



National College of Ireland

Project Submission Sheet

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Capstone project

By
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Supervisor
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***“THE IMPACT OF THE FOUR DAY WORKWEEK ON BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY, EMPLOYEE WELL BEING AND
PROFITABILITY”***

An international analysis of trials in Japan, New Zealand, Iceland and Ireland

Hand in date:
04.07.2025.

Programme:
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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

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Name: *fardosa daahir jaamac*

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abstract

This study investigates the effect of the four-day workweek on business productivity, employee welfare, and total profitability. With companies around the world coming under intense pressure to improve work-life balance and cut down on burnout, the four-day workweek has emerged as a possible big fix. This research project explores whether there are lower workweeks specifically, a five to four-day workweek that can not only achieve productivity levels or better, but also improve mental and physical health of employees, and profitability of the business without a reduction in pay. Based on global case studies in such countries as Iceland, the U.K and Spain, as well as survey data and interviews with business owners and employees, the research assesses the pros and cons of a shortened workweek. The key findings indicate that the 4-day model, if properly regulated, may bring higher satisfaction to personnel, a lower number of absences, and improved work. Nevertheless, reservations linger about scheduling, client desires, and industry-specific restrictions. The paper closes with recommendations for companies looking to make this conversion, highlighting appropriate sector and firm size specific strategies. Overall, the four-day workweek was a wonderful experience.

Introduction

The idea of a four-day workweek has gained traction in recent years as companies seek ways to increase productivity while improving employee satisfaction. The four-day workweek serves up weeks with fewer working days, typically four instead of five with no reduction in pay or working hours overall. A four-day workweek can be defined in two ways. This type is when an employee compresses their regular working hours, for example typically 35 hours over four days. The second is allowing employees to enjoy a three-day weekend by converting their hours, typically 28 hours, into four days. Several countries have experimented with a four-day workweek in the past few years to observe the effect of their work. These countries include Iceland, Japan, Spain,

New Zealand. Valencia Spain 3 capital, set aside four consecutive Mondays as local holidays in April and May 2023 as part of a pilot experiment to test a four-day workweek.

Shifting labor practices and public perceptions of productivity and work-life balance have shaped the idea of a four-day workweek. Before labor groups battled for improved working conditions and the eight-hour workday was established, workers endured arduous schedules of 10 to 16 hours a day six days a week, during the Industrial Revolution (U.S. Department of Laybourn'd). Henry Ford, who believed that greater rest would increase production, instituted the five-day, forty-hour workweek in 1926 without lowering compensation. The Fair Labor Standard Act in the United States made this model mainstream by 1938 (Hunnicut,1988). By 1930, technical developments led to increased output expectations, notwithstanding economist John Maynard Keynes's prediction of a 15-hour workweek (Keynes, 1930).

The four-day workweek saw a resurgence in popularity in the 2010s. According to the 4-day week (Barnes and Jones, 2020), New Zealand's perpetual guardian, under the leadership of Andrew Barnes, successfully tested the concept in 2018, resulting in a 25% increase in productivity. This sparked similar experiments around the world, such as the 2019 Microsoft Japan trials conducted in Iceland between 2015 and 2019, which resulted in the universal adoption of shorter workweeks (Haraldsson and Kellam, 2021). These changes were further pushed by the COVID-19 epidemic, as businesses realized the advantages of flexible work schedules for worker well-being and productivity, establishing the four-day workweek as a contemporary development in labor history (collins,2021).

Rationale

The four-day workweek has drawn a lot of interest as companies and workers look for creative ways to boost output balance work and personal life, and combat burnout. To draw and keep talent in a market that is becoming increasingly competitive, companies are reconsidering old

work models considering the growing popularity of flexible work arrangements, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study shows how the four-day workweek has the potential to become a viable and successful practice across a range of industries. As they negotiate the future of work and try to establish workplaces that strike a balance between productivity and worker and worker well-being, legislators, corporate executives, and workers must have a thorough grasp of these effects

With a focus on case studies from New Zealand, Japan, Iceland, and Ireland, where the model has been successfully tested, this study will investigate the viability and effects of these trials on overall business success, employee well-being, and productivity. From February to August 2022, a subset of 12 small to medium-sized businesses in Ireland mostly in the professional services and its industries, took part in a six-month trial program (4dayweek.com,2022). The results of this trial, such as organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and productivity measures, will be examined in the study. Although these global examples will be the study focus, Ireland's potential adoption of a four-day workweek will also be considered particularly in industries like healthcare, finance, and technology. Data will be collected via academic research, public publications, and surveys of employers and employees participating in these experiments, and the scope will be restricted to companies that have implemented or experimented with the four-day workweek

Statistic based

One must critically assess whether the four-day workweek's encouraging trial results—like Microsoft Japan's 40% increase in productivity and Perpetual Guardian's 20% improvement in employee performance are applicable (Microsoft Japan, 2019). Could this kind of success be repeated in fields where physical presence or shift work is more important? Furthermore, even though fewer workdays might result in less stress and greater job satisfaction, it is credible that

some employees might experience pressure to complete the same amount of work in less time. Barnes and Jones use the practical success of trials and research done all over the world to make a compelling case for the four-day workweek. They outline how companies can move away from the conventional five-day workweek without compromising productivity, emphasizing the value of a methodical approach to change. There is mounting evidence that such a model can benefit both employers and employees, with Microsoft Japan and Perpetual Guardian in New Zealand setting the standard. (Barnes & Jones, 2021)

Aims and objectives

While the five-day workweek has been the norm for modern business, a change in attitude around employee wellbeing has been the norm of work life balance and has sparked interest in other options. With business globally experimenting with cutting down work hours to maximize productivity. This adjustment reflects a wider trend in workplace culture, where prioritizing the wellbeing of employees is key to workplace success. Research shows significant benefits of reducing work hours. Indeed, according to Swedish social work organizations research data, a lessened work contribution positively affects stress, work family conflicts where general wellbeing and productivity receive a boost and exhaustion. The four-day workweek has also been found to boost employees' life satisfaction with workers reporting a greater sense of personal fulfillment and enjoyment in their lives thanks to their extra free time. Staff burnout and fatigue are lessened too with participants reporting being able to focus better and feeling less overwhelmed

To assist me with decomposing my primary research question, the following goals and objectives are listed. The foundation of my study issue is the comprehension of the four-day workweek as an organization cannot function if its members do not recognize its significance. This will allow me to investigate whether Irish companies have adopted a four-day workweek and how successful

they have been. Finally, I will investigate some commercial advantages, how employees are more productive, the challenges employers may encounter when implementing a four-day workweek, and how certain industries, like healthcare and retail, will adapt since they require round-the-clock customer support.

- *To assess how a four-day workweek affects workers' well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity in various industries.*
- *To evaluate the viability and difficulties of introducing a four-day workweek in industries that need to run continuously, such as retail and healthcare.*
- *To investigate the four-day workweek model's long-term viability and potential for worldwide scaling.*
- *Examine previous case studies (such as Microsoft Japan and Perpetual Guardian) to gauge how the four-day workweek affects output and worker satisfaction.*
- *Examine the difficulties that sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, and customer service have had implementing a four-day workweek.*
- *To find out how employees feel about the impact of the four-day workweek on stress, mental health, and work-life balance, conduct surveys or interviews.*

Thesis statement (argument)

Businesses can increase productivity, lower employee burnout, and preserve profitability by implementing a four-day workweek. Successful experiments in nations like the UK, Iceland, and Spain show that reduced work hours give companies a competitive edge in luring and keeping top talent in addition to increasing employee satisfaction.

In the 4-day week. Andrew Barnes and Stephanie Jones demonstrate that this creative model is a workable solution that has been successfully applied in businesses all over the world, not just a

fad. Companies are finding increased productivity, decreased employee stress, and a more sustainable work culture due to cutting back hours. The authors contend that the four-day workweek has the potential to completely reshape the nature of work in the future and establish a new standard in which workers are not only happier but also more productive and involved.

As we adjust to a new work setting, it is important to comprehend why this change is both required and timely. We need to reevaluate our working methods because of the growing popularity of remote work, rising employee burnout, and the desire for a better work-life balance. In addition to providing workers with more personal time, the four-day workweek promises to help businesses maintain or even boost productivity. What is required to implement this model, though, and is it feasible globally?

Question-based

How should the four-day workweek model be modified for industries that need to maintain a physical presence or provide continuous customer service? Applying the same strategy in retail or healthcare may present considerable obstacles. Can shifts be changed in the healthcare industry, for instance, where employees are required around the clock without compromising patient care? Reducing work hours may affect the level of customer care in retail or customer service. To adjust to the four-day workweek in these industries, it is critical to investigate viable options like job-sharing schemes, flexible shifts, or rotating schedules. According to Andrew Barnes and Stephanie Jones in the 4 Day Week (Barnes & Jones, 2021).

Literal review

It was already considered a way to boost productivity and curb burnout while keeping the bottom line healthy, supported by a growing body of real-world evidence from diverse countries. This essay reviews important case studies, including perpetual guardians' experiment in New

Zealand and the national trials in Iceland, as well as the experiment conducted by Microsoft Japan and the government endorsed pilot program.

Perpetual Guardian Trial (2018) in New Zealand

In 2018, a New Zealand based trust company perpetual guardian, ran an eight-week experiment on cutting the work week from five days to four days without a decrease in workers' salaries. It was a trial to assess the effects of productivity and workers' wellbeing. The findings indicate that employees worked fewer hours without affecting their performance on the job. Productivity of work increased, and the work life balance for employees saw a lot of improvement. Research conducted in tandem with the trial reported a 24% improvement in employees work life balance and a 7% reduction in overall stress (Barnes & Jones, 2019). It also experienced increased employee job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation. After the trial, perpetual guardian adopted the four-day workweek permanently

National trials in Iceland (2015-2019)

Between 2015 and 2019, Iceland ran one of the largest trials of four-day workweek anywhere in the world with over 2,500 workers across different sectors. The trials which the government backed were intended to test whether working fewer hours would have any effect on productivity and workers' health. The findings indicate that productivity was stable or increased in most workplaces; workers also reported enhanced job satisfaction and wellbeing. Stress and burnout levels dropped significantly, and employees had more time for family, leisure, and personal development (Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021). The trial was so successful that it resulted in widespread adoption of shorter workweeks in Iceland with more than 86% of the workforce gaining the right to work fewer hours without cuts in pay.

