

THE FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK – AN INEVITABLE REVOLUTION OR A PASSING FAD?

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Purpose: The aim of the article was to identify the effects of implementing a four-day working week based on selected experiments conducted in the period 2022-2024.

Design/methodology/approach: A review of experiments examining the effects of implementing the four-day workweek idea was conducted, and based on the collected material, its potential benefits were assessed and summarized.

Findings: Based on the critical analysis, a number of questions were asked about the justification for the great optimism regarding the shortening of the working week. It was pointed out that the conducted studies often present numerous benefits from the introduction of a four-day working week, but the barriers to the introduction of a new organization of working time, the costs associated with it are omitted and the effects of experiments in the long term are not sufficiently studied. The article opens a discussion on the research gaps in the area of the four-day working week.

Research limitations/implications: Three main limitations of the analysed studies were identified: too short a time of research implementation, which does not show the potential effects of a four-day work week in the long term, subjective assessments of employers and employees, including differences in defining individual phenomena and feelings, and the lack of examination of potentially negative effects of the experiments.

Originality/value: Conclusions from the analysis of selected studies shed new light on the approach to the four-day work week, revealing numerous research gaps in the experiments conducted so far, while asking a number of important questions, the understanding of which may influence the assessment of the idea of shortening the work week and may contribute to setting new standards in the implementation of subsequent studies.

Keywords: four-day work week, work-life balance, work time organization, labor market trends, working time reduction.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Panta Rhei [Gr. everything flows]. This phrase, attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus, aptly describes many aspects of our environment. For over 2500 years, these two brief yet profoundly meaningful words have remained relevant. They are particularly fitting for describing the changes observed in management and quality sciences. Work is one of the fundamental human activities, and it is estimated that we spend more than half of our lives engaged in it (Zdun, Kopański, 2016). Globalization, social changes, and technological development strongly influence trends in work organization (Balcerowicz-Szkutnik, 2015; Błachowicz, 2019). A particularly interesting and currently widely discussed idea for reorganizing work is the four-day work week. This concept appears to have an almost equal number of supporters and opponents. The topic is so intriguing that extreme opinions often surface in the media, ranging from euphoria and certainty that this is the future of the labor market, perfectly aligning with Keynesian macroeconomic concepts, to skepticism and the belief that it is merely a temporary trend or pure populism. Moderate commentary is less frequently observed. Undoubtedly, this is a bold and electrifying idea, as it could significantly impact both the organization of enterprises and employees' private lives.

In Poland, the concept of a four-day work week remains under-researched. There have been few publications on the topic; however, in recent years, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of shortening the work week has increasingly appeared in the media and even within parliamentary debates. Internationally, the situation is different. In addition to lively discussions among business leaders and politicians, numerous studies have been initiated. These aim to help us understand whether the four-day work week is not only an attractive and futuristic concept but also a viable form of work organization that offers tangible benefits to both employees and employers. Examples of such initiatives include efforts in New Zealand, Iceland, and the United Kingdom. Organizations like *4 Day Week Global* have emerged to promote the reduction of the work week. Additionally, the first companies to adopt this system from the grassroots level have begun closely monitoring the outcomes of their actions. A frequently promoted slogan is *100/80/100*, which represents 100% pay for 80% of the work time, while maintaining 100% productivity.

The aim of this article was to identify the effects of implementing a four-day work week based on experiments conducted between 2022 and 2024. The analysis focused particularly on the benefits from both the employee and employer perspectives. Initially, the author intended to analyze both the benefits and costs; however, it turned out that reports from the experiments did not include information on the costs or potential negative side effects of this new work time arrangement.

