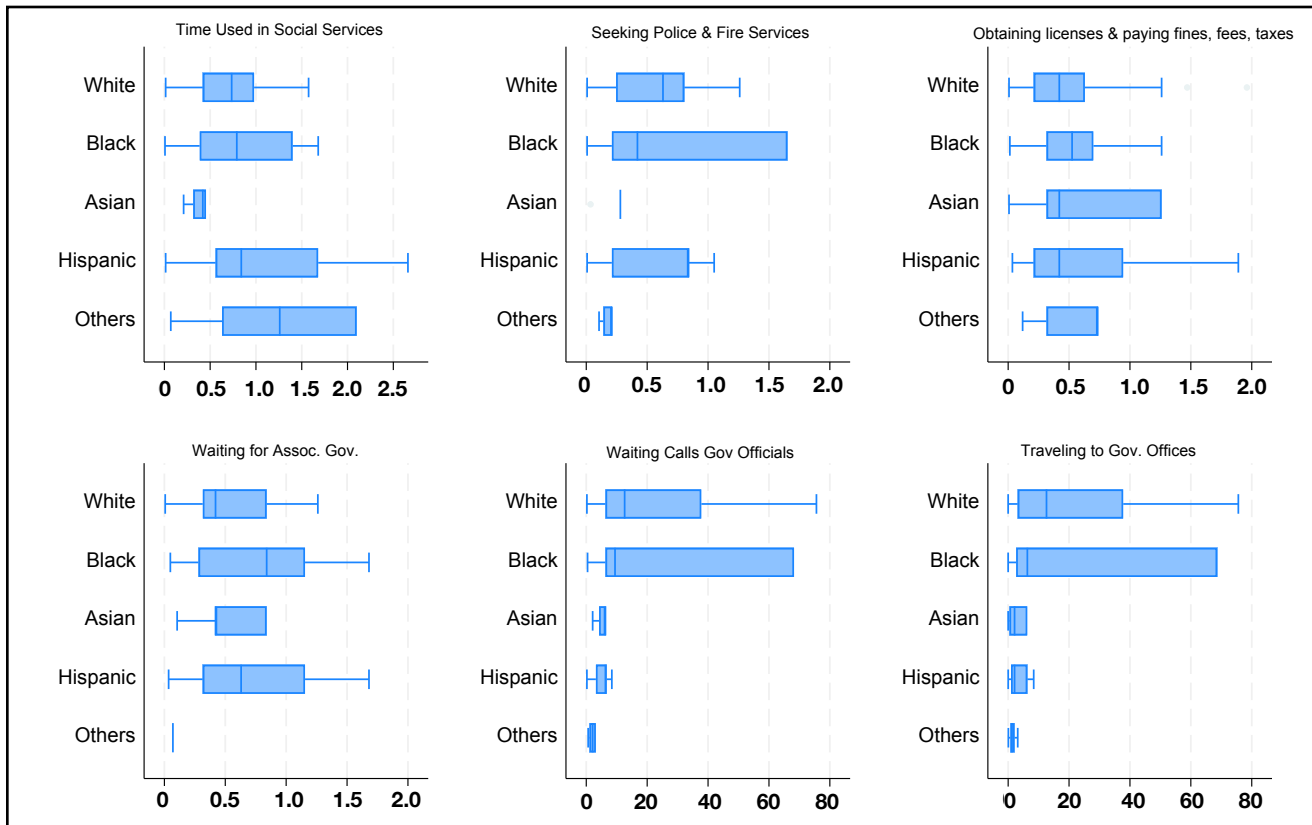
Table 2. Weekly Minutes Spent Seeking and Waiting for Government Services 2003–2022 by Type and Race

Type Gov. Services	White			Black			Asian			Hispanic			Other races (American Indian, Hawaiian)		
	Mean	Std. dev.	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Max
Social services	0.245	13.386	1,575	0.657	23.665	1,680	0.167	7.919	455	0.773	30.530	2,660	1.118	39.177	2,100
Police and fire services	0.124	8.353	1,260	0.178	11.355	1,652	0.038	3.080	280	0.153	9.910	1,050	0.155	5.262	210
Obtaining licenses & paying fines, fees, taxes	0.478	15.494	1,960	0.661	18.714	1,260	0.518	18.161	1,260	0.439	16.842	1,890	0.322	12.752	735
Waiting for associated w/gov. services	0.134	8.789	1,260	0.384	17.938	1,680	0.213	11.285	840	0.252	14.300	1,680	0.016	1.069	70
Waiting calls gov. officers	5.146	363.915	75,600	7.154	434.564	68,250	1.000	72.472	6,300	2.124	104.662	8,400	2.252	65.528	3,150
Travel gov. services	0.540	14.540	1,680	1.201	28.032	2,135	0.506	14.682	805	0.815	19.567	1,470	0.589	11.601	315
N	160,704			30,967			8,396			32,235			4289		

week, while Blacks wait 7.154 minutes. Notably, the wait time for Hispanics in this regard is low compared to other races (mean = 2.124), possibly due to that group’s preference for personal interaction rather than telephone, as other studies have demonstrated (Bucholtz 2009; Evans et al. 2000); and due to English language barriers for Hispanic speakers, for whom holding an interview, receiving information, or asking questions in English is often onerous, especially on the telephone (Engstrom and Won Min 2004; Nathenson et al. 2016). If the standard deviation is considered, Blacks wait 1.3 hours longer (SD = 434.56 ~ 7.24 hours) than Whites (SD = 363.91 ~ 6.0 hours) for telephone calls from government officials. See also the use of time and waiting weighted among the types of government services and races in Figure 2. Overall, non-Whites dedicate more time to seeking and awaiting government services, and their time distribution shows a substantially higher variability as well.