The 2019 experiment of Microsoft Japan

In 2019, Microsoft Japan introduced the work life choice challenge, in which all employees worked four days a week and received their full salaries. Details of the experiment focused on whether shortening the workweek would be beneficial. The outcomes were incredible productivity increased by 40% and operational expenses such as electricity and printing costs were cut (Microsoft Japan, 2019). Workers also reported greater satisfaction with jobs and a better work-life balance. This experiment showed that cutting working hours, without cutting pay, could deliver significant business and employee benefits

Spain government supported pilot program in 2021

In 2021, the Spanish government launched a national pilot program to assess the viability of a four-day workweek. The initiative, which has been taken on by 200 companies, sought to find out if a shorter workweek could improve productivity and workers' wellbeing without risking the economy. Early results showed stable productivity and boosted employee morale for businesses adopting the four-day workweek. The research examined direct public health outcomes but also the economic and social implications, proposing that the mental well-being and environmental sustainability benefits of reduced workweeks could prove persuasive (European Commission, 2022). The government's ongoing support for the program is in the hope of these long-term outcomes.

How the four-day workweek will influence productivity, wellbeing, and economic stability

With governments and businesses experimenting with reduced work hours to see if the four-day workweek is feasible, the idea has become a flashpoint in the battle for what the future of work should be like and how many days a week we should work. These studies typically assess

productivity, employee wellbeing, and economic sustainability. This project analyzes the evidence around the four-day workweek through case studies from New Zealand, Iceland, Japan, and Spain, outlining the key findings on its three crucial dimensions

Productivity

The four-day workweek has continued to be a hot topic of discussion among businesses and organizations worldwide as they consider the impact of their workforce working one less day a week on their productivity. Sharply limiting the workweek has had no ill effects on productivity, according to studies and pilot schemes run in other parts of the world and can improve it.

Microsoft Japan (2019): after launching the work life choice challenge” productivity increased by 40%, with fewer hours worked. For example, focusing more on task and less unnecessary meeting led to better workflow and efficiency (Microsoft Japan,2019).

Perpetual Guardian (New Zealand, 2018): the firms test over eight weeks showed that employee productivity did not dip with the shorter workweek. Workers adjusted themselves by focusing better on tasks and honing their time management skills (Barnes & Jones,2019).Iceland national trials (2015-2019): this large-scale study demonstrated that public and private sector employees their maintained or increased their productivity, disproving the belief that fewer working hours led to a reduction in output (Haraldsson & Kellam,2021)

Spain's government pilot program (2021): according to early results from Spain pilot, productivity level did not dip. In contrast, companies that took part in the trial kept output while their employees said they worked more effectively. (European commission, 2022)

Employee well being

The most common reason cited for implementing a four-day workweek is to enhance employee wellbeing and studies have consistently demonstrated that workers are less stressed, have better work life balance, and derive greater overall satisfaction

- I. Perpetual Guardian (New Zealand, 2018): after six-week trial of the four-day workweek, employees reported a 24% improvement in work life balance and 7% decrease in stress levels (Barnes & Jones, 2019).*
- II. Iceland national trials (2015-2019): participants ran lower rates of burnout and wistfulness. Reduces hours, in fact, enabled employees to spend more time with family, indulge in leisure, and overall improve their mental wellness (Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021).*
- III. Microsoft Japan (2019): employees experienced higher job satisfaction and improved energy levels with many claiming that the extra off day supported improved mental and physical wellbeing (Microsoft Japan, 2019).*
- IV. Spain's government pilot program (2021): employees reported an increase in their mental health a decrease in work related fatigue, and an improvement in work life balance, emphasizing that a four-day workweek leads to stronger work environments (European Commission, 2022).*

Economic impact

The four-day workweek results in more individual business benefiting and wider economic consequences for costs, workforce retention, and national economic stability. Microsoft Japan (2019): the initiative resulted in a sizable drop in overheads such as less electricity consumption and savings on printing. The data also showed that the savings highlighted the budgetary impact

of a 4-day week (Microsoft Japan, 2019). Perpetual guardians (new zealand,2018): the company experienced an increase in employee retention and motivation, reducing hiring and training costs leading to long term financial sustainability (Barnes & jones, 2019).

Iceland national trials (2015-2019): after businesses were able to accommodate this new shift without economic fallout, 86% of all iceland workforce was granted this right to reduced work hours (Haraldsson & kellam,2021). Spain's government pilot program (2021): this initiative examined the economic viability of businesses positioning themselves as profitable while their employees enjoyed an improved work life balance.

The international tests of four-day workweeks have compelling evidence that cutting working hours does not dent productivity. Efficiency makes a step forward because more focus is put on pressing tasks and the concentration of employees avoids distractions. Employees can enjoy better mental health overall and work in a less stressful environment, which contributes to greater job satisfaction. From a business standpoint, the companies that have enforced the four-day workweek are facing lower operational costs, increased employee retention, and continued profitability. The four-day workweek: a global exploration of evidence to improve productivity, employee welfare, and economic stability, the four-day workweek has attracted attention.

Different governments and private sector entities have tested short workweeks to assess their impact on businesses and workers. This project looks at large scale government backed trials in iceland, the Uk and Spain alongside private sector projects, including Microsoft Japan and new Zealand's perpetual guardian. The report draws comparisons between various outcomes, difficulties, and successes of these implementations.

**Larger trial
in iceland
(2015-2019)**

Between 2015 and 2019, more than 2,500 people working in iceland public sector took part in one of the largest trials of four-day workweeks ever conducted. The trial sought to test if reducing hours of work preserves or even increases productivity while improving employee quality of life

results

- I. Productivity stayed flat or increased in most work environments*
- II. More job satisfaction and lower stress for employees*
- III. Improved work life balance which in turn brought better motivation and engagement*
- IV. 86% of iceland workforce won the right to shorter working hours due to the success of the trial.*

Uk and Spain: government funded programs

**UK (trial
in 2022)**

The UK ran a six-month trial with 3,300 workers from more than 70 companies taking part in a four-day workweek experiment. The government and tanks worked together to determine its feasibility.

Results

- I. 92% of companies elected to keep the four-day workweek after the trial.*
- II. Employees showed 71% less burnout and more job satisfaction.*
- III. Productivity stayed level or even grew for most companies.*

Spain pilot program (2021-present)

Spain pilot program (2021-present) *The Spanish cabinet approved a nationwide pilot program involving 200 companies to gather data on the effect of a shorter workweek on productivity and other aspects of an economy.*

results

- I. Early reports showed steady productivity and greater wellness.*
- II. Interest from sponsors for permanent adoption was also there, but cost-related fears remained.*
- III. It is still being reviewed and may be expanded.*

Private sector experiments: Microsoft Japan & perpetual guardian in New Zealand

Microsoft Japan (2019 experiment) *In august 2019, Microsoft Japan began testing a four-day workweek with the work life choice challenge,” a test to boost efficiency in the workplace.*

results

- I. 40% more productive with more focused work.*
- II. Costs of operations such as electricity and printing fell.*
- III. Staff noted an improvement in work-life balance and satisfaction.*

Perpetual guardian (New Zealand, 2028 trial) *a trust company based in New Zealand, tested a four-day workweek to increase employee engagement and productivity.*

results

- I. Work life balance 24%*
- II. Stress level decreased by 7%*
- III. After the trial, the company made the four-day workweek permanent.*

Based on four-day workweek trials and other experiments around the world, the results show there are promising benefits especially with regards to better wellbeing with productivity either maintaining or increasing. Government supported approaches in iceland and places like Spain also show long term diffusion possibilities, while private sector efforts in Microsoft Japan and perpetual guardian offer the four-day workweek has a future appears to hinge on robust engagement with cost considerations.

The four-day workweek and its economic and business potential

The four-day workweek has sparked a huge debate on its economic and business impact. However, even though advocates say that it improves efficiency, lowers costs, and gives better employee welfare, there are still many concerns about it with respect to company profits, national levels of employment, GDP, and labor laws. This analysis examines the major economic factors that come into play with a short workweek with insights from business owners and economists.

Effects on company profits and efficiency costs: Profitability and revenue generation

Companies that have implemented a four-day workweek have seen their revenue remain steady or improve productivity. Trial by Microsoft Japan in 2019 resulted in a 40% increase in productivity operational cost reduction and improved profitability. But some industries, especially those that interact with customers, are worried business hours may cut into sales.

Workplace efficiency and productivity and Operational and labor costs

Research shows that fewer hours at work equals more productivity because employees avoid burnout and have more focused time at work. 92% of participating Uk companies continued to observe the policy after the year ended with productivity remaining stable or increasing in the Uk 2022 trial. Some companies are concerned about potential skills gaps with workers who might not be able to get through workloads in fewer hours. Having one less working day saves on utility bills costs associated with coffee, copying paper and the like Microsoft Japan trial slashed electricity and printing costs. Industries reliant on round-the-clock staffing could see higher costs if additional workers were brought in to make up for reduced shifts.

Effects on national economy: employment, GDP, and labor laws: Employment levels and job creation

A reduced workweek could raise employment levels as it incentivizes businesses to hire part-time or additional workers. The trial in Iceland 2015-2019 prompted scale uptake with 86% of the workforce receiving fewer hours with no loss in pay. But larger corporations may find an easier time hiring new additional workers than smaller businesses.

GDP growth and economic stability and Laws and policy changes related to labor *Increased productivity and engagement of the workforce can result in increased overall economic output. Some critics say that working fewer hours would make the country less productive, a blow to GDP growth. Spain government backed experiment is being reviewed to determine its macroeconomic effects in the long term. Implementing a four-day workweek might entail changes in laws and regulations such as changes in wages or employment contracts. countries*

like Iceland and Spain are beginning to adopt shorter workweeks in a growing recognition that the nature of work itself is changing and further cooperation between employees and employers is needed. Businesses are also resistant because they are concerned about the legal complications of reducing working hours without cutting pay.

Voices of economists and business owners

1. Economists' viewpoints

Others claim that the economy benefits from a four-day workweek by preventing burnout and making people healthier, which saves on healthcare costs. Critics warn that fewer total working hours could shrink economic output in labor intensive sectors.