2. Overview of Definitions and Historical Background Introduction

In 1956 R. Nixon said "The four-day work week is inevitable" (De Spiegelaere, Piasna, 2020). With these words, Nixon, one of the most prominent American politicians, sought to convince voters of his candidacy. It is clear that, even approximately 70 years ago, this topic was already present in public discourse and significant enough to be addressed during a presidential campaign. It is believed that the idea was popularized by W. Reuther in the 1950s (Hartman, Weaver, 1977). Some companies implemented this concept earlier, with American tanker drivers in the 1940s being an example, but such instances were marginal (Dunham, Hawk, 1977). Scientific research and numerous academic publications on the four-day work week began to emerge in the 1970s. During that period, scholars such as Hedges, LaCapra, and Gannon contributed to the development of this subject (Hedges, 1971; LaCapra, 1973; Gannon, 1974). Interest in this area was primarily observed in the United States, but it lasted only a few years (Campbell, 2024). The four-day work week had many skeptics, sparked controversy, and seemed unrealistic. Negative opinions began to dominate the public debate, leading to a reduction in actions supporting this direction. A more significant return to the topic occurred thanks to R. Bird in 2010, due to the changing work environment and new challenges facing enterprises (Bird, 2010). Over the following years, discussions continued across various sectors, including politics, journalism, and business, with growing public support for this idea (Srnicek, 2018; Peeples, 2009). However, it was only during the COVID-19 pandemic that the notion of a shorter work week returned to the forefront of public discourse. Increased interest can be observed in the frequency of searches for the phrase "four-day work week" over the past decade.

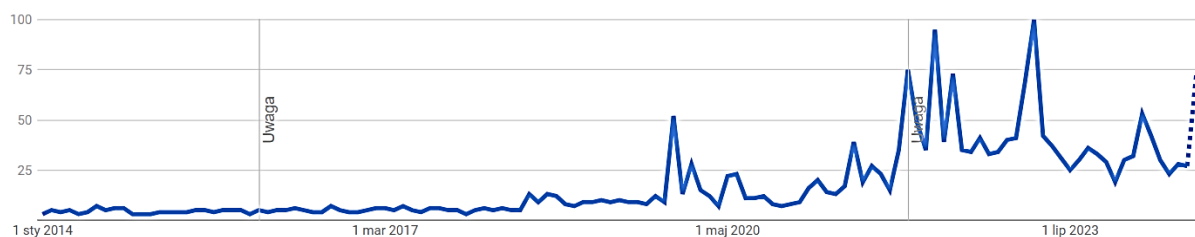


Figure 1. Number of searches for the phrase "four-day work week" in 2014-2024.

Source: Google Trends, <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2014-01-01%202024-09-02&q=4%20day%20work%20week>, 2.09.2024.

The first significant increase in interest can be observed during October-November 2019, attributed to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, alternatives to the traditional employment model were being sought, with a focus on finding effective solutions to adapt to the new, challenging conditions for conducting business and balancing professional and personal life (Pang, 2020). The periods of November 2021-April 2022 and January 2023-March 2023 are also worth noting, possibly resulting from publications, scientific studies,

political actions, or media debates. Undoubtedly, the reduction of working hours remains of interest, despite the end of the pandemic period. It is worth emphasizing that the concept has been evolving autonomously, with various variants emerging dynamically, often driven by the diverse needs of both employees and companies. As a result, the four-day work week can be defined in various ways.

Table 1.

Overview of selected definitions of the four-day work week

Author	Definition
American Management Association (1972)	Any arrangement of working days and hours, planned by an organization, in which one or more groups of employees fulfill their professional obligations in less than the standard five full days.
Dunham R., Hawk D. (1977)	A type of compressed work schedule in which employees typically work four longer days as part of a full-time, four-day work week.
Eberle T. (1996)	A reduction in the total number of hours in which employees work four standard days and receive reduced pay.
Imber A. (2021)	The reduction of the work week to four working days, with employees receiving the same pay as if they were working a 40-hour, five-day work week.

Source: Own elaboration based on (Dunham, Hawk, 1977; Eberle, 1996; Imber, 2021; Yasmin, 2024).

Based on the above definitions, it is clear that the four-day work week has become increasingly expansive in meaning and can be understood as either a shortened or compressed work week. In the author's view, this distinction should be clearly made to maintain consistency in the information presented during discussions. These models may be associated with different opportunities and risks, leading to outcomes with distinct characteristics.