Table 3 reports model specification results. Compared to Whites as the reference group, in all specification models, being Black or Hispanic is associated with a higher use of time when seeking and waiting for government services. In Model 2, when controlling for other variables, Blacks and Hispanics spend 0.669 and 0.662 minutes as much time on government services as Whites. In other words, Whites spend about a third less time waiting for government services than Blacks and Hispanics do. Age, although statistically significant, does not represent substantial variation in waiting time. Educational attainment is not statistically significant in explaining variation in time use when seeking government services. Unsurprisingly, socioeconomic status (SES) measured in weekly earnings is statistically significant in explaining the use of time when seeking government services. Higher weekly earnings are associated with decreased wait time for government services. Being married or having a permanent partner is associated with a decrease of 0.8 minutes when seeking government services. This result is consistent with previous studies that found that single parenting or marital status was associated with higher learning, compliance, and psychological costs (Edwards et al. 2023; Herd and Moynihan 2019), which could also result in higher waiting times. In addition, a greater number of children in the household was associated with an increase in wait time by 0.264 minutes. Being unemployed was also associated with an increase of 0.534 minutes of wait time

Figure 2. Weekly Minutes Spent Seeking and Waiting for Government Services 2003-2022 by Type and Race (Means Weight)



when seeking government services, which is expected. Involvement in a job is also a statistically significant variable associated with a slight increase of 0.013 minutes when seeking government services. Appendix A shows similar results when analyzing the monthly use of time.

Table 4 reports the probabilities of waiting when seeking government services. The likelihood that a White person spends time waiting is 0.09%, that of a Black person is 0.18%, and that of a Hispanic person is 0.12%, with a confidence level of 95%. These results are consistent with our previous OLS results, suggesting that Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to wait longer than Whites when seeking government services. Table 4 also shows that women are more likely to wait longer than men. See also Figure 3 and note that the x-axis measures the probability of reporting any number of minutes greater than zero ($pr(\text{Time Higher Zero})$). Previous work has demonstrated that women bear a disproportionate share of wait time (Abramovitz 2017; Rodriguez et al. 1996), partly because social norms make women more responsible for caring for their homes and families (Mastracci 2013). Also, based on the results,

having less than a graduate education, higher weekly earnings, having more children, being unemployed, and looking for a job increase the likelihood of longer wait times while interacting with the administrative state.

Conclusion

Everyone interacts with the administrative state while seeking government services and or requesting official documents; in doing so, individuals allocate time and often wait. We found that Blacks and Hispanics spend more time waiting for government services by 1.7 and 1.6 times, respectively, compared to Whites. When controlling for other sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, educational attainment, and marital status, on average, Whites spend about a third less time waiting for government services than Blacks and Hispanics do. We also found that socioeconomic status (SES) correlates with race, which is consistent with one previous study exploring the time cost of waiting for various activities (Holt and Vinopal 2023).

Our findings indicate that Blacks and Hispanics face greater challenges in exercising their agency over their

Table 3. Regression Results: Gaps in Time Used When Seeking Government Services 2003–2022 (Weekly Minutes)

	Model 1	Model 2
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Referent Group)		
Black	.903 (.212)*	0.669 (.177)*
Asian	-.163 (.382)	-.094 (.386)
Hispanic	.828 (.208)*	0.662 (.218)*
Other	.625 (.528)	0.441 (.530)
Demographic		
Age		0.084 (0.023) *
Age ²		-.0008 (0.0002) *
Woman		0.049 (0.146)
Educational Attainment		
High School		-.0.187 (-.0.248)
Some College		0.378 (0.265)
College Degree		0.077 (0.255)
Graduate Degree		0.001 (0.307)
Socio Economic Status (SES— Weekly earnings)		-.4.83e (1.21e)*
Control for Other Factors		
Spouse/Partner present		-.0.805 (0.177) *
Number household children		0.264 (0.073) *
Unemployed		0.534 (0.218) *
Seeking Job		0.013 (0.003) *
Constant	1.240 (.085)	-.0.213 (0.518)
R-squared	0.0001	0.0004
N	236,591	236,591

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. *p < .05

limited time. The increased time spent waiting and navigating processes faced by these groups may stem from their need to invest more time in understanding policies or government services and fulfilling requirements—such as completing forms, gathering documentation, traveling to offices, or awaiting communication from public officials—and, crucially, enduring longer wait times. This puts them at a significant disadvantage in society more broadly. The differences in the use of time and waiting create a separate, segregated, and excluded

experience, preventing some from full integration socioeconomically, civically, and politically.

