# THE INEFFICIENCY OF WORKER TIME USE

**Decio Coviello**
HEC Montreal

**Andrea Ichino**
European University Institute
and University of Bologna

**Nicola Persico**
Kellogg School of Management,
Northwestern University

**Abstract**

Much work is carried out in short, interrupted segments. This phenomenon, which we label *task juggling*, has been overlooked by economists. We study the work schedules of some judges in Italy documenting that they do juggle tasks and that juggling causally lowers their productivity substantially. To measure the size of this effect, we show that although all these judges receive the same workload, those who juggle more trials at once instead of working sequentially on few of them at each unit of time, take longer to complete their portfolios of cases. Task juggling seems to have no adverse effect on the quality of the judges' decisions, as measured by the percent of decisions appealed. To identify these causal effects we estimate models with judge fixed effects and we exploit the lottery assigning cases to judges. We discuss whether task juggling can be viewed as inefficient, and provide a back-of-the-envelope calculation of the social cost of longer trials due to task juggling. (JEL: J0; K0; M5)

Keywords: Individual production function, work scheduling, duration of trials.