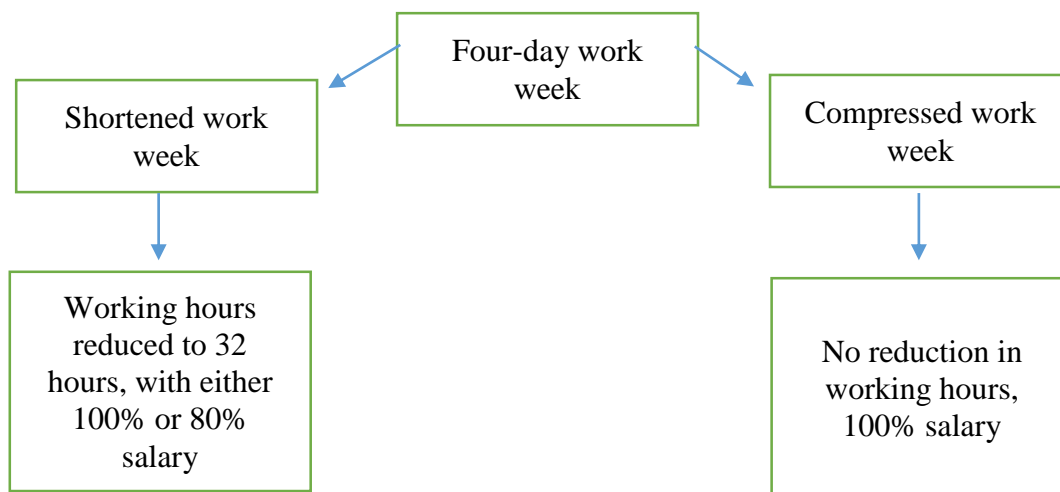


Figure 2. Types of the four-day work week.

Source: Own elaboration.

The concept of a shortened work week involves performing professional duties for four days, eight hours a day, per week. In this model, there are proposals to either maintain salaries at the same level or reduce them by 20%. The compressed work week, often referred to as the "false four-day work week," means receiving full pay but working an average of 10 hours per day. This solution potentially reduces work comfort and safety, while increasing stress, the risk

of accidents, and burnout. It undermines the foundation of the shortened work week, which aims to improve work-life balance. These models elicit very different levels of interest from employees. The model proposing 32 working hours per week without a reduction in pay is the most commonly chosen as the most attractive. This is well illustrated in the survey conducted by Hays Poland (2021, 2230 respondents).

Table 2.

Survey results from Hays Poland: Percentage of responses to the question "Would you like to work in a four-day work week model?"

Model type	Definitely yes	Yes	Rather yes	Total
Model 4 days x 8 hours, 100% salary	88%	6%	2%	96%
Model 4 days x 10 hours, 100% salary	15%	16%	21%	52%
Model 4 days x 8 hours, 80% salary	3%	5%	11%	19%

Source: Own elaboration based on Hays Poland survey, 2021, <https://www.hays.pl/4-dni-pracy>, 3.09.2024.

The results of the above survey demonstrate a significant difference in attitudes toward individual models. The publication *The Workforce View in Europe* (2019, 10,585 respondents) indicates that as many as 78% of respondents prefer to work longer hours and maintain their current salary. Employees are reluctant to accept a reduction in their pay, even if it would result in intangible benefits in their personal lives. Therefore, it should be emphasized that different interpretations of the concept of a 4-day workweek can create confusion in public debate. In practice, each of these models has various advantages and disadvantages, so discussions about the 4-day workweek require participants to clarify which specific model of the workweek is being analyzed.

3. Review of Selected Completed Experiments on the Four-Day Work Week

"The solution to (almost) all problems: work less" (R. Bregman). These words, spoken by a Dutch historian, suggest that reducing working hours could potentially bring positive outcomes in many areas of everyday life. The four-day work week is not merely about reducing hours spent on professional duties; it is a concept that seeks multidimensional benefits for both employees and employers. This idea has captured the imagination of many, who see it as an opportunity to de-standardize current forms of work organization. Research on shortening the work week has been conducted over the past few decades by private entities, organizations, and government bodies. These studies typically lasted from a few to several months, spanning across all continents, highlighting the importance of this topic. This article presents completed experiments on the four-day work week that meet the following criteria:

1. Full employee compensation was maintained during the experiments.
2. A real reduction in working hours was implemented, while compressed work week pilots were excluded.
3. Sample size exceeded 250 employees.
4. Research was conducted after 2021 (post-pandemic period).

Based on these selection criteria and a review of the literature, five studies were selected.

Table 3.

