The fault lines of internet-enabled work in rural Atlantic Canada:
Putting gender and class in place.

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Abstract

Forms of internet-enabled work, telework, and digital work, are often imagined and promoted to allow “work from anywhere,” and that place is no longer relevant; but this study of internet-enabled work in rural Atlantic Canada shows that geographical place and individuals’ relationship to it matter in terms of why rural workers are involved, how they access opportunities, and the impacts on their work and households. Twenty-eight participants from rural communities completed a questionnaire and participated in semi-structured interviews. I apply a grounded theory approach to the analysis and employ an inductive process, staying close to the data to develop findings grounded in time and place. The findings reveal that the length of time in rural communities impacts involvement, as residents with skills and experiences gained in urban areas are involved at a higher rate and can gain access to opportunities far from their communities without incurring material or labour costs over long-term residents. Rural women are more involved than rural men because of interrelated mechanisms of occupational segregation, spatial division of labour, and rural work cultures. Rural women are also pushed into the forms of work as a strategy to overcome material conditions and rural employment contexts. A portion of rural women are also actively engaging in internet-enabled work in addition to other paid forms of work, which puts them in a situation where the spheres of work and home are acute, as they must manage the conflicts between employers in addition to their domestic work and other care responsibilities. Rural women with children and long-term rural women are disadvantaged in enacting strategies to minimize negative impacts. The thesis fills a gap as it focuses on rural contexts rather than the urban environments that dominate the literature. It also furthers scholarship initiated by scholars on the gendering of rural digital work (Khan & Burrell 2021) and the intersections of gender, class, and rurality (Bryant & Pini 2011).
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Introduction

Hidden voices in anywhere work

In a digital era, with its promise to allow “work from anywhere,” does the location where workers perform work and live still matter? The recent massive teleworking experiment induced by the COVID-19 pandemic implies that working from home may become a preferred arrangement for many for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the proliferation of digital platforms gives the appearance of opportunities for workers to work anywhere they can connect to an app. Both forms of work suggest that work activities may be wherever and whenever. Therefore, does it matter if wherever is rural and resource communities? Furthermore, what happens when forms of work designed for the “work” and not “the place” are completed by rural workforces?

This thesis contributes to answering these questions through a mixed-methods study of workers involved in two main forms of work—telework and digital work—in rural Atlantic Canada. These questions arose from what I conceive as an obscurity of voices of rural workers in the media, research, and prevailing perceptions and ideas among workers, unions, researchers, and organizations about how people experience remote forms of work. For instance, during the pandemic, most of the news reports on worker experiences of working from home were done in urban areas. When and if rural workers were included, the discussion was principally focused on issues related to uneven broadband and connectivity issues.

The focus on technology and rural broadband is also evident in general discussions. Over the past two years, as I worked on this research, and told those inquiring about it that I
was exploring remote work in rural areas, the predominate response was, “Oh, so you are looking at broadband issues?” Then I would explain that there was more to working in rural areas than broadband issues that could impact workers' experiences, such as the absence of daycares in communities where workers live with young children.

When discussions move away from a technology orientation, there is a general lack of consideration for the geographic location of the home as a site of importance. Often the focus is on the location of the work—either the physical workplace or the home—but not *where the home is located*. There is a general presumption that as work moves out of the office and into the home, the question of where work is produced is no longer relevant and the relationship between the home and the workplace is elevated in importance. However, this does not include the provision that households are situated in different places—e.g., urban, suburban, rural, and remote areas—and that these differences may impact the work and other household activities that shape the experiences of the worker.

An example of this can be seen in the 2023 strike by the Public Service Alliance of Canada, where the flexibility to work from home emerged as a major issue during negotiations. Besides the focal point of employee and management rights in such a matter, much of the union’s argument centred around the evidence that employees have shown to be as productive working from home as they were at the workplace (CBC, 2023). While the outcome was somewhat positive for the union, with remote work gaining allowance on a case-by-case basis, news reports that discussed or announced a dialogue around the fact that telework is not a
homogeneous experience were noticeably absent.\(^1\) While productivity may increase and work may still get done from home, evidence has shown that telework often leads to working longer hours, higher amounts of work-family conflicts, and any time saved is sacrificed for the family’s needs (Greenhill & Wilson, 2006; Gurstein, 2001; Higgins et al., 2014; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Sullivan, 2003). The negative consequences are most pronounced for women because of the burden of domestic work associated with gender roles and the division of labour within the home (Greenhill & Wilson, 2006; Gurstein, 2001).

In addition to the silence of media reports on the inequities among remote workers, I could not find reports that discussed that the union’s workers lived in different places. This was despite the possibility that some of the workers may have lived in rural communities and not urban or suburban areas. And this oversight overlooks the contribution of generations of scholars whose investigations into gender and work in rural communities highlighted that gender identifies, work experiences, household strategies, and domestic responsibilities intersect and are shaped by conditions in their local environment (M. Connelly & MacDonald, 1983; Davis, 2000; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Mackenzie, 1987).

The focus on the workplace and the home as the dominant locations for analysis and understanding workers’ experiences and the exclusion of the geography of the home is also found in the academic literature. A substantial scholarship has been conducted on telework and digital work and how workers negotiate the work-from-home experience; however, the vast

\(^1\) In searching news reports I used the news function on Google. I also reviewed different news outlets during the strike, such as CBC News, Toronto Sun, and National Post. When and if I found a news report that questioned the rights of telework for the workers, the reporting focused on that work being a form of a privilege—only a portion of people can access telework (Quenneville, 2023). Access to telework among different types of workers is different than understanding that workers experience the form of work differently.
majority of these studies often omit discussion of the place or it’s only cursorily mentioned, and attempts to connect the place to specific outcomes are neglected (see Higgins et al., 2014, 2014; Mirchandani, 1999; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Tremblay, 2003). When scholars do consider the home of workers in the analysis, they primarily focus on relationships within the household or between workers and the organization (see Johnson et al., 2007; Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowtiz, 2005). Research does not tend to include the relationships between the household and the community, nor do studies tend to include dimensions particularly relevant to rural regions, such as distance to schools and availability of resources and other critical services that may shape how workers complete paid work and undertake other activities to support their households. When and if studies do attempt to insert place into the discussion, the locations are primarily urban and suburban places and not rural regions (see Gurstein, 1996, 2001). Empirical studies in rural areas are limited, and those documenting the work experiences of long-time residents of rural communities are scarce. Only a few qualitative studies exist, most of which involve a small number of participants (Clark, 2000; Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Laegran, 2008; Simpson et al., 2003).

The focus on technology, the urban centrism of the scholarship, and the viewpoint that, under remote work, the location of both the work and home is irrelevant, combine to hide and obscure the experiences of rural workers. It leaves a significant gap in our understanding of what is important to them and their communities as it presumes that their experiences are universal to those of other remote workers. Universalizing experiences tends to obscure specific challenges faced by certain groups of people in particular places and may exacerbate existing problems and inequalities when policies and programs are developed.
The risk of overlooking rural women’s experiences is also especially pertinent as these forms of work are seen by policymakers as offering opportunities for limited rural labour markets and the added benefits such as flexibility, family-friendly work, and income-earning potential, which are often explicitly marketed to women. However, the ability of women to access services, material resources, and critical infrastructure to support their lives can vary considerably across geographical places and income levels.

**Research objectives and questions**

The goal of this thesis is to explore rural workers' experiences of telework and digital work to uncover and understand if their rural location impacts their experiences. I frame their experiences through an overarching research question of how workers living in rural communities navigate these forms of work. I use the term *navigate* to broadly include the following areas of inquiry: who completes what forms of work, and any conditions that enable or constrain their involvement, e.g., their ability to access the forms of work, what motivates them to become involved, and what happens to the work, their households, and their personal lives from their involvement.

I centre geographical place throughout the research by considering how rural workers’ experiences may be shaped by the local context of their specific communities and their place-particularities. While issues related to engagement in these forms of work are not solely confined to rural areas, it is important to recognize that workers in rural areas may face unique challenges. Therefore, centring geographic place in the study of work-from-anywhere experiences provides the opportunity to identify: the conditions in which rural workers may be
disadvantaged compared to their urban counterparts, and which workers are disproportionately impacted by their rural conditions.

Moreover, the identification of specific factors that matter to rural communities and the acknowledgement of the diversity of rural people and places are important themes in rural community research (Reimer, 2004; Simpson et al., 2003). On the specific subject of telework, rural researchers have previously indicated that there is a need to consider how one’s physical location as a rural worker shapes their experience (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Simpson et al., 2003). Simpson et al. (2003) argue that “without a focus on diversity, we will simply have created another homogeneous category—the rural teleworker” (p. 125). As this thesis will show, such a category does not exist.

**Definitions**

*Rural and resource communities*

For this project, I employed two quantitative measures used by Statistics Canada to define rural communities: Census Rural Area and Rural and Small Town.\(^2\) Census Rural Area is based on the size of the population living outside of places of 1,000 people or more or population living outside places with a density of 400 or more people per square kilometre. Rural and Small Town is based on a labour market context with a population living outside commuting zones of larger urban centres of 10,000 or more (du Plessis et al., 2001). As the

\(^2\)There is no single definition for rural. Rural has been defined in many ways but the most common are geographical, a location with boundaries on a map, and as social representation that is based on descriptive or socio-cultural definitions such as a community of interest and a cultural a way of life (du Plessis et al., 2001; Nelson et al., 2021). Du Plessis et al., suggest that the definition of rural used in research should be determined by the question being addressed (du Plessis et al., 2001).
study aims to understand workers’ experiences outside of urban and suburban areas, I decided that using the two measures would enable me to capture rural participants from across Atlantic Canada adequately.

I refer to resource communities as rural areas and small towns that have a narrow economic foundation and are primarily focused on natural resource production. Communities may be deemed as “resource-dependent” where there is a high percentage of the labour force attached to one employer or industry. The communities may be deemed as “in transition” where they are witnessing a change in their local resource industry.\(^3\)

**Internet-enabled work**

I use the term “internet-enabled work” to describe a broader category of work practices that function through information technology and communications (ICTs) and revolve around connectivity through the internet. As connectivity to ICT infrastructure is an important topic of concern for rural communities and a significant component of existing scholarship on digital developments (Salemnik et al., 2017), I deemed it essential to define work practices through this frame.

For the purposes of this project, I refer to telework as a form of remote where workers receive and deliver their work through information communication technologies (ICT)

\(^3\) Resource communities, often referred to as resource-dependent communities, resource towns, or company towns, have different characteristics than other towns and urban places, as a result of their intersections of the social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political forces that are part of natural resource extraction. Resources communities are not homogenous as there are as many similarities and differences among mining towns, forestry towns, and fishing villages (Randell & Ironside, 1996).
mediums such as computers and emails. I conceptualize digital work as income-generating work where workers utilize a digital platform, a digital app, or other relevant digital mediums to receive, deliver, or conduct a portion of work activities. Digital work activities reviewed in this study include work conducted on labour and project-based platforms (e.g., Upwork), asset-based platforms (e.g., Airbnb and Esty), e-commerce activities, management and creation of content for social media platforms, and creation of websites.

While both forms of work generally presume that a portion of work activities is completed on a computer and utilizes the internet in some capacity, there are a few distinctions. Most notably is that they differ in how ICT functions in the work. For telework, ICT acts as a primary link between the worker and their employer and client, and the delivery and receipt of work are transferred through the technology. Meanwhile, for digital work, ICT acts as the intermediary and method of organization between workers and their employers and clients. The geography of telework usually presumes that sellers and buyers of labour are geographically dispersed. Some digital work also has similar geography to telework, e.g., online labour

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4 Despite the prevalence of the term in academic scholarship, a consistent definition for telework is lacking. Reliance on information communication technologies is the crucial factor in distinguishing telework from other forms of homework and decentralized work (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Sullivan, 2003). Telework research is often conducted based on project-specific definitions that vary considerably as there is an enormous variation amongst teleworkers. Scholars create definitions using a mixture of dimensions such as work location, use of information communication technologies (ICTs), locational time distribution, and contractual arrangements (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Sullivan, 2003).

5 A 2017 working paper found close to thirty different terms used to describe forms of work related to the digital economy (Heeks, 2017). Each term has a slightly different definition, including a range of variables, and may have a narrow to broad topical range for empirical or theoretical research. For example, the term digital work includes both online work and work in the digital sector and is used to research a wide variety of topics. The term digital labour includes both paid and unpaid work within the digital economy and is often employed in more theoretical discussions on the distinctions between work and labour or unpaid labour. The term platform work can include highly skilled work that can be performed anywhere (e.g., computer programmers on Upwork) as well as low-skilled work that is performed in a particular location (e.g., drivers for Uber).
platforms, while some digital work is performed in local geographic areas, e.g., task-based work or Airbnb.

There is a precedent for using internet-enabled work; Kahn and Burrell used the term in an ethnographic study of the work in rural areas in the western United States (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). My conception and use differ slightly as the work activities in this study are primarily focused on paid and income-generating work, whereas their study was grounded principally in the use of the internet. For example, Kahn and Burrell’s study included participants that used the internet to order farm equipment (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). These participants would not be included in this study. However, a person that completes social media activities on behalf of a farm or a business on an unpaid basis would be included in the work activities related to farm income.

**Geographical context**

Rural and resource communities in Atlantic Canada are the key sites for this research for several reasons. First, the region is undoubtedly rural. Compared to other parts of the country, the Atlantic provinces have the highest share of people living in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2022). In 2021, the percentage of the rural population in New Brunswick was 49.1 percent, Newfoundland 40 percent, Nova Scotia 41.1 percent, and Prince Edward Island 54 percent (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Second, since the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of people have relocated to the region from other parts of Canada. According to data from Statistics Canada, more than 88,109 people relocated to Atlantic Canada between 2021 and 2022. Nova Scotia recorded the highest number of migrants from outside the region, with 40,269 (Statistics Canada, 2022).
While it’s safe to say that the majority of these migrants probably ended up in urban areas, it is plausible that some relocated to rural areas of the region (Statistics Canada, 2022)\(^6\)

The relocation activity in the region provides an important feature to the context of the rural areas and the region overall, as the activity is unprecedented. For countless decades, the Atlantic provinces have been an out-migration region. More people move away to other parts of Canada than decide to relocate to the region, if they relocate at all. The recent influx of people into the region’s rural areas offers the chance to examine differences in internet-enabled work experiences among residents based on their relative position to the communities, e.g., newcomers and long-term regional residents. Before COVID-19, this opportunity may not have arisen.

Last, the rural regions in Atlantic Canada have the distinction of being peripheries in an economically marginalized region of Canada (Clow, 1984; Porter, 1987; Sacouman, 1981; Veltmeyer, 1978). The periphery place context is important in understanding the complex lives of workers living in economically marginalized regions. Rural communities are peripheral to the region's urban centres, while, simultaneously, the Atlantic Region is peripheral to the rest of Canada. This double-periphery place context may not be found in other rural communities in other parts of Canada, such as Ontario or British Columbia. This periphery context contributes to a higher incidence of poverty and economic underdevelopment in rural communities of Atlantic Canada (Sacouman, 1980).

\(^6\) Statistics Canada has not publicly published interprovincial migration data at the level of city and country to account for potential influxes in rural areas.
Theoretical framework

As this thesis’s primary political agenda is to make visible the experiences of rural internet-enabled workers, it deploys a theoretical framework that includes intersectionality and social reproduction. While it’s common to undertake empirical studies using the theories separately, for the purposes of this research, it is essential to combine their analytical abilities to provide a fuller picture of the varied experiences of the rural workers I encountered.\(^7\) Intersectionality provides a lens through which to understand differences among rural residents based on the interconnection of critical dimensions such as class, gender, and place. Recognizing the diversity of rural residents is vital to providing them a voice (Bryant & Pini, 2011). Meanwhile, social reproduction draws attention to experiences of work and survival strategies that are enacted by workers as they navigate the spheres of both work and home. As an analytical lens, social reproduction helps to make visible the labour rural workers must allocate to thrive when tensions of work and home are most acute.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality provides a potent framework to unpack the heterogeneity of rural workers’ experiences encountered in this research, as it considers at a very foundational level that individuals’ experiences are shaped by their position to different social dimensions such as class, gender, race, sexuality, age, disability, etc. (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Much more than simply a focus on diversity, intersectionality wrangles with “multiplicity”—in that individual lives are shaped by many axes of social difference, which simultaneously influence each other

\(^7\) While I fully acknowledge that there are epistemological differences between intersectionality and social reproduction, an in-depth review of these differences is beyond the scope of this project. However, a starting place for theorizing the two can be found in Ferguson’s article on Intersectionality and Social Reproduction Feminism: Towards an Integrative Ontology (Ferguson, 2016).
Through this lens, intersectionality provides a framework for understanding inequality that results from a person or group of people based on their specific positions to categories of social difference. Theoretically and empirically, intersectionality does not seek to place one category of difference over and above another, but instead, focuses on their mutual interactions (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). In doing so, it provides the opportunity to illuminate which individuals are advantaged and disadvantaged and why.

For the purposes of this thesis, I adopt the definition of intersectionality of Brah and Phoenix (2004), which “signifies the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects of which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts” (p. 76). This definition was chosen because of the latter part of the definition, which requires researchers to situate the analysis within a specific context. In the case of this research, the context is a geographical place—rural Atlantic Canada—during a time of uncommon population change. Situating the research in a specific place provides empirical evidence to recognize “place”—more specifically, “rurality”—as an influential dimension that conditions people’s experiences alongside other major social axes. Major axes of social difference that frame this thesis, along with place, are gender and class. Combined, the dimensions allow me to interrogate differences between genders (rural men and rural women) while also remaining attentive to the diversity within a gender category through their social class (rural women).

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8 The population change is outlined in the geographical context section.
In situating the intersections of gender and class in rural communities, this thesis builds upon work completed by Bryant and Pini (2011). Their seminal work inserted intersectionality into rural social sciences to show how gender and classes operate together in rural communities. Drawn from empirical data in Australian farming communities, it found that gender and class “are actively constructed through daily interactions, the nature of one’s work, volunteer activities, leisure choices, and memories” (p. 76). Compared to urban places, the researchers conclude “that there are unique material and discursive aspects of rurality which inform how class and gender come together in non-metropolitan spaces” (p. 76). Dimensions important for rural places were the predominance of family farming and its intergenerational operation (family farms are passed down through the patriarchal lineage); discourses of communitarianism (shared ways of living); and traditional gender discourses in rural environments (women’s narratives of respect and worth is attached to their husband’s family name not their non-farm occupations) (Bryant & Pini, 2011). From their work, we see that gender and class operate together in rural spaces to position men materially differently than women, and position groups of women differently. For example, family histories and the family name privilege rural farming men, which provides them with access to spaces such as political networks, finance, and agriculture. While farming wives are shut out of inheriting, many use their husbands’ family name and labour contributions to the farm to gain respect and opportunities to belong over women with no relations to a farm or work outside of the family farm (Bryant & Pini, 2011).

Similar to the work completed by Bryant and Pini (2011), this thesis adopts an understanding of gender as a social construct and a process embedded in social relationships (Risman, 2004; Saltzman Chafetz, 2006). This conception of gender considers the social
relations that assign norms, characteristics, social spheres, and social roles to individuals, which, in turn, condition the opportunities and constraints experienced by men and women (Risman, 2004; Saltzman Chafetz, 2006).

For class, I adopt a multi-dimensional understanding of the concept drawn primarily from stratification and opportunity-hoarding approaches. Combined, they situate class through individual attributes and life conditions (e.g., sex, age, education, employment, and location) and through access to and exclusion from certain social and economic opportunities (e.g., process of social closure) (Wright, 2009). This use of class differs from that of Bryant and Pini, which used a broad understanding of class that incorporated material and cultural aspects, including values.

_Social Reproduction_

With a focus on the labour and supports necessary for both work and life, social reproduction provides an effective lens to examine the lived experience of rural internet-enabled workers. For the purposes of this thesis, I draw upon Bakker and Gill’s (2019) definition of social reproduction, which encompasses the “social processes, human relations, social institutions, and ecological life-producing structures associated with the creation and maintenance of individuals, households, and communities” (p. 518). It involves an enormous amount of labour, the provisioning of basic needs, material benefits, entitlements, and the processes involved in providing for social, emotional, and physical needs (Bezanson, 2006). According to Bezanson (2006), social reproduction “encompasses the work that must be done to ensure that people at least survive and ideally thrive and develop as well as to ensure that the economic system is perpetuated” (p. 26).
The usefulness of social reproduction as a framework to examine internet-enabled work is four-fold. First, at a conceptual level, recent theorizations indicates that spheres of social reproduction and the means of production as merged (Bhattacharya, 2017; K. Mitchell et al., 2003; Winders & Smith, 2019). In this conception, the domains of work, life, and leisure become indistinguishable, and life becomes work (Winders & Smith, 2019). This conception allows for me to examine work in an era of digital technologies and flexible production where the lines between home and work are blurred, as is the case with internet-enabled work. By investigating experiences for both production and reproduction activity, social reproduction is able to make visible labour and work that is often analytically hidden and denied (Bhattacharya, 2017). Therefore, a lens of social reproduction may reveal how endorsements of “family-flexible policies” and discourses of “work-life balance” and “the best of both worlds” may obscure work and labour. Furthermore, insights garnered from social reproduction as noted by Cockayne (2021) can help to “understand how different kinds of work overlap in the home in new ways and how the respective meanings of work and home might change in light of the pandemic” (p. 502).

Second, with broad definitions of work and labour, social reproduction allows me to investigate experiences for survival strategies. Work is understood as a process that mediates relations and includes the practical activity of beings (Bakker & Gill, 2019). Labour is

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9 Some theorists have merged the two spheres to account for the blurring of productive and reproductive work; other theorists argue that it may not always reflect the realities of workers across the class spectrum (B. E. Smith & Winders, 2015). The line between being at work or at home for some workers may be blurred; others may find the line is becoming sharper and more distinct, e.g., in-person workers or those that can not telework. A review of how social reproduction theorists have viewed the relationships over time can be found in Winders & Smith’s article, “Social reproduction and capitalist production: A genealogy of dominant imaginaries” (Winders & Smith, 2019). Despite the debate, theorists do agree that the conditions of social reproduction arise through its dialectical and mutually constituted relationship with the means of production, which is always in tension (Katz, 2001) and often organized for the benefit of capital (Bhattacharya, 2017).
conceived as a lived and creative experience that includes both alienated and non-alienated forms (Bakker & Gill, 2019; Ferguson, 2008). The broader conceptions incorporate an element of agency that is important in analyzing home-based work as it allows researchers to focus on relationships instead of the type of activity (Boeri, 2016). This conception allows me to investigate the idea that workers may be actively choosing strategies and internet-enabled work to address their particular situations instead of being instruments of structural limitations (Boeri, 2016).

Third, because the spatial manifestations of both internet-enabled work and social reproduction are similar, I can situate place in the analysis. Internet-enabled work is seen as highly mobile as work can be anywhere and everywhere; however, workers still need to live somewhere. For instance, internet-enabled workers still need: a roof over their heads, and to have a place to cook and consume food, and complete household chores to reproduce themselves. Workers with children or aging parents still need a place to provide necessary care. Social reproduction, according to Katz (2001), “always takes places somewhere, and the environments for its enactments are integral to its outcomes” (p. 715). Its material manifestations are profoundly spatial phenomena (Winders & Smith, 2019). Katz (2001) argues that, when “production is highly mobile, but social production necessarily remains largely place-bound,” as is the case of internet-enabled work, “all sorts of disjunctures occur across space, across boundaries, and across scale, which are likely to draw upon sedimented inequalities in the social relations as to provoke new ones” (p. 716). Through social reproduction we can see differences among workers from community to community and workers within a community.
Lastly, social reproduction offers the opportunity to build upon and understand an individual’s experience of internet-enabled work based on their positions to class, gender, and place. As theorized by Bakker and Gill, the patterns of social reproduction are uneven, differentiated, and hierarchical, and variable across time, space, and social formations (Bakker & Gill, 2019). Bakker and Gill (2009) note that “patterns of social reproduction are differentiated along hierarchical and unequal lines of class, race, gender and caste” (p. 511). Bezanson (2006) explains that social reproduction “reflects negotiations and (im)balances in gender and other relations” (p. 25). For instance, the work of social reproduction has historically been unpaid, socially undervalued, and undertaken by women (Bezanson, 2006; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Cockayne, 2021; Strauss & Meehan, 2015; Teeple Hopkins, 2015). As social reproduction reflects the inequalities in economic and social relations, it is a powerful “lens for focusing on the unequal distributions of conditions of flourishing that render some bodies, some workforce, and some communities far more precarious than others,” according to Strauss & Meehan (Strauss & Meehan, 2015, p. 2). From this vantage point, social reproduction provides a vehicle to illuminate, if, how, and under what conditions rurally based internet-enabled workers may be at a disadvantage compared to their urban-based counterparts.

**Outline of chapters**

In Chapter One, “Internet-Enabled Work: Gender, Class and Working from Home,” I present a summary of the literature related to the primary analytical areas I’ve undertaken in this research study. The literature leans heavily on telework scholarship as it has the most established body of work completed in the analytic areas. The review highlights important information related to gender, class, and place and social reproduction.
In Chapter Two, “Methodology,” I outline the methods of data collection, including the online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. I describe the analytical process I employed to allow me to develop findings firmly rooted in the data. Introduced in this chapter is the participant classification system I designed to allow for the analysis of different rural residents. As this research study aims to understand the experiences of rural residents, it was important to situate their relationship to their communities in a systematic way. Considering the number of people that moved to the region since the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also relevant to situate participants in Atlantic Canada.

In Chapter Three, “Work: Different Work for Different Folks,” I lay the foundation of gender and relationship to place, as I present the evidence on which segments of participants are involved in the forms of work. As women are doing most of the internet-enabled work, I draw upon research from rural areas to understand their prevalence. I argue that the mechanism of occupational segregation and the historical spatial division of labour in rural communities position rural women to complete these forms of work. In the latter part of the chapter, I reveal additional implications related to how rural women are using these forms of work as a strategy to make a living and support their households.

In Chapter Four, “Access: The (Dis) Advantages of Location,” I present the evidence on the location patterns of the research participants and their employers and clients. I analyze the segmentation pattern that emerges, which reveals that the dimensions—such as the geography of previous employment and social networks, in addition to employers’ perceptions—limit access to the forms of work. In addition to these dimensions, I unveil the
costs of access and demonstrate that these costs are disproportionately borne by rural women, particularly long-term rural women.

In Chapter Five, “Motivations: From Flexibility to Out of Necessity,” I apply a place-based lens to the research participants' motivations. I first compare the participant motivations with the existing scholarship, drawing insights into similarities and differences in meanings. Then I demonstrate that there are motivators specific to rural workers, particularly rural women. I argue that the presence of these motivators is evidence that rural women are pushed into the forms of work because of the employment and labour conditions of their communities.

In Chapter Six, “Outcomes: From Limited Impacts to Work Intensification,” I analyze the participants' work experiences using a rural lens. In deciding the relevant aspects of the rural lens, I drew upon research from rural areas that indicated that the availability of service infrastructure and proximity to urban centres is important to rural communities and Chapter Three’s findings, which reveal the occurrence and gendered character of occupational pluralism. The chapter shows that one’s geographic location as a worker—and, specifically, as a rural internet-enabled worker—does impact the work experiences of internet-enabled work, but for some more than others.

In Chapter Seven, “Competing Demands: Juggling Work, Domestic Work, and Care Work,” I build upon the work undertaken in Chapter Six and analyze how participants are negotiating the multiple demands to provide a fuller picture of their working-from-home experiences and impacts on household and personal reproduction. New aspects important to rural communities are added to the rural lens, including lack of formal daycare and reliance on family members and how women with spouses involved in resources adjust their work and
lives around resource schedules. The chapter shows that rural women with dependent children are more exposed to work-family conflicts than urban women, as they are not able to enact strategies to deal with intrusions. Meanwhile, women involved in occupational pluralism are faced with trade-offs, where the money from the additional leisure and time for their own reproduction is reduced. Rural women with material resources, higher incomes, and family in the area can mitigate these issues.

In the final and concluding chapter, I provide a summary of the main findings, drawing attention to how gender, class, and relationship to place can be considered intersections for internet-enabled work experiences in rural Atlantic Canada. They create the conditions to explain that internet-enabled work in rural communities is a heterogeneous experience. I conclude that these dimensions allow the diversity of experiences to emerge so that we can see not only the differences between urban and rural workers, but also the differences among rural workers. In this study, we can see that rural women are at a disadvantage compared to rural men, while, simultaneously, long-term rural women are at a disadvantage to new and returning women that arrive in the communities with material resources and privileges garnered from time spent in urban areas. In this chapter, I also outline the significance of the research limitations and discuss the implications for future research.
Chapter One. Internet-Enabled Work: Gender, Class, and Working from Home

Introduction

A substantial amount of scholarship has been produced on telework and digital work. Although the literature covers a wide range of topics, this review will focus on four main themes to provide a frame to help in answering the research questions. These themes are: demographics and access, which help to explain who is involved in internet-enabled work and the conditions that allow work to occur; place, which explains where internet-enabled work takes place; motivations, advantages, and outcomes, which help to explain why people telework and what happens to them when they perform the work from home; and work and family boundary management, which describes how workers negotiate the work-from-home experience. Although this study examines both telework and digital work, the review draws heavily on telework scholarship, as it is the most expansive in the thematic areas. As some themes related to telework—such as managing the challenges of working from home—also apply to digital work, it makes sense to explore questions through the more developed telework scholarship. The review’s aim is to provide a general introduction to the themes with particular attention on outlining key insights related to gender, class, place, and social

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The emergence of digital technologies and platform-mediated work has created a robust scholarship area focused on documenting the implications on workers, their livelihoods, and work, more generally. Currently, areas of interest to scholars include control over workers, job quality, and individual worker motivations (Churchill & Craig, 2019; Dunn, 2020); labour market practices, operations and impact on workers (Heeks, 2017; Tucker, 2020); growth of precarious employment and the transition away from employment contracts (Graham & Anwar, 2018; Tucker, 2020); the intensification of work practices (Richardson, 2018); and how digital technologies may reduce the distance between work and place allowing workers to escape some of the constraints of local labour markets (Graham & Anwar, 2018). While there is robust scholarship, there is currently a gap regarding the experiences of working from home, such as work-life conflicts and boundary management.
reproduction, to provide background context for the study. The chapter does not address all scholarship used in the analysis; instead, other relevant scholarship is embedded in the appropriate chapter and section based on the topic being presented.

**Demographics and access**

*Gender and class in telework.*

The gender of teleworkers continues to elude researchers, despite numerous empirical studies across various disciplines, including transportation, labour, urban planning, ethics, law, sociology, and organizational studies and time periods; there remains no consensus on the key question: are teleworkers most likely to be men or women (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gurstein, 2001; Haddad et al., 2009; Haider & Anwar, 2023; Kley & Reimer, 2023; Tremblay, 2003)? For example a Canada-wide study of 1996 workers reported that men and women telework at the same rate (Gurstein, 1996). A provincial study of Quebec in 2003 found that more men than women were involved in this practice. Meanwhile, a recent empirical study undertaken in 2021 reported that gender did not have a statistical association with telework adoption before or during the pandemic in Canada (Haider & Anwar, 2023). Potential reasons for the elusiveness of gender-specific research in telework might be chalked up to different sampling techniques and definitional issues.\(^{11}\)

While the gender question remains elusive, the prevalence of telework is related to such occupational and work-related aspects as the type of work or industry—e.g., white-collar

\(^{11}\) For a review of the definitional debate on telework, see (Sullivan, 2003).
work\textsuperscript{12} and information and cultural industries (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Haddad et al., 2009; Haider & Anwar, 2023; Huws, 2014); job suitability factors, such as individual control of the pace of work and minimal need for face-to-face interactions (Bailey & Kurland, 2002); availability and firm adoption rates of ICTs (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Haider & Anwar, 2023); and individual managers’ willingness to allow the work arrangement (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Closely aligned with occupation and job suitability factors is education, which is positively associated with telework. Teleworkers are primarily highly educated people (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gurstein, 1996; Haider & Anwar, 2023) and often come from above-average-income households (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gurstein, 1996).

From the dimension of occupation, evidence does show that the telework labour market is both gendered and classed. The occupations of teleworking men and women are segmented along gender and class lines (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Huws, 2014; Kley & Reimer, 2023; Tremblay, 2003). Teleworking men and women are concentrated in occupations or fields of work similar to the traditional labour market (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Huws, 2003; Kley & Reimer, 2023; Tremblay, 2003). For instance, there is high gender segregation in computer science and telecommunications, with men being overrepresented (Kley & Reimer, 2023). Meanwhile, they are also segmented across occupations based on work activities, control over work, and pay (Blackburn et al., 2002; Kley & Reimer, 2023). For example, teleworking men are more likely to use higher skill functions and are often the decision-makers that use ICT as

\textsuperscript{12} A large-scale empirical analysis undertaken in the United Kingdom comparing white-collar and blue-collar workers found that occupation was the only statistically significant variable, at a 95 percent confidence, with white-collar workers being more attracted to work from home than blue-collar workers (Haddad et al., 2009)
work tools; whereas lower-skilled teleworking occupations like data entry, customer service and technical support staff positions are mostly filled by women (Huws, 2003; Menzies, 1997). Men who telework are more likely to be employed on a full-time basis, where women are often employed on a part-time basis (Huws, 2003; Kley & Reimer, 2023; Menzies, 1997).

