

4 day work week: What we know already from scientific research

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Breaking away from work has never been more difficult, thanks to the rise of popular work chat programs and easy access to business email via our cellphones at any time. Many businesses, however, have been experimenting with a four-day workweek.

It appears that employee burnout is on the rise. [Gallup](#) found that 23 percent of workers said they were burned out at work "often or very often," while another 44 percent said they were burned out "sometimes" in a study of 75,000 employees released in June of last year. In a 2017 research of 614 human resource leaders done by [Kronos Incorporated and Future Workplace](#), nearly half of those polled stated burnout is responsible for up to half of their annual worker turnover.

Now, it appears that an increasing number of businesses are attempting to offset this trend by trying to enhance work-life balance, most notably by trying to implement a four-day workweek. While the four-day workweek is still uncommon, it does appear to be gaining favor.

In an April 2019 poll performed by the Society for Human Resource Management, 15% of the 60,000 US employers claimed they provide a 4-day workweek of 32 hours or less. This is an increase from 13% in 2017 and 12% in 2018. Furthermore, according to the study, firms that implemented the reduced workweek did not experience a loss in production or revenue.

Microsoft recently made headlines when it released the findings of a trial it conducted at a Japanese subsidiary, during which it shuttered its offices every Friday in August. The company discovered that doing so resulted in a 40% increase in productivity.

What countries have a 4 day work week?

1. Spain

The four-day workweek received a notable boost recently when Spain announced a pilot project for

employers interested in a trial run of the concept.

2. Iceland

Researchers in Iceland discovered that a four-day workweek enhanced workers' wellbeing and productivity without reducing their income. Employees in Iceland started working 4 days a week. It didn't hurt productivity, researchers say.

According to a study published by Autonomy, a progressive think tank located in the United Kingdom, researchers tracked 2,500 employees who decreased their workweek to 35 to 36 hours for four years. "Worker wellbeing considerably increased across a range of indices, from perceived stress and burnout to health and work-life balance," the researchers discovered.

At the same time, most workplaces' productivity stayed constant or improved, according to the report. Hospitals, offices, playschools, and social service offices were the venues where participants worked.

In Iceland, most employees work 40 hours per week on average, and working more than 13 hours per day is forbidden. When the trial began, staff worked 40-hour weeks, later reduced to 35 to 36 hours. Participants indicated that working fewer hours allowed them to spend more time exercising and socializing, which helped them perform better at work.

The trial reflected the working population's wishes.

"By the time this report is published in June 2021, 86 percent of Iceland's working population will have been placed on contracts that have either shifted them to reduced working hours or allow them the right to do so in the future," according to the study. "As a result, these trials are an outstanding success story of working time reduction, which will pique the curiosity of campaigners and employees all over the world."

Is working 4 days a week good?

From Shake Shack to Uniqlo, some other notable companies have attempted converting to a four-day workweek.

Shake Shack is experimenting with a 4-day work week

Since March 2019, the popular burger business has been experimenting with a four-day workweek at several of its Las Vegas stores, with around one-third of the company's outlets currently following suit. Although the four-day workweek is still in its early stages, CEO Randy Garutti stated that the results so far are good on the company's most recent earnings call.

"We're paying attention to our managers, trying to figure out what their lifestyles are like and what they desire," he said. "People are saying, 'Wow, this is very strong.'" According to Garutti, the four-day workweek has saved some employees from having to pay for childcare on the fifth day, and it has also prompted others to apply for the position.

Basecamp allows employees to work four days per week during the summer

During the summer, the team at Basecamp, a project management software startup, works four days a week for 32 hours. Although new employees may be required to undergo a training period, the policy is from May 1 to August 31, 2020.

According to Chase Clemons, Basecamp's customer service team lead, the 32-hour workweek allows employees to focus on the most critical things to their jobs. "We have to prioritize what we work on since we only have 32 hours," Clemons told the site. "It's not about working quicker, but about working smarter," says the author.

Uniqlo ran a trial that allowed employees to work 40 hours over 4 days instead of 5

Uniqlo's parent company, Fast Retailing, stated in 2015 that one-fifth of its employees would be allowed to work a four-day workweek. However, workers must still work 40 hours per week.

Fast Retailing gave the benefit to full-time shop employees to deter employees from transitioning to part-time work to attain a better work-life balance, according to Bloomberg at the time.

Perpetual Guardian adopted the 4-day work week long-term after a successful trial

Andrew Barnes, the founder of Perpetual Guardian, a New Zealand-based estate planning firm, may be the most outspoken backer of the 4-day work week yet. In March 2018, his company conducted an experiment where all 240 of its employees in New Zealand were given one paid day off per week. Employees worked 30 hour weeks but were paid the same and had the same amount of work to complete.

The organization discovered that team engagement had grown considerably following the trial, while work-life balance and stress had decreased. Since November, the corporation has started applying the policy on a long-term opt-in basis. Since then, Barnes has been a strong proponent of the four-day work week, even founding a foundation to support the concept.

Wildbit implemented a four-day workweek in 2017 and has been iterating on the approach since

Software Company Wildbit also ran a trial in 2017 that involved taking Fridays off.

In 2017, cofounder and CEO Natalie Nagele said, "We're pushing ourselves that by limiting our time, we'll do more focused and essential work than when we had 40 hours to get it all done."

Since then, the corporation has tweaked the format to accommodate busier times of the year. According to Fast Company, it finally switched to giving some support team members Mondays off instead of Fridays, and it has discussed considering shorter workdays instead of entire days off.

Nagele said the company launched more features in its first year of implementing the four-day workweek compared to the previous year. Employees were also able to avoid distractions and focus on important tasks thanks to the technology.

Is working 4 days a week bad?

Treehouse CEO Ryan Carson found that the 4-day work week didn't pan out as planned

Not all trial runs of the four-day workweek have proven successful.

In 2015, Treehouse, a firm that provides virtual seminars for learning to code, experimented with a four-day workweek. However, according to firm CEO Ryan Carson, the policy was scrapped in 2016. Carson remarked, "It generated this lack of work ethic in me that was really damaging to the business and our mission." "It was a horrible situation."

Further Reading:

An article by Fadzai Danha, a consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants, outlines other major aspects of a 4 day work week:

<https://www.thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/The-4-day-Work-Week-Everything-You-Need-To-Know>

Conclusion

[The Association for Sustainable Democracy](#) and Autonomy conducted its research from 2015 to 2019 in two large-scale trials that monitored 2,500 workers. Researchers noted that workers transitioned from stress and burnout to a healthier "work-life balance," according to the study.

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