Overview of Selected Studies on the Four-Day Work Week Conducted in 2022-2024

No.	Study period (chronological)	Country	Sample size (employees/ organizations)	Dominant industries
1.	February 2022 – April 2023 (14 months)	USA, Canada	630 / 41	Professional services, marketing, non-profit
2.	June – December 2022 (6 months)	United Kingdom	2 900 / 61	Marketing/advertising, professional services, non-profit
3.	August 2022 – February 2023 (6 months)	Australia, New Zealand	547 / 26	Professional services, marketing/advertising, manufacturing
4.	March – August 2023 (6 months)	South Africa, Botswana	287 / 28	Professional services, IT, marketing
5.	January – June 2024 (6 months)	Brazil	252 / 19	Communication and media, technology, consulting and innovation

Source: Own elaboration based on The 4 day week: 12 months on with new US and Canadian research, The Results Are In: The UK'S Four-Day Week Pilot, Experimenting with a 4 day week in Australasia, South Africa A 4 Day Week Pilot Program, Brazil 4 Day Week Pilot.

USA/Canada

Study Conducted by: Researchers from Boston College in collaboration with 4 Day Week Global.

Participants and Timeline: 630 individuals, 41 companies (32 in the USA, 9 in Canada). Companies joined the study from February 2022 to April 2023, with effects measured up to 12 months after the introduction of the four-day work week.

Results: On a 10-point scale (1 being the worst, 10 the best), employers rated the pilot at 8.7, and employees rated it 9.1. The four-day work week significantly improved recruitment (8.7) and positively impacted productivity and efficiency (7.7). Company revenues increased by an average of 15% during the study. Among surveyed employees, 32% said they were significantly less likely to consider changing employers under this system. No company expressed interest in returning to the five-day week after the trial period, and 95% of employees wanted to continue the new arrangement. Burnout symptoms were reduced for 69% of respondents, 40% reported lower stress, and 59% observed a reduction in negative emotions. Employees reported less fatigue (45%) and improved sleep quality (40%). Work-family conflicts were less noticeable for 61% of participants. No "travel rebound" effect was observed (using free time to organize one-day car trips resulting in a larger carbon footprint),

and 42% of employees reported increased engagement in environmental activities such as recycling and biking.

United Kingdom

Study Conducted by: Think tank Autonomy and researchers from the University of Cambridge, Boston College, University College Dublin, University of Salford, and the University of Brussels, in collaboration with 4 Day Week Global.

Participants and Timeline: 2900 individuals, 61 companies, from June to December 2022.

Results: The overall rating of the experiment was 8.3/10. Of the 61 companies, 56 (91.8%) expressed a desire to continue, and 18 (29.5%) confirmed plans to implement the four-day work week permanently. Stress levels dropped for 39% of employees, while 71% reported reduced burnout symptoms. Employees found it easier to balance work and personal life (54%), and overtime hours decreased (34%). Job satisfaction increased for 48% of respondents, while mental health improved for 43%, notably with a reduction in negative emotions (54%). Physical health also improved (37%), which may reduce healthcare costs. Fatigue decreased for 46%, and sleep quality improved for 40%. Household finances improved for 44%, and relationships with family members strengthened for 45%. Company revenues remained stable, with an average increase of 1.4%. Employee resignations fell by 57%, and absenteeism decreased by 65%. The positive impact on company productivity was rated 7.5.

Notes: During the experiment, the following variants of the four-day work week were implemented:

- **Single additional day off for all employees** – Companies operated exclusively for four days a week, ensuring that all employees were present during this period. This was a centralized system with no internal rotations or divisions.
- **Alternating schedule** – Employees were divided into teams that worked on different days. This option was chosen by companies that needed to maintain operations for the entire week (five days).
- **Decentralized schedule** – Different groups worked according to varied time arrangements, which included situations where some employees worked for five days. This model was used in companies with diverse functions and challenges.
- **Annualized schedule** – Employees worked an average of 32 hours per week, calculated over the course of the year. This applied to companies with seasonal work, where longer hours during the summer season were compensated by shorter hours during the winter.
- **Conditional schedule** – The right to an additional day off was directly tied to the current performance of employees. Continuous monitoring of work outcomes was essential, and the shortened work week could be suspended if certain departments or individuals did not meet agreed productivity targets.

Australia, New Zealand, Europe, USA, Canada

Study Conducted by: Researchers from Boston College in collaboration with 4 Day Week Global.