A prominent viewpoint among scholars is that employers and employees either choose to engage in alternative work arrangements—or don’t. (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Schweitzer & Duxbury, 2006; Tremblay, 2003; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016). However, given the power dynamics in the employment relationship, the employer’s decision holds sway. Often it is the employer or the requirements of the job and not the employee’s personal wishes that induces telework (Tremblay et al., 2006). Employers may show preferential treatment around telework for positions deemed professional and often oppose arrangements for clerical workers, even through both jobs are deemed suitable for telework (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). The gender occupational segregation can also apply to the decision to telework. Men are employed in roles that allow them to make the decision on their own, while women are more likely in roles where the decision is made jointly with their supervisor (Tremblay, 2003).\(^{13}\)

*Gender and class in digital work.*

The gender of digital workers is more concrete than in telework, where evidence from the various digital work activities shows that, at an aggregative level, men are more likely to be involved than women. For instance, men are more involved in performing work through online labour platforms, particularly microtask platforms, where businesses hire out workers to

\(^{13}\) A large empirical study undertaken by Tremblay found that for women teleworkers, mainly employed in accounting and clerical roles, the decision to telework more often has to be made jointly with their supervisor; while men teleworks in professional and technical positions were likely to have made the decision to telework on their own (Tremblay, 2003).
complete small tasks that can be completed remotely and using the internet—also called “crowdwork.” A global study of platform work found that, for every three workers, two were men and only one was a woman (Berg et al., 2018). The gender gap is even more striking in developing countries, where women only represent one out of every five platform workers (Berg et al., 2018). The gender difference in platform-related work activities is not surprising given that, on a global basis, women and girls have not benefitted equally from the digital transformation that society has witnessed over the past decades (OCED, 2018).

Similar to telework, gender segmentation in the labour market also operates in digital platform work. Women are more likely to dominate platforms that specialize in traditional women-orientated tasks, like caring, and men dominate platforms which specialize in what might be considered traditional man-oriented tasks like transportation (Balaram et al., 2017; Churchill & Craig, 2019). Women are also more apt to be on asset-based sites, such as Etsy and Airbnb, where they can sell or rent out rooms, whereas men are more likely to be involved in task-based platforms, such as Uber or TaskRabbit (Balaram et al., 2017; Churchill & Craig, 2019). The prevalence of women using asset-based platforms raises questions related to access to material resources, particularly for many rural women where historically access to assets has been challenging, especially for lower-income women.

The dominance of women on platforms that require them to perform care work is further evident in the use of the short-term-rental platform such as Airbnb.14 Goyette (2019) argues that it is not surprising that women are drawn to short-term rental platforms, as these platforms rely on classic forms of domestic labour—both physical kinds, such as cleaning and

14 According to the company, in 2019, women comprised 56 percent of all the hosts on the platforms (Airbnb, 2019).
laundry, and intangible kinds, such as emotional labour of hospitality (Goyette, 2019). Historically women have often supplemented their household income through renting (Bates, 2006; Goyette, 2019), particularly during times of industrial restructuring when spouses may have lost jobs as a result of downsizing or business closures (Bates, 2006). The prominence of using care-oriented platforms while working from home is concerning as rural scholars have revealed that, when rural women cope by increasing their paid work or informal work in the home as a result of economic restructurings, they tend to experience an intensification of their unpaid domestic work (Bates, 2006; Mackenzie, 1987).

While work through digital platforms is often characterized as on-demand work that relies on flexible labour and is associated with very low pay (Huws, 2014), the majority of the work is performed by educated men and women and middle-to-upper-class individuals (Berg et al., 2018; Churchill & Craig, 2019). These individuals are likely to be both men and women. Despite the rhetoric that low barriers to entry on platforms would help low-income households, the evidence is not there (Schor & Vallas, 2021). Instead, platforms appear to advantage those workers who are already better off through their education, skills, and material resources (Schor & Vallas, 2021), which allow them to participate—e.g., Airbnb requires access to a home or apartment to participate. For instance, hosts with a strong presence on Airbnb are primarily professionals, such as engineers, managers, researchers, lawyers, and doctors (Mermet, 2021). These groups also have the most profitable listings (Mermet, 2021). Schoar &

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15 The ILO global study found that 57 percent of participants involved in work on micro-task platforms had a university degree. Of these participants, 20 percent held post-graduate degrees (Berg et al., 2018). Similar results were found in Churchill and Craig’s (2019) review of digital platform workers in Australia. The proportion of men with degrees using platforms is only slightly higher than women. Their study found men with degrees represented 45.7 percent of men workers, and for women, the result was 43.26 percent. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between men and women in other educational level segments (Churchill & Craig, 2019).
Vallas (2021) contends that the “inequality among earners is systemic, as platforms accommodate a range of situations, from the relatively privileged to the desperate” (p. 379).

**Places of internet-enabled work**

Contrary to receiving the most attention from the media, teleworkers that work exclusively in their homes have always represented the smallest percentage of the teleworking population (Huws, 2003; Messenger, 2019; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007). Teleworkers may work a portion of their hours at home, or at a satellite office or teleworking centre (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Templar et al., 1999; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007). Teleworkers may also work a portion of their time in the field at a client’s site (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007), or work across various locations, going from home to the field to the main or satellite office and then back again (Garrett & Danziger, 2007). Teleworkers may also work in a mobile office, such as out of their car, or a hotel, especially for those that travelled for their work (Templar et al., 1999), or in third spaces such as coffee shops, libraries, airports, on aircraft, or at co-working facilities (Messenger, 2019).

Differences in how and where people choose to complete telework can be explained by occupation type, personal characteristics, organizational context, and work environment impacts (Garrett & Danziger, 2007). For instance, working exclusively from home or going back and forth from home to a fixed site (either the main office or a satellite office) is more prevalent among professionals; however, those involved in occupations such as sales or information technology may flex their time among home, formal workspaces, and clients’ sites (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007). Those that work across multiple sites, including their home, are the “closest group to the current conception of the anytime, anyplace, technology-enabled worker,” according to Garret and Danziger (Garrett & Danziger, 2007, p. 379).
They are also more likely to be men, while women are slightly more likely to telework from home (Garrett & Danziger, 2007).

Empirical evidence indicates teleworkers live primarily in urban or suburban environments, and this evidence is consistent across research disciplines and geographical borders such as Canada (Gurstein, 1996; Haider & Anwar, 2023, 2023; Schweitzer & Duxbury, 2006; Tremblay, 2003), Finland (Helminen & Ristimäki, 2007) Sweden (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016), the Netherlands (Muhammad et al., 2007), Portugal (de Abreu e Silva, 2022), and the United States (Stiles & Smart, 2021). Despite the initial hope that telework would somehow spread into rural areas and provide rural workers in limited labour markets access to these forms of work, to date, it has not yet happened on any major scale.

Grimes (2000) offers one explanation for the minimal spread in rural areas. He argues that the exploitation of technology needs to take into consideration the economic and social context of where it is deployed. Because rural areas have a deficit in associated investment, skills, and level of enterprise needed for significant uptake in ICT services, rural areas remain at the fringe of telework adoption (Grimes, 2000). Other researchers point out the urban bias and place-related assumptions that are distinctively urban (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). In its initial formulation, telework arose from a desire to reduce urban commuting time (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016), which was partly spurred on by the 1970s energy crisis (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016; Pratt, 1984). Shortly thereafter, the concept developed into the more general term “telework” as a way to focus on the work and not the trip (Pratt, 1984). At the turn of the century, the concept advanced in tandem with discussions on virtuality and cyberspace, with
proclamations about the internet and the future of work. Here, the concept broadens into “virtual work,” where workers are digital nomads or cybertariats (Huws, 2014; Messenger & Gschwind, 2016) who complete work that is neither here nor there but, rather, constantly on the move (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). Khan and Burrell (2021) argue that “these lofty visions suggested certain pragmatic possibilities for rural economic revival through work that has overcome location, where the physical location of the work is irrelevant” (p. 3).

While the ubiquitous nature of digital work activities suggests work can be completed anywhere someone can connect to the internet; digital work, the same as telework, is predominately an urban phenomenon (Berg et al., 2018; Braesemann et al., 2020; Combs et al., 2020). Crowdworkers—those that perform work through microtask platforms such as Amazon’s Mechanical Turk—primarily live in urban and suburban communities (Berg et al., 2018). Additionally, workers involved in performing work through short-term rental platforms are also in highly concentrated metropolitan areas (Combs et al., 2020). Although studies show that rural workers are involved performing e-commerce activities (Kahn & Burrell, 2021), the location of e-commerce firms is concentrated in urban areas (Brunn et al., 2002). Rural workers are making inroads on project-based online labour markets such as Upwork, but the largest percentage are still based in urban areas (Braesemann et al., 2020). The portion of rural workers involved in project-based online labour markets supply higher-skilled labour (knowledge work) proportional to the rural population compared to urban workers (Braesemann et al., 2020). It is unknown if these rural knowledge workers on online labour

16 One such proclamation was by Cairncross, who declared The Death of Distance and proposed that telecoms, the internet, and wireless technology would usher in a workplace with greater autonomy and leisure, and that barriers related to geography would be overcome (Cairncross, 1997).
17 An ILO study found that, globally, only one out of five crowdworkers lives in rural areas (Berg et al., 2018).
platforms are more likely to be men or women, or locals or reverse migrants moving from cities to the countryside.\textsuperscript{18}

**Contradictory motivations, advantages, and outcomes**

*Autonomy and flexibility for whom?*

Flexibility, control, and autonomy over work and time are among the most cited reasons why workers telework (Duxbury et al., 1998; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mirchandani, 1999; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Tremblay, 2002; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007). Teleworkers are often cited as having more freedom to structure their work activities and schedules and the ability to decide where and how they engage with work (Mirchandani, 1999; Morgan, 2004; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). However, autonomy and control are often conditioned by the employment relationship. Contractors and self-employed teleworkers have greater control over their schedules and work activities than employed teleworkers, whose work and schedules must still meet the time demand outlined by their employers (Johnson et al., 2007; Osnovtiz, 2005). Therefore, as workers are motivated by the chance to gain flexibility, control, and autonomy, their ability to enact these outcomes will differ based on class, occupation, and specific job requirements. For instance, workers in higher-paid professions such as managers may have the ability to enact these advantages over workers in lower-paid positions such as call-centre agents.

\textsuperscript{18} Brasemann et al., (2020) study did not disaggregate by gender or by type of rural resident.
Despite the ability for a segment of teleworkers to assert autonomy over schedules and commitments, time boundaries frequently blur, and schedules are often altered (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Schedules are often dictated and controlled by internal circumstances, such as children and family schedules or external circumstances, such as client needs and school calendars (Gurstein, 2001; Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowtiz, 2005). This autonomy-control contradiction is most pronounced for women with children because of the sexual division of household labour and their responsibilities as primary caregivers. For example, women who telework are more likely than men to alter their schedules during times of family emergencies (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009).

The flexibility to adjust work schedules, time, and activities to suit personal and family needs is a benefit for some teleworkers; however, flexibility is often a double-edged sword as it can often result in an extended workday for individuals (Mirchandani, 2000). According to Mirchandani (2000), “women are most affected by flexibility-induced workday extensions” (p. 140). The ability of women to realize the benefits of flexible time is conditioned by the expectations of their families. There is an expectation that the time flexibility that arises from teleworking would be used to benefit and accommodate the needs of family members over their own personal needs (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Traditional gender roles shape this expectation. Hilbrecht et al. (2008) argue that flexible scheduling “may perpetuate women’s traditional roles” (p. 472). They further argue that the “value of flexible time indirectly leads to an increase in women’s unpaid workload” (p. 465). For many women, the flexibility of teleworking translates as being available for unpaid caring and domestic responsibilities. Leisure time is often sacrificed for the needs of the family (Hilbrecht et al.,
Flexibility therefore provides the conditions where women are disadvantaged to men in terms of reproduction as they are expected to use their personal time for household reproduction, which in turn diminishes time to reproduce and refresh themselves, while men do not face these conditions at the same rate.

*Productivity and job satisfaction*

Telework is often mentioned as a way of contributing to higher productivity for organizations and workers (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Productivity can result from transferring time saved from daily commutes into additional productive work (Tremblay, 2002). Workers are potentially more productive because they experience fewer interruptions than colleagues in noisy and disruptive office environments (Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). Reduced loss of time from travelling and less interference by colleagues are seen as leading to higher job satisfaction along work schedule flexibility (Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). Despite the lure of productivity, telework often leads to feelings of social isolation and reduced job satisfaction, as working away from colleagues and peers can be an isolating experience (Ellison, 1999; Simpson et al., 2003; Tremblay & Thomsin, 2012). Teleworkers are also subject to interruptions by family members and different types of distractions, such as disruptions by neighbours or co-residents (Johnson et al., 2007; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Women with children who telework experience more interruptions in their workdays than other workers (Pabilonia & Victoria Vernon, 2022), and therefore need to negotiate the tensions between production and reproduction more than men. Telework can also lead to reduced job satisfaction through

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19 While productivity receives a significant amount of attention in teleworking studies, Bailey & Kurland (2002) point out that most accounts of productivity are “derived from self-reported data” and “because most teleworkers volunteer or request to work at home, they might be biased to claim success” (p. 387).
increased work hours and workload and can contribute to workaholism (Dimitrova, 2003; Vayre et al., 2022).

**Child care and family responsibilities**

Despite a prevailing idea that people are motivated to telework for child-care and family responsibilities, over the years, it has not been found to be a main motivational factor (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2002; Tremblay et al., 2006). Workers who engage in telework for family obligations are only a small portion of those that telework (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2002; Tremblay et al., 2006).\(^{20}\) They are likely to be part of the small portion of workers that telework at home on a full-time basis (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012), and most likely to have dependent children in the home (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2002).\(^{21}\) While empirical evidence does conclude that women are more likely than men to report child-care and family responsibilities as motivators for telework (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Olson & Prims, 1984; Tremblay, 2006), their overall role in inducing telework is not conclusive. These insights do raise a pertinent question, though: would living in a rural community with no available child care be a stronger inducement for those people signing on

\(^{20}\) In Mokhtarian et al.’s 1998 study of 593 workers in San Diego, only 5.1 percent of respondents reported that they teleworked to spend more time with family, and only 5.0 percent indicated that it was easier to handle dependent care (Mokhtarian et al., 1998). Tremblay’s 2002 study found that, for married teleworkers with children, being close to the family was not their main motivation (Tremblay, 2002). Instead, the decision to telework was about flexible schedules—to be at home in the morning and evening and the desire to reduce travel time (Tremblay, 2002). While Tremblay’s study separated flexible schedules from family factors, on the surface, the desire to have time in the morning and evening could be conceived as a quasi-family factor, especially when that extra time is devoted to caregiving.

\(^{21}\) Maruyama and Tietze found that teleworkers that spent more than 90 percent of their time working from home were more likely to report care responsibilities as “extremely important” compared to other teleworking populations (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). The study also reported that the presence of children was related to the frequency of telework—the amount of time spent working from home (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).
for internet-enabled work than for those that live in places where there are more child-care options?

Commutes

From its inception, telework has been seen as an avenue for workers to overcome issues related to commutes, including the time of commute, length of commute and commute-induced stress (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Haddad et al., 2009). Despite the initial promise of delivering workers from lengthy, traffic congested commutes, most of the early teleworkers in the ’90s were not primarily motivated by travel reductions (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Fast forward to the 2000s, when the desire to overcome travel issues is now considered a major inducement for telework. Commuting factors now rank the second- and third-most-reported reasons for people to telework (Haddad et al., 2009; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2002, 2003; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007). These results are consistent among teleworkers in different places, including Quebec (Tremblay & Gennin, 2007), Canada (Tremblay, 2002, 2003), and the United Kingdom (Haddad et al., 2009; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). While the rationale for the temporal shifts in commuting-related motivations is not pertinent to this project, one potential reason could relate to the increase in transportation and fuel costs and the increase in the number of women in the workforce. The increase in transportation and fuel costs could potentially motivate both urban and rural workers to desire telework. Like their urban counterparts, rural workers, especially those that commute to nearby towns and cities for work, may want to reduce their commute.

What work-life balance?

The desire to achieve a semblance of work-life balance is commonly cited as a motivator and advantage for workers involved in telework (Gurstein, 2001; Hilbrecht et al.,
2008; Sullivan & Lewis, 2012). Often, it is claimed that telework can contribute to work-life balance, as work and private-life commitments can be coordinated and integrated more easily in such an arrangement (Boell et al., 2016; Gurstein, 2001; Sullivan & Lewis, 2012). Despite the claims, telework has been shown to be harmful to work-life balance, as this form of work often results in an increase in work-life conflicts, which arise when the boundaries between work and life become blurred (Sullivan & Lewis, 2012). Work-life conflicts arise in a two-way fashion, with work demands making it difficult to fulfill family roles or vice versa; family demands impacting work responsibilities (Duxbury & Higgins, 2002). Work-life conflicts indicated that the tensions between production and reproduction are acute.

Teleworkers experience high levels of both work-to-family and family-to-work interferences, as they need to accomplish both roles while working from home. A Canadian study on flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict found that teleworkers report higher levels of family-work conflict and work-family conflict than workers who use other work arrangements, such as flex-time and the standard nine-to-five work day (Higgins et al., 2014). Higgins et al. (2014) conclude that “telework arrangements appear problematic in that they increase the permeability of the work-family boundary in both directions” (p. 78). Because

22 The terms “work-life conflict” and “work-family conflict” are often used interchangeably in teleworking literature. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to interrogate the implications of the different usage in the terms, it is important to outline the common definition associated with their usage. The work-life or work-family conflict is often defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other (Duxbury & Higgins, 2002; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Higgins et al. (2003) define role conflict “as that which occurs when the total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of multiple roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably” (p. 9). From a feminist political economy perspective, this common conception is problematic for a variety of reasons. First, the idea of a role appears neutral. It does not take into consideration that roles are socially constructed along gender and racial lines. Second, it does not take into consideration that family demands are unequally distributed along gender lines. Lastly, the concept suggests that conflict between work and family only arises at an individual level. Therefore, it neglects to account for a structural analysis.
of the gendered division of household labour, women who telework experience greater levels of family-to-work interference (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowtiz, 2005). Exposure to higher prevalence of work-life conflicts indicates that women are more disadvantaged than men as they experience more occurrences when they must put time and effort into negotiating between work and family.

**Work and family boundary management**

*Separation and integration*

All at-home workers must manage the boundaries between work and home domains in some way (Fonner & Stache, 2012). Individuals manage the boundaries between work and home in diverse ways, which differ across a continuum of maintaining a separation between the two spheres or achieving full integration (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Lopez Estrada, 2002; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Rigid boundaries are set up to delineate between work and home responsibilities (separation), or strategies are enacted in an overlapping manner that allow for the merger of work, nonwork time, space, physical resources, and activities (integration). There is a multitude of factors that determine and affect the ways workers organize their boundaries across the continuum, such as job structure, physical space, education, income, gender, family configuration, and personal inclinations (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Lopez Estrada, 2002; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowtiz, 2005).

Integrating work and family activities is often considered as one of the main advantages of teleworking, particularly for women with children (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). For women, integration is often idealized in the media and framed in a way to suggest that women can accomplish “the best of both worlds,” according to Mirchandani (Mirchandani, 2000, p. 160).
Research indicates that women are more likely than men to be integrators and to swap rapidly between domestic and work tasks while at home (Mirchandani, 1999; Osnottiz, 2005; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). While some teleworkers have success integrating domestic tasks, those with child-care responsibilities are not able to fully integrate, as changing the paid side of work does not in any way allow individuals to simultaneously do paid work and child care (Mirchandani, 2000). While purchasing child-care services is one method for dealing with intrusions in the home during work time (Johnson et al., 2007), according to Mirchandani (2000), any advantages of work and family integration noted in the teleworking literature “contains the false assumption that all workers have resources for private child care or access to reliable public daycares and after-school care providers” (p. 178).

According to social reproduction, integration strategies provide the conditions for the appropriation of the reproductive labour of the worker at the point of production. As workers complete reproductive tasks while performing their work, their labour becomes part of the circuit of capital. Through these strategies, capital benefits by not having to pay for the labour power required to reproduce the labour force. Additionally, capital benefits because the portion of appropriated labour is considered unwaged and free. Because women who telework are more likely to be integrators, they are more exposed to these conditions. Exposure may differ

23 The inability to simultaneously integrate work with child-care responsibilities illuminates a potential point of difference in strategies used by teleworkers and homeworkers. Research undertaken by Lopez Estrada on homeworkers in an urban city in Mexico found that inclusive strategies were adopted when tasks were less complicated and used simple technology. Whereas in the opposite scenario, the more complicated the task and advanced the technology required to complete the task, integration was not possible (Lopez Estrada, 2002). Lopez Estrada illustrates this point by comparing women working for pay in domestic activities and dentistry. A dentist cannot simultaneously treat a patient and cook; however, a woman can simultaneously bake and care for children (Lopez Estrada, 2002). Lopez Estrada’s insights suggest that the ability to integrate work and family activities completely may be constrained under advanced technology. Instead of integration, teleworkers using advanced technology may instead be moving from work to family tasks in a disjointed manner.
along class and place lines as workers with material resources to afford care can mitigate these occurrences, while at the same time, those that live in places where formal care options may not exist are more vulnerable.

Separation and delineation of work and nonwork are cited as essential to protect work and nonwork time (Hilbrecht et al., 2013). Creating boundaries is seen as a solution to resolve the potential for overwork and a tendency toward workaholism that has been shown to occur when there is a lack of separation between work and nonwork domains (Mirchandani, 2000). However, by maintaining a separation between work and nonwork, instead of challenging the gendered division of labour, teleworkers continue to socially construct these activities as less important (Johnson et al., 2007; Mirchandani, 1999). According to Mirchandani (1999), the need to protect nonwork from work further serves to “maintain the notion of the home as a place of nonwork, that is, as the private domain” (p. 96).

From a perspective of social reproduction, separating work and nonwork spaces and activities is problematic. The separation of work and family responsibilities may mitigate the appropriation of reproductive labour of the worker at the point of production, but because it continually constructs and reinforces the notion that domestic and family activities are less than paid work, it reproduces the public-private dichotomy, which devalues domestic work. The maintenance of the public-private dichotomy has negative implications for social reproduction, for that which is deemed private under neoliberalism is seen as an individual or family problem and therefore less likely to be provided for through state social policies or employer provisions. Separation as a strategy to manage work and family demands reproduces the social relations that devalue reproductive labour while simultaneously undermining the ability for its
provisions. In a neoliberal area of state cutbacks and restricted labour market supports, this could result in further cost transfers to the family and women, which in turn intensifies the labour needed for reproduction. Women in rural communities are more exposed, as rural communities have been disproportionately impacted by neoliberal restructuring (Halseth, 2006).

Main boundary management strategies

Time: Time-management strategies are among the most common approaches used by teleworkers to manage work and family responsibilities and to reduce work-life conflict (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Gurstein, 2001; Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2007; Mirchandani, 1999; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowtiz, 2005; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Winter et al., 1993). Time strategies include a range of dimensions, including fixed work hours, flexible work hours, and blocked-time with sequential time units for work, family, domestic tasks, and leisure (Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Mirchandani, 1999; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Scheduling of time is either used to delineate between work and family responsibility or to multitask across the two simultaneously (Myrie & Daly, 2009).

Time-allocation strategies become particularly important during times when the demands of one of the spheres are more pressing. Workers can reduce time spent on work activities when important family activities occur, or they can modify domestic and household work during times of high work demands. Both options are enacted through two main practices: 1) reallocation of personal time and 2) obtaining additional help (Winter et al., 1993). Workers may reallocate time through several activities, such as reducing the time spent with family, reducing sleeping time, reducing household chores, or cutting down social activities. Or they may seek assistance through: hiring help for household chores or to support their work,
eating out or bringing food in, or calling upon friends and family to help with home-based work. Therefore, workers in places where the ability to hire help or find support may need to reallocate personal time, which in turn impacts their ability to refresh themselves as such time is given over to work.

**Space:** The most commonly cited spatial strategy is the creation and maintenance of a separate space that is designated solely for work purposes (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Physical separation of work activities from the rest of the home is often seen as a way to protect work from family and vice versa (Johnson et al., 2007), to ensure that work only gets done during designated work hours (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), and to prevent the stress associated with simultaneously juggling work and family responsibilities (Mirchandani, 1999). The workspace may consist of a separate room within the home, a designated area in a common room such as a den or part of a basement, or an area in a common room that is designated as a work area during specific times of the day, such as a dining room table (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009).

High hopes for this approach notwithstanding, enacting spatial strategies to manage competing work and home responsibilities can often create conflicts. Designating areas in common rooms or using common areas only during work time can often lead to conflicts and disputes among family members in those areas (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Conflicts may arise between family members as they compete for space (Myrie & Daly, 2009). Myrie and Daly (2009) indicate that family members may feel a “sense of deprivation not only for the use of space but also to the objects located within the space such as computers and
Conflicts may be more acute for work-centred individuals, according to Gurstein (2001), as their “work settings often dominate their home environment” (p. 52). Enclosed workrooms in the home may minimize conflicts; however, this spatial configuration is related to income and ability to have a large enough home to have a separate space.

The spatial separation of work and home spaces, either through an enclosed home office used exclusively for work or through designated areas in a common room, provide the conditions for capital to appropriate material resources that could otherwise be directed toward supporting social reproduction. Home spaces reconfigured for production reduce the ability for those same spaces to be used to meet reproductive needs. Therefore, in-home spatial strategies diminish the social reproduction supports available to teleworkers.

Summary

Internet-enabled work closely mimics the traditional occupational gender segregation with women and men in particular forms of work based on their gender. Workers with the privilege to be employed with supportive managers are more likely to be involved in non-standard work arrangements. However, women and men confront unequal relationships with their employers for the opportunity to be involved. Educated individuals and those with material resources are more involved than individuals from low-income households. While individuals with lower levels of education can access internet-enabled work activities, middle-to-higher income workers can leverage their material resources to their advantage.

Both men and women are attracted to internet-enabled work to gain flexibility and autonomy over work, schedules, and their environment. They are also pulled into non-standard arrangements to gain some semblance of work-life balance, meet care responsibilities, and be
freed from lengthy commutes. While the allure of the advantages of internet-enabled work beckons many workers, only a privileged few achieve them. For many, flexibility of schedules, work-life balance, and managing care responsibilities requires a continual negotiation that requires effort, time, and labour, as the spheres of work and family are often in tension, especially for women and workers with dependent children. Additionally, workers without the means, either in material resources or authority in their work situation, to enact strategies to help cope when work and family are in tension are also at disadvantage. Furthermore, regardless of the strategy, whether workers try to integrate work and family or find a way to keep them separate, both have negative consequences for reproduction, particularly for women.
Chapter Two. Methodology

Research design and rationale

The methodology for this project is a mixed-methods approach involving in-depth qualitative interviews and cross-sectional questionnaire data. Mixed-method approaches, also known as multi-strategy research or multi-methods, are a standard process in which researchers integrate, mix, or link quantitative and qualitative data and methods to understand phenomena better (Bryman, 2006; Mason, 2006; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Given the nature of the phenomena of interest—the navigation of telework and digital work—within a defined place context, multi-methods can yield rich insights into the structures and processes at play in people's lived experiences of these forms of work.

The rationale for using the methodology and research design process is four-fold. First, survey methods and qualitative interviews are among the most prevalent methods employed in mixed-methods studies (Bryman, 2006) and they have been used in previous telework and working-from-home research studies (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Osnowitz, 2005). Second, combining a questionnaire with in-depth interviews provides value for instrument development—the questionnaire results can be used to inform the development and implementation of the interviews. Third, variables from the questionnaire can be used to analyze and explain the findings generated by the interviews and vice versa (Bryman, 2006). Lastly, using mixed methods and multi-dimensional approaches allows one to examine how different dimensions and scales of social experiences intersect and relate, e.g., structure/process, objective/subjective, and macro/micro levels (Bryman, 2006; Mason, 2006).
According to Bryman (2006), "quantitative methods often are used to account for structures in social life while qualitative research provides a sense of process" (p. 106).

**Data collection**

Data collection in this study consisted of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions. The questions pertained to information related to work, household configuration, community, and social-economic and demographic variables. The questionnaire was partially modelled after a large Canadian telework survey completed by Gurstein in 2001. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

The semi-structured interviews were used to obtain a more in-depth understanding of everyday experiences with the forms of work and communities. Interviews touched on questions on involvement and motivations in the forms of work, how subjects adapt their lifestyles around family and work, the types of work performed in their household, the use of services in their communities for work or household, why they live in their communities or moved to their communities, and the work they complete in their communities. The interview schedule included various prompts based on the type of work, e.g., telework versus platform-enabled work or form of employment. Questions were also developed around specific themes, such as anyone related to resource industries, spouses with partners in resource industries, recent and returning residents, and people who indicated high amounts of community work. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix C.

The information was collected from January 2022 to April 2022. The questionnaire was completed via the online survey platform Qualtrics. Participants were provided with a personal
link to the platform. The personal link option on Qualtrics provided the ability to combine the questionnaire data from all participants. At the same time, it enabled the ability to match up individual responses with interview responses. Interviews were conducted via Zoom using the audio and/or video function. The interviews lasted from sixty to ninety-five minutes. The questionnaire was completed before the interviews, allowing the interviews to be organized around certain topics and to include specific questions based on the results.

**Participant recruitment and selection**

I conducted the recruitment of participants through four channels. The first channel was through social networking platforms, primarily Facebook and LinkedIn. I used two approaches for recruiting on the platforms—general posts and targeted searches. For general posts, I posted the recruitment poster on my personal Facebook and LinkedIn pages along with a short message request to my friends and network to share the post. The recruitment poster is included in Appendix D. After each post, I immediately sent an email or text to specific friends who are active users on the sites and have extensive networks to share the message. I communicated directly with people to ask them to share the posts to get a higher result on the sites. Algorithms heavily control the information presented in newsfeeds on Facebook and LinkedIn sites, making it difficult for a single post to show up on a site's newsfeed and be seen by a wide range of people.

For targeted searches, I spent hours using the search functions on the platforms to find community pages or social groups or to target specific participants. For Facebook, I searched using keywords related to geography, rural life, businesses, and Atlantic Canada. For public groups, I posted the recruitment poster. For private groups on Facebook, I sought permission to
join the group. If they agreed, I then asked permission to post the recruitment poster. Most Facebook group administrators responded positively and were helpful. However, there were times when administrators deleted the posts. For LinkedIn, I searched for groups using keywords related to Atlantic Canada and digital technologies and posted the recruitment poster in the groups. I also searched for people using keywords related to work, such as Upwork, Fiveer, and freelancers and filtered lists by province. I messaged potential participants through the LinkedIn inMail messaging feature. I used a free-thirty-day trial to upgrade my basic account to a premium account to message LinkedIn members outside my LinkedIn network.

The second channel was through emails to various groups and organizations requesting to send out the recruitment poster to their memberships or to post on their social media accounts. I reached out to countless organizations, including the Women's Network PEI, Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, Rural Action Centres of PEI, Atlantic Association for Community Business Development Corporations, Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries, Fundy Library Regional Office, and many more. I also sent emails to community offices or municipal representatives in various communities. I selected communities reported on the Canada Forest Service forestry-dependent communities list that I acquired from a researcher at the University of New Brunswick. I also sent request emails to diverse groups, including provincial Black Lives Matter organizations and a few well-known researchers in the region. A sample email to organizations and communities is included in Appendix D.

The third channel was through my friends and family. I sent an email request to a group of friends and family members, asking them to share the poster through their networks. I also contacted specific friends and family members living in rural areas in the region. I asked if they
knew anyone who met the participant criteria and asked for an introduction. The fourth channel was traditional media, including radio and newsprint. I completed two radio interviews through CBC (one in New Brunswick and one in Prince Edward Island), where I put out a call for research participants. The research project and notice for research participants were also featured in a news article in *The News*, a weekly newspaper in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

**Participant demographics and geography**

Initially, I recruited thirty participants for the project. Twenty-eight participants completed both the questionnaire and the interview process. Two participants only completed the survey, but because of scheduling issues and time constraints they did not complete the interviews. The analysis proceeded based on the data collected from participants that did both the questionnaire and interviews.

Women comprise the majority of research participants at twenty, followed by seven men, and one person who identified as a third gender/non-binary. 24 Participants ranged in ages and career and life stages, from young early career individuals to participants that are in retirement. However, the majority of participants were in older age ranges, participants aged forty-five and over represent over half of the participants. 25

Participants live in rural and resource communities across the region. Of the twenty-eight participants, twenty-six were in rural areas, while two resided in resource communities.

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24 During the interview process when I asked the participant if they had a pseudonym that they would like for me to use in the research, they indicated they would be fine if I ascribed to them a women-oriented pseudonym. As a result of this, I included the participant in my analysis related to women.

25 Age range distribution was as follows: one participant aged eighteen to twenty-four; four age twenty-five to thirty-four, six age thirty-five to forty-four; five age forty-five to fifty-four, eight age fifty-five to sixty-four, and four over age sixty-five.
These two participants were located in the same community. The participants were included in the study as their community had a long-standing relationship with resource industries—most notably, mining, fishing, and forestry, all of which are still some of the main drivers of its local economy.

The participants’ geography is highly skewed to rural areas of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, as they represent more than three quarters of the participants. During the recruiting process, I gave considerable effort, time and attention to recruiting participants from all four provinces; however, the skewness to two provinces could have been a result of the geography of my networks and prior residency status. I spent most of my childhood, young adulthood, and professional life in New Brunswick; meanwhile my early childhood years were spent in Nova Scotia. Additionally, the bulk of my extended family reside in Nova Scotia. See Table 1 for the geography of the participants.

Rural communities for each province are somewhat distributed across several areas. For instance, participants in New Brunswick represent rural communities in six different counties. Two rural regions of Newfoundland are represented; meanwhile, three counties in Prince Edward Island are represented. As the province with the most participants, Nova Scotia is a standout for having several counties with a high prevalence of participants. Of the five counties with participants, two counties—Digby Co. and Lunenberg Co.—have more participants than all the other rural areas. Although the provincial geography of the participants is similar to my

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26 Provincial distribution of the participant is as follows: eight rural New Brunswick, three rural Newfoundland and Labrador, fourteen rural Nova Scotia and three rural Prince Edward Island.

27 Considering that the research participants could be the only person in their community or county to complete telework or digital work activities, pseudonyms and work information are not presented with the county level data to protect their confidentiality.
connections to the region, I do not have family connections in the two counties with the greatest number of participants.