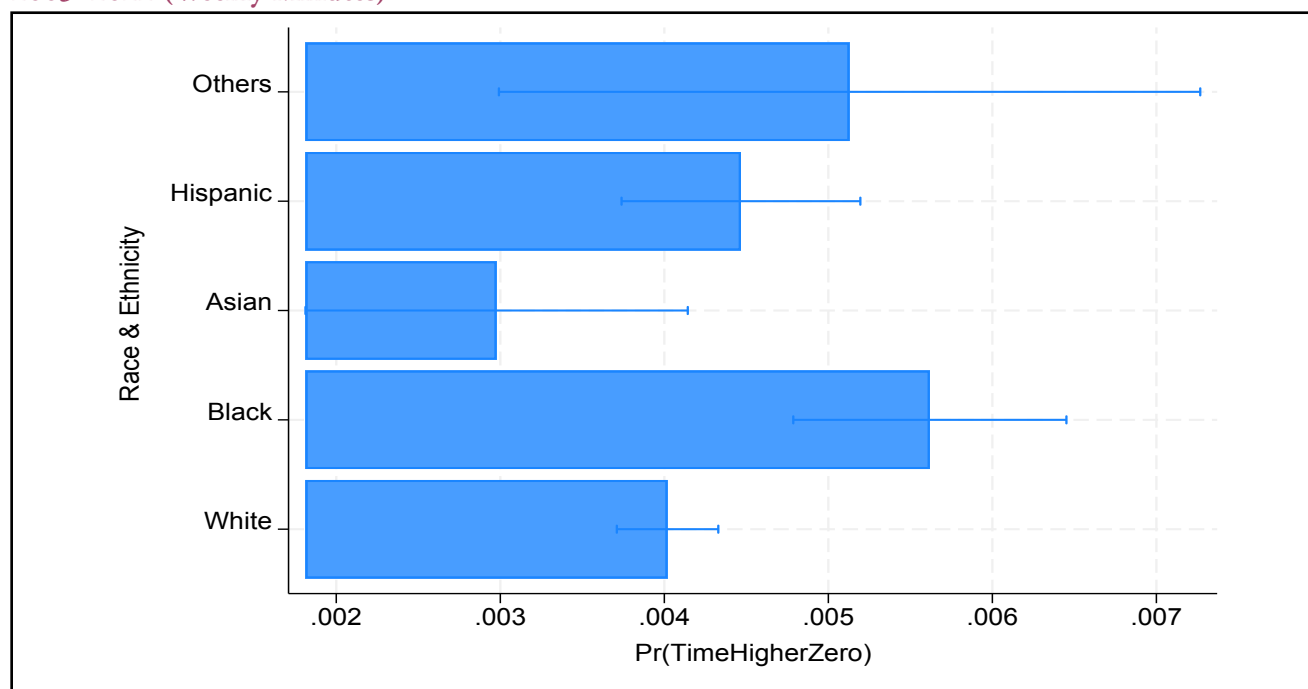
Waiting is a universal experience (Bailey 2019; Foster 2019). However, waiting is not experienced in the same way by everyone; it differs in dimensions, frequency, duration, perception, and the emotions that it occasions. Time spent waiting for a passport, airport security screening, car registration, or voter registration card differs from the experience of waiting for approval for welfare benefits, a work permit, or state identification. Moreover, the perceptions and emotions while waiting in person differ from the time spent waiting on the telephone or waiting for a response to a previous query. Waiting on the telephone, while advantageous if the individual is engaged in other activities, can lead to further frustration if the petitioner needs help communicating in English. In such situations, when the citizen cannot see the body language of the SLB, that fact can itself represent a communication barrier and foster a perception of lack of control over the situation, as well as mistrust. Waiting in an office, while involving commute costs and potentially restricting other activities, can be advantageous for individuals with language barriers when it clarifies situations, results in body language assurance, and builds trust.

Our findings reinforce the need to delve into the meaning of spending more time and waiting for those enduring it. The normalization of biases in wait times reproduces the exclusion of certain groups (e.g., Hispanics, Blacks, women, and single parents). Along with longer wait times, marginalized groups already lack economic resources in comparative terms, meaning that wait times exacerbate their already disadvantaged position. Indeed, in the United States, Blacks and Hispanics experience higher overall rates of poverty, lower levels of income, and lower educational attainment (Cameron and Heckman 2001; Gradin 2012) than Whites.

The implementation of complex procedures and mechanisms designed to prevent fraud and abuse and improve efficiency may account for the increased time experienced by people of color; however, in practice, these processes are often racialized (Gilens 2009). Under the justification of avoiding fraud and abuse, governments have created rules and procedures that demand more documentation and evidence and more rigorous scrutiny of Blacks and Hispanics than Whites (Ray et al. 2023). Also, in the name of efficiency and fairness, the administrative state has designed standardized applica-

Table 4. Likelihood of Waiting When Seeking Government Services, 2003–2022 (Weekly Minutes)

	dy/dx	Delta-method std. err.	z	P>z	[95% conf. interval]	
Race/Ethnicity						
White	0.0009	0.0007	1.35	0.177	–0.00040 0.00219	
Black	0.0018*	0.0008	2.4	0.016	0.00033 0.00330	
Hispanic	0.0012*	0.0008	1.66	0.097	–0.00023 0.00272	
Others	0.0016	0.0012	1.3	0.194	–0.00080 0.00396	
Demographic						
Age	0.0002*	0.0000	3.95	0.000	0.00009 0.00027	
Age^2	0.0000*	0.0000	–3.91	0.000	0.00000 0.00000	
Woman	0.0003	0.0003	1.22	0.221	–0.00021 0.00090	
Educational Attainment						
High School	0.0005	0.0005	1.01	0.313	–0.00046 0.00143	
Some College	0.0013*	0.0005	2.69	0.007	0.00036 0.00233	
College Degree	0.0017*	0.0005	3.55	0.000	0.00078 0.00269	
Graduate Degree	–0.0015*	0.0006	2.59	0.010	–0.00037 –0.00272	
Control for Other Variables						
Weekly earnings (SES)	–0.0199*	2.73E–09	–7.27	0.000	0.00000 0.00000	
Spouse/Partner present	–0.0022*	0.0003	–6.34	0.000	–0.00289 –0.00153	
Number household children	0.0006*	0.0001	4.42	0.000	0.00032 0.00084	
Unemployed	0.0010*	0.0004	2.28	0.022	0.00014 0.00186	
Seeking Job	0.0000*	4.10E–06	3.16	0.002	0.00000 0.00002	