Participants and Timeline: 547 individuals from 26 companies, mainly in Australia (10) and New Zealand (9), with some in Europe (4) and the USA/Canada (3). The study ran from August 2022 to February 2023.

Results: The program was well received, with companies rating it 8.2/10 and employees rating it 9.0/10. Recruitment improved (8.3), and productivity and efficiency were positively impacted (7.0 and 6.8, respectively). Most employees (95%) wanted to continue working under this system. Absenteeism decreased by 44.3%, and resignation rates dropped by 8.6%. Many employees wanted to continue working under this arrangement (96%), and 54% of them reported increased work capacity. Burnout symptoms were reduced for 64% of participants, stress decreased for 38%, and negative emotions decreased for 49%, while positive emotions increased for 62%. The work-family conflict was less noticeable for 49% of participants, and 38% reported feeling less fatigued and experiencing better sleep (35% of respondents). Some employees engaged in regular physical activity more frequently (36% of respondents, with the average duration of exercise increasing by 20 minutes per week). The division of household responsibilities also improved, with 27% of men and 15% of women reporting increased involvement. Additionally, more time was spent caring for children (17% of men and 11% of women). Commute time decreased by an average of 36 minutes per person per week. Moreover, 42% of employees reported increased engagement in environmental activities. There was no evidence of a “travel rebound” effect.

Notes: The four-day work week could be implemented in a flexible manner. The most common approach (adopted by 41% of companies) involved providing employees with an additional day off on different days of the week. This ensured that business operations could continue across all five days of the week.

South Africa, Botswana

Study Conducted by: Researchers from Boston College and Stellenbosch Business School, in collaboration with 4 Day Week Global.

Participants and Timeline: 287 individuals from 28 companies, conducted from March to August 2023.

Results: Participants of the pilot study rated the initiative at 8 (on a scale from 1, the lowest, to 10, the highest). 92% of respondents expressed a desire to continue the project. The four-day work week had a positive impact on company performance (rated 7.1), internal dynamics (7.7), and productivity (7.5). Employees reported a reduction in burnout symptoms (57%) and fatigue (36%). Some respondents increased the time spent on physical exercise (35%). Respondents also noted improved work-life balance (47%) and better mental well-being (35%). Companies reported an average revenue increase of 10.5%. Additionally, productivity, as assessed by

employees, also improved (49%). Interestingly, 25% of participants noticed a decrease in work intensity, 35% worked harder, and the rest did not observe significant changes. Respondents indicated that their work capacity increased (49%), and their creativity improved (58%). The number of resignations decreased by 11%, and employee absenteeism fell by 9%. Employers noticed a significant impact on recruitment capabilities (rated 7.9).

Brazil

Study Conducted by: Researchers from the Vargas School of Business Administration of Sao Paulo, in collaboration with Henley Business School, University of London, Boston College, and 4 Day Week Global.

Participants and Timeline: 252 individuals from 19 companies, conducted from January to June 2024.

Results: Participants expressed a strong desire to continue the four-day work week in their workplaces (97.5%). Surveyed employees noted improvements in project completion (56.6%) and adherence to deadlines (52.6%). Some reported an increase in creativity (80.7%), engagement (60.3%), and higher energy levels for task completion (87.4%). Additionally, some respondents reported a reduction in work-related stress (14.5%) and fatigue (45.9%). Increased sleep duration (42%) and reduced insomnia (49.6%) contributed to lower fatigue levels. Notably, 71.3% of respondents reported having more energy to devote to family and friends, leading to an improved work-life balance (44.4%). Respondents also reported better relationships with their supervisors (49%) and an improved organizational culture (83.2%), with enhancements in collaboration (90.1%), a greater sense of purpose in work and goals (86.5%), and pride in their job (85.1%). Overall employee satisfaction averaged 8.5, and engagement within the company was rated 9.2.

Notes: Prior to the pilot, the research team conducted interviews with management to understand their expectations for the program. The most frequently mentioned goals included reducing employee turnover, retaining talent, increasing engagement and productivity, and finding ways to positively impact employees' quality of life while promoting changes in work practices.

