The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Changing Nature of Work

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In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated in the U.S., many employers suddenly shifted to allow (and sometimes require) employees to work from home full-time. Although Maestas et al. (2017) found that only 22% of American workers had the option to telecommute in 2015, Dingel and Neiman (2020) estimate that telework is possible for 37% of workers overall. Increases in telework may have downstream effects on other occupational demands, including potential changes in sedentary work, cognitive and mental health demands, and flexible scheduling. In this project, we propose to use restricted microdata from the first three years of data collection in Wave II of the Occupational Requirement Survey (ORS), covering August 2018-July 2021. The ORS is a nationally-representative establishment-based survey of occupational and training requirements and environmental exposures collected by BLS on behalf of SSA. This project will be one of the first research projects utilizing the ORS microdata. We propose to examine changes in occupational requirements over this three year period, focusing on telecommuting, sedentary work and cognitive demands), with sub-analyses by industry, region, and essential worker classification.

The proposed project addresses Focal Area #2, "Work in the Modern Economy," specifically the topics "Sedentary work" and "Impact of COVID-19."

References

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