Figure 3. Likelihood of Waiting Time When Seeking Government Services 2003–2022 (Weekly Minutes)

tion forms and procedures that exclude *ipso facto* certain population groups.

Put plainly, White people are not exposed to racialized administrative burdens (Ray et al. 2023). Although nominally, everyone faces the same requirements and procedures, and many rules are justified to avoid fraud and increase efficiency, in the end, they reinforce racial inequalities because their design and practices privilege members of the majority demographic. Differentiated policy requirements, fees, and processes imposed by the administrative state become exclusion, power, and control. The administrative burdens scholarship has demonstrated that race results in disparate policy outcomes (Herd and Moynihan 2019; Meier et al. 1989). Uneven distribution of time costs further embeds systematic inequality. Indeed, being White is an implicit social credential or privilege that buffers a person from otherwise burdensome administrative practices (Ray et al. 2023, 140) and results in shorter wait times. In this way, the administrative state produces varied forms of citizenship/membership and reproduces inequalities based on race, gender, and income (Carswell et al. 2019).

Policy Implications

The administrative state serves as an agent of symbolic and cultural production and reproduction, establishing and enforcing specific routines and rituals as it operates. While spending time and waiting are expected when accessing government services, for some individuals, these norms have created a situation where extended wait times are normalized, anticipated, and seen as inevitable. Some scholars argue that imposing waiting times is a strategy of domination, whether intentional or not, that ultimately affects the most disadvantaged (Auyero 2012; Foster 2019; Seefeldt 2017). The famed sociologist and social theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1989, 25) put this concern plainly when he observed that “making people wait is one of the privileged ways of experiencing the effects of power.”

Individuals who must devote more time seeking government services and wait longer to benefit from welfare programs also bear the opportunity cost of foregoing or postponing other life activities. For instance, individuals who must wait for a driver’s license cannot travel to work, attend medical appointments, go to the grocery store, and so on, without risking additional costs. Individuals who depend on and must wait for

return telephone calls or responses to emails have no choice but to wait. These opportunity costs illustrate forms of social injustice that have been normalized and reproduced via rules and practices embedded in the administrative state. Auyero (2012) has similarly argued that daily interactions of disadvantaged groups with the state are mediated by bureaucratic practices that make them patients of the state instead of engaged citizens, as the epigraph to this article suggests (Auyero 2012, 187).

Differences in wait times also result in a hierarchy of attention to certain societal groups and are rooted in racialized burdens at the institutional level (Ray et al. 2023). Marginalized individuals bear the burdens and consequences of wait times, while public organizations are typically not held accountable for imposing them (Chudnovsky and Peeters 2021). Wait times also produce negative emotive states in those affected. All implementation and policy processes, including service delivery by the administrative state, impose emotional consequences (Portillo et al. 2022) and create feedback effects (Arnold 1990). Feedback theory posits that individuals develop negative attitudes toward the government when their experiences have been frustrating or they have not received the attention they expected (Moynihan and Soss 2014). Service-providing agencies that appear routinely to impose wait-related costs inequitably may prompt entire groups of citizens to perceive and judge the entire government negatively, as a result, yielding distrust of the administrative state as a whole (Benton and Landgrave 2024).

The design and implementation of public policies establish citizenship and membership, shape participation, and transmit messages regarding everyone’s roles in society (Wichowsky and Moynihan 2008). Past studies have shown that how a public service is administered and implemented matters: whether the administration is perceived as fair or arbitrary (Tyler 2010) greatly affects citizen and community members’ perceptions, conveying messages about their value as individuals. In short, negative experiences with the state can alienate people from their government (Campbell 2012).

Underestimating the time spent waiting by minority group members constitutes a subtle form of social injustice, even as it represents a symbol of power (Auyero 2012; Foster 2019), which has largely been overlooked by public administration (Cohen 2018). Delays in citizenship naturalization or immigration decisions, welfare program approvals, and basic government services,

as well as unanswered calls from street-level workers, are a few examples of how imposing time costs can become a means of wielding power in practice that may result in limiting personal activities in other realms and denying basic rights.

Uneven waiting time distribution across population groups *de facto* creates different membership categories and societal roles. Powerless groups wait longer (Auyero 2012; Foster 2019). This phenomenon implies that there are certain individuals for whom the system works and responds efficiently and effectively to their needs and those for whom it does not. Moreover, privileged groups enjoy greater agency regarding when, where, and how to wait; they can also plan since they experience less uncertainty and frustration at the hands of SLBs. The functionality of government services needs to be revisited by examining both power imbalances and the unequal effects they reproduce for already marginalized groups. Even if individuals receive what they were seeking following a significant period of waiting, future research could focus on how administrative state decision processes result in feelings of disrespect, anger, frustration, and resignation, as well as intimidation and humiliation among minority group members.