4. Review of the benefits of introducing a four-day workweek based on selected studies

"The four-day work week is regarded by some as a "triple dividend reform", which can bring positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes. In management and quality sciences, the issue of employees' psychophysical well-being is being increasingly discussed. There is a growing awareness of the harmful effects of overworking. A recent report by the

World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that spending excessive time on professional duties may be associated with a higher risk of heart and brain diseases.

The studies analyzed in this article were conducted between February 2022 and June 2024, involving a total of 4,616 employees from various industries and continents. Based on these data, it can be observed that the positive effects of implementing a four-day work week are evident in every pilot study, with both employees and employers being the main beneficiaries. From the analysis of the presented studies, the author categorized the benefits into four main areas: health, social, economic, and organizational.

Table 4.

Summary of Benefits of the Four-Day Work Week Based on Selected Studies

Area of Benefits	Main Beneficiaries	Identified Benefits	Study Results
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees/Employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced burnout • Reduced stress • Reduced negative emotions • Reduced fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57-71% employees • 14,5-40% employees • 49-59% employees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sleep quality • Improved mental health • Improved physical health • Increase in positive emotions • Increased frequency of physical exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36-46% employees • 36-42% employees • 35-43% employees • 37% employees • 62% employees • 35-36% employees
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced work-family conflict • Improved relationships with close people • More time spent with close people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44,4-61% employees • 45% employees • 71,3% employees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased environmental activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% employees
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,4-15% of companies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved household finances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% employees
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased recruitment efficiency • Increased employee productivity and efficiency • Improved company performance • Reduced employee turnover • Reduced absenteeism • Decreased likelihood of job change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,9-8,7/10 company rating • 7,5-8,4/10 company rating • 7-7,5/10 company rating • 8,6 -57% company rating • 9- 65% company rating • 32% employees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers/Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved internal conditions • Reduced overtime • Increased job satisfaction • Increased work ability • Increased productivity • Increased creativity • Improved relationships with supervisors • Positive impact on organizational culture • Improved collaboration among employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,7/10 company rating • 34% employees • 48-85,1% employees • 49- 87,4% employees • 49-56,6% employees • 58%-80,7% employees • 49% employees • 83,2% company rating • 90,1% employees

Source: Own elaboration based on The 4 day week: 12 months on with new US and Canadian research, The Results Are In: The UK'S Four-Day Week Pilot, Experimenting with a 4 day week in Australasia, South Africa A 4 Day Week Pilot Program, Brazil 4 Day Week Pilot.

It is worth highlighting that the average rating of the new work schedule was very high, ranging between 8.0 and 8.7/10, with many companies expressing a desire to continue the pilot (91.8-97.5%). In the USA and Canada, no company indicated plans to return to the five-day work week. Employees responded enthusiastically to the new arrangement, rating it between 9 and 9.1/10, with 95-96% wishing to continue with the new work schedule. None of the studies reported a decline in revenues, and no significant negative effects were observed for either employers or employees. The four-day work week did not lead to increased stress, burnout, or other psychophysiological symptoms. The range of benefits presented in the reports suggests that the work environment was perceived positively by employees, who viewed it as motivating and conducive to creativity—an impression that was further strengthened by the shortened work week. The significant reduction in absenteeism and employee turnover suggests that this model could improve employer-employee relationships, foster loyalty, and increase commitment. In the table, the author identified the main beneficiaries of the advantages without specifying whether they applied solely to employees or employers, acknowledging that organizations should be seen as interconnected systems. Improvements in employee well-being can positively impact companies, and benefits to the company are likely to have a reciprocal effect on the workforce.

Although the results appear very promising, they should be approached with cautious optimism. The duration of most studies was typically only six months, which is sufficient to elicit a positive response to a new model. However, this is too short a period to determine how effective, or if at all, the model will be in the long term within an organization. Early in such projects, enthusiasm is often high, but over time, emotions may subside, and old habits and routines may resurface, not always contributing positively to task performance. It is unlikely that productivity gains, for instance, will be sustained at a high level over the long term. The key will be employers' awareness and competence in implementing appropriate change management strategies. Crucial elements could include training programs, effective communication tools, and control mechanisms. Furthermore, several challenging questions remain unanswered at this point.