2. Business owners' reactions

Many business owners who tested the chatbots are claiming there is no positive change in job satisfaction and staff retention. There is concern that shorter workweeks will not be feasible in all sectors, especially manufacturing, healthcare and retail.

A four-day workweek with the pros and cons in economic and business terms. Although most studies can attest to its efficacy and cost effectiveness, there are many arguments against it, including those involving GDP, labor laws and other industry-specific factors. Whether a four-day workweek becomes widespread will be determined by how industries adopt government policies supporting it, and further research analyzing the long-term effects on the economy.

Four-day workweek about the employee experience, work life balance, challenges, and what critics say.

The four-day workweek has gained a great deal of interest from companies looking to improve employee wellbeing and work life balance. But as several trials have shown, this

has not been without difficulties and criticisms. This section is about the employee experiencing the pros and cons and the criticisms of a four-day workweek.

Work life balance and employee experience

1. Enhanced work fulfillment and well being

Employees in a four-day workweek trial reported higher job satisfaction and less stress. In perpetual Guardians New Zealand 2018 trial, work life balance improved by 24% among employees which translated into increased motivation and more successful engagement with job. The extra day allows employees to enjoy time for personal growth and development. Hobbies and family.

2. Wellbeing advantage and burnout mitigation and Work life balance and productivity

Research has shown that shorter working weeks lead to half the burnout among employees because they have more time to chill and recharge. The Uk 2022 pilot described 39% of employees feeling less stressed while sick leave utilization decreased. Employees also had better sleep quality and general wellbeing, meaning they could be more productive during working hours.

The additional day off provides employees with more opportunities to juggle children, personal and recreation obligations. A trial by Microsoft Japan in 2019 showed that short workweek resulted in a 40% increase in productivity without impacting business performance. Several workers complain that their workloads are now too heavy, emerging fears over time leaders amid demands.

Research Methodology

1. Research Method

Particularly considering the COVID-19 epidemic, the four-day workweek has attracted much interest as businesses and employees look for means to boost production, strengthen work-life balance, and lower burnout. This study analyzes the economic, corporate, and employee-related effects of the four-day workweek and the goal is to understand how a shorter workweek could affect different industries, workers, and businesses - aiming to gather information from various sources like case studies, expert opinions, and research findings - explains the key elements of the approach, including data collecting, analytical techniques, and how sources are used.

This study uses case studies from Japan, New Zealand, Iceland, and Ireland to assess how a shorter week of work may improve job satisfaction, employee mental health, and organizational performance. Overall, the key components of the methodology include data collection through secondary research, case studies, surveys, and interviews.

Philosophical Assumption – Data Collection and Situating/Justifying Approach to Collecting Data

This study adopts a pragmatic philosophical stance, aligning with the mixed methods approach that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Pragmatism emphasizes the importance of research questions and practical outcomes over rigid adherence to a single methodology (Gobo, 2023). It seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding, through flexible methods, allowing the collection of both subjective experiences via interviews and generalizable trends through questionnaires.

2.1. Data Collection

Many sources like Alda et al. (2019) are used to look closely at the four-day workweek during our research. Some companies tried out this strategy, such as Microsoft's tests in Japan in 2019 and the trials in the UK and Iceland in 2022. These examples gave us essential information, and they also show how shorter work hours really affect people's well-being, how much money companies make, and how well employees do their jobs. Books, research papers, and reports give us secondary data. This includes work by Barnes & Jones (2020), Haraldsson & Kellam (2021), and other important studies that explore how cutting the workweek impacts different sectors. Surveys and interviews helped gather opinions from managers and staff members. These were made to collect both types of information about how people feel about the four-day workweek, how it affects productivity, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.

2.2. Sampling

Data gathered via surveys, interviews, and pilot programs run across many sectors and nations as well as important studies like the UK 2022 pilot, Microsoft Japan's 2019 trial, and Perpetual Guardian's 2018 New Zealand experiment. Businesses and individuals who were either part of or ready to engage in four-day workweek studies were chosen via purposive sampling. The sample included companies from several industries like manufacturing, healthcare, finance, technology, and retail. To assess the viability and effect of the policy thoroughly, attempts were made to guarantee representation across various job types and company sizes.

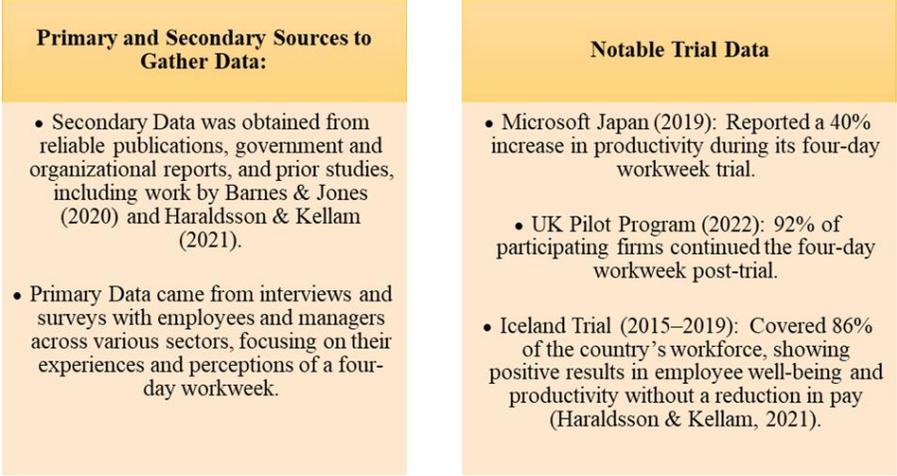


Figure 1: Data Collection

2.3. Practical Implications and Challenges of Implementing a Four-Day Workweek in Different Sectors

Sector	Practical Implications and Challenges
Healthcare	<i>- Improved work-life balance and employee retention, but challenges in staffing and continuous patient care. Reduced hours may strain emergency services and hospital operations.</i>
Manufacturing	<i>- Potential for higher efficiency and employee morale, but reduced hours may impact production schedules and coordination across teams. Machinery downtime is a concern.</i>
Retail	<i>- Increased employee satisfaction but maintaining store coverage and customer service during peak hours could be difficult. Potential for scheduling conflicts during high-demand periods.</i>

Educa tion	- Better retention and focus, but fewer instructional hours may impact curriculum completion and student attendance.
Techn ology & IT	- Enhanced creativity and job satisfaction, but challenges in meeting deadlines, client support, and maintaining availability due to reduced work hours.
Finan ce	- Improved work-life balance, but potential disruptions in financial operations and coordination with global teams across different time zones.

2. Case Study Analysis

This study looked at different companies that have tried the four-day workweek and using case studies was a big part of doing this research. The Microsoft Japan case study was impressive. It showed a 40% increase in output during a brief period. The experiments in Iceland and the UK showed important results about how reducing the workweek affected overall production, employee happiness, and company profits (Alda, 2019). The case studies show the benefits and challenges companies face when trying to use a four-day workweek. Also, this study looks at the data from these experiments to find common patterns, results specific to different industries, and problems with staying efficient and meeting deadlines while working fewer hours (Microsoft Japan: 4-day workweek experiment; Alda, 2019). This case study looks at different real-world experiments and what happened to them. It shows the benefits and challenges that companies face. In 2019, Microsoft tried out a four-day workweek in Japan. They wanted to see how it would work with fewer hours of work. The results were great: costs for things like printing and power went down a lot, and production increased by 40%. In tech companies where innovative ideas and hard work are important, this study showed that shorter work weeks can lead to better productivity and lower

costs. This test shows how businesses can keep or even increase their output while giving employees a better work-life balance – having superior results that have been shown in other places too. In the UK, a 2022 experiment with many companies found that 92% of them continued the four-day workweek policy without losing any productivity (Alda, 2019; Barnes & Jones, 2019). When employees got more involved at work, they said they felt less stressed, took fewer sick days, and slept better.

The case study shows downsides and challenges specific to the sector. The Icelandic trial from 2015 to 2019 included 86% of workers - showing that employees were happier and production increased without cutting pay and it worked best in jobs where hours could be reduced without hurting service delivery (Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021). It was hard for industries like manufacturing, retail, and healthcare to adopt the concept because they needed to be available all the time. A healthcare provider that wants to use a four-day workweek might struggle to keep services running all the time, which could mean hiring more staff and spending more money. In industries that deal with clients, companies are worried that reducing working days could hurt sales and customer service - this is especially true if employees are not available during busy times (Barnes & Jones, 2019). These challenges show there is a need for the specific plans when thinking about starting a four-day workweek - this way, it is possible to make sure that the unique needs of each sector are considered while looking at the possible benefits for both companies and workers.

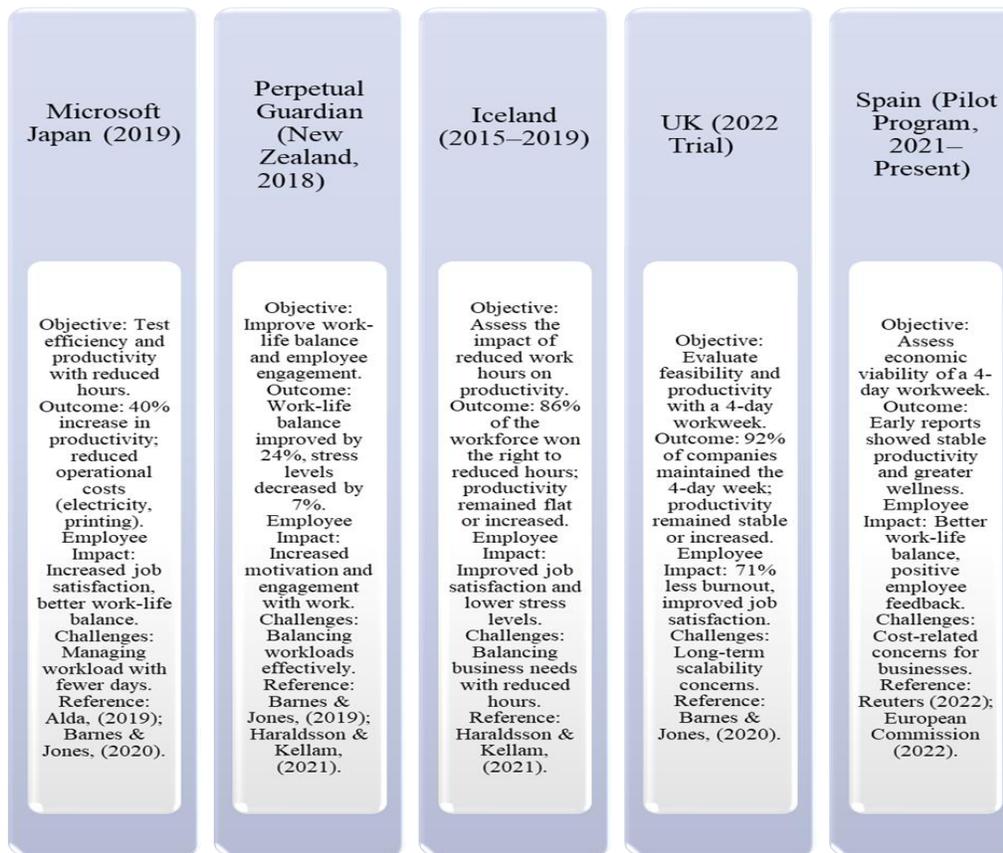


Figure 2: Case Studies

3. Research Design

The research design includes the distribution of structured questionnaires and ensuring timely data collection from a wide and representative pool across different regions.