Scholars also need to learn more about racialized organizational sources, structures, resources, and decision-making that result in burdens imposed on already-disadvantaged individuals and result in disparate effects by race (Ray et al. 2023). Public administration scholars and practitioners should reflect on ensuring reasonable wait times for all citizens. Could governments establish reasonable wait time targets while also developing mechanisms that make waiting less onerous? Could government reduce wait times by disseminating more information in languages accessible to different groups? Could government create differentiated procedures for accessing services that respond to target groups' particular needs and contexts? Should there be clear and stiff sanctions for public officials who do not respond in a timely manner to vulnerable population member inquiries? Future research could build upon our results in these ways and more.

References

- Aberbach, Joel, and Tom Christensen. 2005. "Citizens and Consumers: An NPM Dilemma." *Public Management Review* 7 (2): 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030500091319>
- Abramovitz, Mimi. 2017. *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present*. Routledge.
- Andaya, Elise. 2019. "Race-ing Time: Clinical Temporalities and Inequality in Public Prenatal Care." *Medical Anthropology* 38 (8): 651–663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2019.1590826>
- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Yale University Press.
- Auyero, Javier. 2012. *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina*. Duke University Press.
- Avery, James M., and Mark Peffley. 2003. "Race Matters: The Impact of News Coverage of Welfare Reform on Public Opinion." In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, edited by Sanford F. Schram, Joe Brian Soss, and Richard Carl Fording, 131–150. University of Michigan Press.
- Baekgaard, Martin, Donald P. Moynihan, and Mette Kjærgaard Thomsen. 2021. "Why Do Policymakers Support Administrative Burdens? The Roles of Deservingness, Political Ideology, and Personal Experience." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31 (1): 184–200. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa033>
- Bailey, Catherine. 2019. "Waiting in Organisations." *Time & Society* 28 (2): 587–612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X18794587>
- Barnes, Carolyn Y. 2021. "It Takes a While to Get Used to: The Costs of Redeeming Public Benefits." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31 (2): 295–310. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa042>
- Barnes, Carolyn Y., and Julia R. Henly. 2018. "'They Are Underpaid and Understaffed': How Clients Interpret Encounters with Street-Level Bureaucrats." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28 (2): 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muy008>
- Batley, Richard. 2004. "The Politics of Service Delivery Reform." *Development and Change* 35 (1): 31–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2004.00341>
- Becker, Gary S. 1965. "A Theory of the Allocation of Time." *The Economic Journal* 75: 493–517. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2228949>.
- Bearfield, Domonic, Nicole Humphrey, Shannon Portillo, and Norma Riccucci. 2023. "Dismantling Institutional and Structural Racism: Implementation Strategies Across the United States." *Journal of Social Equity*

- and *Public Administration* 1(1): 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.24926/jsepa.v1i1.4837>
- Bell, Elizabeth, Ani Ter Mkrtchyan, Wesley Wehde, and Kylie Smith. 2021. “Just or Unjust? How Ideological Beliefs Shape Street Level Bureaucrats’ Perceptions of Administrative Burden.” *Public Administration Review* 81 (4): 610–624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13311>
- Benton, Mark, and Michelangelo Landgrave. 2024. “How Can the Police Avoid Earning Our Distrust? Exploring the Associations of Police Distrust Among African Americans.” *Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration* 2 (1): 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.24926/jsepa.v2i1.4987>
- Bier, David. 2019 (June 18). “Immigration Wait Times from Quotas Have Doubled: Green Card Backlogs Are Long, Growing, and Inequitable.” *Cato Institute Policy Analysis*, number 873. <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-873-updated.pdf>
- Boltvinik, Julio. 2023. “Measuring Poverty.” In *From Poverty to Well-Being and Human Flourishing*, Vol. I, edited by Julio Boltvinik, 95–96. Policy Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. “Social Space and Symbolic Power.” *Sociological Theory* 7 (1): 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202060>
- Brewer, Gene A., and Richard M. Walker. 2010. “The Impact of Red Tape on Governmental Performance: An Empirical Analysis.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 20 (1): 233–257. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mun040>
- Briceno Mosquera, Andrea. 2023. “They Asked for More, More, and More Paperwork: Administrative Burdens When Undocumented Youth Claim In-State Resident Tuition Policy Benefits.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 46 (4): 623–645. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737231182672>
- Brinkerhoff, Derick W., and Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff. 2011. “Public–Private Partnerships: Perspectives on Purposes, Publicness, and Good Governance.” *Public Administration and Development* 31 (1): 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.584>
- Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Laura Bloomburg. 2014. “Public Value Governance: Moving Beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management.” *Public Administration Review* 74 (4): 445–456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12238>
- Bucholtz, Mary. 2009. “From Stance to Style: Gender, Interaction, and Indexicality in Mexican Immigrant Youth Slang.” *escholarship.org*. Material downloaded on March 18, 2024.
- Cameron, Stephen V., and James J. Heckman. 2001. “The Dynamics of Educational Attainment for Black, Hispanic, and White Males.” *Journal of Political Economy* 109 (3): 455–499. <https://doi.org/10.1086/321014>
- Cammett, Ann. 2016. “Welfare Queens Redux: Criminalizing Black Mothers in the Age of Neoliberalism.” *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 25: 363–394.
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2012. “Policy Makes Mass Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (1): 333–351. [Annualreviews.org . https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202)
- Carswell, Grace, Thomas Chambers, and Geert De Neve. 2019. “Waiting for the State: Gender, Citizenship, and Everyday Encounters with Bureaucracy in India.” *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37 (4): 597–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263774X18802930>
- Carr, Deborah, Yoko Ibuka, and Louise B. Russell. 2010. “How Much Time Do Americans Spend Seeking Health Care? Racial and Ethnic Differences in Patient Experiences.” In *The Impact of Demographics on Health and Health Care: Race, Ethnicity, and Other Social Factors*, edited by Jennie Jacobs Kronenfeld, 71–98. Emerald Publishing Group.
- Cohen, Elizabeth F. 2018. *The Political Value of Time: Citizenship, Duration, and Democratic Justice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Christensen, Julian, Lene Aarøe, Martin Baekgaard, Pamela Herd, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2020. “Human Capital and Administrative Burden: The Role of Cognitive Resources in Citizen-State Interactions.” *Public Administration Review* 80 (1): 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13134>
- Chudnovsky, Mariana, and Rik Peeters. 2021. “The Unequal Distribution of Administrative Burden: A Framework and an Illustrative Case Study for Understanding Variation in People’s Experience of Burdens.” *Social Policy & Administration* 55(4): 527–542. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12639>
- Edwards, Frank, Kelley Fong, Victoria Copeland, Mical Raz, and Alan Dettlaff. 2023. “Administrative Burdens in Child Welfare Systems.” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 9 (5): 214–231. <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2023.9.5.09>
- Engstrom, David, and Jong Won Min. 2004. “Perspectives of Bilingual Social Workers: ‘You Just Have to Do a Lot More for Them.’” *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 13 (1): 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n01_04
- Evans, Gary W., Stephen J. Lepore, and Karen Mata Allen. 2000. “Cross-Cultural Differences in Tolerance for Crowding: Fact or Fiction?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (2): 204–210. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.2.204>