1. Will employees, over the long term, be able to organize their work effectively enough to maintain the same productivity as they would in a five-day work week? Will they be able to sustain high levels of self-discipline?
2. Will employers implement the changes appropriately? A new work schedule requires systems, a deep understanding of the company and its employees, adjustments to organizational culture, management of internal tensions, effective communication, and numerous tools and competencies, which leadership teams must first acquire.
3. Could the four-day work week lead to conflicts within companies? This work arrangement may not suit all job positions. Some employees who continue to work five days a week may experience frustration or demotivation, ultimately seeking employment elsewhere.

4. In the long term, could a shortened work week, with unchanged employer demands, negatively affect the physical and mental well-being of employees, or increase the number of workplace accidents? Could this also result in increased pressure from employers, such as more frequent performance reviews or stricter day-to-day oversight?
5. Given that many reports currently indicate high levels of overtime, is the four-day work week feasible for a larger number of businesses, or will it remain limited to sectors such as marketing/advertising, IT, and non-profit organizations that can accommodate this model?
6. What are the actual costs associated with implementing the four-day work week? This question remains unanswered in the studies analyzed. It is crucial to understand whether the increased cost per working hour is offset by gains in productivity or creativity.
7. How will existing clients and competitors respond to this change?
8. Will the four-day work week force businesses to increase number of employees?

It is difficult to imagine that, particularly in certain professions, the same amount of work could be completed within four days. Good examples include positions such as teachers, hairdressers, drivers, manual laborers, doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists, and sports trainers. Additionally, it should be noted that Poland currently has low unemployment, and finding suitable employees is often a lengthy and costly process.

There is no doubt that many businesses experience so-called "inefficient hours", where employees do not spend the entire workday on their tasks. On the other hand, it is unclear which work-time arrangement offers more key advantages and fewer critical drawbacks. The four-day work week is undoubtedly a very intriguing solution, but it requires further, in-depth research over a longer timeframe. Such studies should objectively present both the numerous opportunities and risks associated with this model.

5. Conclusion

"The four-day work week has captured the public's imagination (...) but the most important question remains unanswered: is the shift from a five-day to a four-day work week inevitable?" (Hedges, 1971). This is yet another return to the topic, and notably, it comes with similar energy and a sense of mission as seen in the 1970s (Bird, 2010). Will public debate on this issue once again stall? Is this an inevitable revolution unfolding before our eyes, or just a passing trend leveraged as a marketing tool by populist parties? These questions remain unanswered. However, it can be stated that the present era is one of various transformations. Social changes, driven by factors such as the entry of a new generation into the workforce, globalization, and the pandemic, seem to be strong catalysts for continuing the discussion on the four-day

work week. The increasing familiarity with broad-based flexibility has made the four-day work week an attractive prospect for many. Similarly, the technological revolution, including digitization, cloud working, and particularly the impact of artificial intelligence on most areas of life, could be considered a new paradigm. This contributes to the de-standardization of working hours and the transformation of traditional forms of collaboration (Burchel et al., 2024). It is possible that we are witnessing irreversible changes in labor markets and demand for specific professions. It may also be that we are redefining time itself, as well as its value for both employees and employers.

On the other hand, the advantages of reducing working hours, as presented in public discourse, often appear overly optimistic. Current studies frequently do not show long-term effects, but instead highlight short-term gains, which may be difficult to sustain over a longer period. The same problem was evident in the 1970s (Campbell, 2024). One example is a company that reported a 400% increase in sales during that period (Bird, 2010). A common issue is the flawed research methodology and the over-reliance on subjective opinions (Mahoney et al., 1975). Presenting results without accounting for real costs and potential barriers undermines trust, which is a weakness of previous studies. Ultimately, attractive slogans and electrifying ideas about shortening the work week will need to be confronted with employer expectations and their economic balance sheets.

This article shows that the four-day work week may have both strong and weak points. It seems that governmental support could be crucial in providing the appropriate legal frameworks for this change. It is essential that the public debate be free from bias and unnecessary extremes of optimism or skepticism. The widely adopted eight-hour, five-day work model is likely to undergo changes in the future. In many countries, there is increasing pressure to reduce working hours. Today's social challenges, along with expanding technological capabilities, particularly the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), are strong stimuli for adjusting employee workloads. The near future will reveal whether the four-day work week has a real chance of becoming a widespread system of work organization.

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