3.1. Surveys and Interviews

Interviews and surveys provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the four-day workweek contributes to workplace dynamics from both a top-down and bottom-up point of view. Participants requested to reflect on their first responses to the policy, its influence on team performance, and how they would control stakeholder or client expectations under this new work structure. Their points of view were just as extremely important as they offered analysis on how

the decrease in working hours may affect their work-life balance, stress levels, and general job satisfaction. Both groups were asked about their preferences for a set timetable vs a more flexible structure, therefore helping to determine how adjustable the policy may be across different business sectors.

3.1.1. Interview

Initial Reaction	•What is your initial reaction to the concept of a four-day workweek?
Impact on Productivity	•Do you believe a four-day workweek would increase, decrease, or have no significant impact on your team's productivity?
Impact on Workload & Deadlines	•How do you think a four-day workweek would affect your team's ability to meet deadlines and manage their workload?
Managing Expectations	•How would you manage client or stakeholder expectations if your team were to transition to a four-day workweek?
Measuring Success	•How would you measure the success of a four-day workweek in your team?
Attracting Talent	•Do you think a four-day workweek could help attract and retain top talent in your industry?
Impact on Work-Life Balance	•How do you think a four-day workweek would affect your work-life balance?
Productivity Focus	•Do you think working fewer days would make you more productive and focused during your working hours?
Stress & Burnout	•Do you believe a four-day workweek would help reduce stress or burnout?
Schedule Preferences	•Would you prefer a fixed four-day schedule (e.g., Monday to Thursday) or a more flexible arrangement where you choose your days off?
Job Attractiveness	•Do you think a four-day workweek would make your job more attractive compared to other employers?

Figure 3: Interview Questions

3.2. Question Design – Themes of the Study

The questionnaire is designed around key themes derived from the literature and theoretical framework, primarily Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The first theme, Self-Efficacy, explores how confident one feels in applying centered methods. The second theme, Perceived Benefits and Outcomes, examines beliefs about the impact of engagement and performance. The third theme, Challenges and Barriers, focuses on systemic, cultural, and institutional factors that hinder implementation. The final theme, Support and Professional Development, investigates the types of training and support employees have received or need to better implement the right strategies.

3.3. Sampling – Target Participants and Pilot Study – Testing and Refinement

This research uses representative sampling and the rationale behind this selection is to capture diverse experiences and views across different socio-economic settings, ensuring that respondents reflect a realistic cross-section of the workforce. A pilot study was conducted to test the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire. Responses highlighted issues such as the ambiguity in Likert scale statements and the need for more open-ended questions to allow richer responses. Based on this, adjustments were made by simplifying language, refining scale descriptors, and including a comment box after each theme to encourage elaboration. Top of Form Bottom of Form

4. Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to look at the data collected from case studies and surveys. Also, the patterns are found in the replies by looking at survey data, which included how many managers thought productivity would stay the same or go up, and how many workers believed a shorter workweek improved their work-life balance. Interviews give a better understanding of the problems and concerns that the policy created - the answers are grouped

into topics like operational viability, staff wellbeing, and productivity, and this helped us understand the numbers better.

5. Secondary Research

For this report, I looked at different trials, studies, and reports from around the world about the four-day workweek. I gathered and analyzed the data to understand it better. Valuable information came from Microsoft Japan's 2019 trial as they saw a 40% increase in productivity and lower costs for things like electricity and printing - this shows that a shorter workweek can make work more efficient and save money for businesses. The 2015-2019 Iceland trial showed that 86% of workers took part in shorter workweeks without losing pay - having beneficial effects on work-life balance and employee well-being, and productivity stayed the same (Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021). Also, 92 percent of UK pilot enterprises chose four-day weeks in 2022. Staff felt less anxious and slept better, and Spain is considering a similar attempt (Reuters, 2023). This review can help us understand how it affects the economy, like changes in GDP and jobs. Studies by Barnes and Jones (2020) and Haraldsson and Kellam (2021) show that a shorter workweek can improve employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity, while also helping to reduce burnout. But there are still many concerns about how possible it is to put this policy into action in jobs that need people working all the time, like healthcare and manufacturing. There could also be legal and regulatory problems, especially with changes to employment contracts and pay structures. This research shows the possible good and bad sides of a four-day workweek, and it points out that there is a need for more studies and better policies to solve these issues and make sure everyone benefits fairly.

6. Limitations and Scope

This study focused on companies and sectors like IT and office jobs, where the four-day workweek has been tried before - this limit how much we can apply the results to industries that need to operate all the time, like healthcare or manufacturing. This limitation matches the Contingency Theory (Donaldson, 2001). This theory says that how well work practices fit with things like the type of industry and operational needs affects how successful an organization is. The focus on case studies from Japan, Iceland, and the United Kingdom makes it hard to apply the findings to other places - this is because different countries have different labor laws, work cultures, and economies, which can change the results - this challenge connects to Institutional Theory that shows how social, cultural, and legal norms shape how organizations work (Arranz & Arroyabe, 2023). Most of the studies looked at were short-term and had small sample sizes - this made it hard to see the long-term effects on things like GDP, jobs in the country, and how businesses keep going. Campbell and Stanley in 1963 talk about experimental design and the risks to validity and they say that relying on small or not enough data can harm both internal validity and external dependability (Dunn, 2024). Published data is inadequate and inconsistent, with some outcomes being partially provided, which may decrease research depth and accuracy. Personal stories in interviews and surveys could bias responses. Focusing on employee views, which may be biased by preferences or expectations, overlooks managers, customers, or industry experts, highlighting a limitation of Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1984), which emphasizes considering all affected groups and calls for long-term, large-scale trials across sectors and cultures with diverse stakeholder opinions and standardized reporting methods to improve reliability.

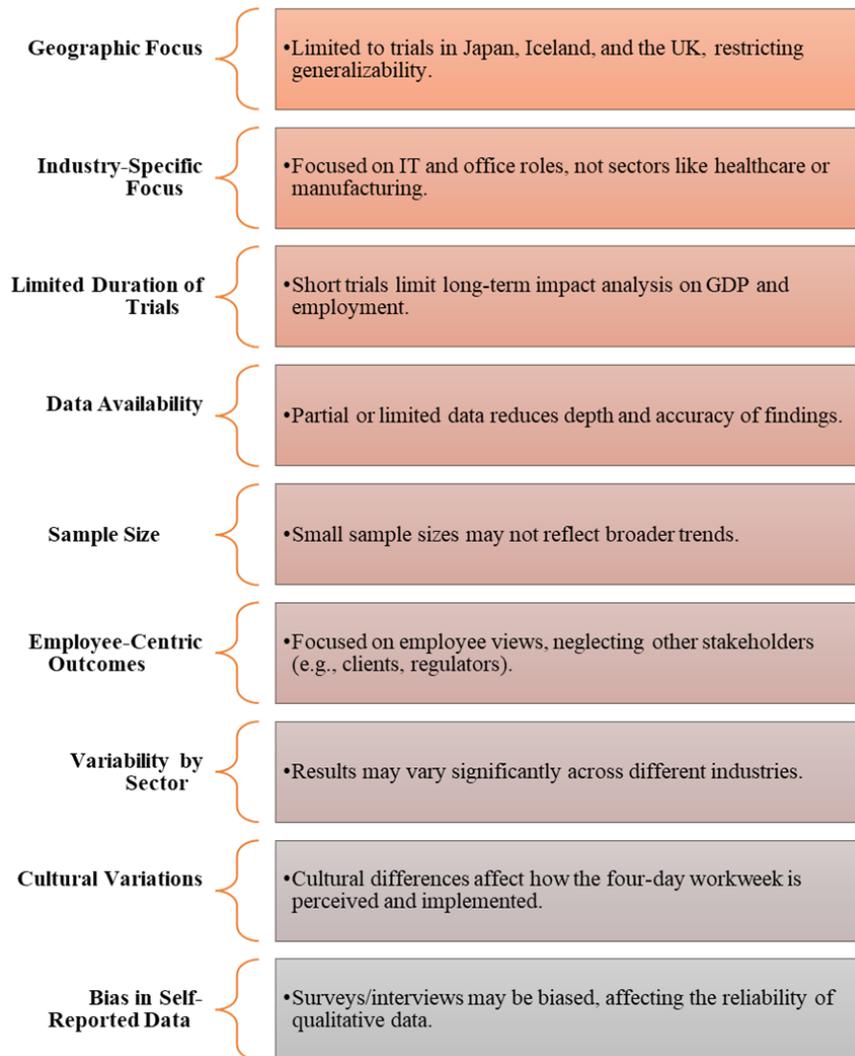


Figure 4: Limitations and Scope

7. Impact of External Factors on the Success of a Four-Day Workweek

Cultural and economic developments may significantly influence a four-day workweek. Economic crises could require enterprises to cut expenses, making a reduced workweek impracticable due to productivity and profitability difficulties. Innovative work paradigms that improve worker well-being may be more accepted during economic success. Cultural differences are crucial since some cultures value long working hours and struggle with shorter working hours.

Scandinavian work-life balance cultures may support a four-day workweek. Depending on context, these outside factors can help or harm a four-day workweek.