- Foster, Rebecca. 2019. "Doing the Wait': An Exploration into the Waiting Experiences of Prisoners' Families." *Time & Society* 28 (2): 459–477. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X16633235>
- Fountain, Jane E. 2001. "Paradoxes of Public Sector Customer Service." *Governance* 14 (1): 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0952-1895.00151>
- Friedman, Milton. 2018. *Theory of the Consumption Function*. Princeton University Press.
- Gilens, Martin. 2009. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. University of Chicago Press.
- Goodman, Julia M., Dawn M. Richardson, and William H. Dow. 2022. "Racial and Ethnic Inequities in Paid Family and Medical Leave: United States, 2011 and 2017–2018." *American Journal of Public Health* 112 (7): 1050–1058. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.306825>
- González, Marcela F. 2022. "Precarity for the Global Talent: The Impact of Visa Policies on High-Skilled Immigrants' Work in the United States." *International Migration* 60 (2): 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12870>
- Gradín, Carlos. 2012. "Poverty Among Minorities in the United States: Explaining the Racial Poverty Gap for Blacks and Latinos." *Applied Economics* 44 (2): 3793–3804. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2011.581219>
- Halili, Ruzhdi. 2020. "Administrative Burdens from the Service Users' Perspective." *Journal of Comparative Politics* 13 (2): 65–85.
- Hasenfeld, Yeheskel. 1972. "People Processing Organizations: An Exchange Approach." *American Sociological Review* 37 (2): 256–263. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2093466>
- Hasenfeld, Yeheskel, Jane A. Rafferty, and Mayer N. Zald. 1987. "The Welfare State, Citizenship, and Bureaucratic Encounters." *Annual Review of Sociology* 13: 387–415. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.13.080187.002131>
- Heinrich, Carolyn J. 2016. "The Bite of Administrative Burden: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 26 (3): 403–420. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muv034>
- Herd, Pamela, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2019. *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hero, Rodney E., and Robert R. Preuhs. 2007. "Immigration and the Evolving American Welfare State: Examining Policies in the US States." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (3): 498–517. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00264.x>
- Holler, Roni, and Noam Tarshish. 2024. "Administrative Burden in Citizen-State Encounters: The Role of Waiting, Communication Breakdowns and Administrative Errors." *Social Policy and Society* 23 (3): 593–610. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746422000355>
- Holt, Stephen B., and Katie Vinopal. 2023. "Examining Inequality in the Time Cost of Waiting." *Nature Human Behaviour* 7 (4): 545–555. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01524-w>
- Humphrey, Nicole M. 2023. "Racialized Organizations in the Public Sector: Exploring Race and White Normativity." *Public Integrity* 25 (3): 316–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2022.2076491>
- Kear, Mark. 2013. "Governing Homo Subprimicus: Beyond Financial Citizenship, Exclusion, and Rights." *Antipode* 45 (4): 926–946. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01045.x>
- Kennedy, Elizabeth J. 2015. "Wage Theft as Public Larceny." *Brooklyn Law Review* 81 (2): 1–46. <https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr/vol81/iss2/2/>
- Krantz-Kent, Rachel. 2009. "Measuring Time Spent in Unpaid Household Work: Results from the American Time Use Survey." *Monthly Labor Review* 132 (46): 1–14.
- Lipsky, Michael. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Logue, Larry M., and Peter Blanck. 2010. *Race, Ethnicity, and Disability: Veterans and Benefits in Post-Civil War America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lu, Frederick Q., Amresh D. Hanchate, and Michael K. Paasche-Orlow. 2021. "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Emergency Department Wait Times in the United States, 2013–2017." *American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 47: 138–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2021.03.051>
- Martin, Lucie. 2024. "The Intra-Household Distribution of Administrative Burdens." *Economic and Social Review* 55 (3): 387–456.
- Masood, Ayesha, and Muhammad Azfar Nisar. 2021. "Administrative Capital and Citizens' Responses to Administrative Burden." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31 (1): 56–72. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa031>
- Mastracci, Sharon H. 2022. "Dirty Work and Emotional Labor in Public Service: Why Government Employers Should Adopt an Ethic of Care." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 42 (3): 537–552. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X21997548>
- Mastracci, Sharon H. 2013. "Time Use on Caregiving Activities: Comparing Federal Government and Private Sector Workers." *Review of Public Per-*

