To work from home or not to work from home? That is the question

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) era has ushered in a new look and feel for the workplace. With the fear of infection, of self or loved ones, many people are breathing a sigh of relief with the expansion of permissions to work from home, whereas others are holding their breath in the aftermath of widespread lockdowns and economic uncertainty. In “Who should work from home during a pandemic? The wage-infection trade-off” (National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 27908, October 2020), authors Sangmin Aum, Sang Yoon (Tim) Lee, and Yongseok Shin explore an optimal policy: “the economic costs of containing a pandemic can be minimized by only sending home those jobs that are highly exposed but easy to perform from home.”