Call for Papers

AI, Remote Work, and Productivity: An International Conference

Supported by the Productivity Network as funded by the SSHRC Partnership Grant, SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, the Bridge Divides Project as funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, Department of Economics at University of Alberta, Rutgers Centre for Global Work and Employment, International Association for Work & Organization Studies, and Stephen Jarislowsky Chair, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Memorial University

Location: Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada

May 8-9, 2025

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a "big shift" in the world of work. In the 2010s, the share of work done from home in the United States was between 5% and 10% (Barrero et al., 2023; Mateyka et al., 2012). During the pandemic's first full year, 2021, the United States Census Bureau (2024) estimates that 17.9% of workers in the country worked from home. The incidence of working from home has stabilized at around 25% of all days worked in the United States, down significantly from its pandemic peak of greater than 60%, but still five times greater than its pre-pandemic level (Bloom, 2024). Clearly, remote work is here to stay. The question is, what exactly are the impacts of working from home?

According to Bloom (2024), the average study finds that fully remote work decreased productivity by 10%. However, some studies find positive effects while others point to even worse negative effects; research indicates a close to neutral impact for hybrid work. Remote work has heterogeneous uptake potential and actual impact across different industries, jobs, organizations, and employees (Bloom et al., 2023; Hansen et al., 2023). Furthermore, the practice is still in its early stages of widespread adoption. As management practices, employee experiences, and enabling technologies all advance to better suit hybrid or fully remote workplaces, longer-term outcomes will likely improve. Management concerns about negative effects on communication, innovation, and culture may all be warranted, but the positive outcomes associated with working from home are likely not yet all uncovered. For example, remote work could reduce real-estate costs and commuting time, improve talent attraction and retention, and lead to better job matches in the labor market by widening the available labor pool across geographical boundaries, and enhancing the representation of underrepresented groups (Hsu & Tambe, 2022).

As remote work was becoming institutionalized in the late stages of the pandemic, artificial intelligence (AI) was thrust into the public eye like never before. OpenAI released its ChatGPT chatbot to the public in November 2022 to substantial media and online publicity. The chatbot displayed capabilities far beyond any AI technology the general public had previously witnessed. Other tech firms accelerated the development of their AI technologies, and large firms in particular have substantially increased their AI investments. Early analyses predicted eventual productivity-boosting effects equal to trillions of dollars to the global economy (McKinsey & Company, 2023), and approximately 80% of the United States

workforce having at least 10% of their tasks being affected by exposure to large language model AI (Eloundou et al., 2023). At the time of writing, the economy is still very early into the adoption stage of these technologies. However, it appears that, so far, AI usage in the economy has been relatively limited outside of several big technology firms that are focused on research and development. The Economist (2024) recently argued that generative AI has had a minimal impact on productivity to date.

Evidently, remote work and AI both have interesting and controversial effects on productivity. Therefore, this call for proposals is seeking research related to the productivity effects of each. Successful proposals will be invited to present a paper at *AI, Remote Work, and Productivity: An International Conference*, a conference to be held on May 8-9, 2025 at Memorial University of Newfoundland located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Scholars from all relevant fields of study (Economics, Management, Sociology, Science and Engineering, Public Policy, etc.) are welcome to submit proposals in line with the conference's topics of interest. Remote work and AI are subjects that span a multitude of disciplines, and the conference will recognize this reality. Please send a proposal relating to your research (maximum of 800 words) to Tony Fang (tfang@mun.ca) and Jane Zhu (zzhu@mun.ca). Questions or comments may also be directed to the same email addresses. Please send your proposal by April 1, 2025. Proposals concerning the following topics, and related subject matter, are welcome:

- Differences in remote work productivity pre-COVID, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the pandemic (i.e., remote work as exogenous shock or strategic choice).
- Determinants of remote work or AI's adoption;
- Productivity effects of remote work or/and AI at the industry, organizational, work unit, or individual levels.
- Mediating and moderating factors in the remote work-productivity or AI-productivity relationships.
- Research into the mechanisms through which remote work or AI can increase/decrease productivity at various levels.
- Research into management practices that can ameliorate productivity in remote or hybrid workplaces, or ameliorate productivity gains from AI adoption.
- Theoretical contributions that may help explain the heterogeneous productivity effects of remote work or AI.
- Comprehensive analyses of existing research into remote work or AI's productivity effects (i.e., meta-analyses or detailed state-of-the-art literature reviews).
- Qualitative or mixed-methods research into the mechanisms behind remote work's/AI's productivity effects and the differences in opinion regarding them.
- Quantitative modeling or forecasting of remote work's/AI's productivity effects.
- Comparative studies that contrast remote work or AI productivity effects in different geographical or work settings.
- Productivity impacts of previous AI innovations.
- Synergies, or anti-synergies, between remote working and AI adoption.