- sonnel *Administration* 33 (1): 3–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X1243698>
- Maynard-Moody, Steven, and Michael Musheno. 2000. “State Agent or Citizen Agent: Two Narratives of Discretion.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 10 (2): 329–358. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024272>
- Meier, Kenneth J., Joseph Stewart, and Robert E. England. 1989. *Race, Class, and Education: The Politics of Second-Generation Discrimination*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Meyers, Marcia K., and Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen. 2012. “Street-Level Bureaucrats and the Implementation of Public Policy.” In *The SAGE Handbook of Public Administration*, edited by B. Guy Peters and Ion Pierre, 153–164. Sage.
- Mikkelsen, Kim Sass, Jonas Krogh Madsen, and Martin Baekgaard. 2024. “Is Stress Among Street Level Bureaucrats Associated with Experiences of Administrative Burden Among Clients? A Multilevel Study of the Danish Unemployment Sector.” *Public Administration Review* 84 (2): 248–260. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13673>
- Moynihan, Donald P., and Joe Soss. 2014. “Policy Feedback and the Politics of Administration.” *Public Administration Review* 74(3): 320–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12200>
- Moynihan, Donald, Pamela Herd, and Hope Harvey. 2015. “Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen-State Interactions.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25 (1): 43–69. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muu009>
- Moynihan, Donald, Julie Gerzina, and Pamela Herd. 2022. “Kafka’s Bureaucracy: Immigration Administrative Burdens in the Trump Era.” *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 5 (1): 22–35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvac007>
- Nadasen, Premilla. 2007. “From Widow to ‘Welfare Queen’: Welfare and the Politics of Race.” *Black Women, Gender & Families* 1 (2): 52–77. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacwomegendfam.1.2.0052
- Nathenson, Robert A., Brendan Saloner, Michael R. Richards, and Karin V. Rhodes. 2016. “Spanish Speaking Immigrants’ Access to Safety Net Providers and Translation Services Across Traditional and Emerging US Destinations.” *Milbank Quarterly* 94 (4): 768–799. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12231>
- Oberfield, Zachary W., and Matthew B. Incantalupo. 2021. “Racial Discrimination and Street Level Managers: Performance, Publicness, and Group Bias.” *Public Administration Review* 81 (6): 1055–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13376>
- Obinna, Denise N. 2020. “Wait-Times, Visa Queues, and Uncertainty: The Barriers to American Legal Migration.” *Migration and Development* 9 (3): 390–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2020.1797456>
- Ohlson, Madeline. 2020. “Effects of Socioeconomic Status and Race on Access to Healthcare in the United States.” *Perspectives* 12 (2) 1–13. <https://scholars.unh.edu/perspectives/vol12/iss1/2>
- Ortiz, Stephen R. 2009. *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*. New York University Press.
- Pettigrew, Stephen. 2017. “The Racial Gap in Wait Times: Why Minority Precincts Are Underserved by Local Election Officials.” *Political Science Quarterly* 132 (3): 527–547. <https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12657>
- Portillo, Shannon, Nicole Humphrey, and Domonic A. Bearfield. 2022. “Representative Bureaucracy Theory and the Implicit Embrace of Whiteness and Masculinity.” *Public Administration Review* 82 (3): 594–597. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13477>
- Powell, Catherine, and Camille Gear Rich. 2020. “The ‘Welfare Queen’ Goes to the Polls: Race-Based Fractures in Gender Politics and Opportunities for Intersectional Coalitions.” *Georgetown Law Journal* 108(SE): 105–165. https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/faculty_scholarship/1194
- Pratt, Eleanor, and Heather Hahn. 2021. “Most Adults Who Feel Treated or Judged Unfairly When Applying for Public Benefits Report Adverse Consequences.” Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/most-adults-who-feel-treated-or-judged-unfairly-when-applying-public-benefits-report-adverse-consequences>
- Ray, Victor. 2019. “A Theory of Racialized Organizations.” *American Sociological Review* 84 (1): 26–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312241882233>
- Ray, Victor, Pamela Herd, and Donald Moynihan. 2023. “Racialized Burdens: Applying Racialized Organization Theory to the Administrative State.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 33 (1): 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muac001>
- Rodriguez, Michael A., S. Szkupinski Quiroga, and H. M. Bauer. 1996. “Breaking the Silence.” *Archives of Family Medicine* 5: 153–158.
- Rothstein, Richard. 2017. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Liveright Publishing.
- Schram, Sanford F. 2005. *Putting a Black Face on Welfare: The Good and the Bad*. State University of New York Press.