**Rural resident classification**

For this project, I have categorized participants' residency status into three main categories: 1) long-term residents, 2) recent residents, and 3) returning residents. I classified participants into these categories according to a combination of factors—most significantly the time they lived in the area and where they established their livelihoods or careers. In borderline cases, participants were categorized based on where they indicated they spent most of their lives.

The categories were applied in a dual manner, where participants were classified based on their status in their current community and Atlantic Canada. The dual coding based on geographical scale considers that a participant's residency status in their community may be the same as or different from their status in the region. It also considers that migration can be complex and that residency status to communities or regions can change over a person's lifetime. Factors used to classify participants by local and regional levels are outlined in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/Region</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carleton</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Province</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarenville-Bonavista Peninsula</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green's Harbour (Avalon Peninsula)</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digby</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunenburg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Hants</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Prince</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>PE</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Residency coding

As this project investigates rural and resource communities located in a peripheral region, categorizing participants based on their residency status at local and regional levels is imperative to reveal distinctive patterns in the forms of work that may arise from this dual peripheral position. While categorizing residents of rural communities is a well-established research practice (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; C. J. A. Mitchell & Madden, 2014; von Reichert et al., 2014), ascribing a secondary classification to their regional status is new. Based on the rural telework literature, this project is the first to include the additional classification for regional residency status.

I argue that including the regional residency status, particularly related to research in rural Atlantic Canada, is essential for several reasons. First, classifying regional status provides the chance to determine the presence of regional underdevelopment themes such as low wages and underemployment and how they may condition the work patterns. Second, a regional status offers the potential to broaden and deepen the understanding of the work experiences of urban-to-rural migrants as these workers may have migrated from inside or outside the region. Third, classifying participants by region also considers the current context. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many people living outside the region have moved to Atlantic Canada. The pandemic-fuelled urban flight, partially supported by teleworking and remote work arrangements, provided the impetus for many Canadians to move to regions that have often suffered significant outmigration.

The inclusion of regional categorizations enhances the diversity within the scholarship. The focus on diversity directly corresponds to rural researchers' calls for the diversity of rural people and places to be acknowledged and integrated into telework research (Simpson et al.,
Simpson et al. (2003) argue that, without a focus on diversity, researchers will create "another homogenous category—the rural teleworker" (p. 125).

As a researcher, I recognize the power dynamics in ascribing participants to specific geographic categories. An individual's identification with a particular location or environment is highly subjective and can be open to interpretation. As studied in human geography, a sense of place can be derived through emotive bonds and attachments to a particular place. It can also be generated from positive bonds and negative feelings regarding a place and can arise from the distinctiveness of a particular place or region (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009). Based on this understanding, a research participant may disagree with the assigned categorization. Therefore, every effort was made to use objective factors to reduce power or researcher bias for the assignments. Furthermore, as the project is primarily oriented to the structural role of place instead of individual perception, the existence of potential classification disagreement does not reduce the project's credibility.

Based on my long-time Atlantic Canada resident position, I was cautious and intentional in selecting the terms for the categories. I specifically avoided terms that could be perceived as harmful or offensive, such as “outsiders” and “city dwellers” or the local Atlantic-Canadian term “come from aways,” used to describe people who originate from outside the region. I chose the terms “long-time,” “returning,” and “recent” to describe residency status because they are primarily related to a length of time and are not necessarily considered objectionable. I also selected the terms that could be easily used and applied interchangeably across the two geographical scales. As the ability to describe residency status at both levels is an important feature of this research, I wanted consistent terminology.
The categories and related terminology I used for this project are similar to terms used in rural studies and migration scholarship. Researchers have used various terms to describe rural residency status, such as “stayers,” for those who may never leave or “return migrants” for people who may leave and return (von Reichert et al., 2014). The terms “rural originating” or “local” are also often used to describe long-time rural residents (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). Terms such as “lateral migrants” may be used for people who moved from similar-sized communities (C. J. A. Mitchell & Madden, 2014). Meanwhile, terms such as “urban transplants” and “counterurbanites” are often used to describe long-time urban residents who move to rural areas (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; C. J. A. Mitchell & Madden, 2014).

The project's terminology to classify regional participants is a slight departure from current terms used in the Atlantic-Canada urban-rural migration literature. Research in the region tends to only classify residents and migrants by their provincial status as 'interprovincial' or “intraprovincial migrants” (Mitchell, 2019) and not their regional status—e.g., interregional migrants.

**Grounded theory method and data analysis**

The data analysis drew heavily on a grounded theory approach to coding and analyzing data. The grounded theory method is a systematic research process that is iterative, reflective, and flexible while remaining entirely focused on the data (Urquhart, 2013). It involves an inductive approach to analysis whereby there is a continuous iteration between data collection and data analysis and concepts and literature. One of the main features of this method is that researchers “are so close to the data that you gain all sorts of rich insights; these insights almost invariably result in excellent research,” according to Urquhart (Urquhart, 2013, p. 4).
I iterated among open, selective, and theoretical coding in this study. I focused on finding constructs and relationships between concepts. Then, I iterated between concepts and existing literature to further develop the relationships and reconcile the analysis. This process allowed me to develop findings firmly rooted in the data and ensure that they are informed by the lived experiences of rural residents. The latter part is particularly important for research in rural areas. Theories are often built from urban experiences and placed on rural sites; therefore, staying close to the data in an iterative process with the literature allowing me to reveal meaningful aspects of rural communities.

The aim of ground theory method is to generate a theory based on data, rather than to verify a grand theory. Generally, the theory that is generated is represented by a narrative framework, a disagreement, or a set of hypotheses (Urquhart, 2013). I depart from this method and draw upon intersectionality and social reproduction, where appropriate, to frame the findings.

**Ethical considerations**

This research has been conducted in accordance with the guidelines of Carleton University’s Research Board (CUREB-A).

28 Before completing the data collection, I completed the Tri-Council Course on Research Ethics and submitted a protocol application. I received ethics clearance for the project (Project #116639) on December 16, 2021.

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28 CUREB-A is the research body that approves research and ethics undertaken at the university in the fields of arts, humanities, business, and public affairs.
This research study did involve a vulnerable population. Working from home can be a stressful experience for workers as they must navigate responsibilities for both their employer and their family in the same place. Therefore, speaking about their experiences could create emotional harm for the participants in the form of negative emotions and feelings as they discuss the challenges related to work and home. To address the potential harm caused by the interviews, after each interview, participants were provided with a follow-up email (see Appendix F) that explained that juggling multiple roles can be a stressful experience and informed them that they were not alone if they felt that managing their responsibilities was an overwhelming experience. I also provided them with two mental health resources: 1) a list of contact information for national and provincial mental health organizations (see Appendix F) and 2) a copy of the pamphlet Work-Life Balance Make It Your Business produced by Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) see (Appendix F).

Participants were also told that there was a minor risk if during the course of the research they reported to me that they had undisclosed income and if this information would somehow end up reviewed by the Canada Revenue Agency. This identified risk was minimized by only asking participants to indicate their personal and household income in the questionnaire. During the interviews, income-related questions were centred on confirming the information or, in cases, participants were asked if their income from the internet-enabled work was an essential for their household income. Additionally, if during the course of the interview a participant reported that they complete several jobs, I did not ask income-related questions related to the additional work activities. Therefore, the study did not collect data that would represent undisclosed income.
In addition to the above, I also undertook various ethical actions during this study centred on participants’ anonymity and confidentiality. In the initial phone screening, I made participants aware of the study’s goals and analytical areas. I also discussed that the study would not mention their employers or clients if they arose in our exchange for any reason. If a participant discussed the information, I deleted it from the transcript before I started analysis. Additionally, participants were assured that in research reports and publication materials their exact geographic information would not be shared. Instead, I told them, their location would be scaled up to either the county or provincial level, and their pseudonyms would not be associated with their geography. Participants live in rural areas, and in many cases, they may only be a teleworker or digital worker. If someone in their community read the research publications and materials, they could potentially determine the participant. To add an additional layer of protection, I placed the master pseudonym list on an encrypted flash drive that is under lock and key in my home office, to which only I have access. The research data, interview transcripts, and questionnaire data are located and stored separately in a different location through the networks secured through Carleton University’s information technology infrastructure.

Along with the above considerations of confidentiality and anonymity, consent for the study was completed in two other occurrences. Before each questionnaire, I asked participants to digitally sign consent (see Appendix E). All participants provided consent for the questionnaire. Additionally, at the beginning of each interview, I read the research consent forms (see Appendix E) and, in cases when the forms hadn’t been sent prior to the interview, asked participants for verbal consent. All participants provided their consent. I also reminded them that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw consent at
any time without consequence. And I told them that they could skip a question at any time in the interview. I also told participants that I would delete all research materials, including those that included identifying information such as interview recordings, upon completion of the project.
Chapter Three. Work: Different Work for Different Folks

Introduction

Determining which workers are involved in what forms of work is an enduring theme in work and labour studies. Labour patterns provide insights into which workers are more likely to be involved in which forms of work and to illuminate the characteristics or conditions that may divide groups of workers or forms of work. In this chapter, I first outline which workers are involved in the two main forms of rural internet-enabled work activities reviewed in this study: 1) telework and 2) digital work. Then I draw attention to possible explanations for these arrangements, taking note of gender and residency in particular. To support the analysis, I combine findings from scholarship on rural areas with the research data and show that internet-enabled work in rural contexts is primarily the domain of women. Rural women are more likely to be involved because of the prevalence of occupational segregation and the historical spatial division of labour in rural communities that positions them to have the computer skills and work experiences required for these forms of work. Lastly, I present the data that reveals two critical dimensions that condition how rural women are utilizing rural internet-enabled work to make a living and support the economic viability of their rural households. I argue that these dimensions are vital to providing a fuller picture of internet-enabled work in rural areas, highlighting the diversity of women’s experiences, and demonstrating which group of rural women are most impacted.
Gender and place segmentation of telework

Telework was the primary form of rural internet-enabled work among the research participants. Twenty participants were principally involved in work activities that saw them carry out their workday on computers, which they additionally use to deliver and transfer the product of their efforts to customers and clients, along with the internet and other ICT digital mediums. Participants spanned a range of employment sectors, types of expertise, and organizational affiliations that were characteristic of white-collar work (e.g., in engineering, sales, IT, administration, professional services consultation, and call centres).

In my research sample, the participants involved in rural telework were most often urban transplants, e.g., new and returning residents who’d spent most of their professional lives in urban settings. The majority of these participants were also newcomers and returning residents to Atlantic Canada. Six long-term rural residents were involved in telework, five of whom were women, whom I call Dakota, Finley, Kimberly, Patricia, and Tammy. I refer to the lone long-time rural man involved in telework in this study as Jeffery. See Table 1 for the list of participants by forms of work and residency status.

Despite urban transplants making up the largest proportion of teleworkers in the study, the presence of six long-term residents does indicate that telework is being pursued by a portion of rural workers. While the research sample is too small to generalize about gender, the study’s results, along with those of previous research, do advance the idea that, in rural communities, long-term rural women are more likely to be involved in telework than long-term

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29 Fourteen of twenty participants involved in telework were new or returning residents who spent most of their professional lives in urban and suburban environments.
rural men are. For instance, research on education in rural and resource communities has found that women are more likely to obtain higher education than men (Corbett, 2007; Halseth & Ryser, 2004), which suggests that rural women may be more in possession of the skills and knowledge required to gain white-collar employment, often associated with telework, than rural men.

The prominence of new and returning residents involved in rural telework is consistent with previous studies on telework, which found that telework in rural areas is mainly performed by newcomers and is often urban-to-rural migrants (Clark, 2000; Grimes, 2000; Kahn & Burrell, 2021). Why reverse migrants are the main participants in rural telework “remains largely understudied,” according to Kahn & Burrell. (Kahn & Burrell, 2021, p. 10). Potential reasons that have been suggested are: limited infrastructure for skill development of rural workers to gain access to white-collar professions (Grimes, 2000), rural workers may lack the social capital, such as professional networks, which may be necessary to secure telework and operate sustainable enterprises in the periphery (Clark, 2000; Grimes, 2000), and that telework is an urban form of employment that may not be compatible with rural work cultures (Kahn & Burrell, 2021).

Urban experience as employment edge

Employment and work-related data reported by the research participants provide some insights into the reasons noted in the previous section. Human capital was the critical factor in the participants' ability to access their current telework arrangement. Possessing the necessary skills and experiences for their work was a theme across all the participants, from rural newcomers and returning residents to long-term rural residents. Newcomers and returning
residents often had many years of work experience in urban areas that allowed them to gain skills and exposure to industries or specialized occupational areas not located in rural areas. Therefore, they had the necessary human capital to be employed in a range of different occupations and industries. For example, one participant, whom I refer to as Dawn, is involved in specialized video game development; another participant, whom I call Rebecca, works in the music industry; and the participant I call Antoine works in automation engineering.

Compared to urban transplants involved in telework, several of the long-term rural participants also discussed how they had gained their skills and experience in urban areas. These participants reported that they always worked in urban areas and had to commute from their rural communities to access employment opportunities. For instance, while Kimberly and Dakota lived rurally, they worked in urban settings, and were therefore able to overcome any lack of skills and infrastructure in their rural communities to gain the human capital required for telework. There was evidence of long-term rural residents gaining their skills and experiences from within their rural community; however, in these cases, they honed skills through employment in occupations and industries within rural areas, e.g., health care and administrative services. For example, long-time rural resident Tammy has a long-standing career in a professional role within a health-care system. Meanwhile, long-term rural resident Patricia previously worked in journalism and held administrative roles within government.

Based on evidence from this research, the prevailing viewpoint that the lack of infrastructure in terms of educational institutions, limited job prospects and low variety of occupations in rural regions that affects employment can only partially explain the absence of long-term rural residents involved in telework. Long-term rural residents that live within
commuting distance to urban centres can gain skills necessary for the white-collar occupations synonymous with telework. Furthermore, there are some rural workers who can gain skills while in their community if they are employed in occupations that are more amenable to telework, such as Tammy and Patricia are. This research study suggests that it may be more appropriate to examine the skills needed for specific occupations or industries to determine which residents are involved in rural telework and why some are absent.

The significance of personal and professional networks

Social capital is an important feature for obtaining teleworking opportunities. For many of the research participants, information about remote job opportunities or their initial introduction to their current employer was derived from their networks. In this study, networks were equally important for employed teleworkers as for participants who telework as independent contractors and across all residents.

“You know, my job is my job. It’s a little unique in the sense that I kind of knew someone who knew someone and I kind of knew my boss. You know, we’d had drinks at conferences, type of thing, casual conversations. And so, my job kind of came about. You know, just someone knew someone that that was looking for a position” (William, telework, new rural and regional resident).

“Actually, my aunt was the one who got me involved in it because she works for the same company. Before this I was working at (removed) and I wasn't doing good there. Like the hours were crazy and it just wasn't a very healthy environment to be working in. So, my aunt was like, you know, they’re hiring at this place, and I work there. Let’s throw your resume in and just see how it goes. So, I gave her my resume. And then a couple of weeks later, I got a call, and they offered me an interview. And then after I got the interview, I got offered the job” (Finley, telework, long-time rural and regional resident).
In this study, there was a relationship between the geography of personal and professional networks and the location of employers. Regional newcomers and returning residents whose employers were based outside of the region relied on their professional networks based outside of the region. Similarly, most of the long-term rural and regional residents utilized professional networks that were based either inside the region or within their local area for in-region employers.

There were a few exceptions where long-term regional residents used networks from outside of the region to secure employment with non-regionally based employers. In these cases, the participants had either previously lived outside of the region, such as research participant Robert, or worked in roles that provided the opportunity to develop professional networks with people outside of Atlantic Canada, such as the research participants I refer to as Linda and Jeffery. There was only one instance of a long-time rural participant—Dakota—who obtained worked outside of the region through a connection with another regional resident.

The research findings suggest that the rationale to explain why long-term rural workers may not be involved in telework because of their lack of social capital needs to be modified to indicate that their teleworking opportunities may instead mimic the geography of their networks. Based on the evidence found in this research, the difference in the geographic scope between long-term rural workers and urban transplants was more influential in determining where their respective employers were located than the difference in which the resident was more likely to be employed.30

30 The geographic distribution of telework employers is discussed and developed in the preceding chapter.
The ongoing impacts of occupational segregation

A lens on occupations and industries in rural areas and adjacent communities within commuting distance can provide more insights into the potential of a gender division of rural telework among long-term rural residents. It can help to answer the question of why more rural women are involved in rural telework than rural men, as found in this study. For instance, is it because rural women are more likely to be employed in occupations that are more amenable to telework than rural men?

In this study, several of the long-term rural women were employed in women-coded occupations, such as health care, administrative services, and call-centre activities. Compared to Jeffery, the lone long-term rural man, who was employed in managerial and executive sales work, the long-time rural women—Dakota, Finley, Kimberly, Patricia, and Tammy—were primarily employed in administrative and professional work activities. The gender segmentation of the participants’ work was similar to telework studies which found that men were more likely to be employed in managerial work and women in administrative work (Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2003).

The prevalence of long-term rural women as teleworkers in women-coded employment in this study parallels the gender-based occupational segmentation found in most rural areas of Canada. The occurrence of women working in women-coded occupations such as health care, administration, and clerical work and men working men-coded occupations such as natural-resource extraction is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (Rose Olfert & Moebis, 2006). According to research, occupational segregation is more pronounced in rural areas situated farther from urban areas (Rose Olfert & Moebis, 2006).
Combining this study’s research findings along with rural scholarship suggests that long-time rural women may be involved in telework rather than rural men as they are more likely to be employed in occupations more agreeable to telework. While long-term rural women may be able to access telework more than rural men, the findings suggest that they are probably in women-coded occupations. The occupational segregation that exists in their rural communities, therefore, may be mimicked in telework, which in turn leads to a gendering of rural telework.

**Gendering of rural digital work**

Many participants were engaged in digital work activities.\(^{31}\) Eleven participants were involved in a range of digital work activities, including Airbnb, professional work via online labour platforms, marketing and communications on social media, selling products through e-commerce, and creative work such as website design. Participants engaged as digital workers were somewhat even across residency status, with seven newcomers and retuning residents, whom I refer to as Amanda, Katie, Kathleen, Margaret, Melissa, Nathaniel, and Stephanie, and four long-term rural residents, whom I refer to as Barbara, Hannah, Heather, and Patricia. Participants involved in digital work activities were predominately women.\(^{32}\)

Involvement in digital work activities by both urban transplants and long-term rural residents in this research is consistent with Khan and Burrell’s 2021 study of internet-enabled work in rural areas in the Western United States. Digital work activities, particularly platforms designed as online marketplaces and social media platforms, were found to appeal to both

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\(^{31}\) Eleven of the twenty-eight participants were involved in digital work activities.

\(^{32}\) Of the eleven digital workers, ten were women and one was a man.
rural-originating residents and urban transplants. Both types of residents were involved in selling products online, operating Airbnbs, and using platforms to reach alternative markets (Kahn & Burrell, 2021).

The gender distribution of this study’s participants involved in digital work activities is comparable to the distribution of Kahn and Burrell’s research. As in Khan and Burrell’s rural research sites, this study found that long-term rural men were not involved in digital work activities (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). Additionally, that research aligned with mine in its finding that both women and men urban transplants were involved in digital work activities (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). The ratio between women and men was also similar across the research sites, with more women urban transplants than men engaged in digital work (Kahn & Burrell, 2021).³³

The prominence of rural women (both long-term and urban transplants) involved in digital work across the different research sites (Atlantic Canada and the Western United States) provides further evidence of the gendering of rural digital work. Kahn and Burrell suggest that the reason for the prominence of rural women and absence of rural men in computer work is deeply rooted in the spatial division of labour in rural farming communities, e.g., home versus the farm and inside versus outside work. Farm wives are more likely to be exposed to computers because, historically, they’ve been situated as the primary worker responsible for the bookkeeping and administrative work of the farm, which have become computerized. Farm wives were also more likely to be involved in supplemental work off the farm and, therefore,

³³ In the study’s research sites, there was five women urban transplants involved in digital work compared to one men urban transplant. The ratio of women and to men in Kahn and Burrell’s study was 5:2.
most likely to require computer skills to obtain other work (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). Women completing administrative work for spouses’ resource businesses have also been found in fishing communities (Binkley, 2005). Kahn and Burrell also suggest that digital work often involves a significant amount of relational work with outsiders, such as dealing with Airbnb guests and managing the expectations of online customers. In their study, rural men tended to leave this outside relational work for their wives while they engaged in internally focused relationship work, such as networking with others in their industry (Kahn & Burrell, 2021).

The gendering of rural digital work challenges the current understanding of the gender-digital divide, which assumes that most women disproportionately lack the resources and capabilities to access and effectively utilize ICTs (OCED, 2018). While the gender digital divide is an important issue globally, especially in rural areas of developing and emerging countries, it might operate differently in rural areas within industrialized countries. This research study, along with Kahn and Burrell’s study, suggests that rural work cultures of Western industrialized countries provide an important grounding for rural women to have the skills for internet-enabled work over rural men.

**Multiple jobs and the intertwining of work forms**

Multiple job holders represent approximately one third of the research participants and are exclusively women. Long-term rural women comprise the largest portion of the multiple-
job holders, followed by recent residents and then returning residents. See Table 2 for the list of multiple job holders.

Women were engaged in one of three job-coordinating approaches: 1) combining different telework positions, 2) mixing telework with digital work activities, or 3) interlacing telework or digital work alongside other non-internet-enabled forms of work. The multiple work activities vary in terms of employment status; participants complete each job on a part-time basis, or as a mix of full-time and part-time, or the positions occur on a seasonal basis.

Multiple-job holding among the participants is a distinctive feature of this research study. The occurrence of multiple-job holding has not been present or explicitly mentioned in previous rural telework studies (Corbett, 2007; Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Simpson et al., 2003), nor does it appear as a prominent feature in the teleworking literature. Historically, the teleworking scholarship is preoccupied with teleworker demographics that assume participants primarily hold one position, either full-time or part-time. There is a small number of studies that have outlined the presence of multiple-job holders using the worker category “moonlighters” to describe those who work in the home on a part-time basis as a supplemental job in addition to holding down a primary job (Deming, 1994; Gurstein, 1996, 2001). However, the impacts of the form of work on moonlighters are not a prominent feature of discussion or analysis.

34 Of the nine participants involved in multiple-job holding, five (Barbara, Dakota, Heather, Kimberly, and Patricia) are long-term rural women, three (Cynthia, Kathleen, Katie) are recent residents, and one (Melissa) is a returning resident.
While multiple-job holding is notable absent from telework studies, the theme is present in digital work and gig economy literature, as well as in research on rural communities. The gig economy, with its non-standard and highly flexible employment opportunities, often attracts multiple-job holders (Dunn, 2020). The multitude of digital platforms, project-based work, and short gigs access through the internet and digital technologies provides avenues for people with full-time or part-time work to secure a second income. For example, a survey by the International Labour Organization found that 32 percent of crowdworkers who work on digital labour platforms use the work on the platforms to complement their pay (Berg et al., 2018).

Holding multiple jobs, also known as occupational pluralism, has long been a feature of rural communities in Canada (Sandwell, 2013) and rural Atlantic Canada (Bittermann, 1993; McCann, 1999; Sacouman, 1980; Winson, 1985). According to researchers, rural households were often dependent on a range of activities to sustain their livelihoods (Bittermann, 1993; McCann, 1999; Sacouman, 1980; Sandwell, 2013; Winson, 1985). Rural residents often combined practices such as wage labour with the sale of commodities (agricultural and non-agricultural products), along with hunting and gathering and other self-provisioning activities to meet their needs (Sandwell, 2013). In many rural communities, non-farm-related activities often supplemented and, in some cases, replaced farm-related income (Bittermann, 1993; Sandwell, 2013). According to Sandwell (2013), the plurality of work practices used by rural households often “shifted in response to the opportunities of the local environment” (p. 30). Rural households often relied upon place-based resources, amenities, and infrastructure in their areas for additional sources of income on a waged or unwaged basis. Occupational pluralism arises as a strategic response to family survival in a marginal world of work where no single activity provides an adequate income to meet the family's needs (McCann, 1999).
Based on the prevalence of multiple-job holding and its gendered nature found in this study, I argue that the intersection of occupational pluralism and remote work is an important analytical dimension to master in order to have a fuller understanding of forms of internet-enabled work and their implications on rural workers and households. I address occupational pluralism in this section and in subsequent chapters, where I illustrate its impact on the working and reproductive lives of research participants.

I am not the first to propose the importance of using multiple-job holding to understand rural communities and rural workers. New Zealand-based researchers Robertson et al. (2008) argue that the concept is a “very useful vehicle for interpreting changing rural economic and social relations associated with work and employment” (p. 346). The researchers found that rural workers in New Zealand used multiple jobs also as a strategy during times of rural restructuring. They found that during a time of restructuring, some rural workers held multiple jobs as an option of choice that allowed for wider benefits of earning adequate incomes and creating a range of business and personal outcomes that were not otherwise available instead of out of necessity. In comparison to research in rural New Zealand and rural Canada, my research positions the occurrence of occupational pluralism within new and emerging forms of work. It involves the need to understand how rural workers are using multiple jobs that do not arise from forces in the local work environment but instead from the changing nature of work spurred on by technological advances.

35 Rural workers in their study were primarily employed in non-internet-enabled forms of work.
Evidence from this research study indicates that rural women are involved in occupational pluralism using internet-enabled work more than rural men. This finding differs slightly from historical accounts of occupational pluralism in rural Atlantic Canada. Empirical accounts show that both rural men and women are engaged in occupational pluralism; it was more common among men than women (Bittermann, 1993; McCann, 1999). Rural women were often involved in waged work to help support family incomes (Barrett & Apostle, 1987; Bittermann, 1993; M. Connelly & MacDonald, 1983); however, the opportunity for earning cash from multiple occupations was always more limited (McCann, 1999). Historically, rural women’s seasonal and other wage-work possibilities included specialty crop harvesting, lumber camp cooking, fishing and lobster processing, domestic service, sewing, and nursing care (McCann, 1999).

It appears that the computerized and technological nature of performing telework and digital work has opened new avenues for rural women to access additional streams of income. The research findings also imply that rural women are using these forms of work in a multitude of ways to generate additional income.

For instance, a portion of these avenues is not related to exploiting place-based resources and instead is focused on the skills of the women in such positions as those on online labour platforms and in employed telework, suggesting that the forms of work can help women to overcome barriers in their local area. Meanwhile, some rural women are using new internet-dependent avenues to generate income from local amenities and place-based assets such as Airbnb and managing social media pages for rural communities.
As internet-enabled work has provided various avenues for rural women to engage in occupational pluralism, it does; however, it also signals the importance to better understand the differential uses of computers and the internet in rural communities to explain why rural men may be absent. Additionally, the presence of rural women from all residency statuses involved in occupational pluralism indicates there is a need to understand differences among women. For example, are some rural women involved in holding multiple jobs out of necessity? Or are some holding multiple jobs as an option to access wider benefits for earning potential?

The third shift and social media

Several women—Amanda, Heather and Katie—reported that they complete social media work for their spouses’ business pursuits in addition to completing social media work for their employers or their self-employed activities. When asked about renumeration, all the women indicated that they perform these additional work activities on an unpaid basis. The women did not have a negative perception of these additional unpaid activities; instead, they primarily considered them part of their contribution to their spouses’ and/or households’ success:

“Yes, I do. It’s like a very small amount of social media for him. It's not really a business where you need a ton of social media, but I'll just do it once a month. I go through the groups and post a little flyer or whatever” (Katie, digital work as social media work, new rural and regional resident).

“I do social media for his pages for his most recent venture in (removed), which is him testing out this burner so he can move on to (removed), that type of thing. Well, maybe not seven hours, seven hours is a lot, maybe like three

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36 Of the eleven women involved in digital work activities, three were completing additional social media work for their spouses.
and a half, like half an hour a day.” (Heather, digital work as social media work, long-term rural and regional resident).

These findings indicate that social media activities are a new avenue where women are utilizing their labour on an unpaid basis to support their husbands’ careers and businesses. The occurrence of women providing unpaid labour to support spouses’ careers or family businesses is not a new phenomenon. Feminist researchers have often called attention to the nature of women’s work for husbands and businesses, which they collectively argue is often hidden, unpaid, and undervalued (Beneria, 1982; Binkely, 2005; Kohl, 1978; Pavalko & Elder, 1993; Philipps, 2008). Work activities typically include two distinct forms: 1) direct contributions—e.g. a wife completing clerical work or answering the phone for the family business; or 2) indirect social activities—e.g. a politician’s wife who campaigns with and informally advises her husband (Pavalko & Elder, 1993). Women often complete these work activities in addition to domestic responsibilities and their own waged work, comprising a third shift (Binkely, 2005; Philipps, 2008). Sometimes women compromise their own position in the labour market to accommodate a husband’s need for business help (Baines & Wheelock, 1998) or organize their lives around the demand of their husbands’ jobs (Pavalko & Elder, 1993).

Given the evidence on women’s work noted above, I contend that the existence of social media as unpaid third-shift work is highly pertinent for women living in rural communities. I fully recognize that women in urban and suburban areas may also be involved in social media-induced third shifts, yet conditions in rural communities suggest that it may be more salient for rural women. While feminist research has provided evidence of the third shift, there is no empirical research that investigates the occurrence through a geographical framework. However, insights from this study and other research do signal the need for more
research to better understand the similarities and/or differences between urban and rural women in the context of unpaid social media work. First, as outlined in a previous section, rural women appear more likely to be involved in digital work than rural men. If rural women are using social media to generate income more than rural men, then there is a high probability that they may be expected to undertake social media activities should their husband’s career or businesses require the work. Furthermore, the occurrence could be heightened if the husband’s career or business is in the resource industries or skilled trade occupations, as the husband’s computer and digital skills may not be adequately developed. Second, there is a significant amount of historical evidence of rural women providing direct and indirect labour to their husbands’ businesses and careers. Empirical research has shown that farmers’ and fishers’ wives often complete productive unpaid work for the family farm or fishing business, such as clerical work or arranging the sales of catches (Binkely, 2005; Kohl, 1978), and mining wives have often contributed to their spouses' success by performing indirect activities such entertaining and providing hospitality (Rhodes, 2003). Third, the spatial division of labour in rural communities with inside and outside work may function to separate social media work by gender. The final point is illustrated in the following answer from research participant Hannah, when I asked her who completes the bulk of the social media activities for the family farm.

“I would say 99 percent of the time, it's me. Like, I think in the last year and a half, my husband might have made like five or six posts, if that, and I post at least three times a week. My husband does the physical labour on the farm. So that makes it easy for me to tend to the customers and get in contact with different people about buying feed and things like that and then work on social media as well” (Hannah, digital-work as social media work, long-term rural and regional resident).
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described research participants’ involvement in the two forms of rural internet-enabled work: 1) telework and 2) digital work. Based on the results of this study, I find that telework is still primarily an urban and suburban phenomenon—even, perhaps ironically, when it is being done in rural regions. That is, while there is evidence that the form of work is being adopted in rural areas, rural workers with skills and human capital gained in urban areas are more likely to be involved. These workers may be recent residents or rural returnees, or long-term rural residents that commute to nearby urban areas for employment. Long-term rural residents employed in the limited amount of white-collar work in rural communities are also likely to be involved. Therefore, to better understand telework adoption in rural areas, it is important to investigate the conditions under which long-term rural workers either commute to nearby urban areas or engage in local white-collar work.

In this study, both women and men are involved in rural telework; however, women with long-term ties to their rural community are involved disproportionally compared to long-term rural men. Meanwhile, rural digital work is the exclusive domain of women. These findings have several important conclusions. First, that the gender demographics of this research could be a function of the research sample notwithstanding, the research brings attention to the need to add geographical place into internet-enabled work analysis. For instance, while past empirical studies reveal that women do not dominate teleworking populations (Bailey & Kurland, 2002a), this study shows that they may dominate rural telework. Second, the prevalence of women in rural internet-enabled work signals the necessity to uncover similarities and differences among women and men in rural contexts that condition
their involvement. As demonstrated in this chapter, the involvement of long-term rural women is influenced by the interrelated mechanisms of occupational segregation, spatial division of labour, and rural work cultures, which have enabled rural women to acquire the computer skills and white-collar employment experiences to be engaged in internet-enabled work.

While this chapter draws attention to the gendered nature of who is involved in internet-enabled work, it also reveals two important dimensions that frame how rural women are using these forms of work to generate a living and support their households: 1) occupational pluralism and 2) unpaid social media work. Both dimensions illuminate specific conditions affecting rural women. The economic need to hold multiple jobs is a long-standing feature in rural communities in Canada, and rural women with computer skills are actively engaged in internet-enabled work to supplement their incomes. Rural women of all residency statuses are involved in holding multiple jobs, which demonstrates the economic and limited employment conditions of rural communities’ impact on women at a structural level. In this study, long-term rural women are more involved than newcomers and returnees, which implies that those structural impacts are experienced differently based on residency. As some rural women hold multiple paid jobs, some are also performing social media work on an unpaid basis to support their households. The presence of a third shift, either through additional paid jobs or unpaid social media work, in addition to other paid work and domestic responsibilities, unveils that a portion of rural women—women who have lived most of their working lives in rural areas and those with spouses involved in family businesses and resources industries—are dispensing a significant amount of labour through internet-enabled work to support themselves and their households.
Chapter Four. Access: The (Dis) Advantages of Location

Introduction

Both telework and digital work propose that workers can complete their work activities wherever and whenever; they also implicitly imply that the opportunities created can be accessed by workers dispersed across geography. This implication reveals itself by searching online job classified sites and seeing the number of “remote, work from anywhere” tags listed on job advertisements. Or merely by browsing through the internet or social media where ads with taglines such as “be your own boss,” “choose your own hours,” and “work from anywhere” route people to sites devoted to completing small tasks (gigs) or that invite you to sign up as a host for a resource-sharing platform.

These examples suggest that rural workers can take advantage of these emergent work forms, and that, as outlined in the previous chapter, a rural worker with human capital, e.g., skills, knowledge, and job experiences, are involved. However, there are still several questions regarding access to the forms of work for rural workers. For instance, are there any factors or conditions other than job-related skills and ICT infrastructure that prevent or enable rural workers from getting involved? If so, are some rural workers more advantaged or disadvantaged than others?