8. Data Analysis

The study looks at a lot of important case studies and pilot projects to study the four-day workweek experiments using both numbers and personal stories. It also examines data before and after changes, such as how much work is done, how stressed staff feel, and how often they take sick leave. For example, it includes cases like Microsoft's 2019 experiment that found that productivity increased 40% without affecting corporate performance. Also, in the UK, a test in 2022 showed a 39% drop in employee stress levels and less sick leave used. The 2018 trial in New Zealand by Perpetual Guardian showed a 24% improvement in work-life balance, which led to more motivation and involvement among workers (Barnes & Jones, 2020). The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics, and comparisons are taught how successful and profitable a reduced workweek is. Interviews, employee feedback, and open-ended surveys are analyzed. This highlights workplace happiness, wellbeing, and work-life balance. Also, themes like personal growth, better sleep, and less burnout showing up a lot are analyzed (Barnes & Jones, 2019; Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021). The study shows some problems, like concerns about having more work and rules in fields like healthcare and industry where working fewer hours might not be possible. This method shows how important it is to adapt and support policies based on what industries and employees need – allowing researchers to look at the pros and cons of the four-day workweek.

9. Ethics

Ethical considerations are strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, who are assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and the

right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Also, this study was approved by the university's board and complies with ethical guidelines set forth by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

10. Conclusion

Ultimately, this approach aims at understanding the effects, practical implications, and difficulties of implementing a four-day workweek across several sectors by means of a mixed-methods strategy combining qualitative and quantitative data collecting via case studies, surveys, interviews, and secondary research, while considering elements such sector-specific needs, cultural influences, and external economic conditions. Highlighting collecting comprehensive knowledge to guarantee the policy's significance and success in different settings.

Results and Analysis

This section synthesizes insights gathered from professionals across education, social care, and program management roles on the feasibility and desirability of a four-day workweek. Through thematic analysis of the interviews, six core themes were identified: initial reactions, work-life balance, productivity, stress/burnout, scheduling preferences, and attractiveness to employees.

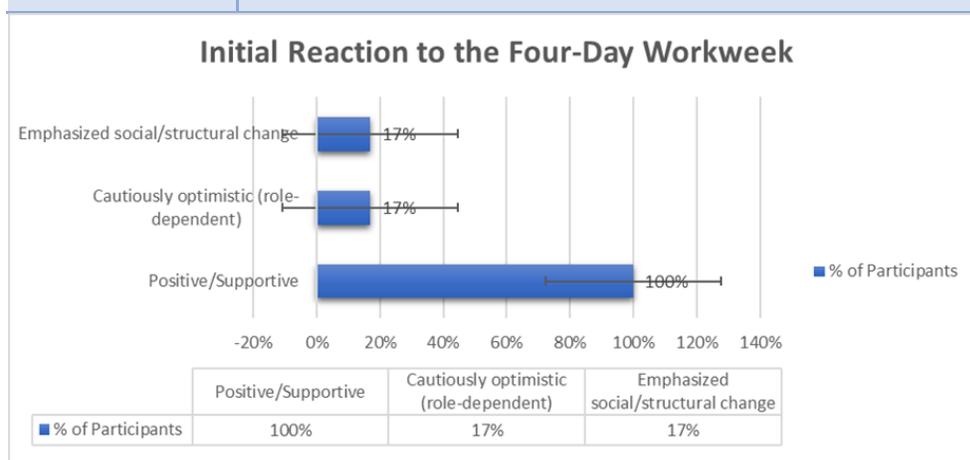
1. Initial Reactions: Strong Enthusiasm with Social Shifts Recognized

People like Jillian, Jessica, Moira, Laura, and Kathleen are becoming more interested in the four-day workweek - this is part of a bigger trend in society to rethink how work is done based on the latest ideas and facts. Even though their feelings were different because of their work and personal

lives, everyone agreed with the idea. Jillian, a high school teacher, was cautiously positive, but she also said that strict schedules might make school harder because it is harder to change duties. Jessica, who had been through it herself, talked about how it had helped her in both her personal and business life, especially when it came to balancing work and life. Moira agreed and said she liked having more time to do her own things. While Laura was excited, she was based on facts. This is in line with research that shows companies shorten their workers' weeks to have happy and more productive workers. Research on flexible work models (Yun et al., 2021) backs this up as well. Kathleen looked at the problem from the point of view of social justice, saying that the five-day workweek is based on old ideas about how men and women should behave. The way she does things is like the idea of "transformative climate justice," which says we need to destroy old systems that keep inequality going (Newell et al., 2021). What Darder et al. (2023) say about critical education, which goes against the grain in favor of justice and freedom, fits with this idea. When there are two incomes in a home, rigid plans hurt women more than men, so Kathleen's point that a shorter workweek could lead to more balanced parenting jobs is especially important. Concerns like these are also brought up in calls for equality and sustainability in the social and economic spheres (Fuchs et al., 2021; Kohl et al., 2022). The job market is changing because of changes in society and technology (Autor, 2022). This means that the way we talk about work plans and what it means to be productive and healthy is also changing. These changes show that we are moving away from old-fashioned industrial-era standards and toward more human-centered and thorough ways of judging success and production. We are putting more emphasis on the well-being, respect, and balance of everyone instead (Bringle & Hatcher, 2023; Biggs et al., 2021). The four-day workweek is not just a change in how things are done; it is also a sign of a greater culture shift that tries to balance the needs of work with the goals of justice, sustainability, and personal happiness.

Participant Initial Reaction

Jillian	<i>Cautiously optimistic; depends on profession</i>
Jessica	<i>Supportive; values experience</i>
Moira	<i>Strongly positive; extra day useful</i>
Laura	<i>Enthusiastic; links with existing research</i>
Kathleen	<i>Excellent idea; promotes gender equality and balance</i>



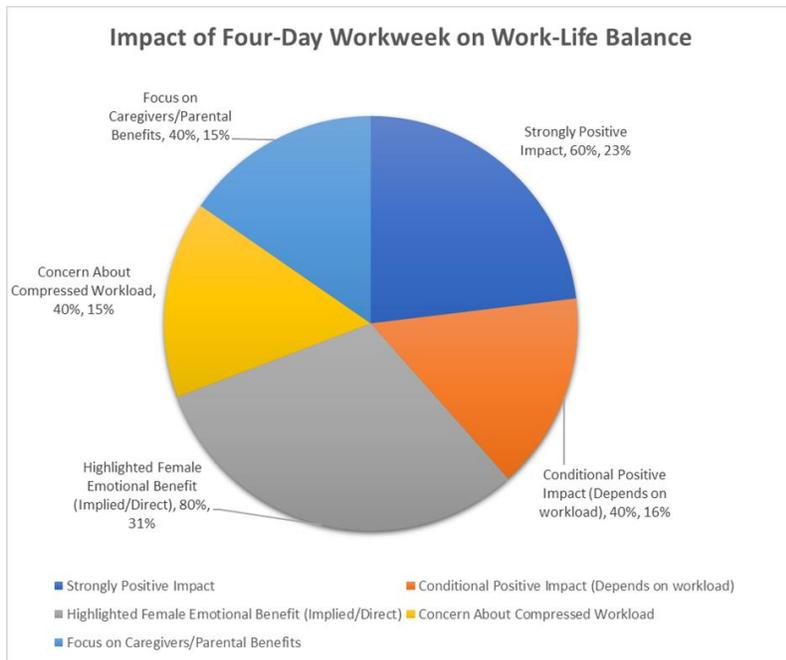
2. Work-Life Balance: A Universal Benefit if Workload is Fair

A four-day workweek might help people find a better work-life balance, but how well it works for each person depends on their job and circumstances. Things will get better, Jillian said, but it would depend on how busy and stressful the next four days are. After thinking about her past and present situations, Jessica fully agreed with the method. Even after her kids were grown up, she said it made it much easier for her to handle work and home life. And Moira liked it too. She said it helps her organize her tasks and get real rest. It was a clever idea, but Laura made it clear that if workdays were cut, tasks would need to be reevaluated so that people would not be under too much stress during the shorter week. Kathleen looked at things broadly when she said a four-day workday would be particularly good for mental and emotional health, especially for caregivers

who have a lot to do. From what people have said, it seems like a shorter workweek might help people deal with mental stress by giving them more time to relax, take care of themselves, and do important things for managing their lives.

Each participant agreed that a four-day workweek could positively affect work-life balance.

Perspective Category	Percentage of Participant	Representative Participant(s)	Description
Strongly Positive Impact	60%	Jessica, Moira, Kathleen	Reported significant improvement in balance, mental health, and flexibility.
Conditional Positive Impact (Depends on workload)	40%	Jillian, Laura	Supportive if workloads are realistic and not overly compressed.
Highlighted Emotional Benefit (Implied/Direct)	80%	Jessica, Moira, Kathleen, Laura	Identified stress relief, better home balance, or holistic wellbeing.
Concern About Compressed Workload	40%	Jillian, Laura	Cautioned that shorter weeks must not increase daily pressure.
Focus on Caregivers/Parental Benefits	40%	Jessica, Kathleen	Emphasized benefits for those managing family or caregiving roles.



The data reveals that a four-day week could reduce emotional strain, especially for women balancing professional and domestic roles.

