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Rainmakers: Why Bad Weather Means Good Productivity

by Joa Julia Lee, [Francesca Gino](#) and Bradley R. Staats

Abstract

People believe that weather conditions influence their everyday work life, but to date, little is known about how weather affects individual productivity. Most people believe that bad weather conditions reduce productivity. In this research, we predict and find just the opposite. Drawing on cognitive psychology research, we propose that bad weather increases individual productivity by eliminating potential cognitive distractions resulting from good weather. When the weather is bad, individuals may focus more on their work rather than thinking about activities they could engage in outside of work. We tested our hypotheses using both field and lab data. First, we use field data on employees' productivity from a mid-size bank in Japan, which we then match with daily weather data to investigate the effect of bad weather conditions (in terms of precipitation, visibility, and temperature) on productivity. Second, we use a laboratory experiment to examine the psychological mechanism explaining the relationship between bad weather and increased productivity. Our findings support our proposed model and suggest that worker productivity is higher on bad rather than good weather days. We discuss the implications of our findings for workers and managers.

Keywords: [weather](#); [productivity](#); [opportunity cost](#); [distractions](#); [Weather and Climate Change](#); [Performance Productivity](#); [Social Psychology](#); [Mathematical Methods](#);

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Rainmakers: Why Bad Weather Means Good Productivity

Joa Julia Lee, [Francesca Gino](#) and Bradley R. Staats

People believe that weather conditions influence their everyday work life, but to date, little is known about how weather affects individual productivity. Contrary to conventional wisdom, we predict and find that bad weather increases individual productivity and that it does so by eliminating potential cognitive distractions resulting from good weather. When the weather is bad, individuals appear to focus more on their work than on alternate outdoor activities. We investigate the proposed relationship between worse weather and higher productivity through four studies: (1) field data on employees' productivity from a bank in Japan; (2)

two studies from an online labor market in the United States; (3) a laboratory experiment. Our findings suggest that worker productivity is higher on bad rather than good weather days and that cognitive distractions associated with good weather may explain the relationship. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our research.

Keywords: [weather](#); [productivity](#); [opportunity cost](#); [distractions](#); [Weather and Climate Change](#); [Performance Productivity](#); [Cognition and Thinking](#);

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