In the previous chapter, I presented the finding that rural teleworkers are more likely to be urban transplants; however, there is evidence that long-term rural women are involved. I also highlighted the prevalence of rural women involved in digital work. Several access-related questions arise from these findings, such as: Are long-term rural workers obtaining work
opportunities from within their communities? Are urban transplants moving to their communities with their current jobs? Are rural workers able to obtain work with employers or clients and customers who are at a far distance from their communities? Additionally, are there particular conditions that enable more rural women to get involved in digital work than telework?

This chapter contributes to the above access questions, and it seeks to explain the conditions that enable or restrict rural workers from entering or obtaining internet-enabled work and to better understand the dimensions involved in the dissemination within the modern workforce. This chapter is organized into two sections. Firstly, I present the data on the geographic patterns between the research participants and their employers, customers, and clients. I highlight the differences among rural workers based on residency status in their rural area as well as the region, which reveals a segmented pattern. Through the research data, I further show that the employer has a great impact on a rural worker’s ability to access opportunities, particularly telework. Lastly, I outline conditions that enabled and constrained the participants' ability to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to partake in internet-enabled work. I argue that these conditions are paramount to examining internet-enabled work, as they unveil the cost that is required of rural women, particularly long-term rural women, to access opportunities.

**The delineation of opportunities**

*The advantage of urban and regional employment*

In this study, participants involved in rural internet-enabled work were found to be most often living in their current rural communities when they obtained and became involved in
their respective form of work or when their work shifted from an in-person to a remote basis as a result of COVID-19.37 Participants who relocated to rural areas after they began internet-enabled work previously lived in cities and suburban areas outside Atlantic Canada.38

Most participants involved in rural telework, either as an employee or independent contractor, held positions with employers based in other provinces across Canada rather than within Atlantic Canada.39 These out-of-the-region employers were concentrated in Ontario and Quebec. For example, Melissa, a returning resident who’d previously lived in Ontario, worked with a firm with offices in Ottawa and Montreal and William a regional newcomer from Ontario reported to corporate offices in Montreal. Meanwhile, teleworking participants with employers based in Atlantic Canada were primarily employed with companies in the same province as their residence. For example, Cynthia, a regional newcomer; Emma, a rural newcomer; and Kimberly, a long-term rural resident, all worked with employers based in their respective province. There were no instances of rural teleworkers residing in an Atlantic Canadian province with an employer in another province within the region. For instance, teleworkers based in rural New Brunswick were primarily employed with companies based in New Brunswick, not Newfoundland.

The concentration of out-of-the-region employers may be partially explained by the number of recent and returning residents in the study, many of whom were previously located

37 Twenty-four of the twenty-eight participants reported that they lived in their current rural community at the time of their initial involvement in Internet-enabled work.
38 Of the four participants who resided in urban areas at the time they obtained their current remote work, three participants, who I refer to as Stephanie, Richard, and Thomas, where all located in urban areas outside of Atlantic Canada, while one participant, who I refer to as Dawn, resided in a small town in New Brunswick.
39 The geographical distribution of teleworking employer was as follows: 10 in a different province outside of the region, seven in a different town in the same province, two in the same town, and one in a different country.
in Ontario and Quebec. It can also be explained because rural teleworkers are more likely to be
urban transplants. In this study, only Dakota and Jeffery, two of the long-term rural residents,
are employed as teleworkers working with employers based outside the region. There are two
instances where long-term regional residents were employed with out-of-region employers.
Robert, a rural newcomer, was employed with an out-of-region employer; however, this can be
explained by the fact that his childhood and early professional career were outside of the
region. Meanwhile, Linda, a returning rural resident, was also employed with an out-of-region
employer; however, her role centred on representing a national organization with activities
within in Atlantic Canada.

Half of the relocating participants, including Rebecca, Richard, and William, maintained the same work with their out-of-the-region employer while they settled in their new rural communities. At the same time, the remainder resigned their positions before moving as in the case of participants Katie and Cynthia or they had lost their job because of the pandemic, in the case of participant Nathaniel. Participants who moved to the region while maintaining employment were mainly men and those who moved as unemployed were primarily women.40

While some participants moved with a job, not all maintained employment with the same employer. Only one research participant who relocated to the region was still employed with the same employer at the time of this study. After settling in their communities, the other participants moved on to new employers. While these participants found new internet-enabled work opportunities, it's important to note these positions were with employers based outside of

40 The women that resigned their positions were previously employed in positions that were not conducive to full-time remote work. Katie worked in a care facility, and Cynthia one worked at a construction renovations company.
the region, in a way resembling the same geographical employment pattern they had before they moved.

Geographic patterns found in this research indicate that the place of previous employers and former places of residence may resemble the geography of the participants’ internet-enabled work. For instance, long-term workers in rural Atlantic Canada may be employed with companies within their respective provinces, e.g., a rural teleworker in New Brunswick may be employed with a New Brunswick company. Meanwhile, recent and returning rural residents are likely to be employed with companies based in their previous location or outside of the region, e.g., a rural newcomer from Halifax may be employed with an employer in Nova Scotia, while a returning resident from Ontario may be employed with an employer from Ontario or another province outside of the region.

There is a plethora of studies on the commuting and relocation patterns of teleworkers (de Abreu e Silva, 2022; Melo & de Abreu e Silva, 2017; Ory & Mokhtarian, 2006; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016); however, I could not find a study that found similar patterns to those noted above. A few studies investigate the distance of teleworkers from their workplaces. Ory & Mokhtarian (2006) studied the relocation and telecommuting patterns of 200 workers in California over a ten-year period and found that those who telecommute and then move actually tend to relocate closer to their workplace, whereas those who begin telecommuting following a residential relocation tended to have moved much farther from their workplace. Empirical studies in Portugal and the United Kingdom found that teleworkers move closer to their work and not necessarily farther away (de Abreu e Silva, 2022; Melo & de Abreu e Silva, 2017). In this study, those that were teleworking prior to relocating moved farther away and not
closer to their workplaces. I did find that those that relocated and then started teleworking lived at a far distance from their employers. However, this only speaks to the geographic patterns of people that relocate and not those that start teleworking and do not move.

Part of the challenge in understanding the patterns found in this study is that most empirical studies on telework and residential location do not specifically address the employer's geographical location. Distance is discussed based on how far employees are from their workplace and not necessarily on the physical location of both the employee and employer. The absence of the employer's location in empirical studies leaves a gap in the understanding of which workers are accessing jobs from different locations. However, data from this study clearly shows that the employer's location is an important component in understanding the ability to access telework from rural areas, particularly from within rural Atlantic Canada. In this study, those with ties to out-of-region employers—either through past employment or previous place of residency—were able to gain employment with out-of-region employers both before and after they relocated, as evidenced in the case of participants Cynthia, Katie, Melissa, Rebecca, Thomas, and William. This was not necessarily the same for long-term rural workers. These findings suggest that the ability to access internet-enabled work opportunities may be more restricted for some than others, as the size of the pool of opportunities may not necessarily be the same for all workers. Accessing opportunities outside of limited rural and regional labour markets is of particular importance, especially in economically marginalized areas such as Atlantic Canada.

Given that Dakota and Jeffery, two long-term rural residents, did access employment outside of the region, it raises the question as to what factors were involved in their ability to
do so that might differ from the others. An examination of the experiences of the participants reveals the key factors of past employment and networks. Dakota heard about the employment opportunity and was recommended to the employer by her friend, who is also employed at the firm. Meanwhile, Jeffery met the person that hired him through previous employment. While Jeffery has lived in his rural community for decades, his previous employment often involved work activities across and outside the region that allowed him to have professional network outside the region.

As outlined in the preceding chapter, data in this study shows that, while networks were an important feature in accessing internet-enabled job opportunities, rural workers utilized networks in a differentiated pattern: recent and returning residents used networks based in their previous location, while long-term rural residents primarily used networks in their current location or within the region. The data suggests that the geographic distribution of workers' networks can shape their ability to obtain internet-enabled work opportunities, especially in the form of employed and self-employed telework.

*The power of the employer*

How employers perceive and interpret location as an essential function of work can impact the likelihood of their allowing internet-enabled work opportunities, which, in turn, provide a basis for the spread of workers to be outside urban areas. Some employers may determine that location is not essential for a particular employee and allow them to work remotely. The research participants cited a person’s skills and knowledge and the type of position in question as explanation for this conclusion. While research participants indicated
that their employers were friendly to remote work, several also indicated that the instances were limited and completed on a case-by-case basis.

For instance, Richard, a teleworker who returned to the region during the COVID-19 pandemic, signed a remote work arrangement with his out-of-region employer. The agreement is limited to his current position and department within the organization. Should he try to move to another department or position, the work arrangement may not be available. This limited arrangement was satisfactory for Richard, as he is nearing the end of his career and has no desire to change positions or departments. Meanwhile, Rebecca, a teleworker and a recent resident to the region, explained that her current work position was not initially remote. Her out-of-region employer was willing to hire her and offer a remote work arrangement based on her skills and experience in a niche industry. However, like Richard, should Rebecca leave her employer, the position may not continue to be offered on a remote basis.

“I think they would prefer someone to be in-house, but they did say, you know, we are opening the job application to people who are farther away. And if we find the right candidate, then we will select them. And I ended up just being the person they picked. But ideally, I think it would be an in-person job. But here I am—they really wanted me. I don't know that there were many other candidates who had my background. They kind of said that” (Rebecca, telework, new rural and regional resident).

“We had it confirmed that we could work from home forever. I mean, the only trade-off is that that's as long as you're in your current job” (Richard, telework, new rural and returning regional resident).

Some employers may determine that location is an important function and require employees to be located near their main offices. For instance, William, a teleworker, previously worked for an employer with a history of being favourable to remote work options before COVID-19. Back then, he teleworked one day a week. Despite the rapid onset of full-time teleworking because of COVID-19, the employer plans to return to the previous practice. It’s
because of this requirement that William left the employer after he relocated during COVID-19.

"I didn't tell my previous employer that I was moving because everyone was working from home. It didn't really matter. And so, it wasn't until I moved to Prince Edward Island that I said to my boss, 'Hey just so you know, I've moved to Prince Edward Island. As you know, in a COVID world, it doesn't really matter where I work because we've proven that we can work remotely.' And they said, 'Yeah, we understand that, but you know, it's not going to be COVID forever, and we need someone in in Toronto for that position. Once, COVID is over; we're going to expect you back in the office.' So, we just agreed to part ways" (William telework, recent rural and regional resident).

The influence of employers' willingness to allow telework is a well-known feature in the discussions on the adoption of telework. According to a review of telework research by Bailey and Kurland (2002), managers' willingness or reluctance are among the "most predictive factors" in determining which employees are offered telework opportunities (p. 383). Research on the role of managers has primarily focused on uncovering factors that influence their interest in uptaking one or another form of work. Main factors reported in the research include trust and control over workers, coordination problems, implementation, and management costs (Bailey & Kurland, 2002a). While my research findings align with past telework investigations and show that organizational-level aspects impact who teleworks, they also point to a new feature: how geography and distance are perceived and then integrated into the organization of work activities. For various reasons, some organizations may determine that certain work activities must be completed in a specific geography. The following narrative from Jeffrey, a long-term rural resident, further illustrates the presence of this feature.

"One example, I was talking to a president of a company that was looking for sales executives to take care of Atlantic Canada. We were having a general conversation. I wasn't looking for a job, just [having a] general business conversation. I said to him, 'Where are you looking?' He said, 'Well, they must
be based in Halifax or Moncton.’ I said, ‘So you're looking at it from a regional standpoint of where the person is, not what their capabilities are?’ He said, ‘Yes, we're hoping to find the person who is there.’ Right. So, PEI as a whole is even pushed aside from executives who have the capability to work in Atlantic Canada, because they either have to be in Halifax or Moncton. Ninety-nine percent of the jobs out there that I could do in Canada, I can't do because I'm not in Toronto, but I know I could do them. You know, I think I could take care of five time zones in Canada from PEI. Yes, but it's perception, right? The perception is [someone in] PEI, from a geographic standpoint, could not administer the job as if they were sitting in Moncton" (Jeffery, telework, long-term rural and regional resident).

*The scope of distance under digital work*

In this research study, the location of customers and clients of participants involved in digital work activities was dependent on the type of work activities. Participants Barbara, Margaret, and Melissa, who are involved in work through platforms such as Airbnb and Upwork, indicate that their customers were geographically dispersed, hailing from various places, provinces, and countries. The breadth of client locations that these platforms access aligns with their business models, which are predicated on a global client base.

While the nature of e-commerce activities is similar to the digital platforms, as they both have a global orientation, the breadth of locations was not the same for the participants involved in e-commerce. Research participant Amanda reports that, while her client base reached outside the Atlantic provinces, it did not extend past Ontario into western Canada. Meanwhile, Stephanie, who is also in e-commerce, reported that she had clients from across the country and even into other countries. The differences between the two participants could be explained by activities—Amanda is involved in retail sales while Stephanie is focused on setting up e-commerce infrastructure. The difference could also be the result of place. Stephanie is a returning resident who had started her e-commerce-based career outside of the
region, while Amanda is a long-time regional resident who only recently ventured into e-commerce.

In this study, there appeared to be a link between the distance between participants and their social media clients. Participants focused on content creation and social media marketing for local organizations, such as Heather and Patricia were employed by rurally based companies. While Patricia reports that she obtained social media clients outside of her rural area and had an initial client from outside of the region, most of her clients were based in the province. Meanwhile, only one participant, Katie, completed social media work for a national company based outside the region.

This finding suggests that, while social media work may be done from anywhere, paying clients might choose to employ or contract with someone who is in proximate distance to their office or that has some association with the company. Therefore, rural residents with talents in social media may not necessarily gain contracts from employers outside of their proximate areas. Or if they do, it might be under specific conditions. For instance, Katie, who does social media activities on behalf of a national company, works for the company on a part-time basis, but in a different non-digital-based different role.

A relationship between the geographic distribution of the customer base and digital work activities was also witnessed in the creative and technical work of website design and development. The two rural participants involved in these activities, Kathleen and Nathaniel, reported that they worked for local and out-of-the-region employers. The ability to gain contracts with out-of-the-region customers can be accounted for by the fact that they are recent rural and regional residents and have access to networks and contacts in metropolitan areas.
outside of Atlantic Canada. However, Nathaniel indicates that most of his clients are based outside the region, while Kathleen reports the opposite; most of her clients are locally based. As the occurrence of this insight is too small to generalize, it does suggest the need to consider gender differences in self-employment, access to networks, and relationship to place.

**Gender and participation costs**

*When education is not enough*

Training enables rural workers to gain the knowledge and skills to obtain and engage in internet-enabled work opportunities. Several participants in the study said they’d participated in formal and informal training activities either before or during the initial period of their work. Formal training consisted of paid courses through professional development companies and universities. The subject matter varied across the participants and was categorized in two main areas: business topics and digital skills—e.g., digital branding, e-commerce, customer relations, marketing, websites, leadership, change management, proposal preparation, and being successful in online labour platforms. Participants involved in telework and digital work engaged formal training; however, in this study, it was more prominent among digital workers. Informal training primarily occurred for participants involved in digitally based work activities and consisted of self-study, such as reading books and articles, or active participation in digital activities, for example, building websites and using trial-and-error tactics on different digital platforms and sites.

41 Seven participants reported training activities in their interviews. Three participants—Kimberly, Margaret, and Patricia—completed formal courses; three participants—Amanda, Heather, and Hannah—engaged in informal learning opportunities; and one participant—Stephanie—took formal courses and was involved in self-study.
In this research study, only women engaged in training activities as a strategy for undertaking their respective forms of internet-enabled work. These women covered all residency statuses—i.e., long-term rural residents, recent residents, and rural returning residents. Although all the women reported that they held some form of post-secondary education, and several held professional and graduate degrees, they still discussed a need to engage in training activities to acquire additional knowledge or skills for their work activities.

The education level of the participants that undertook training to start their work departs from the rural digital deficit scholarship that suggests that low educational levels of rural workers are one of the reasons the adoption, access to technology, and use of the internet in rural areas is behind those of urban areas (Salemnik et al., 2017). In the cases of these rural women, possessing post-secondary education was somehow not enough.

One potential reason to explain the need and motivation for additional training is a knowledge mismatch between their education and current form of work. For example, digital and business skills may not have been part of their education curriculum. Another reason is the form of work itself may also motivate people to engage in training. For instance, some digital workers may engage in informal training to build their skills and knowledge base to become more effective in their work.

The online environment was a common theme across both informal and formal training experiences. Formal courses were completed through online learning formats, and digital skills were gained by being online and engaged in the digital ecosystem. The opportunity to gain knowledge and skills via online channels suggests there is an avenue for rural workers to gain the work conditions necessary to engage in internet-enabled work while residing in their rural
communities. Most of the women that undertook training did so while living in rural communities. Only Margaret, a rural and regional newcomer, completed training in an urban environment before she moved to the region.

While being online opened the ability for workers to gain various skills and knowledge from within rural settings, this may only occur for people interested in becoming involved in digital work activities. In this study, it was more common for women to be involved in digital work than telework activities. One exception was Kimberly, a long-time rural resident who completed a specialized training program that was vital for her to gain the knowledge her employer required. Although Kimberly completed the training and accessed a remote position from within her rural community, acquiring specialized training was not the only factor that led to the position. She became aware of the position through her personal network and used this channel to gain employment.

While most of the women relied on online avenues for their training and skill-building options, rural newcomer Amanda utilized in-person resources at a local library. The rural library, which was only a fifteen-minute drive from her home, provided her with access to information resources to help her gain knowledge. Despite being the only participant that discussed using this local resource, Amanda had experience that provides a glimpse into the importance of local services for helping workers gain knowledge important for participation in digital work.

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42 The majority of these women were living in rural Atlantic Canada at the time of training, with the exception of Stephanie. The returning resident was living in rural community in the Northwest Territories when she started to engage in formal and informal training. She also continued these activities in a resource town in Alberta before moving back to Atlantic Canada.
"So, I did end up reading a lot more like self-help books, mostly educational books. I really took advantage of the library during that time to teach myself how to do a website and marketing, and, you know, how to be a better business leader" (Amanda, digital work as e-commerce, recent rural resident, long-term regional resident).

As previously stated, many of the women engaged in informal learning activities where they developed digital skills through active participation on various platforms. A common theme among the women is that their participation was directly tied to businesses—either their own or that of their family. Heather, who manages social media pages for local businesses, initially honed her social media skills while supporting her family's business. Stephanie garnered expertise in e-commerce when she used e-commerce tools and other digital technologies for her own hospitality business. Amanda learned how to create websites when she launched her e-commerce site, and Hannah used her knowledge of Facebook for personal reasons as an avenue to start the family farm and manage its business page.

These women's experiences of gaining skills while in their communities are contrary to much of the current research that tells us that there is a digital skills deficit in rural areas (Salemnik et al., 2017). While a deficit may exist generally, it may take on a particular pattern where rural residents who work with businesses, either as a paid or unpaid family member, may be excluded. The findings of this study also suggest that this digital skill deficit may be gendered in that it may more aptly apply to long-term rural men, not women.

Although this is a positive finding, as the data indicates that a portion of rural workers are gaining training and skills via technology without the need to relocate to urban areas, there are negative implications. To undertake activities to gain skills, a worker must put in time and labour. All the women that developed their digital skills through informal learning activities
indicated that they spent a lot of their own “free time” on various platforms honing their skills. For a few of the women, including Heather and Stephanie, devoting a portion of their time to gaining skills paid off. Both reported that they were highly successful in their specific digital work activities, and that all the informal learning was important in helping them access their current work. Additionally, as outlined in the previous chapter, some women are completing a third shift by providing unpaid social media work for their spouse's business. This suggests that as rural women gain digital skills, they may open themselves up to situations where they are performing unpaid work on top of other paid work and domestic responsibilities.

*A need for money*

Material resources, in the form of money, were a condition for accessing internet-enabled work opportunities in this study. However, this condition was only present for long-term rural women. Three of the eight long-term rural women interviewed indicated that money was essential to their ability to participate in their current work. In addition to the importance of money in helping them begin their work activities, money also figured in these women’s professional experiences in their outreach for support to friends and government programs in the early days, when they hadn’t the money required to launch. Barbara, who operates an Airbnb, borrowed $10,000 from a friend to complete renovations in her home to create the space that she uses on the site. Kimberly, a part-time teleworker, borrowed over $2,000 to complete a three-day course in the subject matter of the employer's area of expertise. Patricia, a self-employed digital worker involved in social media and communications work, applied for and received income supplements through a government-sponsored self-employment benefit program during her initial start-up period.
The circumstances that gave rise to the participants' need for monetary resources could be explained by their rurality. All the women have lived in their respective communities for a significant period (ranging from thirty-one to fifty-nine years). The women live in different rural communities across the region; however, each woman talked about the lack of employment opportunities and poverty in their respective communities. Both Kimberly and Patricia have post-secondary education, and Barbara previously operated her own rural-based business. While each of the participants reported household incomes above the 2020 low-income cut-off measures for rural areas, they also discussed the need for extra income. All the women hold multiple jobs.

After living in their communities for decades, all the while dealing with the realities of rural economies, these long-term rural women had to rely on friends and government support to obtain the necessary funds to become involved in internet-enabled work. Their experiences were drastically different from those of recent residents—men and women—who moved to their areas from urban areas. Recent and returning participants involved in similar work activities did not discuss a monetary need to obtain training, specialized knowledge, or physical resources. For instance, returning resident Melissa, who is involved in work through Airbnb, did not discuss the financial burdens associated with the Airbnb rental. Additionally, self-employed women in the study, who relocated from urban areas, such as Amanda, Dawn, and Kathleen, did not require income support from the government; instead, they reported that they relied on their personal savings.

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43 Statistics Canada, low-income cut-offs for rural areas in 2020 was $14,431 for one person, $17,564 for two persons, and $21,871 for three persons. Statistics Canada: Table 11-10-0241-01 Low-income cut-offs (LICOs) before and after tax by community size and family size, in current dollars.
The plausibility of rurality as a condition of their need for material resources is consistent with research that has shown that women living in rural areas of Canada have lower labour-force participation rates and employment rates, are overrepresented in low-income situations, and have lower incomes than those in urban communities (Leclerc, 2021). Furthermore, research has shown that even when rural women obtain higher rates of education, their incomes are often lower than those of rural men (Corbett, 2007).

While borrowing money and receiving income support helped the long-term women in this study start their internet-enabled work, they faced additional constraints. Barbara reported that it took her time to recoup the amount from the Airbnb rental to pay off the debt, and she did not start making a profit for two years. Kimberly discussed that even though she secured a position with a company after she completed the specialized training, she is not employed in a role commensurate with the training. Instead, she is employed in a lower-level supportive role. When asked about her position, she disclosed that while she attained the required subject matter knowledge, she does not have the mandatory years of experience needed to perform the work as required by the company. She further revealed that she did not expect to gain the necessary years of experience needed because of her age. Despite these conditions, Kimberly was very happy and satisfied with her work and spoke positively about her experiences. The position that she gained from investing in specialized training was a much-needed source of income for her. While Patricia reported that the self-employed benefits were a vital income source during the initial period of her social media and communications business, she also discussed difficulties with finding enough clients to sustain the business. At the time of her interview, she was only working on her business part-time and had taken on a part-time teleworking position.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated the employer and individual conditions that enable and restrict rural workers from gaining access to internet-enabled work activities. Although the evidence shows that rural workers are accessing opportunities from within their communities, I conclude that the dissemination of this work in rural communities is likely to be highly uneven, with some rural workers having access to a wider pool of opportunities than others. Rural workers with urban and out-of-region employment experiences were more likely to gain employment with teleworking employers at a far geographical distance from their rural location. In this study, long-term rural Atlantic Canadians employed by employers outside of the region or their province of residence were the exception and not the norm. These findings can be partially explained by the geography of previous employment and social networks of rural workers, and, most importantly, employers’ perceptions of geographic location and how work should be carried out. Meanwhile, the distance between digital workers and customers or clients was found to be a function of the type of work activities.

The patterns found in this study are concerning as they imply that rural workers may still need to relocate or commute to urban areas to gain employment experiences or to expand their networks to be on the same footing as urban workers. The regional nature of the evidence suggests that the pattern may also apply at a regional employment level, with long-term Atlantic Canadians being left out of some internet-enabled employment opportunities outside of the region unless they have been able to gain the specific skills and knowledge through their regional-based jobs or obtain work through personal contacts. This leads me to conclude that the phrase “remote, work from anywhere” in job advertisements may not be entirely true.
Instead, it should be written as “work from anywhere as long as it’s in the right place to get the skills, employment, and knowledge needed to complete the work.”

In this study, I have also described that there is a cost to access internet-enabled work that is borne principally by rural women, particularly long-term residents. Rural women must pay with financial, time, and labour investments to obtain the skills and knowledge required to obtain and participate in internet-enabled work. Income support does help long-term rural women; however, they still may be in a marginalized position compared to other women and other workers that have the material resources to invest.

The prevalence of rural women involved in digital work found in this study may arise because of their ability to gain skills through informal learning and the use of digital platforms and other digital mediums. For some rural women, with only the need for time and labour, gaining these skills may be an easier option than undertaking expensive training to access other forms of internet-enabled or in-person work. I contend that the study provides further evidence and advances the work undertaken by Khan and Burrell, who argue that the usual way of thinking about digital divides and inequalities needs to be reformulated in rural areas of industrialized countries (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). As evident in this study, many rural women do not lack education or digital skills, even when controlled for residency status—i.e., long-term versus recent and returning. Furthermore, I conclude that gaining digital skills may be a double-edged sword for some rural women, especially in the context of a third shift. Their newly acquired or honed digital skills may be used to advance others—members of their household, family business, or community groups—on an unpaid basis.
Chapter Five. Motivations: From “Flexibility” to “Out of Necessity”

Introduction

The prevalence and impacts of internet-enabled work depend on understanding what motivates individuals to engage in the form of work. Motivations provide insights as to which workers are more inclined to seek out and be employed in which form of work and under what circumstances. The conventional push-pull motivation framework indicates that workers are pulled by, or demand, alternate work arrangements in order to seek out advantages such as flexible work schedules, the ability to manage family, child care, and work commitments, to improve work productivity, to reduce stress and save time from commuting, to have more control over their work environment, or to have more time for themselves (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Mokhtarian et al., 1998). Alternatively, workers are pushed into remote work because of organizational or supply-side factors where employers create the remote work arrangement as a strategic way of reducing overhead or labour costs (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Telework researchers suggest that individual motivations are likely to differ by various segments of society as the advantages promised by remote work may be desired more or prioritized differently among different workers (Mokhtarian et al., 1998). Researchers have found different motivations often arise between men and women, workers with spouses or without spouses, workers with children or without children in the home, salaried and self-employed workers, and workers across different occupations (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2003; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007).
At the present time, it is not entirely known if motivations differ for workers living in different geographic locations—more specifically, rural and remote areas compared with urban areas. While empirical studies have been completed at various geographic levels, including national (Gurstein, 2001; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2003), provincial (Tremblay & Gennin, 2007), and municipal (Mokhtarian et al., 1998), specific studies on rural areas or comparing urban and rural workers are lacking. Additionally, within the empirical studies, the physical location of the worker is not a factor in the analysis or discussions.

In this chapter, I apply a place-based lens to the research participants' motivations and rationales for why they are engaged in internet-enabled work. Given that rural workforces encounter constrained labour markets and experience different material conditions, it is important to determine if internet-enabled work motivations are influenced in any way or if specific motivations arise because of physical location. This chapter directly corresponds to calls in the scholarship to understand the characteristics that motivate and impact rural workers specifically (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Simpson et al., 2003).

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section, I present the research findings of the participant motivations related to the three most prominent motivators discussed in the remote work scholarship, e.g., flexibility, ability to manage work-family responsibilities, and benefits from reduced commuting. Using the data and interspersing the motivation literature, I explain how rural workers are also motivated by these factors, albeit with slight variations in meaning. In the second section, I outline three motivators that are specific to rural workers—out of necessity, better than the alternative work, and need for additional income. The presence of these three dimensions shows that motivations can differ based on geographic
place, especially in rural areas where employment options are limited, and workers face
different material conditions. I also demonstrate that these three specific motivators are highly
gendered, arising principally for rural women. I argue that these rural-specific motivators show
that some women are pushed into rural internet-enabled work. This challenges the current pull
dimension in the telework literature, which presumes that organizational and supply-side forces
pull workers into internet-enabled work.

The allure of working from home

The advantages of time flexibility

The desire for flexible work hours pulls many rural workers to internet-enabled work.
This factor was among the most reported motivations in the survey and was discussed through
the interviews. Participants perceived the ability to have control over how and when they
worked using internet-enabled forms of work, providing them with a sense of freedom and
independence that they would not have in other types of work. For participants with children,
flexible hours were seen as important in helping them manage their work and family
responsibilities. For some participants, flexible hours allowed them to work according to their
own personal rhythms—working in the mornings or evenings when they are most productive,
for example.

“I very much like being in my own space wearing what I want with music on
in the background. I cannot as a human function in a cubicle surrounded by
other people. It’s just not how I work. It's not how I like to work. It's not how
I work best. I don't work well in eight-hour chunks. I work well in one-hour
bursts or thirty-minute bursts at all hours of the day, seven days a week”
(Nathaniel, digital work as website creator, new rural and regional resident).
This finding is consistent with prior research on teleworker motivations that found that flexibility is one of the top motivators (Duxbury et al., 1998; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2002). Research undertaken by Duxbury et al. in 1998 found that having greater flexibility was one of the most popular motivations to start teleworking, and having the flexibility to set hours and schedules was among the most frequently quoted advantages (Duxbury et al., 1998). Similarly, Maruyama and Tietze also found that flexibility was the primary motivator, in their sample of 394 teleworkers, with 83.3 percent reporting this as one of the main reasons for engaging in telework (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

The desire for time flexibility to help manage work and family responsibilities has also been previously reported. Tremblay’s 2002 research found that this motivation was particularly important for married teleworkers with children (Tremblay, 2002). There is a perception that having greater flexibility to manage work hours would achieve a better balance between work and family commitments (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Tremblay, 2002).

In this research, both men and women report time flexibility as an important reason for their involvement in internet-enabled work. The meaning of time flexibility for the men and women was often centred on choosing when they conducted work and the impact of timing on their work productivity. Women, with and without children in the home, also ascribed meanings to care responsibilities. For instance, both Katheen and Susan discussed that time flexibility was important in helping them meet other forms of caring responsibilities—such as caring for pets.
“Degree of flexibility so that when I wake up at two o'clock in the morning and I have a fabulous idea, I'm more inclined to crawl out of bed and come down to my office and do it. And then mid-afternoon, if I decide because I was up so late last night, I should put my head down and my feet up and take an hour off, that’s [OK]. I mean, the flexibility of a schedule is really important” (Thomas, telework, new rural and returning regional resident).

“Well, I get up at four. Right. And so I have to walk the dogs, I have to clean the litter boxes, I've got three cats and I have to get their food ready. I feed all of them in separate rooms, so I have to set that up. It probably takes me two to three hours a day to do animal care. That doesn't count walking the dogs, which I do as well. So it's a very big chunk, a big part of my day. And also, it's what compels me to, like . . . It's my real motivation to stay at home because one of my dogs is very reactive and if I wasn't able to be there, there wouldn't be anybody else that could look after her” (Susan, telework, returning rural and regional resident).

While the gendered result could be a function of the research sample, it is consistent with previous research on telework motivations. Mokhtarian et al.’s 1998 study found that women rated flexibility and other personal benefits—such as having more time, independence, and control—higher than men (Mokhtarian et al., 1998). Tremblay’s 2003 study of Quebec teleworkers reported that “flexible schedules” was the most-cited advantage among the women participants. While the advantage was also the top advantage among the men participants, more women selected the option than men (Tremblay, 2003).

There was an occurrence in which time flexibility held a slightly different meaning for one rural woman. Hannah, who performs the social media and customer relationship activities for the farm she co-owns with her spouse, discussed that she was searching for remote work. Flexibility held two important meanings for her. One, the always-on nature of social media allows her to intersperse this work around other duties throughout the day. And, two, an internet-enabled job would give her the flexibility to be available for the farm. “When it comes to being on the farm, there are specific times when you have to be there to feed your animals” (Hannah, digital work as social media, long-term rural and regional resident).
Although Hannah’s need for time flexibility can be conceived as arising from the desire to balance work and family responsibilities, which is similar to the reasons discussed in the research (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2002), links to her rural location are present. In Hannah’s case, the desire for time flexibility is partly conditioned by farming operations. While this instance does not allow for generalizable findings, it does point to where a potential difference between rural and urban women may exist. Rural women may desire flexibility because of conditions that arise as part of resource industries. The idea has merit when we consider research from rural and resource communities, which have found women’s employment, family, and household responsibilities to be conditioned by resource industries (Binkely, 2005; Gill, 1990; Moen, 1981; Preston et al., 2000).

The hope of work-family balance

The convenience of working from home motivates many rural workers to engage in internet-enabled work. For many participants, working from home provided them with the convenience of interspersing household work throughout their workday—basically doing chores around their focused work times. “You know, if you want to do a load of laundry or something, you throw it in before you start and then when you take your break, you throw it into the dryer. You're not coming home at six o'clock at night and trying to do it then, right? It's getting done while you're working. And so those little conveniences, I guess” (Cynthia, teleworker, new rural and regional resident). Interspersing household work along with paid work was discussed as an opportunity for participants to achieve a sense of a work-life balance.

The ability to balance work and family duties was cited as a motivating factor primarily for rural women with care responsibilities for children and aging spouses. For the women with
care responsibilities, such as Abigail, Amanda, Cynthia, Finley, Heather, Hannah, and Stephanie, flexible schedules and family responsibilities were intimately related and not discussed as separate factors. Being available to attend to children during the daytime, having the capacity to flex work schedules around school hours, and being available for appointments were important reasons for the women to be involved in internet-enabled work.