- Schram, Sanford F., Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording, and Linda Houser. 2009. "Deciding to Discipline: Race, Choice, and Punishment at the Frontlines of Welfare Reform." *American Sociological Review* 74 (3): 398–422. SSRN.org.
- Schweitzer, Justin. 2022. "How to Address the Administrative Burdens of Accessing the Safety Net." Accessed at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-to-address-the-administrative-burdens-of-accessing-the-safety-net/>
- Seefeldt, Kristin S. 2017. "Waiting It Out: Time, Action, and the Process of Securing Benefits." *Qualitative Social Work* 16 (3): 300–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015606188>
- Sen, Amartya. 1981. "Issues in the Measurement of Poverty." In *Measurement in Public Choice*, edited by Steinar Strøm, 144–166. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1992. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Belknap Press.
- Soss, Joe, Richard C. Fording, and Sanford F. Schram. 2008. "The Color of Devolution: Race, Federalism, and the Politics of Social Control." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (3): 536–553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00328.x>
- Sturman, Michael C. 1999. "Multiple Approaches to Analyzing Count Data in Studies of Individual Differences: The Propensity for Type I Errors." *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 59 (3): 414–430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131649921969956>
- Sturman, Michael C., A.J. Sturman, and Caleb J. Sturman. 2022. "Uncontrolled Control Variables: The Extent That a Researcher's Degrees of Freedom with Control Variables Increases Various Types of Statistical Errors." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 107 (1): 9–22.
- Tummers, Lars L.G., Victor Bekkers, Evelien Vink, and Michael Musheno. 2015. "Coping During Public Service Delivery: A Conceptualization and Systematic Review of the Literature." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25 (4): 1099–1126. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muu056>
- Tyler, Tom R. 2010. "Legitimacy in Corrections: Policy Implications." *Criminology & Public Policy* 9 (1): 127–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2010.00615.x>
- Van Thiel, Sandra, and Frans L. Leeuw. 2002. "The Performance Paradox in the Public Sector." *Public Performance & Management Review* 25 (3): 267–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2002.11643661>
- Venkatesh, Viswanath, James Y. L. Thong, Frank K. Y. Chan, and Paul J. H. Hu. 2016. "Managing Citizens' Uncertainty in E-Government Services: The Mediating and Moderating Roles of Transparency and Trust." *Information Systems Research* 27 (1): 87–111. <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2015.0612>
- Wichowsky, Amber, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2008. "Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A Policy Feedback Perspective on Performance Management." *Public Administration Review* 68 (5): 908–920. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2008.00931.x>
- Wight, Vanessa R., Suzanne M. Bianchi, and Bijou R. Hunt. 2013. "Explaining Racial/Ethnic Variation in Partnered Women's and Men's Housework: Does One Size Fit All?" *Journal of Family Issues* 34 (3): 394–427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12437705>
- Wisniewski, Mik. 1996. "Measuring Service Quality in the Public Sector: The Potential for SERVQUAL." *Total Quality Management* 7 (4): 357–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09544129650034710>
- Wolf Jr, Charles. 1993. *Markets or Governments: Choosing Between Imperfect Alternatives*. MIT Press.
- Zeithaml, Valerie A., Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman, and Leonard L. Berry. 1990. *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. Free Press.

Appendix A. Regression Results: Gaps in Time Used When Seeking Government Services 2003–2022 (Monthly Time Measured in Minutes)

	Model 1	Model 2
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Reference Category)		
Black	3.874 (0.909)	2.869 (0.933)
Asian	-0.702 (1.639)	-0.403 (1.655)
Hispanic Any Race	3.549 (0.894)	2.840 (0.935)
Other Races	2.679 (2.266)	1.890 (2.271)
Demographics		
Age		0.360 (0.102)
Age Squared		-0.003 (0.001)
Woman		0.210 (0.628)
Educational Attainment		
High School		-0.802 (1.065)
Some College		1.621 (1.139)
College Degree		0.334 (1.094)
Graduate Degree		0.004 (1.319)
Socioeconomic Status (Weekly Earnings)		0.000 (0.000)
Controls for Other Factors		
Spouse/Partner Present		-3.448 (0.762)
Number of Household Children		1.134 (.314)
Unemployed		2.291 (0.936)
Seeking Work		0.056 (0.015)
Constant	5.315 (0.365) (2.220)	-0.915
R-Squared	0.0001	0.0002
Number of Observations	236,591	236,591

Acknowledgment

We thank Professor Dr. Max Stephenson, Jr., for his feedback, suggestions, and editing to improve the article.

Andrea Briceno Mosquera (she/her) (bandream@vt.edu) is a research scientist at the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG). Her research explores administrative burdens, the interaction between citizens/individuals and the administrative state, and the intersections of immigration, higher education, and labor market policies. She was a 2019–2020 fellow with the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

Sharon Mastracci (she/her) (smastracci@vt.edu) is a professor with the Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) at Virginia Tech. She studies gender, emotional labor, and stigmatized work in public service. She was a 2014–2015 Fulbright Scholar in the United Kingdom and is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).