3. Productivity and Focus: Condensed, Intentional Work

Sixty percent of the people (60%) who answered the survey think that a four-day workday might make people more effective, but only in some situations. Jillian, Jessica, and Laura all agreed that work might get done faster if the tasks are emphasized or if the workload is changed in the right way. Jessica, for example, said that she could get more done even if she worked fewer days if she set goals and focused more. Laura agreed, but she made it clear that this would only be true if there was less work to do. Jillian had a more complex point of view. She said that a lighter schedule might be good for job-oriented jobs like cleaning, but it would not be as good for jobs like teaching, which need a lot of time and planning. A crucial point is made by this information: the model may help many jobs run more smoothly, but it cannot be used everywhere without considering each job's specific needs. Also, Moira and Kathleen, two of the forty people who took part, clearly agreed with the idea that a shorter workweek naturally makes people more productive and

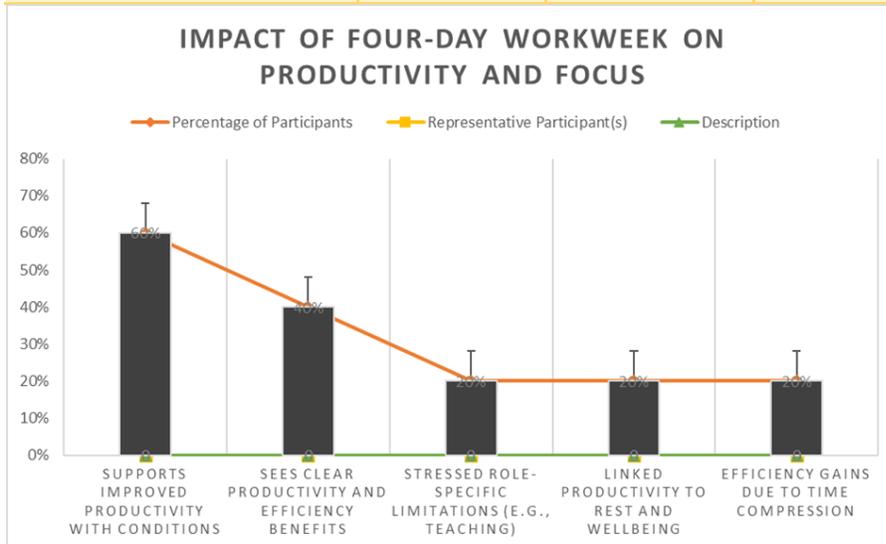
motivated at work. Moira said that having less time helps people focus on what is important, which makes them better at managing their time in general. Kathleen said that this was true because workers who get enough sleep are often more focused and creative. She thinks that taking care of your mental health will make your work better right away. Being short of time did not bother these people; they saw it as a chance to do better. The different points of view suggest that the four-day workweek is not the best way to help everyone, but it could help a lot of people be more focused and productive, especially if it is done carefully and with adjustments made for each job.

Most participants believed that fewer working days would **encourage higher productivity**, particularly when paired with effective task prioritization.

<i>Perspective Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Participants</i>	<i>Representative Participant(s)</i>	<i>Description</i>
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Supports Improved Productivity with Conditions	60%	Jillian, Jessica, Laura	I believe productivity can improve if the role fits or if the workload is reduced.
Sees Clear Productivity and Efficiency Benefits	40%	Moira, Kathleen	Emphasized focus, efficiency, and creativity due to reduced workdays.
Stressed Role-Specific Limitations (e.g., teaching)	20%	Jillian	Believes impact depends on profession; teaching may not benefit equally.
Linked Productivity to Rest and Wellbeing	20%	Kathleen	The remaining employees are more focused and innovative.

<i>Efficiency Gains Due to Time Compression</i>	20%	<i>Moira</i>	<i>Shorter weeks encourage intentional, focused work.</i>
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4. Stress and Burnout: Reduced Routine, Restored Energy

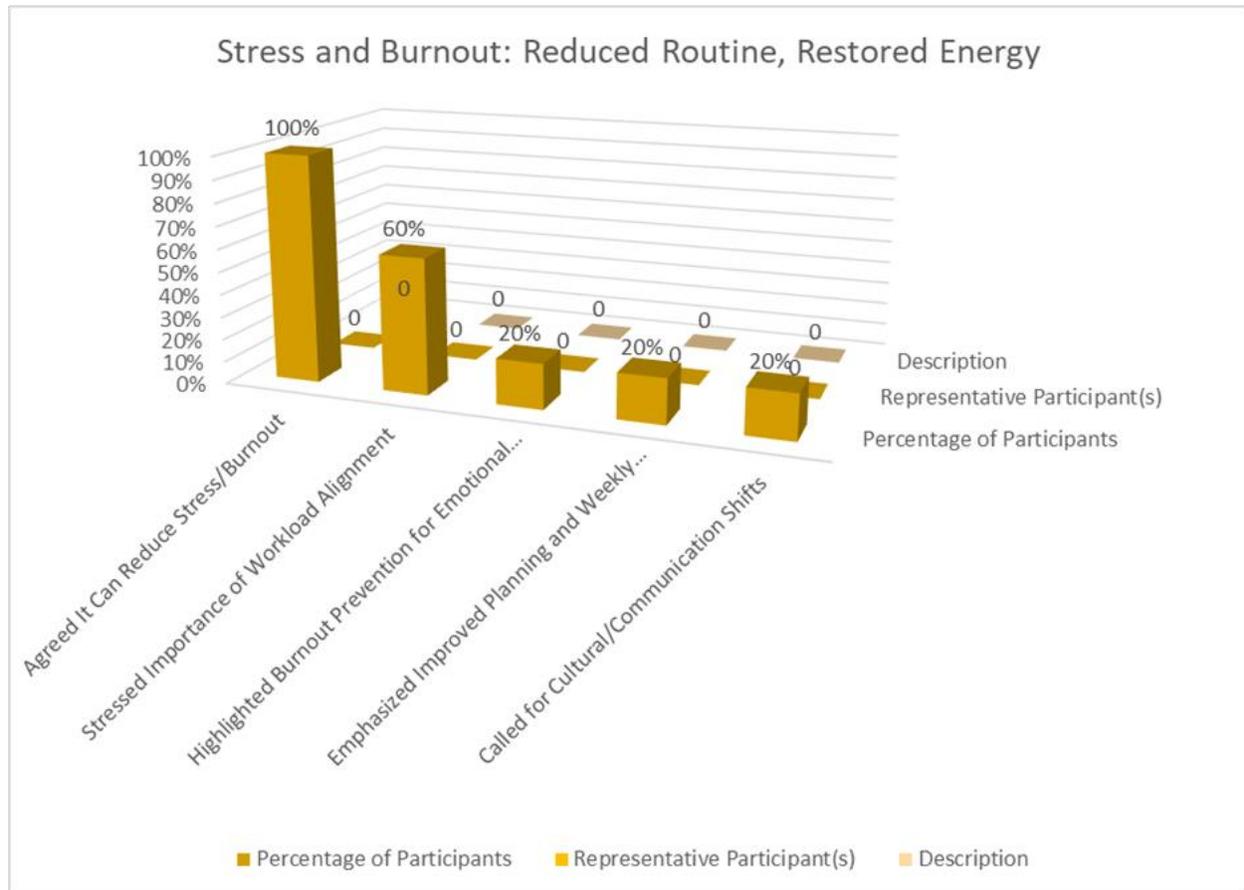
Everybody who took part thought that a four-day workweek could help a lot with stress and burnout, especially if it were done the right way. Jessica, Moira, Jillian, Laura, and Kathleen all said that taking more time for yourself could help you feel and think more clearly. 20% of the people who answered, including Moira, said that better time management helped them plan their week and feel less stressed. Kathleen (20%) gave a more detailed answer. She said that the shorter week is a wonderful way to improve mental health, especially for people who work with people who are sick or hurt. She thought improving long-term health and lowering general stress would be good for the school. However, 60% of those who answered, like Jillian, Laura, and Jessica, said that how work has changed was particularly important to how well the shorter week worked. If Jillian did not change her standards, cramming five days of work into four might cause her just as much stress, or even more. Twenty percent (20%) of the group, Jessica, said that the risk of burnout will not change if people do not change how they help and talk to each other at work. In

addition, Laura said that worry can be moved around instead of going away if people do not have realistic goals for their work. There is no doubt that a four-day workweek could help lower stress, but it will not work as well as it could unless the way things are done and the way people think are changed in ways that are good for workers' health.

All participants agreed that a shorter workweek could **significantly reduce stress and burnout**, though they noted the importance of workload control.

<i>Perspective Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Participants</i>	<i>Representative Participant(s)</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Agreed It Can Reduce Stress/Burnout</i>	100%	All participants	All participants acknowledged potential benefits for mental and emotional health.
<i>Stressed Importance of Workload Alignment</i>	60%	Jillian, Laura, Jessica	Warned that reduced days must be matched by a reduced or manageable workload.
<i>Highlighted Burnout Prevention for Emotional Roles</i>	20%	Kathleen	Cited specific benefits for preventing institutional and emotional fatigue.
<i>Emphasized Improved Planning and Weekly Structure</i>	20%	Moira	Noted better structure and less weekly overwhelm.

<i>Called for Cultural/Communication Shifts</i>	<i>for 20%</i>	<i>Jessica</i>	<i>Indicated broader workplace changes are needed to fully reduce burnout.</i>
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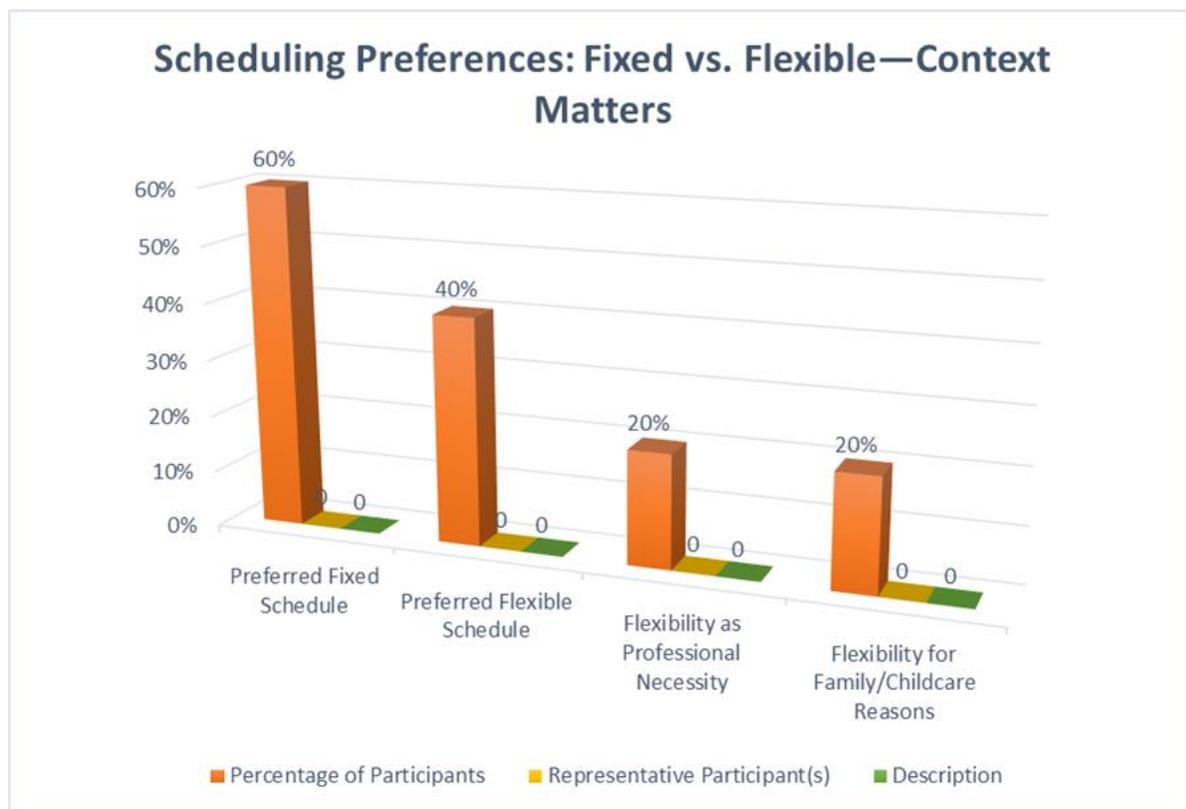
5. Scheduling Preferences: Fixed vs. Flexible—Context Matters

Preferences varied based on participants' job structures and life stages. Kathleen, due to her client-centered work, prioritized flexibility, especially for evening or weekend engagements.

