How Work from Home Reshapes Leisure: Preliminary Evidence on Time Allocation, Multitasking, Mobility, and Energy Impacts in Italian Households

Edoardo Alberti

University of Siena, Italy

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic forced remote work to become an essential facility for companies and employees across Europe, including Italy, turning it from a marginal practice to a central element of work dynamics after the lockdown release. This study employs a multidimensional approach, using both econometric models and qualitative analysis, to investigate the effects of working from home (WFH) on leisure preferences and dynamics and its implications based on Italian 2013 Time Use Survey from Istat. Findings show that the elimination of commuting to work time reallocates saved time differently among genders within households, revealing significant disparities. Results show that remote work significantly enhances the likelihood of engaging in multitasking activities among households with at least one member working from home, facilitating a more effective integration of daily responsibilities and leisure pursuits.

Additionally, the increase in remote work raises concerns regarding rebound effects in energy consumption, as remote workers often engage in more energy-intensive leisure activities. While reduced commuting decreases congestion at peak hours, it also leads to more fragmented mobility patterns, resulting in a rise in non-work-related travels at non-conventional hours.

Keywords: Leisure preferences; Mobility; Multitasking activities; Remote work; Time-use rebound effect.