“I've never really wanted to work in an office, but when it was offered to me as work from home, I was like, this is the perfect thing for me. Because at this point I lived with my sister. I originally moved in with her because I’d drive her to work in the morning. This is when I was in school, so when I was still in school, I'd drive her to work in the morning and then drive her back from lunch and pick her up at the end day because she had lost some of her sight from a medical condition. So, I moved in to help, and then when I got this working-from-home job, I was like, this is perfect” (Finley, telework, long-term rural and regional resident).

The gendered result is consistent with the scholarship, which indicates that women and women with children are more likely than men to be motivated to engage in work because of family and care reasons (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Olson & Primps, 1984; Tremblay et al., 2006). As these women conduct a high percentage of their work from home, it is also not surprising that they selected family-related factors for their motivation. The frequency of telework is correlated to the presence of children, as more hours at home allow for more opportunities to organize work, child care, and other family-care responsibilities (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay et al., 2006). The gendered result is also consistent with the sexual division of labour found in rural communities. While urban and rural women both shoulder the burden of domestic labour, traditional gender roles and conservative values have historically placed paid work for rural women secondary to their domestic responsibilities (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Little, 2009; Reed, 2003). The following narrative provides further context of rural women placing their work around their domestic responsibilities.
“Because, well, one, I have children, even though they're like eight, eleven, and fifteen, they're messy, so you know, they're kids. So, leaving them for an extended period of time generally equals more work for me when I get home. Basically, because other people need me, the work and schedule are tailored to other people's needs, not my own” (Heather, digital work as social media, long-term rural and regional resident).

While the women with young children in this study were attracted to telework, similar to previous studies (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2002), the presence of children took on a different form. Some children lived full-time in the home, as with Hannah, Heather, Katie, and Stephanie, while others lived in the home on a part-time rotational basis, such as with Abigail. Meanwhile, Abigail and Amanda discussed responsibilities for children through informal channels other than formal biological or adoptive parental relationships. For instance, both selected the ability to manage child care in the survey and discussed that they held a prominent child-care role for their significant other’s children.

Intertwined with the need to balance work and family duties for women is the lack of child care in rural communities. Of the six women with young children at home, Abigail, Amanda, Heather, and Hannah lived in areas where there were no formal daycare centres. Stephanie and Katie reported access to a formal daycare within a fifteen-to-thirty-minute drive; however, neither woman utilized the facilities. Both women discussed the lack of spaces and long waiting lists as the reasons they did not enrol their children at the facilities. Katie also reported a lack of options for part-time care. Heather and Katie indicated that the lack of available child care was a motivator to engage in work activities in the questionnaire.

The relationship between family-orientated motivations and the availability of child care found in this study is not specifically discussed in empirical studies of telework motivations. While care responsibilities and the need to manage child care are often discussed
in the main body of the telework scholarship, particularly in relation to why women are often attracted to the form of work (Gurstein, 2001; Mirchandani, 2000; Olson & Primps, 1984; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001), child-care-induced motivations have not been adequately addressed. In reviewing the motivation literature, I could not find an empirical study that had a variable for daycare availability. Instead, most studies use a variable related to the presence of children in the home to explain child-care-related motivations (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay et al., 2006). In contrast, the questionnaire used for this research study included the variable *lack of available child care*. Additionally, during the interview, participants were asked to provide context.

Differences between this study and other scholarship could be partially explained by how child care is understood and interpreted. In much of the scholarship, child care is often discussed as a “need to manage” child care along with work and other responsibilities. This is slightly different from the viewpoint of experiencing a “lack” of paid child care. While the need to manage child care could partially arise from contending with very few formal paid child-care options, it is somewhat different than having to figure out child care and work responsibilities when no paid options exist, as in the case of many rural communities.

*Freedom from commutes*

For many participants, the convenience of working from home provided an opportunity for them to save time and money from work commutes. “The other convenient part of it is financial convenience. So, I'm not spending money to travel, to work, I'm not spending money on parking, I'm not doing any of that stuff” (Dakota, teleworker, long-term rural and regional resident). For many research participants, the appeal of working from home was also that it
freed them from driving in winter weather conditions. “And so, especially with the weather conditions in the winter, I have never been a big fan of driving. So, I don’t like driving in the winter” (Katie, digital work as social media, new rural and regional resident).

All types of residents, from recent to long-term rural residents, discussed the benefits of being released from commutes. Those that recently moved away from urban centres discussed how they saved time and money for not having to deal with commutes and traffic and congestion and lengthy public transit rides. Meanwhile, long-term rural workers also reported that they saved time and money for not having to commute daily to nearby towns and cities to access workplaces or there was no longer a need to plan their days around the ferry schedule.

“The big one is, first of all, the commute. I would have to leave the house before between 6:30 and 7:00 in the morning, and I would get back at between six and seven o'clock in the evening. And, you know, an hour to an hour and a half on either end of those was spent wishing I was somewhere else besides in a car or in a metro. So that's the big attraction” (Thomas, telework, new rural and returning regional resident).

The participants' discussions of the financial and time advantages of travel reduction are consistent with the previous studies on commuting and motivation completed in the 2000s. Based on the questionnaire and interview data, commuting-related factors were within the top four of the most discussed motivation and main advantages of teleworking. The results are similar to the studies in the United Kingdom and in Canada, which report that commuting-related factors are the second- and third-ranked motivators (Haddad et al., 2009; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Tremblay, 2002; Tremblay & Gennin, 2007).

While the participants discussed commuting, it is still not known how this factor relates in terms of the overall importance of their decision to telework. This research limitation is
primarily attributed to the survey design, where the participants were merely asked to select from a list of different motivators instead of to indicate different levels of importance. Despite this limitation, a review of the interview discussions revealed that most of the participants talked about commuting-related factors more from a perspective of an advantage or a positive outcome of the form of work rather than it being an extremely important or strong inducement.

**When rural conditions motivate**

*Not much work around here*

Employment conditions in rural communities propel many rural workers to pursue internet-enabled work opportunities. The lack of jobs and the types of employment available to residents in rural communities create circumstances whereby some workers seek out alternatives. When asked why she was in her current teleworking position, for example, Cynthia said, “out of necessity. OK, yeah, because there's, I mean, there's not much work to be had in these places” (Cynthia, teleworker, recent rural and regional resident).

When work is available, most of the jobs are minimum wage, seasonal, customer service, or manual labour type of positions. Linda describes the employment situation in her community thus: “there's work opportunities if you want to work, you know, at the drugstore or you want to work at the corner store” (Linda, teleworker, returning rural and long-term regional resident). With few employment options and a low variety of work, internet-enabled work allows rural workers to gain access to a wider range of work opportunities and the potential to overcome limiting employment conditions.
Rural researchers have previously speculated that the lack of available employment options may drive some rural workers into internet-enabled work (Simpson et al., 2003); however, to date, there are no empirical studies that have specifically addressed this issue. While digital work options are often discussed as offering the ability to allow workers to escape some of the constraints of their local labour markets (Graham & Anwar, 2018), empirical studies are currently lacking. A 2018 survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that some people that are involved in crowdwork on digital platforms are because they cannot find any other employment (Berg et al., 2018). However, the percentage of workers motivated for this reason was less than 10 percent. Furthermore, the study did not outline if the lack of employment was caused by conditions in rural labour markets or other reasons for an inability to find employment. However, the study does suggest that being unemployed for more than six months could be a motivator, as a large percentage of survey respondents were unemployed before starting work on platforms (Berg et al., 2018). The inability to find work was selected by a small percentage in a 2019 study of Australian digital platform workers (Churchill & Craig, 2019). Similar to the ILO study, the discussion of this condition in the study was scarce, and it is unknown if it was caused by location-based factors or other factors, such as skills mismatch, discrimination, etc. Kahn and Burrell’s study of workers in rural areas of California and Oregon only curiously mentions the motivational reasons rural workers use online platforms to sell products and services: the ability to expand into new markets (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). Considering the state of research, my study is one of the first to confirm that rural workers do consider their rural employment realities when considering internet-enabled work opportunities inclusive of both forms, e.g., telework and digital work.
While I found a connection between rural employment conditions and motivations, the link is nuanced. Although all the research participants discussed limited jobs in their respective communities, not all reported that it was a motivation in the questionnaire.\footnote{Five participants selected “no other job opportunity” in the survey. Amanda, Cynthia, and Katie are recent residents and Finley and Patricia are long-term rural residents. Both long-term rural residents discussed looking for work just prior to starting their internet-enabled work positions.} The difference between survey responses and interview discussions suggests that some rural residents are \textit{directly motivated} by the conditions, while others may be \textit{indirectly motivated}. I use the term \textit{directly motivated} to account for participants who responded with “no other job opportunity” in the questionnaire. I use the term \textit{indirectly motivated} to account for participants who either discuss looking for work in their communities or the lack of employment options in their interviews but do not select “no other job opportunity” in the questionnaire.

In this study, those that were more likely to be directly motivated—\textit{where they perceive the lack of jobs as a main motivation for internet-enabled work}—were rural women, including recent and long-term residents. The gender dynamics of rural labour markets could explain why rural women are more keenly aware of limited job opportunities in their communities than rural men. Meanwhile, time spent searching for work in a rural community could explain why recent and long-term women reported the motivation in the questionnaire. Searching for work in a rural community for the first time or right after a job loss may lead participants to perceive a more direct relationship to why they choose internet-enabled work. These potential conditions could explain why some women selected “no other job opportunity” in the questionnaire, even though more participants discussed the issue in their interviews.
Participants' knowledge, understanding of, and lived experiences of rural labour markets could explain why some rural workers are indirectly motivated—where participants determine they need to find an alternative to the lack of jobs being offered but do not perceive it as a major inducement. If we consider the idea that the lack of options and variety of work are known facts or features of rural living; therefore, labour market realities may not be top of mind when residents—recent, returning, and long-term—decide to engage in rural labour markets. For instance, several rural and returning newcomers (both men and women) discussed how they had simply accepted that they would likely not find work in their rural communities. Meanwhile, most long-term rural participants were quick to report there was no full-time work in their communities. This could explain why some participants talked about the lack of jobs but did not select “no other job opportunity.”

Indirect motivation may be more common amongst long-term rural women than long-time rural men. Jeffery, the sole long-term rural man in the study, did not discuss problems with finding work, while it was a common theme reported by the long-time rural women. More investigation of long-term rural women and men is required to know for certain if it impacts women more, as the results of this study could be merely a result of the research sample demographics.

*It's better than the alternative.*

Internet-enabled work provides circumstances in which rural workers do not have to make trade-offs between finding a career and living rurally. Several rural workers, including new resident Abigail, and returning residents Linda and Stephanie, discussed how remote work
provided the opportunity to access career options that would have previously required them to relocate out of their communities.

“If I wanted to move [to] and live in a bigger city, I would certainly have more opportunities than I do where I am. However, to stay where I am, this is absolutely the best career option that exists for me. It means that I have a job and a career that I find fulfilling and challenging, but I get to live somewhere that I want to live. Without remote work, I would have had to make a sacrifice for employment in order to stay where I want to live” (Abigail, telework, recent rural resident, and long-term regional resident).

I am not the first to find that rural workers perceive remote work as an opportunity to have a career while remaining in their communities. Simpson et al.’s Australian case study reported that the combination of increased opportunities and location preferences that arose from remote work was highly valued by rural teleworkers (Simpson et al., 2003). The case study also found that remaining in their communities was also important to be able to continue to access established support networks (Simpson et al., 2003).

While on the surface the findings are positive and suggest that rural workers can access satisfying employment without moving, more investigation is required to provide a comprehensive assessment of the extent to which rural workers are able to secure career opportunities. It could be that rural workers are enticed by internet-enabled work because it is a “better than the alternative” option and not necessarily a career improvement. For instance, some rural workers may be motivated to undertake rural work as it allows them to avoid the experience of “having to take a job just to have a job,” yet they still may be experiencing underemployment or unfavourable work conditions. For instance, Katie talks positively about her internet-enabled work position; however, she is also only employed on a part-time basis. Meanwhile, Finley also speaks positively about her full-time call-centre position and views it
as a better alternative to the minimum-wage jobs, which is all she could find when she was seeking employment.

“If this job wasn't remote, I wouldn't have a job right now, or I wouldn't have a job in my field right now. So, you know, I have the opportunity to, you know, keep my LinkedIn profile looking good, keep my resumé looking good, keep my skills sharp in my field, even though I'm working remotely. So, yes, I think without it, I would probably be working, you know, a job that I didn't really care about just to make some money” (Katie, digital work as social media, recent rural and regional resident).

Accessing more career opportunities than what is available in their local labour market is different motivation than the main factors discussed in telework research, e.g., personal benefits, flexible schedules, commuting, family responsibilities, etc. Most of the career-oriented research is centred around determining if teleworkers experience positive or negative career-development outcomes after they are already teleworking and not if they are able to start or access a career. Various studies have found that telework can often lead to decreased career-development opportunities (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2002). The potential of decreased opportunities is in part due to the decreased opportunity to be seen by or be visible to managers. Studies have also reported that women teleworkers are most likely to report career development issues (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Tremblay, 2003), and the issue is more pronounced for those with children (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). Maruyama & Tietze’s 2012 study of teleworkers in the United Kingdom found that women with dependent children were 2.6 times more likely than men to report that reduced work visibility/career development was a major concern (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

Participants in this study were not overly concerned about the possibility of limited career-development options. Perhaps the possibility of decreased career development
opportunities with a teleworking position for rural workers is weighed in relation to the
elevated ability of accessing career opportunities that would not otherwise be available
to them. While more research would be required to investigate the existence of a trade-off
between accessing careers and career development, it could point to a difference between the
experiences and motivation of urban and rural teleworkers and rural men and women. The
merit of the idea is enhanced when further placed in the context that several women in this
study—such as Cynthia, Heather, Kimberly, Margaret, Patricia, Susan, and Tammy—are
classified as underemployed. Some women want to work full time but can only find part-time
work, while others are employed in jobs that do not fully utilize their skillsets. For example,
Tammy has a master’s degree and works in a role that only require a bachelor’s degree and
performs work only partially related to her knowledge area. For some, a career-limiting
teleworking job may be better than none. The following narratives provide insight into the
underemployment experienced both recent and long-term rural women face:

“I don't think I realized how difficult that would be for me personally, because. You know, I always worked, and I worked full time. The last job was a heavy-duty job, like very busy with a lot of responsibility and dealing with the customers and keeping everybody happy. So, you sort of come off something like that. And then trying to try to find something full time, that is going to challenge your brain enough” (Cynthia, telework, recent rural and regional resident).

“I went to school and have a whole lot of skills, and I just didn't want to clean rooms at the lodge or at the local inn or you know what I mean? I'm like, I want to use the skills that I have. I felt they were valuable enough that I could make them work using the internet.” (Heather, digital work as social media work, long-term rural and regional resident).

“Because of my age, I don't have time to gain the expertise that is required for a consultant position. I'll never be able to be a full-time subject matter consultant with the company, because they only hire people with like ten to fifteen years’ experience, and I don't have time to get that” (Kimberly, telework, long-term rural and regional resident).
On the search for a second income

The need to generate additional income motivates rural women to engage in internet-enabled work. Multiple women in this study—including Barbara, Cynthia, Heather, Kathleen, Kimberly, and Margaret—reported a need to generate additional income. While this factor was present across women of all residency statuses—i.e., recent, returning, and long-term—the rationales varied. For some women, the additional monies generated from their internet-enabled work supplemented the family income and provided a second income to help with saving. For instance, Heather, whose husband is a fisher, discussed that the extra money helped her family to thrive. When asked if her husband’s fishing income was enough to sustain the family, she replied, “Sustain, yes. Thrive, no. You know, this year I made $12,000 working contracts. So, all this income has allowed us to have a little nest egg and to save for our dream of creating a small company. So, yes, we can live. Could we survive if I didn't work? I don’t know.”

The need for additional income may also derive from employment conditions in the rural area. Additional money through internet-enabled work could provide much-needed income to support long-term rural women who have a history of holding precarious or low-paying jobs. Kimberly, a long-term rural resident, discussed how she has always had a second income. Although she possesses a post-secondary education, throughout her interview, she commented on the lack of work in her area and its connection to long-time poverty.

“I've always been searching for a second income. Yeah, well, you know, and you can imagine and probably can appreciate any savings I had or any credit I had was exhausted by being unemployed for over a year. I was on the federal government unemployment insurance program, and when that was exhausted, I was in dire financial straits. I needed extra income to dig me out of this. I need
extra income because I'm a single woman and I'm a homeowner, and this place needs more than minimum wage. My full-time position is a non-profit position. So, it's bare bones. It's embarrassing what they pay me. The position demands and calls for a certified teacher with a teaching license, but I'm only paid twenty-two dollars and change an hour. I have no vacation. I have no pension. I have no health benefits. I have nothing. But a position. I work thirty-seven point five hours a week, and there's lots of time in the day. So, if I wanted to fix the septic, which I just did before Christmas this year, I mean, that's a big job. That's a major job in the thousands of dollars. My well goes dry every year. I've never been able to afford to dig a new well; I just wait for it to recover, and I hold water. And so maybe with the extra income, I can build my bank account and resources” (Kimberly, telework, long-time rural and regional resident teleworker).

The combination of a women’s age, life stage and household income can also induce them to engage in internet-enabled work. Despite being retired, Barbara, Kathleen, and Susan, all who are aged sixty-five and older reported that they relied on their internet-enabled work to supplement their retirement income. “Yeah, I do rely on it. Absolutely” (Kathleen, telework and digital work, new rural and regional resident). Their household income can partially explain the need to supplement income; all three women reported a household income of $35,000 to $49,999.

For these women, gender and work experience could be the influential factors contributing to their current household income levels. Compared to Thomas, the one man in the study who was over sixty-five, the women’s income level is dramatically different (e.g., over $100,000 compared to $35,000 to $49,999) and illustrates the common reality that women earn less than men. Although Kathleen and Susan had similar educational levels to Thomas, their lifetime earnings are significantly lower. Two of the women were previous business owners (Barbara owned a restaurant in a rural area and Kathleen a florist shop in an urban area), and Susan spent most of her career in professional white-collar positions. While more detailed information would be required to determine if the household incomes were also a function of
the women’s length of time in their rural versus urban areas, it is important to note that research has shown that income in rural regions of Canada is lower than in urban regions (Singh, 2002).

The gender differences between those over sixty-five and the need for additional income are highlighted in the following narratives when they were asked if they relied on their internet-enabled work income:

“I am retired. So, I might. I have kind of a pension, and old age security, but it's not enough to support myself. I mean, I get enough to pay my rent. That's it. The only thing I would be able to pay for from my pension is the rent of this house, no utilities, so I have to work” (Susan, teleworker, returning rural and regional resident).

“I have a fairly reliable pension. I mean, it's not, it's not lavish, but it's adequate, certainly foodwise by the living standards here. So, it is one of those things where it still remains a nice-to-have revenue source. And it has leveraged off a lot of, you know, it has it has enhanced the lifestyle of my retirement years” (Thomas, teleworker, new rural and returning regional resident).

Secondary income motivations reported by the women of this study are a new factor in understanding why some workers are motivated to engage in internet-enabled work as telework. Before this research project, income-related motivations have not been discussed or reported in empirical studies of motivation for telework.

Income motivations were previously found in Kahn and Burrell’s study of rural internet-enabled workers in California and Oregon. The researchers found that rural workers were using online marketplaces as a strategy to earn supplemental income (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). They also found that this strategy was most often pursued by rural women, not rural men (Kahn & Burrell, 2021). The gendered results of Kahn and Burrell’s study is consistent with this research study—only rural women were generating supplemental income. This study
extends their research by showing that rural women are supplementing using telework opportunities in addition to digital work.

In contrast to telework research, scholars of digital work and the gig economy have reported that many people are induced into digital work for income reasons. A survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that 32 percent of digital platform workers were motivated to perform crowwork to complement pay from other jobs (Berg et al., 2018). Churchill and Craig’s study of 409 Australian gig workers reported 49 percent of participants secured work through online platforms for income reasons, with 32 percent to supplement their income and 17 percent as a main source of income (Churchill & Craig, 2019). The study also found that women were more likely to indicate that income earned on the platforms supplemented family and household incomes (Churchill & Craig, 2019).

Reasons for generating secondary income through the gig economy differ amongst workers. According to Dunn, some workers use the platforms to generate extra money for special projects and are not financially dependent on digital work; some workers use the additional money to ease the burden because their main employment situation is precarious; and some workers, who for family reasons are tied to the home or location, may use the sites to make extra money to support their families (Dunn, 2020).

The motivation scenarios outlined by Dunn do help to partially explain the difference reasons why participants in this study were involved in generating supplemental income through both forms of internet-enabled work, e.g., telework and digital work. Long-term rural women and older women with precarious incomes were more likely to be involved in the last two scenarios, while recent residents with higher incomes were more likely to be in the first
scenario. For instance, Melissa, a returning resident, generates extra income through Airbnb and part-time telework, but her household income is not reliant on this income. Barbara and Kimberly, both long-term rural women, generate extra income to overcome precarious income and employment situations. Meanwhile, Heather, a long-term rural resident, is involved in digital work as a family strategy – a way to make additional income from home in a remote area with no employment options.

**Conclusion**

The research indicates that rural workers are motivated to engage in internet-enabled work because of the opportunity to gain advantages of time flexibility, an ability to manage work and family responsibilities and to achieve the benefits from the reduction of the commuting, the same as urban workers. A worker’s rural location did slightly alter the meanings of these motivations. Time flexibility may be shaped by the need to adjust life around resource industry schedules. The need to manage child care arises because of the lack of formal child care. Meanwhile, being freed from rural commuting to urban cities is more an advantage rather than a motivator. Similar to previous empirical studies, there was a gender difference among the three primary motivators. Rural women were more likely to be motivated by time flexibility and the ability to manage work and family reasons then rural men. In this study, the rural men were primarily motivated by control over work and the financial and time convenience that results from being freed from commuting. Given the sexual division of household labour found in rural communities and how industry resource schedules impact rural women’s employment and household responsibilities, the gendered result was not surprising.
The above findings indicate that there is a need for future studies to understand the extent that time flexibility is influenced by industry resource schedules and the need to manage child care in the context of no formal daycares. Both dimensions should be researched separately as well as together to determine if there are moments when workers face both motivating factors. Because both dimensions are highly gendered, they could also illuminate differences between rural women and urban men and women as well among rural women. For instance, some women may need to adjust their work schedules on account of their spouse’s resource schedule, while others may need to manage the lack of child care, and some may need to contend with both.

In this chapter, I revealed three important motivations specific to rural workers that arise from the employment and material conditions of rural communities. Some rural workers are motivated because there is either no work or limited work in their communities. Closely related, some workers are motivated as internet-enabled work allows them to access better jobs than what is available. Meanwhile, some workers are lured in by the ability to generate extra income.

The presence of these motivations has several important implications. Firstly, they add new motivations to the existing scholarly literature and pinpoint differences between urban and rural workers. Telework researchers have anecdotally suggested that internet-enabled work may be a choice among many urban workers and that for rural workers, it might be the only choice. While this sentiment is true on some level, as urban workers do have more employment choices than rural workers in limited labour markets. And in some rural communities, there may be no other work options. However, for some rural workers depending on their
community, internet-enabled work is not the only choice. Instead, rural internet-enabled work is “better than the alternative.” Internet-enabled work might be seen as a choice above the options of completing low-skilled, minimum wage and or seasonal work. Additionally, for some rural workers, internet-enabled work is the best choice for them to have a career and remain in their community.

Secondly, the research results show that rural workers are lured into internet-enabled work because of the employment conditions of rural communities. A portion of rural workers are directly motivated by employment conditions, while others are indirectly motivated; they are all influenced by limited labour market realities in some way. As this was impactful for all workers, it indicates a structural dimension is present and further suggests that rural workers are pushed into internet-enabled work. Being pushed into the work because of the structural dimension related to the economic conditions of a geographical place is entirely different than the historical conception of telework, where push factors are discussed as organizational or supply factors.

Lastly, these rural-specific motivations are highly gendered. Rural women are disproportionately motivated by employment and income conditions in comparison to rural men. In this study, rural men were not in any way motivated by the chance to have a career or find better work options than minimum wage and low-skilled work, nor were they motivated by the need to generate additional income. The gender dynamics of rural labour markets provide an explanation of why rural women are more likely to desire a career better than minimum wage work and the need for additional income. The results also further show that these motivations are not a homogeneous experience amongst rural women.
Chapter Six. Outcomes: From Limited Impacts to Work Intensification

Introduction

The prevailing notion that the physical location of work does not matter is often a rationale for internet-enabled work, especially telework. After all, it’s readily evident that the physical act of sending an email is the same regardless of if it’s sent from a corporate office building in Toronto or from the kitchen table in rural Newfoundland. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous aspect of an e-commerce website implies the experience is the same whether the owner operates the website from rural New Brunswick or downtown Montreal. However, does this mean that internet-enabled work activities, which, in theory, can be done from anywhere and at any time, is experienced in the same manner for workers across geographical locations? Not exactly.

In this chapter, I employ a place-based lens to participants’ working experiences to uncover variations amongst workers to outline how geography matters and who it matters for in an era of rapid growth in internet-enabled work. I argue that while the proliferation of digital technologies has led to changes in the way work is organized and performed and reduced the perceived importance of the distance between the workplace and the work, we need to consider that people’s lived experiences are often shaped by local communities and place-particularities. Given that rural workforces live in communities often characterized by limited access to support and critical services, such as economic development services, computer repair services health care and public transportation it’s essential to determine if and how conditions specific to rural communities impact their work, outcomes, and work-related boundary management strategies.
Rural-specific conditions identified and discussed in this chapter include service infrastructure and multiple-job holding. Service provision in rural areas has long faced the challenge of geography resulting from large distances and low population densities that increase delivery costs (Halseth & Ryser, 2006). Because the types and ranges of services offered in rural areas are often different than in urban areas, it is essential to understand if and how rural, internet-enabled work activities are impacted and influenced by the availability of services. As discussed in a previous chapter, multiple-job holding is a common experience of several women research participants and a historical facet of rural communities in Canada. Therefore, it is important to know if and how this rural condition impacts worker experiences. This chapter directly corresponds to calls by rural researchers who indicate that there is a need to consider how one’s physical location as a rural worker shapes their experience (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Simpson et al., 2003).

This chapter is organized into three sections. In the first two sections, I present the experiences of how internet-enabled workers navigate their work while they work from home in rural communities with infrastructure challenges, most notably, ICT connectivity and reliability issues and business and quality of life services. I draw attention to how infrastructure can impact work and outcomes, as well as which workers are more exposed to the negative impacts. I also draw attention to the importance of the distance from and or proximity to urban centres or service centres in getting their household and individual reproductive needs meet. In the second section, I present the data that reveals two major implications of multiple-job holding, also known as occupational pluralism: 1) increased work hours and 2) the need to manage multiple work boundaries because of work-to-work conflicts. As the condition is only present for rural women, it demonstrates that these two outcomes place women in a more
arduous work situation than rural men and urban-based workers. The presence of work-to-work conflicts challenges much of the telework and work-from-home scholarship that far too often presumes workers only need to manage one paid work along with domestic responsibilities.

**When work is inserted into rural ICT realities**

_The differential outcomes that arise from place._

All participants involved in this research study expressed the view that technological infrastructure was a necessity for being involved in telework and digital work. The narrative “to work remotely, you must have reliable high-speed internet” was a common statement reported by participants. The research participants were primarily concerned with the connectivity and reliability of the infrastructure in their rural areas. The theme of connectivity and reliability took on a form of unevenness, with participants indicating that experiences with telecommunications infrastructure differed drastically based on location. Broadband speeds, cell phone coverage and internet reliability can vary considerably between urban and rural areas, among rural areas, and even within a particular rural setting. The uneven distribution of telecommunications infrastructure in rural Canada is a well-known issue (Theckedath & Thomas, 2019).

The patchwork of telecommunication infrastructure limits where rural internet-enabled work can take place and further signals the presence of differential impacts on workers based on where they live. Rural internet-enabled workers with access to more reliable infrastructure are more likely to have lower incidences of negative impacts on their work, such as work delays or increased work interruptions, because of speed, quality, and connection issues than those with constant connectivity issues. The following narrative provides further insight into
the unevenness of rural telecommunications infrastructure and the potential presence of
impacts on work based on place:

“It doesn't really affect how I can do my job. I'm lucky to have decent internet and cell phone reception, which for some communities near me is a struggle, but the community I live in specifically has been well-upgraded to support that. And so, if I lived down the road, I might have bigger challenges with not having stable connections that would make my job a lot more challenging” (Abigail, teleworker, recent rural resident, and long-term regional resident).

The realities of rural ICT infrastructure and the ability of rural workers to meet work demands are consistent with previous rural telework research. In Simpson et al.’s 2003 study in rural Australia, participants reported delays in their work or impacted their ability to perform their work because of constant disconnection or slow connections (Simpson et al., 2003). Simpson et al. further acknowledge that while rural workers are impacted by technology, technological issues are not peculiar to rural teleworkers because urban workers also voice concerns about infrastructure problems (Simpson et al., 2003). While I agree with Simpson et al. that both urban and rural workers are impacted by ICT-induced problems, my findings illustrate that when investigating rural internet-enabled work, differences among rural communities may be a more pertinent issue than comparisons to urban settings, especially in Canada.

A subtheme emerged on the limitations of telecommunications infrastructure and impacts based on the forms of internet-enabled work and the type of work activities of the research participants. Teleworkers reported that the experienced interruptions to their workday when the internet was unreliable and slow or when there were issues with cell phone reception. Impacts on their work were primarily centred around the inability to communicate with their
employers, peers, or clients or the inability to transmute work through employer intranets.

While most teleworkers indicated that they are required to be online for their work, a review of their daily work activities online often translated into being available to communicate, receive or transfer work. Therefore, should these workers lose connectivity, they could still, in theory, continue to complete or perform a portion of their work.

The exception to this observation was teleworkers involved in call centre or IT technical support work activities, as these activities inherently revolved around internet connectivity. Compared to teleworkers, digital workers are similar to call centre and IT technical support workers based on daily activities in that they require internet connectivity for most, if not all, of their work functions. Therefore, these workers may be at risk of a more pronounced negative impacts, such as work delays or work interruptions, because of connectivity and infrastructure issues. The potential for differential impacts based on forms and types of work activities can be observed in the following account of Heather, a long-time resident of a remote area, and how internet speed and connectivity impede the success of her social media work:

“So that’s my biggest problem is the internet speed I have when I’m talking, trying to upload high-res photos and I shoot with the DSLR. I’d love to be able to use Google Docs and Microsoft Office, and I would like to have more, you know, just digital access. But when the internet could go down for days, right, it’s hard to access your 10-terabyte storage drive online because it’s ten terabytes and you can barely load anything. It’s a huge challenge in the social media world. You know content is key, and everybody’s assumed to have good internet. For example, let’s say something related to one of the businesses I support starts in front of my house, and I can’t go live on that because the connection is so poor it’s pixelated. So, I would have to film and then upload it and curse at the slow upload speed, time out two or three times and finally get it up. Being live in the social media world, whether it be YouTube or Insta or Facebook, is important. But the live streams quality depend on the good connection. So, I can have the most fabulous thing happening, but I would film
it and lose the hits to get the quality of content. Facebook prioritizes livestream over an upload. But I don’t have the access to do live. Its just not there. The quality is too poor.” (Heather, digital work as social media, long-term rural and regional resident)

The research findings indicate that experiences of internet-enabled work and the ICT infrastructure-related implications should be assessed based on work activities, especially in rural and remote geographical areas where ICT infrastructure issues may be more prevalent. I am not the first to propose examining different dimensions of work to understand experiences of telework. Boell et al. (2016) argue that there needs to be a “deeper engagement with the different kinds of work activities” to better understand telework (p. 114). The researchers propose three key dimensions for telework research: 1) complexity and individual experiences situated in practice, 2) diversity of work activities, and 3) the way ICT is enacted in work practices. They suggest that these dimensions, both independently and in their interrelationships, can reveal salient aspects of telework practices and also provide a basis to explain paradoxical and contradictions of experiences (Boell et al., 2016). Within the context of rural communities, investigations of these different dimensions may reveal which internet-enabled workers are disproportionately impacted by ICT-induced delays and work interruptions. And lead us to discover what strategies, if any, they enact to minimize the impacts.

It’s gendered nature.

Based on the research findings on the reliability of telecommunication infrastructure along with research on rural communities and different types of work activities, suggests that there may be additional implications for rural workers based on gender. As evidenced in this research study and studies conducted by other rural researchers, rural women are more likely to

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be engaged in digital work than rural men (Kahn & Burrell, 2021; Marshall, 2021). Also previously indicated, involvement in telework is often divided along gender and occupational lines, with women more likely to be in clerical and administrative roles than professional roles (Mokhtarian et al., 1998; Tremblay, 2003). Because of occupational segregation and rural labour markets, rural women are also more likely to be involved in these types of work activities. For instance, researchers have found that rural women are often strategically recruited for call-centre work (Bonds, 2006). According to Bonds (2006), while “the pay, employment shifts, and opportunities for career advancement are less desirable, telework provides an attractive employment option” (p. 15) for rural women. With the likelihood of rural women being employed in positions where the work activities may require constant connectivity indicates that rural women may experience more ICT-induced work delays and work interruptions than rural men. In this study, study only women were involved in digital work, call-centre work, and IT-based support work.

Poor connection speeds and unreliable telecommunication infrastructure in rural areas may also heighten work-family conflicts for at-home rural workers as they must adjust either their work or family activities to compensate for the limitations placed on them. Researchers have found that teleworkers are more likely to report higher rates of work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts than those without flexible schedules (Higgins et al., 2014). Research also indicates that, because women still bear the brunt of domestic labour and child care, they experience greater levels of conflict (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Osnowitz, 2005). Together, this study’s findings and previous research suggest that these conflicts might be aggravated and influenced by technology for women, especially those with children, in rural
areas. Heather, a mother of three children and a long-time resident of a remote rural area, cites how she negotiates with her children to access the internet to complete her work:

“So, a lot of the time, I have to kick the kids off the internet, which makes them cranky and more apt to bother me big time because I need the internet for uploading photos or I need the internet to have a meeting like this” (Heather, digital work as social media work, long-time rural and regional resident).