<i>Preference Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Participants</i>	<i>Representative Participant(s)</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Preferred Fixed Schedule</i>	60%	Jillian, Jessica, Moira	<i>Favored Monday–Thursday work for consistency, planning, and structural clarity.</i>
<i>Preferred Flexible Schedule</i>	40%	Laura, Kathleen	<i>Needed adaptability for personal care duties or client-driven demands.</i>
<i>Flexibility as Professional Necessity</i>	20%	Kathleen	<i>Flexibility was not a preference but a requirement due to client needs.</i>
<i>Flexibility for Family/Childcare Reasons</i>	20%	Laura	<i>Flexible hours are needed to manage family responsibilities.</i>

The people who took part had different ideas about how to organize their work over a four-day workweek. 6 out of 10 people (Jillian, Jessica, and Moira) liked having a set schedule, usually Monday through Thursday. We liked this system more because it helped them understand their jobs better, especially when they had to work with other groups. Moira said that having a set schedule helps a person plan and manage their goals. It helps these people do their work consistently and steadily when they have set habits. This is especially true in more organized or team-based workplaces. However, Laura and Kathleen, two of the people who made up 40%, liked a more open method, though they had distinct reasons. 20% of people, like Laura, said they needed flexibility because they had to take care of their children. This shows that people with personal

and family responsibilities often need fluid hours. Kathleen (20%), on the other hand, said that being flexible was not a choice but important for her job as a client service rep. Caring for others at work often means working late or on the weekends to be available for customers, which makes it hard to stick to tight schedules. From her point of view, mixed or personalized schedule models might work best, especially in areas that focus on service or people, where sensitivity, availability, and freedom have a direct impact on the quality of service.



These findings suggest that when designing four-day workweek policies, one-size-fits-all solutions are likely to fall short.

6. Talent Attraction: Competitive Advantage, But Needs Structural Support

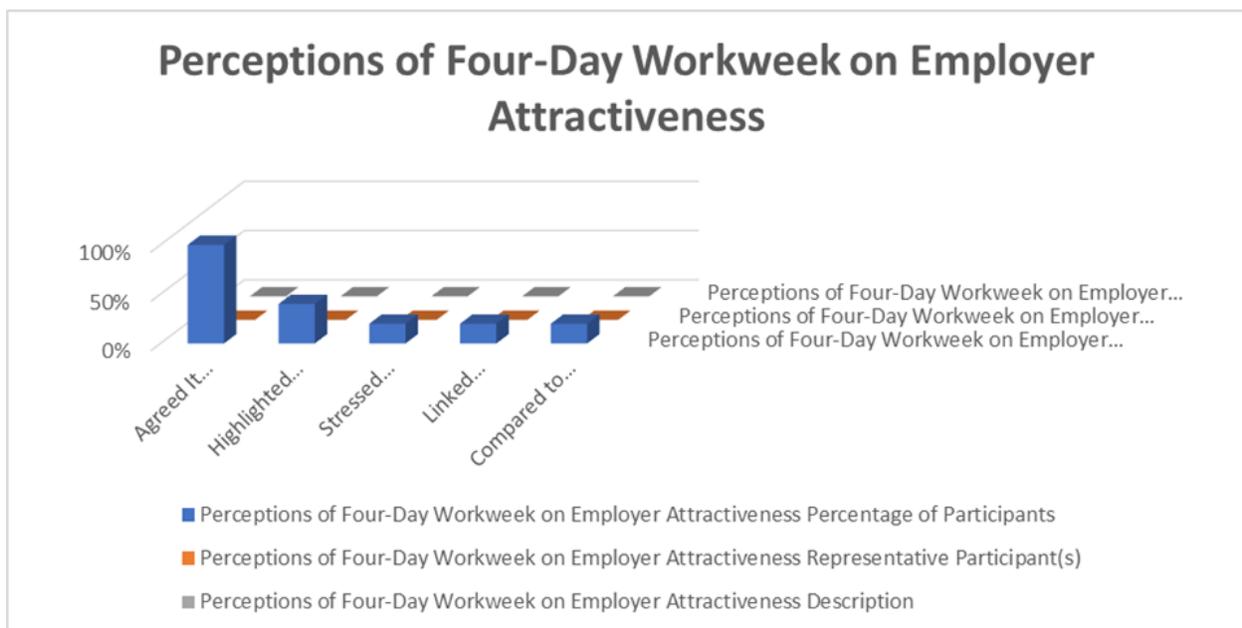
100% of people who spoke agreed that a four-day workweek might help a company find and keep good workers. Jillian said it was appealing in a way that was like mixed work arrangements. The

promise of a better work-life balance is still a big draw, she said. Moira said it was a "strong draw" for workers and how it could help a business stand out in a tough job market. Jessica also liked the idea, but she thought it should be made more appealing to workers, especially those who live in places where the cost of living is high. The four-day workweek is popular in many areas, but how it works in real life will depend on how well it is incorporated into a company's job listing. Laura and Kathleen, who made up 40% of the people who took part, were very worried about how far the system was and how long it would last. Laura said that the four-day plan is more appealing when it can be changed or done from home. But she also said it was important to keep full-time rewards like pensions. She also said that people might not be interested in the idea if they must give up any rights. Twenty percent of people, including Kathleen, agreed. They went even further and said that systemic inequality should be fixed, especially in places like social care that do not have enough resources. She said that her job was different from others, like police work, where people may get full retirement after fewer years of service. It was clear that different jobs are quite different, so some people could not work fewer hours. This information backs up the idea that the four-day workweek is a wonderful way to hire good people, but it will only work if it is supported by the government, pays fairly, and is adjusted to fit each business.

The majority agreed that a four-day workweek would **enhance employer attractiveness**, though Laura and Kathleen emphasized the importance of **economic feasibility and benefits parity**.

<i>Perspective Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Participants</i>	<i>Representative Participant(s)</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Agreed It Enhances Employer Attractiveness</i>	100%	All participants	All five participants viewed the four-day week as appealing for recruitment and retention.

Highlighted Economic Feasibility & Benefits Parity Concerns	40%	Laura, Kathleen	Warned that reduced hours must not affect pay, pensions, or access to full-time benefits.
Stressed Flexibility and Remote Work Options as Add-ons	20%	Laura	Noted that remote or hybrid options would further enhance the model's appeal.
Linked Attractiveness to Sector Equity and Policy Change	20%	Kathleen	Emphasized the need for systemic reform, especially in underfunded professions like social care.
Compared to Hybrid Work Benefits	20%	Jillian	The four-day week is viewed as equally appealing as current hybrid models.



Summary

The results make a good case for the four-day workweek as a major change in the way people work today. On every theme, participants strongly agreed that it could improve work-life balance, efficiency, and staff health. But success depends on how well it is carried out. The results make the need for fundamental justice stand out. They make it clear that the model needs to value mental health, long-term economic viability, and role-specific freedom to be successful and include everyone. Businesses and governments should not make everyone follow the same rules. Instead, they should look for models that are open and adaptable to meet the needs of different people and industries. It is no longer just a treat to work four days a week; it is a big step toward fair, affordable, and people-centered work. By talking about both the good and sad things that could happen, this method might help make the future of work healthy and fairer.

Discussion

This poll shows that more workers, particularly women who work in education, social care, and program management, want to work only four days a week. The participants' incredibly positive answers are in line with what polls have shown about the public's views, such as Hays Ireland (2023), which found that 95% of professionals back a shorter workweek and 73% would think about changing jobs to get this benefit. Kathleen is critical of old-fashioned work structures because they are unfair to women. This is like what Kling (2023) says about how millennials, especially women, need fair and balanced work structures that let them be flexible without holding back their job progress. There are new rules about how to order things and how people should care for themselves and their time. The four-day week is an example of these changes. A lot of people who were interviewed talked about the idea that work-life balance has gotten better. In Zhamshit's (2025) study, there was a clear link between having a good work-life balance, being

emotionally strong, and having less stress in both mixed and online settings. On the other hand, Jessica and Kathleen said that shorter workweeks helped their emotional health and made them better at caring for others. Shaju (2024) agreed and said that open work schedules are important for keeping women's moods up in businesses that make things or take care of people. It is also important to avoid what Johnson (2023) called "compressed stress," which is the idea that fewer days may only mean more work, which could be bad for health in the name of productivity. This is shown by participants stressing the need for a balance between fewer hours and more realistic tasks.

The finding backs up earlier studies that found that when done right, shorter workweeks may lead to more work getting done. It is not just Microsoft Japan that saw a 40% rise in productivity (Alda, 2019); more studies (Barnes & Jones, 2019; Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021) back this up. Some people, like Moira and Kathleen, said that planned workdays with limited time help people focus better and save mental energy by helping them sleep better. This is supported by Lupo (2022), who says that workers are more creative and able to solve problems when they have time to unwind and clear their thoughts. The study also shows that being flexible is important for several types of jobs. For instance, Jillian's guarded approach to teaching is like what George (2023) says about the IT industry: some jobs naturally allow for open schedules, while others need to be carefully changed to keep up with service needs and productivity. When people were asked about burnout, they all agreed that working only four days a week might help them feel less stressed over time. This is what Busick (2024) did when he investigated stress in healthcare. Kathleen's point of view was important because it connected stress to bigger problems in jobs that are hard on the emotions. Cezar and Escarlos (2023) agree with this point of view. They say that stress is usually caused by institutions not focusing enough on emotional work. But Jillian, Jessica, and Laura all said that the work needed to be redistributed in a way that made sense. If not, burnout could get worse or

stay the same. This is like what Hutton found in her study of female accountants (2022): When they do not have enough structure support, high-achieving workers often try to make up for it.

