

Reduced and Compressed Hours week research

1. Background

Reduced hours

Reduced hours are when the standard week e.g. 35 hours is reduced to e.g. 28 hours for the same pay and benefits.

Compressed hours

Compressed hours are when the week's work is compressed into a shorter time span. Under this arrangement a standard 35 hour working week could be compressed e.g. into four 8.75 hour days per week, or nine 7.75 hour days over a fortnight.

Many organisations already have standardised flexible policies in place to allow staff to work compressed hours (e.g. 9 day fortnights).

2. Benefits and disadvantages

Reduced hours

The four-day working week is founded on the belief that productivity can be increased by reducing working hours and working smarter.

Studies have already shown that an additional day off can improve productivity, increase morale, reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and allow for a better work-life balance.

Many staff have parental or caring responsibilities and by reducing the amount of time spent at work, all employees have more time to fulfil personal responsibilities without sacrificing their wellbeing or pay. A shorter working week would also help us attract a more diverse workforce.

The disadvantage of a reduction of hours would potentially be in the loss of productivity based on hours not spent working. However, studies show that the average worker loses time each day to unnecessary meetings, poor technology implementations, and other distractions.

We would look to improve efficiency without affecting productivity whilst enhancing the physical and mental health of our staff. In essence, a happier and healthier workforce is more productive and delivers better outcomes.

Compressed Hours

Compressed hours would convey many of the benefits of reduced hours set out above by allowing staff to have a day off per week (or per fortnight).

However, this could potentially bring additional stress by requiring staff to work longer working days on a regular basis.

3. Evidence from real world trials

In 2022 more than 3,300 workers at 70 UK companies started working a four-day week with no loss of pay in the world's biggest trial of the new working pattern.

The pilot runs for six months and is being organised by 4 Day Week Global in partnership with the thinktank Autonomy, the 4 Day Week Campaign, and researchers at Cambridge University, Oxford University and Boston College.

Preliminary results show that 88% of companies in a survey at the middle of the trial said the four-day week was working “well” for their business at that stage of the trial. About 95% of the companies surveyed said productivity had either stayed the same or improved since the introduction.

The UK pilot follows a similar pilot that was run in the USA and Ireland and has already published its results. The key headlines are that companies scored the results as 9.0/10 in terms of positivity about the trial and reported improved performance and productivity. Overall companies reported an 8% increase in income during the trial period. Staff rated it 9.1/10 and 97% said they would like to see it continue.

Summary of trial results from 4 Day Week Global (4DWG)

4DWG's carried out two trials, which comprised 33 companies and 903 employees in mainly the US and Ireland.

The trials are based on a model called 100-80-100. In it, companies authorise employees to work 80 per cent (or similar) of their regularly scheduled hours in return for 100 per cent of their pay, all with the promise of still delivering 100 per cent of their standard output.

Of 33 companies, 27 filled out a final survey where they were asked about their overall experience and whether they will continue their 4 day week.

- On a scale of 0-10 from very negative to very positive, the companies' average rating for the trial is a 9.0.
- Among the 27, 18 are definitely continuing, 7 are planning to continue but haven't made a final decision yet, 1 is leaning toward continuing and 1 is not yet sure. None are leaning against or not planning on continuing.
- When asked about how their overall company performance was affected by the trial, the average score was 7.6.
- Asked specifically about productivity, the companies reported a score of 7.7.

From the employee side, the experience was similarly successful.

- On a scale of 0-10, from very bad to very good, the average overall experience of the trial was 9.1.
- Virtually all (96.9%) of the employees want to continue the trial.
- When asked to rate their current work performance compared to their lifetime best, the average score rose from 7.17 at baseline to 7.83 at the end of the trial.

- A wide range of well-being metrics showed significant improvement from the beginning to the end of the trial. Stress, burnout, fatigue, work-family conflict all declined, while physical and mental health, positive affect, work-family and work-life balance, and satisfaction across multiple domains of life increased.
- Employees used their day off for hobbies, household work and personal grooming

[4 Day Week Global report](#)

100 UK companies have also recently made the move permanently:

[Guardian article](#)

<https://www.4dayweek.co.uk/about-us>

Other notable organisations that have made a permanent move include Friends of the Earth and Happy Computers.