The family dispute discussed above is similar to the occurrence of family disputes reported in existing telework and boundary management scholarship. Teleworkers that enact spatial strategies to manage competing work and home responsibilities, such as designated areas in common rooms or using common areas during work hours, often lead to family disputes (Mirchandani, 2000; Myrie & Daly, 2009). Conflicts arise between family members as they compete for space and resources. Myrie and Daly (2009) indicate that family members may feel a “sense of deprivation not only for the use of space but also to the objects located within the space, such as computers and television sets” (p. 393).

Rural solutions, but for who?

A theme of affordability and material resources to overcome connectivity issues was observed by the research participants. Many research participants indicated that they invested in additional telecommunication equipment as a strategy to mitigate issues related to connectivity problems. Several participants indicated that these additional expenses were costly but necessary to improve their work experience. The following comment illustrates this experience:

“I did find that, being in a rural area, my internet connection was really not up to the task. I was able to get some additional hardware that really helped. In my case, I was able to talk to a tech who suggested that I put something in, and it's fixed. It was not really a crazy investment, but I had to pay $750 for a piece
of hardware. Like, it's not out of reach, but it's not cheap either. But it's done the job” (Melissa, telework, returning rural and regional resident).

Several participants indicated that they had recently switched internet service providers to Starlink, the broadband internet service designed for remote and rural locations by SpaceX.\textsuperscript{45} While participants praised the service for its reliability, it also comes with a cost of both installation and the service, which may not be affordable for all rural workers and households. The following experience by one teleworker provides further insights into the strategies that rural workers are enacting to deal with internet connectivity issues.

“So, it’s honestly six to one, half a dozen of the other now that we have better infrastructure for internet because we did have to switch to Starlink. I will say that because where we live, we could only get Xplorenet or Bell DSL, and neither one of them are conducive to working from home. No matter what they tell you, it will not work. If I was working from home using either Xplorenet or Bell, I actually had to run both of them. I had Xplorenet into the house, and I had Bell for work. I would have a dedicated line for work, and then my personal would have to be on the other. We switched to Starlink, which, for a lot of people in our area, is a really steep installation. I think it is almost $900 a year to start up. But I think once you have that kind of infrastructure, you're OK. But for some people that start up, they can't do it. It’s just too far of a reach for them” (Dakota, telework, long-term rural and regional resident).

Additional costs borne by rural internet-enabled workers to improve their work experience were not addressed as a concern in previous rural telework studies. While I do not suggest that these concerns are exclusively germane to rural workers, I do argue that the finding implies that there are differentiated experiences among rural households as well as between rural and urban workers, particularly as they relate to issues of cost burdens, equity, and fairness. For instance, researchers agree that access to technological infrastructure, tools, and technical support is critical to the adoption and work outcomes of teleworkers (Belanger et

\textsuperscript{45} https://www.starlink.com/
al., 2001; Berube Kowalski & Swanson, 2005). Belanger et al. (2001) explain that “when resources are low, employees' work on a task that could be supported with technology will be made more difficult or slow. When resources are high, employees can perform tasks more easily and/or complete them more quickly” (p. 157). Furthermore, it has also been suggested that, for telework to be successful, the technical equipment workers should be at least as good as their colleagues in the office (Topi, 2004).

As shown in this study, for rural workers to engage in telework and have the same work outcomes as other employees either within the same company or in urban settings, they must purchase additional equipment. The workers in this study did so with their own money. The occurrence of having employees bear costs for technology for internet-enabled work is not a new phenomenon (Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010; Tremblay et al., 2006). Jaakson and Kallaste suggest that, unless outlined in an employment contract, employers are often not involved in compensating employees for the use of personal computers, home internet connections, or other personal devices used during teleworking (Jaakson & Kallaste, 2010). The high costs of accessing rural broadband in Canada mean that a portion of rural internet-enabled workers may face a double cost burden: first, the broadband service that they receive is costly; second, to improve their work outcomes, they must invest additional amounts.

**When work and home mixes with rural services**

*Different strokes for different folks*

The lack of business services to support work activities was a theme within the research. Generally, most participants reported that they did not use local businesses or related services to support their work activities, nor did they outline a particular service that they
would like to have in their community that, if present, could aid in their work. However, closer investigation revealed a difference in responses based on employment relationships and the forms of work. Employed teleworkers were more likely to respond that they did not have a need for local services to support their work. Independent contractors and self-employed individuals involved in telework or digital work, meanwhile, reported, they would benefit from local business supply stores, printing services, and IT support services, none of which were currently in their communities. Meanwhile, only one self-employed digital worker, who was involved in an e-commerce venture, reported that she used the local post office to send and receive inventory.

These findings indicate that rural residents involved in employed telework may be less vulnerable to changes in business services than those involved in telework and digital work on an independent contractor or self-employed basis. It also suggests that rural digital workers involved in e-commerce ventures may be more vulnerable to the loss of postal service than other types of digital workers.

The research results on service provision and work activities are in contrast to Simpson et al.’s 2003 study of rural telework in Australia, which found that the withdrawal of business and communication services was a constraint to rural telework (Simpson et al., 2003). Simpson et al.’s research found that rural teleworkers were impacted by the withdrawal of banking, post office, and related services. Their participants reported negative impacts due to restrictions on mail service, lack of photocopying options, and the need to drive several hours to get to the nearest bank (Simpson et al., 2003). One potential reason for the difference between the studies is time and the corresponding digitalization of services that have occurred since the research in
Australia. Today, many businesses, such as banking and government services, are accessed through digital mediums such as mobile applications and online platforms. Another reason is the advancements in technology and its impact on the way various work activities are conducted. For example, the need for printing and photocopying is not as prevalent in today’s work environment as it was twenty years ago. Both trends have changed the provision of in-person services for many business and government institutions. For instance, most of the research participants reported that they conduct their banking through either online or mobile banking, and that they interact with government offices through web interfaces.

While advancements in technology and the digitalization of services have reduced potential constraints to rural internet-enabled work that no longer depends on specific services, it does suggest that some rural residents are less vulnerable to changes than others. In the context of rural communities, residents that are involved in internet-enabled work and/or with high rates of digital literacy may be less impacted by the withdrawal of services based on digitalization. Meanwhile, residents involved in non-internet-enabled work or those with low rates of digital literacy would be more impacted. Research participants mentioned the sentiment that there is a population of rural workers and residents that is more impacted than others by the loss of services in favour of digitalization. Several participants reported that bank closures had recently occurred in their communities, and that they were concerned for seniors and other residents who were not digitally literate and relied on in-person banking and government services. The decline of banking and financial services has been a concern in rural and small towns in Canada since the early 2000s, as the withdrawal of business services has important implications for retaining residents and attracting businesses, which play key roles in economic viability (Halseth & Ryser, 2006).
Although most of the internet-enabled workers in this study indicated that their work activities were not significantly impacted by the absence of business services, the responses may also be dependent on individual needs and circumstances. For instance, several women discussed the potential impact of co-working spaces to mitigate challenges to their working experiences. For example, Abigail suggested that access to a co-working space could help improve her experience of isolation as an internet-enabled worker; however, this option does not exist for her because of her rural location. Isolation, as a negative outcome, is a consistent theme in teleworking studies (Golden et al., 2008; Simpson et al., 2003; Spilker & Breaugh, 2021). This study’s research participants often cited isolation as a disadvantage. The connection between co-working spaces and the inability of rural workers to reduce or mitigate the effects of isolation is discussed in the following comment:

“One, it can be a little bit isolating and especially where I live in a small place, there aren't a lot of other people that have a job like I do. And so, there's not really any, you know, if you lived in a city and you were working remotely, you could, say, go to a coffee shop during the day, or you could go to even a co-working space or something like that. Those options don't exist for me here, so I spend all day at home” (Abigail, telework, recent rural and long-term regional resident).

The strongest account for the potential of co-working spaces in rural areas to support internet-enabled workers came from Heather, a digital worker with three children at home. Heather does not have a private space in the home to complete her work. Without a private space, Heather must “find places” to conduct work without being interrupted. Dedicated spaces for work are one of the main strategies that teleworkers employ to manage work and home boundaries and reduce work-family conflicts (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Physical separation of work activities from the rest of the home is often seen as a way to protect work from family
and vice versa (Johnson et al., 2007), as well as to ensure that work only gets done during designated work hours (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). While the configuration of her home impacts her ability to have a dedicated space, the absence of options in her rural community further restricts her opportunities to overcome the challenge of being interrupted while working.

“If I had a private, dedicated space, this might work better, but I don't have a dedicated, private space. So, I think it makes it harder. I can't even leave and rent an office somewhere. I can't go get an office. You can't get a brick-and-mortar space. There are no office buildings renting out office space. I could go to the library for two hours, but it's only open for three hours a day. So, there's no venues that, if I say, OK, the kids are wild, the dog is wild, my husband's wild, and I need to work, I would . . . you know, that's why I said, when you ask where I work, I sit in the car, in the shed, on the beach. I can grab my device. My phone is basically my all-in-one tool. So, yeah, that would be nice if I did have somewhere that I could still work through because there's a difference like work remotely work from home” (Heather, digital work as social media work, long-term rural and regional resident).

The insights around co-working spaces and the limitations to managing the separation of work and home are important. First, it suggests that in the context of rural internet-enabled work, particular services should be analyzed separately in addition to larger categories for potential connections to limitations and opportunities. Looking at specific services can show which rural workers may be more vulnerable to negative outcomes than others. Additionally, it can show which service gaps are most relevant for rural workers in comparison to urban workers, who have advantages because of the full range of services that are available in urban areas. For instance, the inability to access space-oriented amenities outside of the home to mitigate isolation and manage work-family conflicts for rural workers contrasts with urban areas, where workers are more likely to have access to amenities and the ability to choose among a range of options.
The finding also highlights the need to understand how the geographic location of a home can influence boundary-management strategies. This advances the existing literature on spatial strategies. Empirical research on spatial strategies is primarily focused on how people manage or enact strategies within the physical domain of the home. Generally, workers create and maintain a separate space solely for work purposes, either as a separate room within the home or a designated area in a common room (Fonner & Stache, 2012; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Consideration is not usually given to the idea that workers might have to seek out alternatives outside of the home and that these alternatives may be vary from community to community.

The significance of distance

The existence or lack of services to support quality of life was also explored in this research. Generally, when asked about services for their non-working lives, the majority of the research participants reported that they “had all the amenities” they needed in their rural communities to support their lives. Most participants indicated that they had access to the following amenities within a fifteen-minute drive of their home: a gas station, a convenience store, a local grocery store to buy food, a library, cafés/restaurants, shops for items and personal services, and recreational centres. Other than access to rural health care, the majority of participants did not report that they were overly concerned about the availability of services to support their lives.

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46 Survey results: shops/personal services (24 out of 28 participants), cafés restaurants (twenty-eight out of twenty-eight participants), public library (nineteen out of twenty-eight participants), recreation centres (eighteen out of twenty-eight participants).

47 Lack of access to health care was reported by many participants as a challenge facing their rural communities; however, they also indicated that access to health care was not necessarily a rural issue but also a provincial issue.
The general lack of concern about quality-of-life services was consistent across recent residents who moved to their rural areas from larger urban centres and long-term rural residents. When asked about quality-of-life services, most long-term rural residents responded by saying that “there is not much here,” which indicates that living in an area without many services is a normal experience and, therefore, not a topic of concern. While most participants who had moved from larger urban centres reported that they missed the ability to access more cultural and entertainment options found in larger cities, they did not consider the absence of these options as a negative to their overall quality of life.

One potential reason for the lack of concern over the availability of quality-of-life services may be explained by the proximity of the rural communities to larger towns and cities. A fifteen-to-twenty-minute drive from a person’s home to a town area with amenities or a city can greatly influence how a person perceives their ability to access the services that they need to sustain their lives. Research participants that lived near a town centre or a nearby city reported that they were able to take a short drive to get items or to access services when they needed them and did not perceive the drive to be a negative factor in their lives. While those that lived farther away also reported that they travelled for services, travel was not a regular occurrence, and instead, they simply adjusted their lives to account for the travel time. The distance of rural communities to amenities centres and cities suggests that internet-enabled workers that live farther away are more disadvantaged in accessing services to improve their quality of life and may experience more moments when they need to adjust their work and family schedules to accommodate travel time.
Within the context of internet-enabled work, accommodating travel time to access the quality-of-life services needs to be examined more fully to better understand the following: 1) if and how this travel time impacts strategies to manage work and family responsibilities, in particular, temporal strategies; 2) how travel time is experienced by different types of rural workers; and 3) which rural workers are impacted the most. Understanding the occurrence of travel time for quality-of-life services and its implications is additionally important because reduced travel for work purposes—e.g., reduced commuting—is one of the advantages of internet-enabled work.\textsuperscript{48} At the very minimum, the occurrence of travel time for quality-of-life services suggests that, while teleworkers have more time for themselves because they no longer commute for work, there could be a portion of rural teleworkers where this “saved time” has merely been transferred over to accessing services.

Nine of the twenty-eight research participants reported that they traveled more than ninety kilometres per day for household chores, while four participants reported that they travelled more than seventy-five kilometres per day for leisure activities. Distance travelled for household chores ranged from ninety kilometres to a high of 200 kilometres, and seventy-five to 200 kilometres to take part in leisure activities. The primary approaches for travel to quality-of-life services impacted research participants who lived more than twenty minutes from a city, was to adjust their work or home schedules or to bundle activities together so that a time was blocked for travel and activities were all done during the block. Several participants indicated that they scheduled trips to the city on certain days or they would wait to travel to the city when

\textsuperscript{48} Saved time from the reduced commuting was discussed by numerous research participants, particularly those that previously worked in urban environments.
they had to complete several activities at once. For example, one digital worker indicated that once a month, she would travel up to four hours to get to the nearest city where she could access big box retailers so she could stock up on supplies for her Airbnb.

When asked about travelling for services, research participants responded differently. Recent rural residents, especially those that moved from metropolitan areas, did not indicate that they were in any way inconvenienced by having to travel to access services and amenities. Perhaps this suggests that many recent residents perceive any type of travel for services as a positive trade-off because, instead of travelling regularly for work, travel is now only done occasionally and is completed on their terms. For long-term rural residents, travelling out of their communities to access services was discussed as a way of life. For example, Hannah, a long-term rural and regional resident, responded, “to go get groceries, to go to the accountant, to go to Service Canada, Service New Brunswick, anything like that, we have to travel” (Hannah, digital worker, long-term rural and regional resident). Kimberly, a long-term rural and regional resident, said that travelling out of her community costs a significant amount of money. “I calculated that leaving this village cost me $10,000 a year, bare minimum. That was probably two years ago; now it would be more because of the price of gas” (Kimberly, teleworker, long-term rural resident).

Distance and proximity to metropolitan areas have been shown to matter to rural communities. They are among the four main dimensions outlined in the diversity framework developed by the Understanding the New Rural Economy: Options and Choices (NRE) research program to examine and measure communities by focusing on the main challenges rural Canada faces (Reimer, 2002). In the framework, rural communities are categorized by
whether they are adjacent to or distant from major urban centres. Metro-adjacent communities are within 100 km of an urban center of 100,000 or more and not adjacent communities beyond this 100 km distance (Reimer, 2004). Distance to major urban centres reflects that they have a critical element in the economic condition of communities and regions, and proximity can provide opportunities and pressures for rural communities (Reimer, 2002). Metro adjacency has been linked to higher levels of socioeconomic outcomes and employment (Reimer, 2004). Proximity also has been shown to be related to the availability of services. In a 2006 report on service provision across thirty-two rural communities in Canada, metro-adjacent communities offered more business and financial services, community services, and inter-community transportation services than non-adjacent communities (Halseth & Ryser, 2006).

**Multiple job holding and gendered work intensifications.**

*An increase in paid work*

The occurrence of multiple-job holding indicates that there is a portion of internet-enabled workers who are managing work demands from different employers whilst also simultaneously managing household demands. Work demands from different sources can lead to a higher number of hours being devoted to meeting work responsibilities. Several participants, who held multiple jobs, including Barbara, Kimberly, and Patricia reported that they worked more than fifty hours a week between their different jobs.49

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49 Participants were asked to indicate their working hours per week spent on telework and digital work activities and also hours per week spent in other employment. Hours per week on telework and digital work activities ranged from a low of twenty to forty hours. Hours per week at other employment ranged from five to 48 hours. Several participants who held multiple jobs did not provide information on both positions. The absence of these hours could be explained but the perception that their “other jobs” was not the main work that was part of the initial reason for participating in the survey. For example, the second employment of three of the participants was
The potential for increased work hours because of holding multiple jobs is very concerning, as previous studies have shown that teleworking on its own often leads to increased work hours (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Higgins et al., 2014; Sullivan & Lewis, 2012). An empirical study of 5,050 teleworkers found that they worked on average an additional 3.6 per week more than non-teleworkers (Peters et al., 2008). The study did not find a statistical difference for gender, suggesting both men and women teleworkers share in the burden of telework-induced increased work hours. The gender result is different from that found in this research study.

With more hours devoted to work, rural women engaged in occupational pluralism have less time to devote labour to their households, personal leisure, and other social reproductive activities. Based on the results of this study, where only women are holding multiple jobs, the data indicates that the time and labour pressures that arise first from internet-enabled work and then second from working multiple jobs may be more salient for rural women involved in internet-enabled work than rural men.

Pressures of time is not a homogenous experience across all rural women who are involved in holding multiple jobs. When comparing the working hours of the women who complete multiple jobs, those who lived in their communities for most of their professional lives, reported higher work hours compared to recent and returning residents. The higher work reported by this group of rural women was consistent for those that completed each form of work from their home, those who worked jobs in different places, e.g., at home and outside of

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only discovered during the interview. Two of these participants discussed these second jobs as more of a “hobby,” while one framed her second job as she was temporarily helping out her previous employer with some admin work as they had difficulty replacing her.
the home, and those whose forms of work were seasonally based. Hours of work between the different categories for residents were similar for women that had children in the home and when their multiple jobs were classified as part-time. Other similarities and differences among rural women may also be attributed to the forms of work and their rationale for being involved in different work. Women who were primarily employed as paid teleworkers reported similar hours worked for their primary job across recent, returning, and long-term participants. Based on their interviews, this group of rural women generally discussed their second jobs as more of an occasional job or hobby.

The absence of research on the time consequences of multiple jobs in the teleworking literature restricts the ability to compare these results to previous studies. Most empirical studies are focused on time increases that result from completing one job, not multiple. Additionally, as occupational pluralism was only found as a result of the study, the research was not initially designed to investigate the specific issue related to work hours. While the comparison is limited, the data indicates that its important to undercover reasons why women are involved in multiple jobs, especially based on residency, as long-term rural women are disproportionately impacted.

50 Examples of long-term rural women’s higher hours include Kimberly who reported that she works 56.25 hours a week (twenty hours for her telework job and 36.25 for a job that she completes outside of the home); Patricia who works fifty-five hours per week (twenty-five hours for her telework job and thirty-five for her at-home business that involves digital work), and Barbara who works seventy-six hours per week in the summer when she operates an Airbnb and works a seasonal job in hospitality (twenty-eight hours for Airbnb and forty-eight hours for seasonal job).

51 Examples are Heather and Kate, both women who have children at home and work multiple part-time jobs; each reported twenty hours for their digital work and five hours for their other employment.

52 These research participants only provided work information on their primary employment and not their second job. Therefore, I was not able to fully compare with other participants that provided hours for both. The way in which the participants discussed their second job in the interview suggested that the number of hours did not seem to be a significant issue to their lives.
The extra work to manage boundaries and conflicts.

The phenomenon of holding multiple jobs signals that a portion of rural workers needs to manage different work boundaries, in addition to their family boundaries. Forms of work, time requirements and work schedules were the influential factors for how the rural workers manage multiple work boundaries. Participants involved in telework on a full-time employed or those with full-time jobs outside of the home generally completed work for their other jobs around their main work hours. Other jobs were completed either in the mornings, evenings or on the weekends. Participants involved in digital work on a paid or self-employed basis either flexed their digital work around other jobs or tried to integrate the different work activities. Digital workers often described that the nature of their digital work allowed them to easily schedule and complete the work while doing other activities. When asked how she negotiates the time between two jobs, Patricia, a self-employed digital worker, discusses how digital work allows her to easily fit it around her employed telework position:

“I put the part-time job first and the social media and the communications work kind of second. Not putting the client second, but meaning I work around the part-time telework because I can do the social media work at any time. I can do it at seven in the morning. I can do it at ten o’clock at night. You can schedule posts; you can create content any time of the day” (Patricia, digital work as social media, long-term rural and regional resident).

As workers try to juggle multiple jobs, the potential for work-to-work conflicts increases. One research participant, Cynthia, who works two positions as a teleworker, reported that she sometimes has to ‘double dip’ and complete work for her two employers simultaneously when work-to-work conflicts arise because of schedule changes in her primary telework position.
“I was double dipping. I had to work a Saturday for my call center job. A few weeks back. Yeah, that's another thing. There were no Saturdays when I signed up, and then all of a sudden, we had Saturday shifts. But I had work from my other job. So we set up another little table next to me here with my laptop and the extra monitor. On Saturday, the call centre is on inbound calls, so between calls, I was working on plans on the other little desk. When the phone rings. I just swing the chair around and pick up the phone. After the phone call, I would go back to my other job. So instead of having to work two days, I only had to work one day, and I got both jobs done” (Cynthia, telework, recent rural and regional resident).

For Cynthia, double-dipping was a positive situation as she was able to do both jobs at once. In her case, the work-to-work conflict appeared to be easily managed because the types of telework activities were amenable to each other. Both were administrative in nature and could be done in close proximity, using similar equipment and similar work activities. This instance raises the question of how workers cope when the type of work activities is not amenable. Or when work demands for one impact the time available for the other? Barbara, a digital worker who operates an Airbnb, explained how not being responsive to her guests on account of her work demands at a local restaurant can impact her ratings on Airbnb. Ratings are important for Airbnb.

“I had a guest when they called me at work, I was very, very busy, and they were supposed to be checking in late in the evening, and I think it was eight or nine. And anyway, I didn't see her phone call, and after we had slowed down, I checked my phone, and I called them, and they had left they because they couldn't figure out the code of the box, how to get in, so they left. And like I said, you know, I said they left me a bad review. And that's another thing when these people leave your reviews. They can knock you down on the Airbnb site. One person can give you a bad review because they couldn't get a hold of you that night, you're at work.” (Barbara, digital work as Airbnb, long-term rural and regional resident).

The experiences of participants integrating multiple jobs highlight the idea that the incidences of work-to-work-conflicts and how workers respond may be linked to the nature of the employment relationship and the type of work activities. For instance, workers that are
employed as paid teleworkers or in other forms of employed work may have set work hours deemed by their employers, which could limit the ability of workers to complete work for multiple jobs at the same time.⁵³ In Cynthia’s case, she was only able to complete both teleworking jobs at the same time because her work at the call centre on Saturdays was inbound (callers call into the centre), which is different than other her days when she was engaged in outbound calling (calling out to customers) which would not have provided time in between calls to complete other work. For Barbara, her customer service work at a local restaurant impeded her ability to contact her Airbnb customers until after her work was completed. It would be rather difficult to address customers in a restaurant while also being responsive to Airbnb. Meanwhile, Patricia completes her social media and communication work around her paid telework partly because social media activities do not have set timelines, and because she is self-employed, she can decide when to complete the work.

The predominant theoretical frame for work-life conflict is based on the premise that while workers have various responsibilities and roles, they generally have one paid position (Duxbury & Higgins, 2002).⁵⁴ Because of this framing, the vast majority of empirical studies on work-life conflict and boundary management strategies in the telework scholarship is

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⁵³ Out of all the participants that held full-time or part-time telework positions in addition to other jobs Cynthia was the only one that discussed a work-to-work conflict. The absence of other incidences of work-to-work conflict could be related to research design. While participants were often asked how the negotiated time between different jobs, it was not a primary area in the initial research design. This was partly because holding multiple jobs only became an important factor in the research after the data was collected and during analysis.

⁵⁴ The theoretical framework includes the following categories: work demands, demographic characteristics, non-work demands. Individual/family moderators, work-life balance, organizational moderators, organizational outcomes, family outcomes, employee outcomes and societal outcomes. In the work demands category the main variables are Job type, time in work, travel demands, time in education and job stress. There is no category that includes the choice for multiple jobs. The closest variable is work different hours under the individual/family moderator’s category. A diagram of work-life conflict theoretical framework can be found at the Government of Canada’s website in the report *Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium* using the following url: [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-21-186-2003E.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-21-186-2003E.pdf).
focused on understanding the consequences of overlapping of one-work sphere and one-family sphere. As a result, it is currently unknown if and how work-life conflict in the form of “work-to-work” conflict differs between internet-enabled workers that hold one job or multiple jobs. Therefore, my analysis of the findings is limited because the current telework scholarship does not adequately address the experiences of the rural women of this study who are involved in occupational pluralism.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I placed geographical location at the center of the analysis of internet-enabled work, work outcomes, and work-oriented boundary management strategies. Three dimensions important to rural locations: ICT infrastructure, business service infrastructure and occupational pluralism were used as the analytical vehicle to uncover if and how workers were impacted and which workers where impacted the most.

Evidence from the research reveals that one’s physical location as a worker and specifically as a rural internet-enabled worker does impact the work experiences of internet-enabled work. The research further shows that the presence of impacts is highly dependent on the community, the work activities, and who is involved in the work.

The diversity of experiences of rural households found in this research is characteristic of the variability of ICT infrastructure and business service infrastructure across communities. Variability results in a situation where some rural internet-enabled workers experience ICT-enabled work delays and interruptions more than others. Meanwhile, the availability of business services to support work activities or to assist in enacting work-family boundary strategies is dependent on the individual circumstances and the employment relationship of the
worker. This leads to the conclusion that internet-enabled workers in rural communities at a far distance from urban centres and or with poor infrastructure and little to no services are more impacted.

Workers involved in digital work activities and those who required constant connectivity to perform their work were most impacted by ICT-enabled work delays in this study. Additionally, as digital work activities are often performed on a self-employed basis, they may be more at risk should there be a reduction in business support services. The differential impacts amongst workers based on work activities has several important implications. Firstly, it shows the necessity of having a fuller picture of the various forms of internet-enabled work that are being adopted in rural areas. It suggests that existence of a division where groups of rural workers are either more advantaged or disadvantaged. For example, employed teleworkers, who in this study are mainly urban transplants, may be more likely to experience fewer impacts to their work than a long-term rural resident engaged in digital work activities. Lastly, it continues to draw attention to the gendered character of who is involved in the different forms of internet-enabled work in rural communities – principally women.

Combining different forms of internet-enabled work and intertwining them with in-person forms of work leads to increased work hours and the occurrence of work-to-work conflicts. These impacts vary based on the length of time in a rural community, the location of the different jobs, and the work activities. The occurrence of occupational pluralism and its gendered form indicates that rural women are more exposed to these two negative outcomes. I conclude that these outcomes place rural women in a disadvantaged position relative to men.
and women who only complete one paid form of work. Furthermore, my data suggests that this disadvantaged position may be disproportionately experienced by long-term rural women. A broader analysis and understanding of why rural women are involved in occupational pluralism is, therefore, necessary to uncover the conditions of why some are engaged out of need and some as an option.
Chapter Seven. Competing Demands: Juggling Work, Domestic Work, and Care Work

Introduction

As teleworkers confront situations of competing demands of both work and home, individual and household negotiations around reproduction are inevitable, as workers must decide how to deal with the demands. As outlined in Chapter One, working from home increases the incidence of work-family conflicts, and that these occurrences are heightened for women who telework, especially those with children. Additionally, extra effort is required as workers enact strategies either by separating or integrating their multiple roles. However, these strategies can also create unnecessary burdens on reproduction. Therefore, as paid work is moved out of formal offices and integrated into the home, it is imperative to determine if the conditions surrounding the home either enhance their experiences or create additional unnecessary burdens for reproduction.

In this chapter, I examine the participants’ experiences of managing work and home to undercover implications for households and personal reproduction. Similar to the previous chapter, I orient rural specific conditions along with gender and class in the analysis to illuminate factors where the outcomes of rural workers vary. As already evident in this research study, many rural women are dealing with multiple employers in addition to their household responsibilities. Additionally rural women with dependent children are induced into internet-enabled work as a strategy to address child-care needs. Meanwhile, rural workers live in communities where household and community activities ebb and flow around resource industries activities, many of which are seasonal.
This chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I present the realities of internet-enabled work in communities with there are no daycares and workers must rely on family members for support. In the second section, I outline several major implications of holding multiple jobs, including what I call the reproductive monetary trade-off. Lastly, I discuss how spouses of resource industry professionals must adapt their household activities around their work schedules around industry schedules.

**Gendered negotiations of work and care work**

As already outlined in a previous chapter, six of the research participants had young children in the home and therefore needed to enact child-care strategies to complete their work. When asked about child-care arrangements while they perform their work, four of the participants, Amanda, Hannah, Heather, and Stephanie, reported that they perform child care, and Katie and Abigail reported that they shared responsibilities with their spouses.

To negotiate work and child-care responsibilities, the women reported that they used a flexible schedule to enable them to intersperse child care around work activities. These findings are similar to teleworking studies that report that women with children often do two different strategies—they either fragment their schedules, or they have times when they do “intense work” (Mirchandani, 2000; Osnowitz, 2005; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). On closer review, those that were able to use a flexible schedule had a high degree of control over their schedules, either as independent contractors, self-employed individuals like Amanda, Hannah, and Stephanie, or as employees of employers who allowed flexible hours, like Abigail, Heather, and Katie. While flexibility over schedules allowed the research participants to manage child-care and work responsibilities, the findings do suggest that there could be
implications for rural workers who do not have control over their work schedules, such as those in such service-oriented positions as call-centre work.

The ability to meet work demands and manage work-life boundaries may be more difficult for rural internet-enabled workers than urban workers, as access to formal and informal daycare arrangements is very limited and, in many cases, non-existent in rural communities. Strategies are necessary because, as Mirchandani (2000) outlines, “changing the site of paid work does not in any way allow individuals to simultaneously do paid work and child care” (p. 178). Purchasing child care either formally outside of the home or inside of the home is a primary boundary-management strategy for reducing intrusions of the home into work (Johnson et al., 2007). Research has also shown that, even with assistance, the proximity of caregiving can make managing time a challenge, especially in cases when child care becomes unavailable (Osnowitz, 2005)—for example, when a child is sick and cannot go to a formal daycare or when school is closed.

With a limited ability to purchase child-care services, rural workers are not able to take advantage of strategies for dealing with intrusions and are, therefore, more likely to experience more moments of family-to-work intrusions. While I do not suggest that limited access to daycare is peculiar to rural internet-enabled workers, I do suggest that access to daycare may be particularly difficult in some rural contexts. Therefore, these workers are disproportionately impacted by child-care-related effects on their work and work-life strategies.

Research has shown that, in Canada, rural communities are underserved, and most rural families do not have access to formal child care. According to Prentice (2017), “compared with cities, in non-metropolitan Canada, child-care services are more scarce, inaccessible, and
weakly suited to parents' needs, and the quality is questionable” (p. 420). A marketized approach to child care, the presence of low population density, and the prevalence of non-standard and seasonal employment work against the adoption of formal child care in rural communities (Friendly et al., 2016; Prentice, 2017).

In addition to issues of unequal access, rural families are more likely to face financial barriers to child care than urban families. According to Prentice (2017), “because wages are lower in rural than urban areas, rural parents find child-care costs a particular challenge” (p. 429). Prentice further argues that, in the absence of quality child care, the work-family balance is severely comprised (Prentice, 2017). The reality of rural child care indicates that the implications of engaging in internet-enabled work at home is more heightened for rural workforces compared to their urban counterparts.

The consequences of internet-enabled work and the realities of rural child care may be gendered. As women are still primarily responsible for completing the majority of child-care responsibilities within families, the impacts that arise from the realities of rural child care are, therefore, more salient for internet-enabled workers who are women than those that are men. Rural women may have to implement different strategies or face extra difficulties managing work and home demands because there are no daycare centres in their communities, or because hiring in-house nannies is not a possibility, either because of income or labour supply.

*When care work is needed, rural families step in*

In the absence of formal daycare centres and limited child-care arrangements, the research participants with young children indicated that they rely heavily on family to provide child care when needed. One participant commented, “I don’t know what to do with my kids if
my parents couldn’t take them if I needed to” (Stephanie, rural New Brunswick, returning rural and regional resident). The reliance on family members was also discussed by research participants without young children. For example, Barbara, a long-term rural resident, explained, “grandparents have the kids a lot of the time so that the parents can actually work” (Barbara, digital work as Airbnb, long-time rural and regional resident). Heather, a mother with several children, indicated that older children are also involved in providing care, especially during work times.

“There is no day formal daycare whatsoever. I'm lucky that my oldest is fifteen and my youngest is eight. So, she's been there when I needed, you know, if I needed to hide in a closet somewhere to take a meeting, you know, so you could at least make sure that, you know, the kids weren't up to no good. There are absolutely no daycares at all, private or otherwise, that I'm aware of, except for a nearby town. So that's sixty-eight kilometres and two ferry trips away” (Heather, digital work as social media, long-term rural and regional resident).

The increased reliance on family support in rural communities has several implications for rural internet-enabled workers. For recent residents, the absence of family members, in addition to limited to no formal daycare options, can increase the experiences of work-family conflicts as their options are even more limited. This was expressed by Katie, a recent resident with children who indicated that child care was even more important because her family was not in the vicinity to help when needed, especially when there were conflicts with her spouse’s schedule. In contrast, some rural workers may have to find strategies to deal with the absence of family members because those family members are working. Abigail, a teleworker in rural Newfoundland, said she preferred her current teleworking position over commuting to the city an hour away as it would have made child-care arrangements difficult because the children’s grandparents are still working.
Rural communities’ reliance on family members found in this research is consistent with child-care research, indicating that this arrangement is more likely to occur in rural than urban areas. According to Bushnik (2006), rural Canada relies heavily on informal care—“care outside of the home by a relative is more popular for children who live in in a rural community compared to children who live in an urban setting” (Bushnik, 2006, p. 6). Bushnik (2006) further states that the “type of community in which a child lives may have some bearing on the availability of certain types of non-parental child-care arrangements compared to children who live in an urban setting (p. 6). For example, compared to families in urban areas, families living in rural areas may not have the same access to a wide range of child-care alternatives (Norris et al. 1999).