The members' choices about when to meet also show how important it is to be able to adapt to your job. 60% of people wanted to set schedules from Monday to Thursday so that things were clear and organized, while 40% wanted open models so that they could work around client work or family obligations. The same thing was found by Hamilton (2025), who stressed that companies must offer flexible plans and peak output times to meet the needs of all employees after the pandemic. Because Kathleen must be available in the evening, her situation shows how important it is to change your plans. Ahmad et al. (2022) also talk about how tight schedules that do not adapt to changing employee standards can lead to conflict and employee loss. There was talk about making the change to a four-day workweek more appealing to workers as a main reason. There was unanimous agreement that the idea will help a business find and keep good employees. Jillian said it was like the appeal of mixed models, which means it meets the need for freedom among workers today. Moira thought it was a big plus in fields with a lot of competition. 40% of the people who came said it was important for the benefits to be the same for everyone and for the hours to be cut off without hurting full-time pay, pensions, or health care benefits. Laura and Kathleen made this point noticeably clear. Laura also said that the model might be even more appealing if it could be used from home or in a mixed way (20%). Kathleen connected the issue to fairness in the wider sector, saying that areas like social care that are not getting enough money need structural changes to make reduced-hour models possible. Both Yeboah (2024) and Hendriana et al. (2023) say that fair pay, freedom, and rewards are important ways to get good employees.

Furthermore, the summary table below reinforces that while attractiveness is universal, its impact is heavily influenced by how equitably and sustainably it is implemented:

<i>Perspective Category</i>	<i>% of Participants</i>	<i>Representative Participant(s)</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Agreed It Enhances Employer Attractiveness</i>	100%	All participants	<i>I viewed the four-day week as appealing for recruitment and retention.</i>
<i>Highlighted Economic Feasibility & Benefits Parity Concerns</i>	40%	Laura, Kathleen	<i>Warned reduced hours must not affect pay, pensions, or full-time entitlements.</i>
<i>Stressed Flexibility and Remote Work Options as Add-ons</i>	20%	Laura	<i>Noted that remote or hybrid options enhance the model's appeal.</i>
<i>Linked Attractiveness to Sector Equity and Policy Change</i>	20%	Kathleen	<i>Urged reform in underfunded sectors for model sustainability.</i>
<i>Compared to Hybrid Work Benefits</i>	20%	Jillian	<i>The model was viewed as competitive with popular hybrid work schemes.</i>

Everyone agreed that the four-day workweek might make companies more interested in hiring people, but how well it works rests on how evenly it is applied to different jobs and industries. The data shows that everyone who took part thought the idea was interesting, but 40% of them, mostly Laura and Kathleen, were concerned that any reduction in work hours should not hurt the economy or similar rewards like pensions, health care, or leisure time. Myara et al. (2023) also talked about how fairness theory can help explain happiness and success at work, which is related

to this subject. It is said that workers do not just think about fair pay when they think about fair pay; they also think about fair working conditions and being recognized.

People who work four days a week might feel like they are being treated poorly if they start losing access to full-time benefits. This goes against the main goal of this plan, which is to improve health. In state tax offices, Bakaring et al. (2023) also found a link between pay and drive. If employees think they are not getting paid enough for the time or work they put in, they will do a terrible job and have low confidence. As Kathleen pointed out, this risk is especially high in areas like social care where staff are already under a lot of stress because they must do a lot of emotional work for extraordinarily little pay. If the way people are paid is not changed so that everyone gets the same rewards, some fields might see their differences get worse instead of better with a four-day workweek. Also, a four-day workweek needs to consider the needs of different institutions and sectors. This is especially true in fields like healthcare and education, where ongoing tasks and long hours make it hard to change plans. When Kathleen compares social care to institutions with more money, like the police officers, it brings up the problem of institutional inequality, which Arranz and Arroyabe (2023) talk about in terms of institutional theory. In this light, old legal, financial, and social systems need to be changed to make room for the latest ideas like flexible work. An interesting alternative view is McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (Busa et al., 2022). The main ideas behind the four-day plan come from Theory Y, which says that people do best when they are open and trusted. Theory X companies, on the other hand, may find it hard to adapt because they need strict rules and set schedules. Ngugi and Muli (2024) found that a bad work-life mix hurt school success. However, it is hard to make changes because of structural issues like not having enough staff and not being able to switch supervisors. This is hard, as Kathleen's story shows.

The four-day workweek might help with mental stress and make low-paying jobs more appealing, but it needs to be backed up by changes to the law and financial security to make sure it lasts. Without them, these kinds of programs might only be available in places with lots of money, which would make inequality even worse. In the end, everyone likes the idea of a four-day work week. However, how it works in real life will depend on how important balance is for all jobs. Cultural standards played a key role in how people thought the four-day workweek would work and be accepted. This was especially true in fields like education, health care, and social care where rules are usually extremely strict. Why does Kathleen think the five-day plan is based on outdated gender roles? This shows how social and cultural factors affect the quality of work life in general. That fits with what Pillai and Ramakrishnan (2023) say: that work-life quality is not just a matter of structure, but also of culture and society, formed by the values of diverse groups, gender roles, and standards in various fields. Due to well-established work-life balance laws, Scandinavian countries have found it easy to accept flexible work plans (Reuters, 2020). However, business, education, and care services often fall behind because of old ways of organizing and bureaucratic lethargy. Overtime rules at the Kenya Ports Authority were looked at by Opot and Munene (2023), who found that the organization's rules still support strict work-hour plans over fluid ones. This makes things at work even less open. If these social and cultural factors are not considered, Kathleen's complaint shows that it might be hard for some groups, especially women and caregivers, to get to even good changes at work. The theory of conservation of resources (Jabeen et al., 2022) says that a person's ability to keep a job relies on both the resources they have access to and how well they think they can keep their energy up and avoid getting emotionally worn out. This is more likely when work models are open, and diverse cultures are considered. It is not enough to be able to shift to other cultures, though. You also need to make sure that your company's rewards, training, and growth programs are compatible with those of other cultures.

Sanosra et al. (2022) showed that workers do a much better job when they are rewarded, trained, and really care about the company. Innovative ideas, like lighter workweeks, can grow in the workplace thanks to this societal support. Kathleen is worried about how fair her job is compared to police work and other public service jobs. This shows that cultural harmony, formal fairness, and support systems all need to work together. Nie (2025) shows that this is true because diverse groups have unique needs when it comes to rewards. This means a four-day plan that works for everyone might not work if it does not consider culture or age-based standards. Wang et al. (2025) also looked at adaptive testing through the view of trial-and-error learning theory. They said that it is important to do this when putting new work models in place. Companies should not force one-size-fits-all answers on everyone. Instead, they should be willing to try new things and learn from differences in culture and business. This is also supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Firmansyah et al., 2021). It says that workers' decisions to accept new work arrangements are affected by what they think are social rules and standards. So, the four-day workweek has a lot of potential, but it will only work in fields like social care if companies are ready to change their own rules and make sure that their plans for staff growth are in line with how people expect to be trained. Interviews and secondary data are encouraging, but we need to be honest about the flaws in the proof we already have. A lot of test projects, like the ones in the UK and Iceland (Haraldsson & Kellam, 2021; UCD, 2022), are still short-term and only work with certain types of businesses. This is in line with what Dunn said about experimental design in 2020. He says you should not use small, random studies to draw broad conclusions. In the same way, self-reported poll data can be biased if not enough management, clients, and users fill it out. Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (Kivits et al., 2021) says different points of view must be considered to ensure that policymaking is truly inclusive.

The results show that a four-day workweek may be an effective way to increase output, staff health, gender equality, and the business's appeal, if it is done carefully and with thought. It needs more than just cutting back on hours, though, to work. It needs a big plan that includes changes to the organization, the amount of work, and the rules that make sure everyone gets paid fairly and can keep their full-time benefits. Changes that work for each industry are needed, especially in jobs that require a lot of emotional support, like social work and teaching, where formal rules and cultural norms might otherwise make them impossible. Some of the people who answered this poll said that freedom should come with structural support and an open design so that all workers can benefit from it, not just those who work in nice industries. Also, the shift to a four-day workweek must consider how people are changing their feelings about health, work, and time. Getting feedback from stakeholders, especially workers like Kathleen, is important for the model to work overall. This means solving long-standing inequality and making sure that changes work with the diverse ways people work now. The four-day work week is not a quick fix for everyone. It is a substantial change that will make the future of work more loving and stronger. If this method includes strong partner participation, policies based on proof, and a dedication to social justice, it could change what important, long-lasting work looks like in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

This project shows that the four-day workweek is a viable alternative for businesses aiming to enhance productivity, boost employee well-being, and provide more long-term reliability during the good times. In areas from education and social care to programme management, support for the concept was overwhelming with many saying it would lead to more time for them and in turn to better balance between work and their personal life, less stress and better mental health. The findings represent a surge of interest in more flexible, people-focused working patterns, particularly from women and younger workers. But the studies show that a shorter workweek

needs to be implemented in a way that makes it work. Without thoughtful workload planning, support and flexibility, the four-day model risks compounding pressure and resulting in “compressed stress.” If hours are being cut, employers need to make sure this doesn't turn into unreasonable expectations. Distributor-oriented responses and company productivity feedback are all needed for success. This study also highlights the importance of fairness. Attendees emphasized that the traditional model of five-day service can be detrimental to women and caregivers. A more open and adaptive attitude is now required – one that questions the norms of the past in favour of a fairer world. Economically, in global trials, real results over hours have led to more efficient and engaging performance - for profit. Employers who invest in the health of their workforce tend to have lower turnover, reducing their absenteeism concerns about lost time. In short, the four-day workweek isn't just a perk; it's a stride toward a healthier, more equitable future of work. Effectively supported and appropriate in reinforcing policy and mind-set, this model has potential to contribute to the creation of workplaces as productive, inclusive and sustainable for all.

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