The Geography of Job Tasks

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We introduce new measurement tools to understand the sources of earnings differences across space. Based on the natural language employers use in job vacancy text, we develop granular measures of job tasks and of worker specialization. We find that jobs in larger commuting zones involve greater interpersonal interactions and have higher computer software requirements. Between 10 and 50 percent of task and technology variation between large and small commuting zones exists within occupations. Further, workers in larger markets are more specialized within occupations. Tasks, technologies, and worker specialization account for a substantial portion of the market size premium even within occupations.