Multiple-job holding and class-based reproduction

Integrating multiple jobs can heighten the occurrences in which rural workers need to adjust the time for their personal leisure and reproduction to accommodate increased working hours and different work activities in addition to domestic chores. When Katie, a mother of two young children and multiple-job holder, was asked how she completed her work and family responsibilities while working from home, she answered that “I am letting go of things that I like to do so that I can work right now.” She further indicated that, before the multiple jobs, “I would walk in the forest every day.” And, after starting multiple jobs, she commented, “I am not doing that anymore. I am not gardening. I am not reading. I am letting go of my own recreational pursuits.” Katie also pointed on that her reduction in time spent on her own life to integrate the two jobs still occurred even though her husband was an active participant in the household chores.
Working multiple jobs and the negative impacts to personal reproduction that results may be perceived as a positive to some residents who view such impacts as a necessary trade-off for the monetary compensation that is received from the multiple income sources. However, the presence of a reproduction-monetary trade-off may be more of an issue for long-term rural residents, especially those that live in very poor rural areas, than recent or returning residents who spent most of their professional careers in urban areas. Of the participants involved in multiple jobs, the only ones that discussed the trade-off were long-time rural residents, including Barbara, Kimberly, and Patricia. This reproduction-monetary trade is evident in the following narrative by Kimberly, a long-term rural resident who also often spoke about the poverty in her rural New Brunswick community.

“I do homework on Saturdays. Sometimes I putter around. Sometimes the dishes don't get done; sometimes they do, depend on what I'm doing. It depends on the working bill, for instance, when I was working for a couple of big clients. I didn't do anything but work. Because I was really excited about making that extra cash, getting the extra hours, and I came home from work, and I sat down, and I worked until it was time to go to bed. And I did that pretty much every day last summer. So, a lot of things get left behind. And it doesn’t really matter to me, it's not that bad, I live alone, it would be different if my son was here. If I'm only putting in twenty hours a week, I can easily do housework. If it were forty hours a week for the remote job, it’s harder. I did do that in the summer. I worked eighty hours a week, every week, for a few weeks doing both jobs. So that's when the housework went down. I barely washed my clothes. So, summer, you don't really need to, right? Some days I wonder, oh, did I wash my hair today? (Kimberly, telework, long-term rural and regional resident).

The amount of energy required to integrate multiple paid jobs along with domestic household labour may increase for a portion of internet-enabled workers involved in jobs that also require domestic labour, such as Airbnb. In the case of Airbnb, some workers may have to attend to domestic chores for their personal residences as well as their Airbnb units. The labour needed to put into the domestic work for the two spaces may seem overwhelming when these
workers also work outside of the home, completing other types of work. The following observation provides further insights in the experience of integrating multiple jobs under situations of increased domestic work through Airbnb. When asked about having the energy to clean the Airbnb after working her seasonal job, Barbara, a long-time rural resident, answered:

“No, it doesn't bother me. You know, I will get up, and I’ll be like, oh God, do I really have the energy? I can hardly stand up, the old back's killing me, like, especially in the summertime when I was working in the evenings. Oh, my goodness, because you're on your feet, it's long shifts. You only work six hours, but, still, it's busy. So, you're constantly on your feet. You don't get to sit down at all. But then the next morning, I got to get up and clean, and you would drag your body for a while. But then, once you get up there to do it, you're fine” (Barbara, digital work as Airbnb, long-term rural and regional resident).

The potential for increased domestic work that arises from engaging in work through Airbnb and completing other jobs may differ across rural workers based on the forms of work, income levels, residency status, and whether they hire people to conduct domestic work for their units. Two participants—Barbara, a long-time rural resident, and Melissa, a returning rural resident—recounted vastly different experiences with Airbnb, domestic work, and managing multiple jobs. In the narrative above, Barbara discussed having to put in considerable energy during the summer times when her seasonal job and the demand for Airbnb coincide. In contrast, Melissa did not indicate having to increase her efforts in dealing with Airbnb and cleaning alongside her part-time telework position. As a teleworker, Melissa completes the demands of both jobs in the same place. The increase in domestic work that results from the Airbnb was not felt, as Melissa hired a cleaner. Melissa indicated that, while she managed the Airbnb and was involved in guest relations, she took a subordinate role in the cleaning of the unit. According to Melissa, “I have a cleaning helper to help, but I'm involved with the turnovers for the gap. I help the cleaner with the cleaning and all that other stuff.”
comparison, while Barbara charges her guest a cleaning fee, she indicated that hiring an outside cleaner to help was a rare occurrence. For Barbara, the cleaning fee is an important income stream to her household. In her words, “I don’t do that very often because I know I must keep my money and put it away, especially for the winter.” Instead of hiring a cleaner, she keeps the money for paying increased heating bills and snowplowing or for savings, in case something needs to be fixed. The importance of having extra income from Airbnb was a very salient issue for Barbara, who mentioned it throughout her interview. While the Airbnb was helpful to Melissa’s household because it “generated enough money to cover itself, pay for property taxes, and help us finish off the mortgages,” the money was not the primary motivation for renting out the second house on her property. Instead, Melissa described her Airbnb work as “a hobby,” a way for her household to engage with others as they “live in the country and [are] away from civilization,” and that they could not “afford to burn it down and level it.”

Household income and the amount of time spent in rural areas may account for the different accounts of holding multiple jobs and navigating domestic work that arise from the involvement in Airbnb. Income is an important motivator for Barbara, a retired pensioner, to be involved in Airbnb whilst also holding a seasonal job. “How can anyone live on that?” was how Barbara described her old-age pension. Barbara’s lower household income situation may be related to her rurality, as Barbara spent most of her life in rural Nova Scotia. While Barbara left for a period to live in an urban part of Alberta, she spent most of her professional and main income-generating years in a rural community, which she describes as a place with a

55 Barbara reported that her household income ranges from $35,000 to $49,999. Income that she receives from her Airbnb is approximately 40 percent of her household income.
lot of poverty and very few employment options. In comparison, when initially asked why she started teleworking after retiring relatively young and moving back to rural New Brunswick, Melissa responded, “I just wanted to make a little bit more money.” While on the surface, income was a motivator, her responses around income indicated that she was not as concerned about the extra income to pay bills as Barbara was. When asked why she wanted to generate extra income, Melissa responded, “We were, like, you know, we had food in the fridge, and the bills were getting paid, OK, but to have that little bit of extra income . . ., you know, did I need it? I don't know. That's debatable. Yeah, I wanted it.” Melissa’s higher household income situation may be related to time spent in urban areas. Melissa grew up in rural New Brunswick; however, she spent most of her professional life in urban areas outside of Atlantic Canada.

While the differences in their household incomes could also be explained by educational and other household factors, place could still be a factor. Melissa holds a degree; Barbara did not graduate high school. Melissa is married with no children; Barbara has children and was never married. Despite educational and household differences, both Barbara and Melissa operated businesses. Barbara owned and operated a business for many years in her rural community. At the same time, Melissa operated a business in a metropolitan area outside of Atlantic Canada. These details suggest that where rural workers spend their professional

56 Melissa did not provide data on her household income. For the purposes of this study, I assume her income is higher than Barbara’s on the following basis: 1) she indicated she was retired and, based on her age, she would need significant income to retire before fifty-five. 2) Her current telework employment and previous employment can be considered white-collar jobs and therefore are more likely to come with higher incomes. Income she receives from her telework is approximately 90 percent of her personal income and 30 percent of her household income. Based on the structure of the survey, participants were not asked to separate income from telework and digital work sources. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, it is assumed that Melissa’s personal income is mostly derived from telework and not from digital work.
careers may influence their household income, which then accounts for the different income rationales to engage in multiple jobs, operate Airbnbs, and, most importantly, if and at what rate they outsource cleaning support to deal with the increase in domestic work.

The research findings on multiple-job holding in rural communities add fresh insights to discussions on internet-enabled work and work-life strategies. Predominantly, the research on telework and work-life boundaries is preoccupied with a simple work context of the worker with one main employer or client base for a contractor and their home and family environment. However, for a portion of rural women, the main research context does not adequately address their experiences of mixing work and home. Even Hochschild’s concept of the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild & Machung, 2003) needs to be adjusted for these women are instead engaged in ‘multiple shifts’ managing different employers together with their domestic duties.

Broadening the conditions to include multiple jobs offers the ability to examine which rural residents are completing multiple jobs out of necessity or as a hobby and to determine if these two conditions create differences in the ways that workers try to reconcile work and life. Emerging research on low-pay work and work-life balance can be a starting point. Smith and McBride’s study of fifty low-paid multiple-job holders in the United Kingdom found that workers regularly struggle to manage work and other duties as they confront the daily challenges of juggling multiple jobs across different places and times (A. Smith & McBride, 2021). The workers reported that they were “exhausted” and “knackered” after working long days. Their social lives were constrained because of working jobs with non-standard hours, such as evenings and weekends. Many workers reported that the long hours related to multiple jobs had a detrimental impact on their families and relationships. Those with children faced
challenges trying to balance, navigate, and manage care and domestic duties and often had to enact a patchwork of care strategies using mutual networks of family and friends for support. Finally, additional conflicts and tensions often arose as there was often no clear delineation of boundaries between work and family life as workers went from job to job (A. Smith & McBride, 2021).

**Gendered work and labour adaptations to resource industries**

Another factor that influences the extent to which rural internet-enabled workers at home may need to adjust their work and family lives is the connection to resource industries, primarily through spousal relationships and industry schedules. Women respondents with spouses and significant others employed in resource industries, such as Dakota, Hannah, Heather, were often left with the entire burden of housework during periods when their husbands were working. For example, Dakota, who teleworks, has a spouse in aquaculture, and worked a rotating two-week-on-two-week-off schedule, discussed two different divisions of household labour—times when her husband was on the boat or off the boat. When her husband was off the boat, he took an active role in many household chores, which alleviated some of the domestic burdens to which she would normally attend on her own when he was on the boat. When asked about how their lives revolved around the rotational schedule, the participant spoke favourably of the two-week period. His previous rotation of one week on and one week off was a bit more difficult. As she explained, “Neither one of us knew where he was supposed to be at any given time because it was just one week.” The constant coming and going led to an unsureness of sorts, with her constantly needing to think about what she had to do at home.
While rotational schedules impact the at-home work experiences of women primarily during alone times, seasonal schedules impact the daily experiences of spouses. For example, Heather, a digital worker with a spouse that works as a fisherman, indicated that changes occur to her responsibilities during fishing seasons. While her husband fishes, she cannot rely on him to help in the home, which increases her domestic workload. Along with her increased domestic work, she also needs to increase the amount of domestic labour to support her husband. The change in receiving domestic support and providing labour to support her husband is noted by the following narrative:

“When he's fishing, I do not have any expectations that he [will] do any housework whatsoever. Fishing is exceedingly difficult and dangerous and drags on the body. So, when he is fishing, I have zero expectations. I get up with him in the morning. I get up at five with him to get his clothes, make his lunches, and let the dog out. I get the fire going. He comes home. He goes right to bed, rightfully so, because it's exhausting and freezing. I have no expectations of him; I help him because his body needs to regenerate. But this time of year, when they're going out once a week, I might say, OK, you've been off now for three days; maybe it's time to help out a little bit” (Heather, digital work as social media, long-time rural and regional resident).

Without the ability to share the burdens of domestic work with their husbands, resource wives may experience more occurrences during which they need to adjust and direct more of their time and labour toward household chores and tasks. Because they also continue to work, the wives may need to reduce the time spent for their own reproduction or reduce their paid work. These occurrences could lead to an increase in family-to-work conflicts. Based on the experiences of the wives in this study, adjustments and conflicts that may arise could occur on a rotational or seasonal basis. The wives in this study did not provide any indication that they reduced their paid work during different periods when their husbands were not available for support.
The need for wives to adjust labour for work and home activities around resource schedules may be in distinct contrast to women internet-enabled workers with no spousal connections to resource industries. As resource industries are more likely to be in rural areas, it also indicates that urban and rural differences may apply, with rural women workers more likely to have higher incidences of family-to-work conflicts and reduced time spent on their own reproduction.

The research finding indicates that connections to the resource industry are important in rural women’s experiences of internet-enabled work. This finding is consistent with feminist research, which has shown that women’s lives in rural and resource communities are impacted by resource industry dynamics. Preston et al.’s 2000 study of rotating shiftwork in paper-mill communities in Canada found that the onus for adjusting to shifts falls mainly on the spouses of mill workers, many of whom are often constrained in their own choices related to employment and child care as a result of shift schedules (Preston et al., 2000). Additionally, as already noted in a previous chapter, women in rural and resource communities are involved in a “third shift,” performing unpaid work for their spouses’ businesses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined conditions of households and individual reproduction to provide a full picture of internet-enabled work in rural communities. Three dimensions important to rural locations—availability of day care, occupational pluralism, and resource industry schedules—were used as dimensions to uncover if and how workers were juggling work, domestic work, and care work.
As evidenced in this study, rural internet-enabled workers who need to combine work, domestic work, and care work are faced with constrained conditions when responsibilities for work and family intensively compete. For instance, in addition to having to put effort into attending to work-family conflicts that arise from internet-enabled work generally, rural workers with children at home are also exposed to a higher incidence of family-to-work conflicts as they must cope with no formal daycare options. Without the ability to access a key strategy to cope when pressures of work and home are most acute, rural workers are at a disadvantage to their urban counterparts. Child-care-related challenges may be especially acute for those rural workers without family in the vicinity, and for groups of workers who are employed in jobs that don’t offer them the privilege to alter their hours or have any control over their schedule.

Further, I conclude that gender is also highly pertinent. As became evident in this study, rural women are positioned in multiple dimensions. Rural women are still the main person responsible for performing child care. In this study, they are the only participants involved in occupational pluralism and, therefore, must negotiate time and labour amongst multiple jobs, often at the expense of their own reproduction. They are also adjusting their domestic responsibilities around their paid work and resource schedules. Some women are adjusting their lives around paid work and domestic labour, and are performing unpaid work for spouses’ businesses and their rural communities, all of which further undermine their ability to put labour into their reproduction.

Combining gender and class also reveals that impacts are not homogeneous amongst rural women, particularly those involved in occupational pluralism. These dimensions
illuminate the importance of distinguishing between those women who hold multiple jobs out of necessity and those who hold them as an option. In this study, long-term rural women were at a disadvantage compared to new and returning rural women because of their rurality. Despite the difference, the financial benefit of additional work outweighed the negative impacts their abilities to refresh themselves. Work is hard to come by in many rural communities, so giving up leisure time for the chance to have extra income seems appealing. For long-term rural women, that extra income might be the difference between thriving, sustaining, and surviving.
Conclusion

Summary of key findings: It depends

This thesis aimed to investigate how workers living in rural communities navigate internet-enabled work (specifically telework and digital work) to determine if the location of work and home influenced the work-from-anywhere experience. Based on a mixed-methods study and grounded theory analysis, I conclude that it does matter if working from whenever and wherever is completed in rural communities. However, this experience is not homogeneous, as considerable diversity exists among rural workers. For some workers, their rural location does not greatly influence their daily work activities or households. In contrast, for others, their rural location significantly shapes the way they navigate their experience. The results further indicate that the diversity of rural workers' involvement, access, motivations, and outcomes of working from anywhere highly depends on gender, class, and relationship to place. A rural worker's position to these fault lines conditions how they navigate their experiences.

Research findings demonstrate that relationship to place, particularly the time spent in a location, is important, whether a rural community or a city. Urban-to-rural migrants can leverage their skills and experiences gained in cities to be involved in telework at a higher rate and to gain access to opportunities far from their rural communities without incurring tangible or intangible costs. Long-term rural workers can also be involved in telework; however, they are likely rural residents who commute from their homes to nearby urban centres for work to gain the skills employers require or the few residents fortunate to be employed with a rural employer that allows telework. Access to opportunities is also somewhat further restricted
unless long-term residents have a social network with a vast geography. For some rural workers, especially long-term rural women, involvement comes with a cost of time, money, or labour. However, such costs do not have authority over the right of employers to decide where work will take place or the preference of businesses to work with at-home freelancers closer to their location.

Work and household experiences of rural workers are impacted by services in their communities; however, outcomes vary based on the state of services in communities, how close communities are to service areas such as a city or a larger town, and the individual needs of workers. Workers in communities with reliable ICT infrastructure are alleviated from potential impacts on their work. In contrast, others must invest in additional resources to mitigate issues while performing their work, leaving rural households without the means to undertake additional resources or in more underserved communities more exposed to ICT-induced work interruptions. Such interruptions place them at a disadvantage compared to other rurally based and urban internet-enabled workers. This disadvantage is also heightened for rural workers involved in work activities where the need to be connected is critical to productivity and performance, such as digital work or call-centre activities. Furthermore, such disadvantages are gendered because rural women are more likely to be employed in these work activities.

The state of services in communities does influence rural workers in enacting work-from-home strategies. Rural workers with young families or those without family in their immediate rural area are constrained in implementing daycare strategies to limit work-family conflicts. Additionally, rural workers without dedicated spaces in their homes are not able to
utilize external space options to mitigate work-family conflicts. The results indicate that these outcomes are more pronounced in communities where daycares and external spaces do not exist because the cost-of-service provision is too high. Furthermore, the inability to utilize services to support work and households for those workers that need them (self-employed workers, households with out dedicated spaces to perform work, workers with young children or with out family nearby, or workers located a far distance from urban centres) indicates that they are disadvantaged from those that don't (employed workers, workers without children, workers located near urban centres) and further disadvantaged compared to internet-enabled urban workers.

A broad definition of internet-enabled work reveals a labour market segmentation that is clearly delineated by residency and gender. Urban-to-rural migrants who are men and long-term rural workers who are men are only involved in telework, whereas urban-to-rural migrants who are women and long-term rural workers who are women are involved in both. While the number and demographics of the participants limit generalization, the results, along with the work completed by Kahn and Burrell in the United States, indicated that internet-enabled work is disproportionately done by women in rural contexts. The results also indicate that the gender segmentation found in urban areas differs in rural areas. The presence of a long-term rural man involved in telework was an exception, compared to urban settings, where men who perform internet-enabled work are more the norm.

The gender and residency segmentation can be partially explained by understanding mechanisms that operate in rural places and why rural workers are involved in internet-enabled work. Long-term rural women are involved because of historical work cultures and
employment options that operate to enable them to have the skills needed to gain access to internet-enabled work as opposed to long-term rural men. Men, who are urban-to-rural migrants and long-term rural residents are drawn into the work, similar to urban workers, because of a desire for flexibility, to manage work and family responsibilities, control over the work and to be freed from commuting. Women, who are long term rural residents and urban-to-rural migrants are also pulled into the forms of work for these reasons, albeit for slightly different reasons. However, the evidence indicates that both women, who are long term rural residents and reverse urban-to-rural migrants are pushed into internet-enabled work as a result of conditions in rural labour markets that operate to restrict employment options for women.

The evidence from this study indicates that the occurrence of multiple-job holding, also called occupational pluralism, by rural women should be considered deeply problematic. Results reveal many rural women are facing an increase in work hours, the presence of work-to-work conflicts, and heightened work-family conflicts. As a result, the time and labour to go into activities to support their own well-being is severely diminished. Research design and time constraints limit the ability to definitively conclude that these outcomes are unevenly dispersed amongst rural women; however, the evidence does suggest that it is likely to occur along class lines. Women with higher incomes, material resources and in professional occupations may be involved as an option, while women with lower incomes, limited access to material resources and employed in administrative or clerical positions - may be out of necessity. As incomes and access to material resources for women differ from urban to rural areas, the length of time in urban and rural places could also account for their involvement. Furthermore, particular class position in terms of material resources or in occupational position, may also determine which
rural women can enact strategies to mitigate the outcomes and which rural women are restricted.

Of equal concern are the digital work findings, which illuminate the amount of unpaid work and labour being performed by rural women. Many women are putting time and effort into building their digital skills within their community; at the same time, these same skills are then being used to support their spouses or family businesses. The nature of digital work allows for rural women to be freed from limited labour markets only then to be exposed to a third shift where they must navigate competing work-work-family responsibilities.

Research significance

The gendering of rural digital work

This study advances the work initiated by Kahn and Burrell (2021) on the gendering of rural digital work in that it is disproportionately completed by rural women. The feminization of rural digital work, as evident in this study, challenges the current understanding of the gender digital divide, which presumes that women are impeded in the ability to access and harness digital technology on account that they face hurdles, generally more than men such as affordability, lack of education, and social and cultural norms. Although these factors limit women on a global scale from embracing the full benefits of digital transformation, this research provides evidence of locational differences, specifically in rural communities in industrialized countries.

The significance of a gender digital divide where inequities exist more for rural men than women have two implications. First, as already outlined in previous chapters, it implies
that rural women are more disproportionately exposed to negative impacts arising from performing digital work than urban women and rural men. Secondly, it also indicates that specific barriers, either formal or informal, may impede rural men from accessing or being involved in programming-oriented to support digital skill development in rural areas. If rural men are not involved in programs, the gendering of digital work will likely continue.57

Intersectionality and place

This study also advances the intersectionality scholarship and the work undertaken by Bryant & Pini (2011) on the intersections of gender, class, and rurality. The importance of geographical place, as evident in this study and its interrelationship with gender and class illustrates that place is a pertinent axis for understanding an individual’s experiences and the inequalities that they may face. Length of time in a rural community not only situates long-term rural women in different positions to long-term rural men, but they are also positioned differently than rural women who have recently relocated or are returning from urban areas, with material resources and privileges that can be leveraged to access forms of work and enact strategies to support work and home when spheres merge and overlap.

57 As this study did not investigate skill development programs, I cannot fully comment on the gendered character of digital skill development programs in rural Canada. However, a discussion with one of the participants who taught GED courses provided some insight. The participant indicated that the GED program has a digital literacy module where participants are taught basic digital skills such as using a computer, emails etc. She indicated that in previous years, it was mostly women in her GED courses not men, yet, this year, she noticed a change where more men are enrolled. Some potential barriers are outlined in the following narrative: “I think remote work, the problem is, the skills like navigating, you know, the computer. I'm not sure everyone has the skills that they need. So, I really, I think it's a good thing. Right now, I'm teach people to get their GED, their high school equivalency. And within my program, every Wednesday I have a digital literacy instructor come in to teach people how to navigate the internet, how to get it an email account, and how to use a computer and become more computer literate. You don't have to be one of my students to get this digital literacy, but we're having a really hard time filling the seats because people still must drive to work to do it. It doesn't sound like very much to do that, but it is. And I know how it feels to not really have enough money to put into training (Kimberly, telework and long-term rural and regional resident)
Occupational pluralism while working from home.

The prevailing empirical scholarship on telework, working from home, and boundary management scholarship was not able to help me completely describe the experiences of the rural women involved in holding multiple jobs. As evidenced by this study, the existing scholarship, with its focus on workers navigating family and one job, obscures that some internet-enabled workers are experiencing additional impacts, such as increased work hours and work-to-work conflicts.

Although the scholarship accounts for the severity of outcomes based on gender and children, it does not currently account for severity based on occupational pluralism. For instance, the scholarship tells us that women and women with children in the home are more likely to experience work-to-family conflicts and often must adjust their domestic labour accordingly to manage competing demands. But it does not account for what happens to women’s domestic labour when they have responsibilities for multiple employers and family responsibilities. This glaring gap conceals the instances of double-dipping, the reproduction-monetary trade-off, and the importance of determining if extra work arises from necessity or an option to account for differences among workers. Therefore, this study provides an important grounding to add occupational pluralism as a research dimension in future studies on internet-enabled work and work-from-home scholarship.

Rural internet-enabled work in an economically marginalized region

As this study investigated rural areas in an economically marginalized region, it also advances the general body of scholarship on internet-enabled work and work-from-home dynamics and the research in rural areas specifically. Incorporating a regional lens in the study
enabled me to uncover a differentiated pattern of employment that has not yet been discussed or illustrated in the general or rural-specific scholarship on internet-enabled work. This study's results suggest that the urban advantage also operated as a regional advantage. Long-term rural residents were employed with provincially based employers; in contrast, migrants from outside the region, both newcomers and those returning home, were most often employed with employers outside the region. Furthermore, the employment patterns of long-term regional residents in the study - those that relocated from an urban city from within the region - were also predominantly employed with provincially based employers. Rural residents with ties to urban areas and social networks outside of the region had a different pattern than those residents without such ties. I could not compare the results with other studies because of the gap in the scholarship; however, the evidence found does indicate that the pattern could be a distinct feature of rural Atlantic Canada or rural areas in peripheral regions.

While the regional lens uncovered differentiated employment patterns, it also takes issue with empirical studies focused on the spread of internet-enabled work, commuting patterns and telework-induced migration. These studies' research patterns are predominately based on the dimension of the 'distance' between the employer and the employee. In contrast, in this study, I reviewed patterns based on the 'location' of the employer. By switching the aim of the dimension and analysis from distance to location, I was able to reveal that there was a regional advantage for migrants with employment experiences and residency periods outside of the region, at least for rural residents living in rural Atlantic Canada.

Further, my research suggests that instead of looking for how far away a teleworker relocates after they start the work, or if they start after they relocate, inspecting the location of
the employer can help unveil potential inequities based on place and reveal the power of the employer in determining where work takes place. A focus on distance implies a work environment where both employer and employees have the same power in the decision to adopt telework; however, as evident in this study and others (Bailey & Kurland, 2002a; Tremblay, 2003), this is not the case. Instead, the crucial dimensions in the decision process are an employer's perceptions of where, how and who performs work activities via telework.

**Research limitations**

*Methodology for motivations*

Certain features of the methodology used in this research, particularly choices made the questionnaire, limited my ability to further explain and expand on internet-enabled work motivations. For instance, the quantitative question on motivations did not allow the participants to rate the importance of each of the motivations in their decision to be involved in internet-enabled work, e.g., very important, somewhat important, or not at all important. Additionally, the question did not allow for participants to rank one motivation overall. While the qualitative questions enabled the study to gain important insights on the rural-specific motivations, because of the research design, I can not conclude if the rural-specific motivations were more important than other motivators.

The design of the questions on motivations also limited my ability to draw conclusions as to the presence of regional-specific motivations or the impetus for a portion of the women to be involved in holding multiple jobs. Although the study did have a regional slant for investigating motivations in an economically marginalized region, I did not develop specific dimensions in the questionnaire to elicit such results. It only occurred to me during the data
collection process that such dimensions should be developed. During the interviews, a common theme among many newcomers to the region was relocating to the area and being able to access telework opportunities outside the region that paid higher wages than what is usually offered in Atlantic Canada. One long-term rural participant who managed to access a job outside of the region also commented about the wage difference, as the participant is now working for a higher wage. Considering the employment patterns found in this study, the participants' discussions around wages is concerning, as it could suggest that additional inequities may arise between rural residents with and without ties, notably employment residency and social networks, outside of the region.

Similar to the above-noted methodological issue on the region, the motivations section was not designed to identify particular reasons why residents are involved in multiple-job holding. It was only during the data coding and analysis phase that I realized the occurrence of occupational pluralism among a good portion of the women in this study. Conceivably, if I had been able to write reflective research notes after each interview, I might have found the occurrence earlier and then adjusted the interviews or asked participants for a short-follow up interview. Based on my employment situation and responsibilities at the time of data collection, it was simply not possible. Ironically, I was also involved in multiple paid jobs, one of which would be deemed internet-enabled work, whilst I undertook the research.

Participants and sample size

The generalizability of this study is primarily limited by the number of participants. Twenty-eight participants are not a representative sample of the rural population of Atlantic Canada. With that being said, the number of participants is similar to that of other telework and
work-from-home studies (see Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2007; Lopez Estrada, 2002; Myrie & Daly, 2009; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001); therefore, the results do have some measure of validity.

**Implications for future research**

*Occupational pluralism via internet-enabled work*

Future research should continue examining the extent of multiple-job holding throughout the region and other rural regions of Canada. Because of the scope of the research, it is unknown how prevalent pluriactivity via internet-enabled work is in the broader context of employment in rural regions of the country. Researchers interested in occupational pluralism in rural areas should also investigate its gendered and resident character. While in this study, holding multiple jobs via internet-enabled work forms was the domain of women, I could not conclude if historical gendered patterns have shifted—from more rural men than rural women to more rural women than rural men. Given that women’s employment in rural areas is often conditioned in a way that positions them closer to gaining skills required for internet-enabled work, a change may be occurring. As this study was not designed to specifically investigate why both long-term, returning residents and newcomers in rural areas are involved, I could not conclusively explain the data with certainty. Further research that addresses these two dimensions would provide an understanding of change in rural employment and gender dynamics in an era of rapid digital transformation.
Social media as women’s work

Further, considering the impact that social media and digital platforms have on society and the economy, researchers should continue to explore the work being performed by women through these avenues to support their spouses and family businesses. In this study, I deemed this as unpaid women’s work and suggested that this may arise more for women with spouses in traditional industries than for others. I could not conclude that this is more impactful for women in rural areas than in urban areas.

More could be investigated to understand the impacts of this work on businesses and, ultimately, the women that perform the labour. Jarret’s concept of the “digital housewife” provides a starting point to explain the exploitation of the unpaid labour women perform online for the benefit of companies (Jarrett, 2017); however, what needs to be developed is an understanding of how they’re using this unpaid labour to support their households. Examining the way unpaid digital labour is used to further a household would be necessary to the feminist agenda, as feminist political economists have often demonstrated that, under capitalism, the family is a site of women’s oppression (Connelly, 1983; Greenhill & Wilson, 2006). Additional research could examine instances where digital labour within the home may be a site of oppression and exploitation. Such evidence, if found, would be concerning, as our society continues to forge ahead in a very digital way.

Digital labour and rural community reproduction

Along the lines of unpaid digital labour, further research could examine how women with digital skills utilize them to support their rural communities. I did find evidence that several women were lending their skills in various capacities. For instance, one woman spoke
about how she often uses her skills to support her community and said that being the resident IT expert gave her a way to find a sense of place in the community. Another participant reported how she helped others in her community utilize the Airbnb platform and informally supported local tourism by gathering information for her guests. Because of time constraints, I could not thoroughly analyze the occurrences. Using digital skills to support rural communities is an important issue to investigate in rural communities as years of work by feminist and rural scholars have established the historical role of women in providing the labour necessary to reproduce and sustain communities (Bates, 2006; Davis, 2000; Gill, 1990; Halseth & Ryser, 2004; Mackenzie, 1987; Marchak, 1983; Moen, 1981; Reed, 2003; Sinclair & Felt., 1992).
Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix A: Empirical tables

Table 1: Geographic distribution of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/Region</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carleton</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarenville-Bonavista Peninsula</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green's Harbour (Avalon Peninsula)</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digby</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunenburg</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictou</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Hants</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Residency coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local: rural community</th>
<th>Recent</th>
<th>Returning</th>
<th>Long-term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lived in the community for a short period of time, less than ten years.</td>
<td>They came of age in the area but moved away in early adulthood and established a career outside of the area</td>
<td>Lived in the community for a minimum of ten years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They spent more of their lives in urban areas than rural areas.</td>
<td>Established their livelihoods in the area.</td>
<td>Established their livelihoods in the area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region: Atlantic Canada</th>
<th>Recent</th>
<th>Returning</th>
<th>Long-term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They lived outside of Atlantic Canada for most of their lives</td>
<td>They came of age in the area but moved away in early adulthood and established a career outside of the region.</td>
<td>They lived and stayed in the region their entire lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They migrated to the region as an adult for a while but did not remain</td>
<td>They spent most of their adulthood in the region.</td>
<td>They spent most of their adulthood in the region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time lived outside the region was shorter than the time within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Type of Rural Resident</td>
<td>Type of Regional Resident</td>
<td>Forms of Internet-enabled work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Digital work as Airbnb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Digital work as an e-commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Digital work as an e-commerce and digital marketing consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Digital work as online labour digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Digital work as social media and content creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Digital work as social media and content creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Digital work as social media and content creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Digital work as website creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoine</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finley</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberly</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Telework and digital work as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>website creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Telework and digital work as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Airbnb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Telework and digital work as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>social media, content creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Participants involved in multiple forms of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Type of Rural Resident</th>
<th>Type of Regional Resident</th>
<th>Work Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Performs digital work as Airbnb work and holds a seasonal position in hospitality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Employed teleworker, full-time with one employer and part-time with another employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Full-time employed teleworker and operates a part-time tourism-based business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Performs digital work as social media and content creation work on a part-time basis, holds other part-time and casual positions in different sectors such as education, elections,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Performs digital work as website designs on a self-employed basis and completes the same type of work part-time with a local employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberly</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Part-time teleworker and full-time work in the education field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Recent</td>
<td>Performs social media and content creation work on a part-time basis; also works part-time in a residential care setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>Part-time teleworker and performs digital work as Airbnb work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Part-time telework and performs digital work as social media, content creation and communications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Appendix B: Questionnaire

WORK AND WORK ACTIVITIES
The following questions are about the work you complete on an at-home or remote basis using computers, the internet, digital platforms, and other mobile or web-based tools.

1. Briefly explain what kinds of work do you complete on an at-home or remote basis using computers, the internet, digital platform, or other web-based tools?

2. Please list and name all of the virtual spaces, websites, digital platforms, web-based and mobile-based tools etc., that you use to complete these activities?

3. Do you complete these work activities?
   - As a paid employee
   - As an independent contractor
   - As a self-employed individual
   - Combination of one or more of the above: (please explain)

4. If you are employed or an independent contractor is your employer(s) located?
   - In the same town where you live?
   - In a different town but the same province?
   - In a different province?
   - In a different country?
   - Multiple locations? (Please explain)

5. If you are self-employed are your clients/customers located?
   - In the same town where you live?
   - In a different town but the same province?
   - In a different province?
   - In a different country?
   - Multiple locations? (Please explain)

6. Do you complete these work activities on?
   - An occasional or seasonal basis
   - A part-time basis
   - A full-time basis

7. How many months/years have you been in involved in these work activities?
   _______months ______years

8. Are these work activities your primary employment? Yes__ No___
If no, please list your primary employment? ________________

9. On average, how many hours per week do you?
   ▪ Complete remote, digital or online work activities?________
   ▪ Complete work at other employment?________

10. Why did you become involved in these work activities? (Check all that apply)
    ▪ Ability to work from home
    ▪ Ability to manage childcare and other family responsibilities
    ▪ Convenience (e.g., lack of commute)
    ▪ Change in your family situation
    ▪ Change in your work status (e.g., loss of job, change in hours)
    ▪ Change in your spouse/partners work status (e.g., loss of job, shift change, mobile work)
    ▪ Lack of available childcare or elder care
    ▪ No other job opportunity
    ▪ Stay at home orders due to Covid-19 pandemic
    ▪ Wanted flexible hours
    ▪ Wanted control over your work
    ▪ Work-family balance
    ▪ Generate extra income
    ▪ Other __________________ (please explain)

11. Do you employ others in completing these work activities?
    Yes _____ No____
    ▪ If yes, how many people do you employ?
    ▪ ______ part-time
    ▪ ______ full-time

12. Do your family members participate in helping complete these work activities?
    Yes _____ No____

13. Do you use childcare while you are completing these work activities? Yes ____ or No ____
    If so, what type of childcare arrangement do you use?
    ▪ Childcare centre
    ▪ Babysitter or nanny inside of the home
    ▪ Babysitter or nanny outside of the home
    ▪ A relative
    ▪ Spouse does it
    ▪ I do it
    ▪ Other, please specify

14. Approximately what percentage of your personal income comes from remote, digital or online work activities? ________________
15. Approximately what percentage of your total household income comes from remote, digital or online work activities? ________________

COMMUNITY

The following questions are about the community where you work and live.

16. Where do you live?
   ________ town/rural area ________ county ________ province

17. How long have you lived in your current community? ______ months ______ years

18. Previous to your current community, where do you live?
   ▪ Another rural area
   ▪ A small town (less than 10,000)
   ▪ Suburban area (i.e., outside an urban core)
   ▪ Urban (more than 10,000 but less than 100,000)
   ▪ Urban (more than 100,000)

19. How long did you live in your previous community?
   ______ months ______ years

20. Are you a returning resident? (e.g., You lived in the same community before and moved away for a period of time)? Yes ________ No __________
   If yes, how long did you live away from the community? ______ months ______ years
   Where did you reside during your time away from the community?
   ▪ Another rural area
   ▪ A small town (less than 10,000)
   ▪ Suburban area (i.e., outside an urban core)
   ▪ Urban (more than 10,000 but less than 100,000)
   ▪ Urban (more than 100,000)

21. Which of the following services are currently available in your community within a 15-minute drive from your home?
   ▪ Shops/personal services
   ▪ Dial-up internet
   ▪ High-speed internet
   ▪ Satellite internet
   ▪ Banks
   ▪ Copy/business centres
22. What services do you or your family access or utilize within a 15-minute drive from your home?
- Shops/personal services
- Dial-up internet
- High-speed internet
- Satellite internet
- Banks
- Copy/business centres
- Co-working spaces
- Post-office
- Government services offices
- Cafés/restaurants
- Recreation centres
- Childcare centres
- Medical professionals
- Public transportation
- Schools
- Public Library
- Other services (please specify)

23. Do you participate in community affairs, organizations or at events either as a volunteer or paid position? Yes _____No.
   On average how many hours per month do you spend involved with community affairs, organizations or events as?
   - a volunteer
   - a paid position

24. In your last working week, what was the average distance per day in kms you travelled:
- For these work activities
- For other employment activities
- For household chores
● For childcare/activities for children
● For care responsibilities of family members
● For volunteer activities
● For leisure activities

**ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The following questions are about your household configuration to understand other responsibilities that you may have in addition to these work activities.

25. What is your marital status? (Check one)
   - Single
   - Married/Cohabitating
   - Separated Divorced
   - Widowed

26. If you are married/cohabiting, what is your spouse/partner's work status?
   - Paid employment
   - Self-employed
   - Unemployed
   - Retired

27. What is your spouse/partner's occupation, and in what industry?
   - Explain

28. Briefly explain your spouse/partner's work schedule or work/home rotation schedule?
   Please indicate if they complete shift work, seasonal work or commute to another province for work.
   - Explain

29. If your spouse/partner is self-employed, do you help with their work? Yes ____ or No ______
   If yes, how many hours per week do you help in their work? ______

30. Do you have any children living at home? Yes ____ or No ______
   If you have children, How many? ___________ What are their ages? ______________

31. Are there any relatives or other adults living in the home? Yes ______ or No ______
   If yes, do you have caretaking responsibility for relatives or the other adults in the home?
   e.g. health, legal, or financial responsibility. Yes ______ or No ______

32. Do you have care-taking responsibilities for relatives or other adults that do not live in the home? e.g. health, legal, or financial responsibility Yes ______ or No ______
33. On average, how many hours per week do you do?
   - Household chores/maintenance
   - Childcare
   - Eldercare
   - Volunteer work
   - Leisure activities

PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to provide summary statistics for the study, provide the following details about yourself.

34. What is your age?
   - 18-24 years old
   - 25-34 years old
   - 35-44 years old
   - 45-54 years old
   - 55-64 years old
   - Over 65

35. What category best describes your gender identity?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Non-binary / third gender
   - Prefer not to say

36. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Check one)
   - Grade 9 or Higher
   - Grade 10-12 non graduate
   - High School Graduate
   - Some Post Secondary
   - Trade Certification of Diploma
   - College Diploma
   - University Degree (Bachelor)
   - University Degree (Master)
   - University Degree (Professional)
   - University Degree Doctoral

Which category best describes you? (check all that apply)
   - White, Non-Hispanic (e.g., Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, etc.)
   - Indigenous, First Peoples or First Nations (e.g., Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomukkatiyik, etc.).
   - Hispanic, Spanish or Portuguese (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, Brazil etc.).
- Black, African or Afro-Caribbean (e.g., African Nova Scotian, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, etc)
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, etc.).
- South Asian (e.g., Punjab, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshis, etc.)
- Middle Eastern or North African (e.g., Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (e.g., Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc.)
- Some other ethnicity or origin
- I prefer not to say

37. What category does your total household income fall under?
- Under $15,000
- $15,000 to $29,000
- $29,001 to $58,000
- $58,000 to $85,000
- Over $85,001
Appendix C

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

MAIN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Work Activities

1. To begin, could you tell me how you became involved in working at home or on a remote basis using computers, the internet, digital platform and other mobile or web-based tools?

Additional prompts
- For teleworkers: Was telework arrangements your idea or your employer’s idea? How long were you working with your employer before you started teleworking?
- For self-employed or independent contractors – what prompted you to become self-employed? How did you get started? Were your clients initially in your current community or elsewhere? Did you become self-employed prior to moving to the current area or before? What type of resources did you need in order to start self-employment?
- For digital workers – How did you learn about the digital platforms? What type of resources did you need in order to begin the digital work? What is easy or difficult to secure (incomes, clients, or work) through the platforms? Was it a long process? Were there any financial requirements? How did you decide which platform to use?

2. In the questionnaire you indicated some of the reasons as to why you decided to complete these forms of work. I would like to discuss this more with you now. Of the reasons that you indicated; can you tell me more about them?

Additional prompts
- Are there other reasons that are not mentioned on the questionnaire that you feel were important in your decision?
- Where were other work opportunities available to you in your community at the time that you chose to do this work?
- Had you tried to secure other forms of work in the area? Or outside of the area? In the local resource industry?
- Have you thought about moving to a different location (city or town) for employment?
- Do you participate in a government program aimed at telework/digital work?

3. What do your work activities entail? Describe a typical workday.

Additional prompts
• What is your work schedule? How do you set up your workday? Do you have a set schedule or use flexible arrangements?
• Teleworkers: Do you have a lot of interaction with your work colleagues? Are your hours set by your employer? Where are your clients located?
• Self-employed & independent contractors: how do you find clients? work? Are your main work clients in the same area? Or outside of the area?
• Digital workers – do you use more than one platform? Can you describe what it’s like to work on multiple platforms? Please tell me about your experience on each platform. How long does it take to secure work? If you, sell products on online marketplaces tell me about the products and where you secure them? If you, sell services, tell me more about the services? Are your buyers typically in the same area, or do they reside elsewhere?

4. How have you had to adapt your life since engaging in these work activities?

Additional prompts
• Are there any differences from how you completed your work and or family responsibilities before you started teleworking/digital work to now?

5. Generally, what do you think are the benefits/disadvantages of these forms of work?

Additional prompts
• Teleworkers - do you think telework negatively impacts your potential for career advancement?

6. What is the likelihood of you stopping these work activities if a different work option appeared?

Additional prompts:
- For part-time or occasional workers? If you could complete telework or digital work on a full-time basis, would you stop other employment or income activities?
- Would you move to a new area for a better paying non-telework/digital work employment opportunity?
- Do you think that these forms of work provided you an opportunity that allows you to remain in your community instead of moving?

Family and work

7. How does your family and friends feel about your involvement in these forms of work?
8. How do you negotiate the time and energy you need to spend on your work activities and your other responsibilities? (Household chores, family, relatives, volunteer work)

Additional prompts
• How do you negotiate with your family and friends when it comes to the time you spend working?
• What do you do when your family interrupts you while you are working And vice versa? Do you employ particular tactics to minimize family or work interruptions?
• Do you experience intrusions from family/neighbours while you are working? If so, how do you respond?
• What do you do when you are working and an unexpected/unplanned non-work situation arises e.g., sick child, school closure, family emergency? Similarly, what do you do when an unexpected/unplanned work emergency occurs while on family time?
• If cohabiting, how do you and your spouse/partner decide how and who deals with these unexpected family situations?

9. Do you ever solicit help from your family to complete your work? If so, can you provide examples?

Additional prompts
• Do you involve your spouse or children? If so, what types of activities?
• Do you provide them with monetary or non-monetary renumeration? If so, what forms?
• Does their participation create any negative experiences within the family? If so, how do you manage them?

10. Similarly, do you participate in your spouse’s, a family member’s work, or a household business operation in addition to your work activities? (i.e., family farm, fishing operations, etc.)? How do you negotiate the time you need to spend on your own work and the work for your spouse?

11. Can you describe the distribution of household work and family responsibilities? e.g. Who is the primary person responsible for the following?
• Cooking
• Cleaning up after cooking/eating
• Major cleaning around the house
• Laundry
• Tidying up
• Grocery shopping
• Bill paying
• Childcare
• Visits doctors/dentists with children
• Visits doctors with older relatives
• Takes sick leaves to care for children when they are unwell
• Helps children with homework, if applicable
• Arrange recreation activities
• House renovations and repairs
• Lawn mowing and snow removal

Additional prompts
• How was this particular distribution of responsibilities agreed upon?
• Were there any changes in the division of responsibilities since you started these forms of work?
• Are there any particular responsibilities that you complete more now than you did before? Similarly is there any responsibility that you do less? Or is now completed by your partner/spouse, or children?
• For those that indicate hired help – What steps did you have to take to find hired help? Why did you choose to use hired help?

Community/Place
12. How would you describe what it means to be at-home remote worker or digital worker living in a rural/resource community?

Additional prompts
• Do you think living in a rural/resource community makes it easier or more difficult to engage in these forms of work?
• Are there advantages or disadvantages for your work by living in a rural/resource community? Or for your work-family balance?

13. Are there many other people in the community also doing these types of work activities?

14. Do you think these forms of work provide good job opportunities for people in your community?

Additional prompts
• Do you think that women and men in your community have the same opportunities with respect to gaining work through these forms of work?
• Would you recommend these forms of work to people in your community?

15. Can you tell me about the different services that you use in the community (resources) that help you complete these work activities? Or help you to complete your care and family responsibilities?

Additional prompts
• Are there any services currently not available in your community that you feel would better support you to complete these work activities or your family responsibilities?
• Have the services in your community changed over the past several years? Are there more or less services?
• Has there been any reduction of services that have impacted your ability to complete these work activities or your family responsibilities?
Are there particular work activities or family responsibilities that are more difficult or challenging to complete now than perhaps a few years ago?

Do you need to travel to other areas to access particular services for these work activities or family responsibilities? If so, what are those services? How far do you have to travel? Do you need to travel often? Does the travel impact your work activities?

16. What do you think are some of the advantages that your community has that makes it a good place for remote or digital work forces? Similarly, what are some of the challenges your community would need to overcome to make it more adaptable for a remote or digital work force?

Livelihoods

17. Is this your main source of work? And if so, does your household rely on the income you generate from these work activities?

18. If this is not your main source of work, tell me about your other employment? Or other income-generating activities? Please describe what you do and how often?

Additional prompts:
- Are there any other ways that you use to make ends meet (e.g., kitchen gardens, exchanging goods and services with relatives and friends)? If so, can you describe these activities? Please describe what you do and how often?
- Does your household rely on the income you generate from these activities?
- Have you always been involved in these sorts of activities? Have other people in your family participated in these activities? Has participation in these activities changed over the past several years? If so, more, or less?
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

During the main interview, participants may be asked if they would be willing to engage in a 30-minute follow-up conversation to gather more in-depth information in particular topic areas.

For participants that indicate they perform work related to resource industries.

1. Can you describe your experience as a women working in the industry?
2. What challenges did you overcome to enter the industry?
3. What opportunities have you experienced, or challenges have you faced since entering the industry?
4. How do you think your work in the resource industry is viewed by your family? And by members of the wider community?
5. Do you think these forms of work open up opportunities for women to work in more male-dominated resource sectors or occupations?
6. How do you think these forms for work are generally perceived within the industry?

For participants that indicate they also perform work for their spouses/partners/family’s resource industry?

1. What type of activities do you complete?
2. How did you and your partner/spouse/family member decide that you will be involved in their work and your level of involvement?
3. How do you negotiate the time spent on your own work and these activities?
4. Does your involvement in the activities cause challenges or stress between you and you spouse/family member? If so, how do you manage these situations?
5. How do you get renumerated for these activities?
6. Has your involvement changed in any way over the past several years? Increased or decreased?

For participants that they indicate they are recent residents.

1. Why did you move to this community?
2. In what ways was your decision to move influenced by these forms of work?
3. In what ways have your work activities been impacted since you moved to the community?
4. In what ways have your family responsibilities or other non-working activities been impacted since you moved to the community?
5. What is the likelihood that you would relocate back to your previous city/or town, if there was a better employment opportunity?
6. Generally, do you think these forms of work provides a good opportunity to relocate to a rural area or resource community?

For participants that they indicate they are returning residents

1. Why did you move away?
2. Why have you moved back?
3. Do you think it was important to leave the community to be able to secure the skills and resources to complete these types of work activities?
4. In what ways have your work activities been impacted since you moved back?
5. In what ways have your family responsibilities or other non-working activities been impacted since you moved back?
6. Generally, do you think these forms of work provides a good opportunity for former residents to move back?

**For participants that they indicate they have high amounts of community work.**

1. In which ways do these forms of work impact your involvement in community activities?
   - Community activities organizations, events, formal and informal organizations.
2. How do you negotiate your community involvement with your other responsibilities?
3. Has your participation in the community changed over the past several years? Has it increased or decreased?
4. Do you think these forms of work provide an opportunity for people to be more or less involved or their community?
5. In what ways do you think these forms of work are beneficial for your community?
Appendix D

Appendix D: Recruitment posters and emails

**Online Invitation**

To be posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, Upwork, Freelancer, Esty, Kijiji

**Volunteers needed for a study on telework (remote work) and digital work in rural and resource-dependent communities in Atlantic Canada**

We are looking for volunteers for a study on telework (also referred to as remote work) and digital work being completed in rural and resource-dependent communities in Atlantic Canada. This project aims to understand how people in these communities are navigating these forms of work.

You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, a 5-day activity log, and participate in one 75-minute interview, that will take place through zoom. You may also be invited to participate in an optional follow-up 30-minute interview on specific topics. The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed.

To be eligible, you must be

- 18 years and older
- Reside in a rural or resource community in Atlantic Canada
- Complete a portion of your work at-home or on a remote basis using one or more of the following:
  - Computers and emails
  - Digital platforms
  - Websites
  - Mobile platforms
  - Social media
  - The Internet
  - Virtual spaces
  - Online marketplaces
  - Web-based tools
  - Blogs

The study is being conducted via online and digital communication channels and should take approximately 12 to 13 hours over the duration of the study. Participants will receive a $20 Tim Horton’s gift card.

If you are interested, please email Rhea Bowen at rheabowen@cmail.carleton.ca
This research has been cleared by Carleton University Research Ethics Board A. Clearance # 116639

Should you have any **ethical concerns** with the study, please contact the REB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or by email: ethics@carleton.ca). For all other questions about the study, please contact the researcher.

**SAMPLE EMAIL TO ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS**

Hello

My name is Rhea Bowen, and I am a master’s student at Carleton University.

I am currently researching remote (telework) and digital work (generating work using the Internet, websites, social media, etc.) in rural and resource communities in Atlantic Canada.

I am interested in understanding how people in rural and resource communities in our region navigate these forms of work. The vast majority of research has been done in urban environments, and I strongly believe that we need to understand the experiences of people living in rural and small resource communities. Additionally, there has been no research on how people in our region navigate these forms of work.

Would you be willing to share my recruitment poster on the Rural Actions Centres website, social media and through your network?

I appreciate any help that you could provide. I believe that people in rural Atlantic Canada can provide us with new insights on these forms of work.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,

Rhea

P.S. A little about me, I am originally from Pictou, NS but spent most of my life in New Brunswick. I am passionate about rural areas, small towns and resource extraction. I am fascinated by why people live in these communities, what they do for work, and most importantly, why people stay.
Appendix E

Appendix E: Sample research consent forms

**Research Consent Text for Questionnaire (online)**

**Name and Contact Information of Researchers:**

Rhea Bowen, Graduate Student, Carleton University, Institute of Political Economy  
Tel.: 506-663-9377  
Email: rheabowen@cmail.carleton.ca  
Supervisor: Dr. Karen Hebert, Carleton University, Institute of Political Economy  
Email: KarenHebert@cunet.carleton.ca

**Project Title:**

Work, Gender & Place: Women’s experiences of telework and digital work in rural and resource-dependent communities.

Carleton University Project Clearance  
Clearance #: 116639 Date of Clearance: December 16th, 2021

**Invitation**

I am asking you to complete this survey because you live in a rural or resource-dependent community in Atlantic Canada and are involved in teleworking (also known as remote work) on an employed or self-employed basis and or generate income through digital (online) platforms. This questionnaire is being conducted by graduate student, Rhea Bowen of Carleton University’s Institute of Political Economy, working under the supervision of Prof. Karen Hebert.

**Objectives and Summary:**

The aim of this study is to better understand how people in rural and resource-dependent communities are navigating these forms of work.

We estimate that the questionnaire will take about 45 minutes to complete. Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary, and you may choose not to take part, or not to answer any of the questions. If you decide to withdraw after you submit the survey, we will remove your responses from questionnaire data if you notify the researcher within one week from the date.

**Risks and Benefits:**

We do not anticipate any risks from taking the questionnaire, nor do we anticipate that you will derive any benefit.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage:**

We will treat your personal information as confidential, although absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without
your specific consent. Research records may be accessed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board in order to ensure continuing ethics compliance.

All data will be kept confidential, unless release is required by law (e.g. child abuse, harm to self or others).

The results of this study may be published, but the data will be presented so that it will not be possible to identify you, unless you give consent. All research data will be encrypted [or password-protected] and any hard copies of data will be kept in a locked cabinet at the home of the researcher.

Your data will be stored and protected by Qualtrics on servers located in Toronto but may be disclosed via a court order or data breach.

We will encrypt and password protect any research data that we store or transfer.

After the study is completed, your data will be retained for one year once the study is published, and then securely destroyed.

**REB Review and Contact Information:**

This project was reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 for CUREB A or by email at ethics@carleton.ca.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

☐ Yes
☐ No
Informed Consent Form

Name and Contact Information of Researchers:
   Rhea Bowen, Graduate Student, Carleton University, Institute of Political Economy
   Tel.: 506-663-9377
   Email: rheabowen@cmail.carleton.ca
   Supervisor: Dr. Karen Hebert, Carleton University, Institute of Political Economy
   Email: KarenHebert@cunet.carleton.ca

Project Title:
Work, Gender & Place: Experiences of telework and digital work in rural and resource-dependent communities.

Carleton University Project Clearance
Clearance #: 116639          Date of Clearance: December 16, 2021.

Invitation
You are invited to take part in a research project because you live in a rural or resource-dependent community in Atlantic Canada and are involved in teleworking (also referred to as remote work) on an employed or self-employed basis and/or generate income through digital (online) platforms. The information in this form is intended to help you understand what we are asking of you so that you can decide whether you agree to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and a decision not to participate will not be used against you in any way. As you read this form and decide whether to participate, please ask all the questions you might have, take whatever time you need, and consult with others as you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this study is to understand how people in rural and resource-dependent communities are navigating forms of remote and digital work. The study will explore your motivation to engage in these forms of work, how you perform the work, the impact of the work on your daily life, the strategies you use to manage the work alongside family and community responsibilities, and how the community where you live may be impacting your participation in these forms of work. The study will also explore the differences between women and men. Experiences of people in rural and resource-dependent communities are not adequately addressed in the current research on telework and digital work. The results of this study will benefit the research community by providing empirical evidence of how these forms of work operate in rural and resource communities. The results will also be beneficial for rural economic development policies and initiatives.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to take part in the study, I will ask you to:
• Complete an online questionnaire related to your work, household demographics, and your community
• Complete a five-day activity log of your work, family, community, and leisure tasks.
  o You will log your daily activities using a Word template provided by the researcher. The template can be completed using a pen or information can be entered directly into the Word document.
  o You will log your activities for five days over a two-week period. The five days may be consecutive or spaced out. At least three days should be during the weekdays (i.e., Monday through Friday).
• Participate in one-on-one interviews of approximately 75 minutes in length.
  o The interview will be completed through zoom. You can elect to communicate through the audio or the video function. The interview will be recorded to allow me to more fully capture your experience. Audio recording is required; however, video recording is optional.

The study also involves brief follow-up interviews on specific topics. The follow-up interviews will be approximately 30 minutes in length. The follow-up interviews are optional.

**Risks and Inconveniences**
Participation in this study comes with some risks if your personal identities are revealed. You could experience a loss of privacy if your personal information is shared or a loss of your reputation in the community if you discuss a negative experience. You could also experience a loss of benefits or face financial consequences with the Canada Revenue Agency or other government programs that provide financial assistance if during the study you reveal unclaimed taxable income.

To mitigate these risks, your real name will not be published, and instead, you will be assigned a pseudonym (see the confidentiality section below). Information related to employer(s), client(s), your business, and spouses’ business, if identified, in the course of the study will be removed prior to analysis. Information published on income derived from work activities will be aggregated. Additionally, your exact community location will not be published and instead will be presented in a larger geographical area e.g., a county or region.

You may experience unpleasant feelings and minor psychological stress during the interview when discussing how you manage work, family and personal matters or recalling difficult experiences related to work-family conflicts. At the end of the interview, you will be provided with a list of contact information and weblinks to mental health resources available in your area.

**Possible Benefits**
You may not receive any direct benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation may allow researchers to better understand how these forms of work are experienced by people living in rural and resource-dependent communities.

**Compensation/Incentives**
You will receive a $20 Tim Horton’s gift certificate in appreciation for your participation.
No waiver of your rights
By signing this form, you are not waiving any rights or releasing the researchers from any liability.

Withdrawing from the study
You may withdraw your consent during the study by notice given to the Principal Investigator (named above). If you withdraw your consent during the study, all information collected from you before your withdrawal will be discarded.

After the study, you may request that your data be removed from the study and deleted by notice given to the Principal Investigator (named above) within two weeks after the second interview.

Confidentiality
I will remove all identifying information from the study data before starting the data analysis. Identifying information obtained in interviews will be removed after they are transcribed.

I will treat your personal information as confidential, although absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent. Research records may be accessed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board in order to ensure continuing ethics compliance.

The results of this study may be published or presented at an academic conference or meeting, but the data will be presented so that it will not be possible to identify any participants unless you give your express consent.

You will be assigned a pseudonym so that your identity will not be directly associated with the data you have provided. Data will be kept in password-protected files on the researcher’s secure Carleton’s University Microsoft OneDrive account. Coding information will be kept on a password-protected file on an encrypted USB key that will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home in Gatineau, Quebec.

Data saved to the researcher’s OneDrive account will be stored and protected by Microsoft in a server located in Toronto or Quebec City but may be disclosed via a court order or data breach.

"In-session” data, such as the audio, video, and chat transcript from the Zoom interviews, will be stored locally on the researcher’s secured computer. Operation data, such as meeting and performance data, will be stored and protected by Zoom on servers located in Toronto but may be disclosed via a court order or data breach.

I will encrypt any research data that I store or transfer.

Data Retention
Your de-identified data will be retained for a period of one year after the research has been published and then securely destroyed. Audio and video recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed and verified.
New information during the study
In the event that any changes could affect your decision to continue participating in this study, you will be promptly informed.

Ethics review
This project was reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board A. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Carleton University Research Ethics Board (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or by email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Statement of consent – print and sign name
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. ___Yes ___No
I agree to be audio recorded ___Yes ___No
I agree to be video recorded ___Yes ___No
(If applicable) I agree to be contacted for follow up research ___Yes ___No

________________________
Signature of participant
________________________
Date

I have explained the study to the participant and answered any and all of their questions. The participant appeared to understand and agree. I provided a copy of the consent form to the participant for their reference.

________________________
Signature of researcher
________________________
Date
Appendix F

Appendix F: Follow up email and resources

**Final Email**

**Subject:** Resources related to work-life balance, mental health, and wellness

Hello,

Thank you for sharing your personal experiences of your work, family, and community responsibilities. The information you shared will help us better understand how people living in rural and resource-dependent communities are navigating telework and digital work.

During the study, you may have experienced negative feelings and emotions when discussing juggling your multiple responsibilities. Managing multiple roles can be a stressful experience, particularly when conflicts between responsibilities arise.

It is important to know that you are not alone in these experiences. The National Work-Life Conflict study sponsored by Health Canada found that 58% of Canadians report overload associated with their many roles – work, home, family, friends, physical health, volunteer, and community service. Additionally, researchers have found that teleworkers experience higher work-family conflicts than their peers who do not telework or work a flexible schedule.

I have attached work-life balance, mental health, and wellness resources to this email. These resources can be used to help you find support and valuable tools to help you navigate any negative feelings that arose through the study or when you experience stress from managing your work, family, and personal responsibilities.

Thank you for your time and participation in the study.
Sincerely,

Rhea Bowen

Attachments: Work-life Balance Make it Your Business, National and Provincial Mental Health and Wellness Resources
# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS – RESOURCES AND LINKS

## NATIONAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Mental Health Association – National Office</td>
<td><a href="https://cmha.ca/">https://cmha.ca/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association</td>
<td>Find a Canadian Certified Counselor <a href="https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/find-a-canadian-certified-counsellor/">https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/find-a-canadian-certified-counsellor/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge the gaap</td>
<td>Online resources to support mental wellness <a href="https://www.bridgethegapp.ca/">https://www.bridgethegapp.ca/</a></td>
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</table>

## NEW BRUNSWICK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizon Health Network</td>
<td>Mental Health Services Information about services, regional numbers, and links to helpful resources. <a href="https://en.horizonnb.ca/home/facilities-and-services/services/addiction-and-mental-health-services.aspx">https://en.horizonnb.ca/home/facilities-and-services/services/addiction-and-mental-health-services.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitalite Health Network</td>
<td>Mental Health Service Community Mental Health Service contacts <a href="https://www.vitalitenb.ca/en/points-service/mental-health">https://www.vitalitenb.ca/en/points-service/mental-health</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of New Brunswick</td>
<td>Department of Health, Mental Health <a href="https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/health/AddictionsandMentalHealth.html">https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/health/AddictionsandMentalHealth.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Mental Health Association of New Brunswick</td>
<td>Phone: (506) 455-5231 <a href="https://cmhanb.ca/">https://cmhanb.ca/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIMO, Help Line</td>
<td>Phone: 1-800-667-5505 <a href="http://www.chimohelpline.ca/">http://www.chimohelpline.ca/</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### New Brunswick Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College of Counselling Therapists of New Brunswick</th>
<th>College of Psychologists of New Brunswick Public Registry</th>
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</thead>
</table>

### Newfoundland and Labrador

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Health and Community Services</th>
<th>811 Health Line Mental Health Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health resources</td>
<td><a href="https://www.811healthline.ca/mental-health/">https://www.811healthline.ca/mental-health/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mentalhealth-committee/mentalhealth/">https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mentalhealth-committee/mentalhealth/</a></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Mental Health Association – Newfoundland and Labrador</th>
<th>Association of Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 1-877-753-8550</td>
<td>Find a psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://cmhanl.ca/">https://cmhanl.ca/</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.apnl.ca/find-a-psychologist/">http://www.apnl.ca/find-a-psychologist/</a></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Federation of Associations of Counseling Therapists in Newfoundland and Labrador Member Associations</th>
<th>Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line 1-888-737-4668 or 709-737-4668</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.fact-nl.org/member-associations">http://www.fact-nl.org/member-associations</a></td>
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### Nova Scotia Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province of Nova Scotia Health, Mental Health</th>
<th>Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online help centre with information on services, locations, online tools, and providers</td>
<td>Phone: 1-877-466-6606</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province of Nova Scotia Mental Health and Wellbeing, list of services and helpful links</th>
<th>Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line 1-888-.429-8167</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia  
| Phone: 902-464-6000  
| [https://www.mentalhealthns.ca/](https://www.mentalhealthns.ca/) |
| Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia  
| [https://apns.ca/find-a-psychologist/](https://apns.ca/find-a-psychologist/) |
| Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists  
| Registry  
| [https://nscct.ca/public-access-registry/](https://nscct.ca/public-access-registry/) |

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND RESOURCES

| Province of Prince Edward Island  
| Mental Health Services  
| Resources and information  
| Canadian Mental Health Association PEI Division  
| Phone: 902-566-3034  
| [https://pei.cmha.ca/](https://pei.cmha.ca/) |
| Province of Prince Edward Island  
| Community Mental Health Services  
| [https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/community-mental-health-services](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/community-mental-health-services) |
| Prince Edward Island Counselling Association  
| Find a Counsellor  
| [http://peica.org/find-counsellor/](http://peica.org/find-counsellor/) |
| The Island Helpline  
| 1-800-218-2885 |
| Psychological Association of Prince Edward Island  
| Private practice directory  
| [https://papei.org/private-practice-directory](https://papei.org/private-practice-directory) |
Work-Life Balance is good for business.

According to Stephens and Joubert (2001), the direct and indirect economic burden of mental illnesses in Canada was estimated to be $14.4 billion in 1998. Get the support of your employer by:

- Being clear on what it is you need to ensure work-life balance;
- Researching the programs, policies and benefits available;
- Providing examples of practices that have worked in the past.

Some of the options that might be available include:

- Flexible hours – flexible start and end times;
- Telecommuting – working from home;
- Job sharing – splitting a full-time job with another employee;
- Graduated return – gradually building up to a full-time schedule after a leave.

We all have mental health. And just like our physical health, we need to take care of it – which means reducing harmful stress.

According to Statistics Canada, employees who considered most of their days to be quite a bit or extremely stressful were over three times more likely to suffer a major depressive episode, compared with those who reported low levels of general stress.

Take an important step towards protecting your mental health by bringing all aspects of your life into balance.

Learn More! Contact the Canadian Mental Health Association.

- Visit our Web site at www.cmha.ca.
- Call the CMHA branch nearest you or the National office at 613-745-7750.

A global study by AC Nielsen, more than half of people making New Year’s resolutions for 2007 aimed for a better work-life balance.
Are You in Balance?

If you’re finding it difficult to balance the different elements of your life, you’re not alone. 56% of Canadians report “overload” associated with their many roles – work, home and family, friends, physical health, volunteer and community service.

A moderate amount of stress improves our efficiency and our mental sharpness. But how do you know when your everyday juggling act has stopped being a motivating challenge and started being harmful to your health? Here are some signs:

- You feel like you’ve lost control of your life;
- You often feel guilty about neglecting your different roles;
- You frequently find it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand;
- You’re always tired.

Sound familiar? Take the complete Work-Life Balance Quiz at www.cmha.ca to see if you’re in balance!

A survey by Desjardins Financial Security showed that money is the main cause of stress outside work. Nearly half of respondents cited money issues as their top stressor.

Tips for Staying in Balance

Take control – there are ways to help bring yourself into balance!

At work

- Schedule brief breaks for yourself throughout the day. Your productivity and effectiveness will increase if you take even a ten-minute break every two hours and overall, you will get more accomplished.

- At the end of each day, set your priorities for the following day. Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have available.

- Only respond to email once or twice a day. Then, shut off your email program to avoid being distracted as messages come in.

- Make a distinction between work and the rest of your life. Protect your private time by turning off electronic communications. Don’t be available 24/7.

At Home

- Create a buffer between work and home. After work, take a brief walk, do a crossword puzzle, or listen to some music before beginning the evening’s routine.

- Decide what chores can be shared or let go. Determine which household chores are critical and which can be done by someone else. Let the rest go.

- Exercise. Even if it’s only for 15 minutes at a time, you’ll feel more energized and refreshed.

- Create and implement a household budget. Start by setting aside some money from each pay cheque for the future.

In Your Community

- Make choices. Social, community and volunteer obligations pull us in many directions. Choose the ones that are most fulfilling and learn to say “no” to the rest.
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