

Benefits and Challenges of a Shortened Workweek: Creative and innovative strategies

Mussie T. Tessema*

College of Business, Winona State University
175 W Mark Street, Winona, MN 55987, Email: Mtessema@winona.edu.

Courtney Bauer

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

Melissa Campobasso,

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

Karlie Dostal

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

Sai Manisha Garapati,

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

Michael Newsome

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

Emanuel Pires,

MBA student, College of Business, Economics & Computing University of Wisconsin-Parkside,
Wisconsin.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjhrm.2013/vol11n31226>

Published June 11, 2023

Citation: Tessema M., Bauer C., Campobasso M., Dostal K., Garapati S.M., Newsome M., Pires E. (2023) Benefits and Challenges of a Shortened Workweek: Creative and innovative strategies, *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol.11, No.3, pp.12-26

ABSTRACT: *Although employees always want flexibility, the pandemic has increased their desire for the same in their work life. Many alternative work arrangements exist (e.g., flextime, compressed workweek, shortened workweek/4-day workweek, remote work, hybrid, and job sharing). However, this study focused on a 4-day workweek. Recently, 4-day workweeks have gained momentum worldwide. In 2022, many companies piloted a 4-day workweek. Therefore, this study (1) discusses the benefits and challenges of a 4-day workweek, (2) identifies creative and innovative management strategies for implementing a 4-day workweek, and (3) indicates directions for future research.*

KEYWORDS: 4-day workweek; shortened workweek; work-life balance; U.S.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, working 12-14 hours per day does not fit with the advancement of technology compared to the 18th and 19th centuries, when that was the norm. Employees need to have a balanced work-life has increased, and one way that impacts it is a shortened workweek, such as a 4-day workweek (Gross, 2018; Stronge & Lewis, 2021; Paul, 2019), a subset of the broader concept of alternative work arrangements (Bird, 2010) in which a weekly schedule is reduced to four days per week (Quiggin, 2023). In 1956, Vice President Richard Nixon predicted the shift to the 4-day workweek stating it "is not too distant future" (Brockell, 2021). In the 1970s, interest in the 4-day workweek increased for a while; however, it did not last long. Recently, primarily because of the pandemic, interest in the 4-day workweek has increased significantly (Tessema et al., 2022; Kelly, 2022) and has attracted global attention.

Some companies require employees to work 10-hour days to reach 40 hours, while others allow eight-hour days, totaling a 32-hour workweek. Workplace culture and lifestyle can affect someone's ability to remain motivated and focused. An organization must have a healthy culture because it encourages work-life balance and promotes teamwork and collaboration. The reality of a 4-day workweek is that Thursdays can become new Fridays. People may become less productive on the fourth day of work during the week so that they can start their 3-day weekend. 4-day workweeks can boost happiness and job satisfaction because an additional day off gives people more time for family, personal interests, and rest (Kelly, 2022; Baltes et al., 1999; Gross, 2018).

Presently, while many companies (e.g., Amazon, Basecamp, Bolt, Buffer, Kickstarter, Microsoft, Panasonic, and Shopify) have adopted a 4-day workweek, many countries (e.g., Ireland, Belgium, New Zealand, Japan, the UK, and Spain) have either adopted or tested a 4-day workweek. Additionally, many companies are piloting a 4-day workweek (CNN, 2022; Walker & Fontinha, 2022). Although this concept began in the 1970s (Carbonaro, 2023), it has gained momentum worldwide in recent years. During the pandemic, many countries and companies worldwide began adopting or piloting a 4-day workweek after seeing its benefits. While a 4-day workweek provides several benefits to employees, employers, and the environment (Ashford & Kallis, 2013; Baltes et al., 1999; Gross, 2018; Stronge & Lewis, 2021; Paul, 2019), it also poses challenges (Bird, 2010; Campbell, 2023). Hence, piloting a 4-day workweek before it is fully implemented is necessary.

Although many studies have been conducted on 4-day workweek-related issues (e.g., Bird, 2010; Campbell, 2023; Baltes et al., 1999; Gross, 2018; Stronge & Lewis, 2021), only a few have examined the benefits and challenges and identified creative and innovative management strategies for an effective 4-day workweek. Hence, this study discusses the benefits and challenges of a 4-day workweek, identifies critical factors for its effectiveness, and proposes creative and innovative management strategies for its effectiveness.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

This study consists of five parts. Part I introduces the study. Part II reviews the literature and discusses the benefits and challenges of the 4-day workweek. Part III discusses the research methodology. Part IV discusses creative and innovative management strategies for an effective 4-day workweek. Part V concludes and provides directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of weekly working hours and days in the United States is a complex and evolving topic affected by various economic, social, and political factors. Before the current nine-to-five workdays, from Monday to Friday, working hours were completely different from those of previous generations. In the late 17th century, when agriculture was the primary source of income for many people, they worked for approximately 12 hours per day for six to seven days a week (Jones, 1963). Even after the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, many Americans worked more than 70 hours a week, which turned into a political issue. Since then, the workweek length has decreased significantly (Whaples, 2008). Over the years, workers have protested to reduce their working hours. The first strike was in the 1790s by carpenters in Philadelphia demanding a reduction in work hours to 10 hours per day, then working for approximately 14 hours per day, six days per week (Bernstein, 1950). There were a few unsuccessful protests by shoemakers in Boston and female workers in Lowell Mills to reduce the workweek to ten hours. In the 1840s, after several movements, many states passed laws reducing the workweek to 10 hours daily. President Martin Van Buren made it mandatory for all federal employees who performed manual labor to work only 10 hours per day (Jones, 1963). In the end of the 18th century, many industries had reduced their work hours to 10 hours per day, six days per week (Stefanuk, 2020). In the 1860s, in many U.S. cities, such as Chicago and New York, workers went on strike demanding an 8-hour-a-day workweek. In 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant issued the National Eight-Hour Law Proclamation providing government employees with an 8-hour workday (Stefanuk, 2020).

During the Great Depression, U.S. workers had an approximately 30-hour workweek (Brockell, 2021). During the 1930s, many people lost their jobs, causing many companies, such as Kellogg, Sears Roebuck, General Motors, and Standard Oil, to change their working hours to six hours per day, instead of firing their employees. This helped reduce production, thus decreasing oversupply, which was the main reason for the high unemployment rate (Jones, 1963). In 1933, the U.S. Senate passed a bill to change the workweek to six hours per day and five days a week, but it was abandoned by President Roosevelt, who decided to create more jobs rather than reduce work hours. He banned child labor, set a minimum wage for employees, and set standard work hours at eight hours per day (Brockell, 2021).

In the mid-19th century, an 8-hour workday and five days a week were accepted by all U.S. companies, and the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1938. This law forced employers to

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
pay their employees overtime if they worked more than 44 hours per week, which was later changed to 40 hours in 1940 (Blakemore, 2023).

Benefits of a 4-day workweek

Benefits of a 4-day workweek for employees

There are many benefits of a 4-day workweek for employees, including better employee work-life balance, improved mental and physical well-being, reduced commute time and expenses, and increased employee morale (Bartel; 2021; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008; Grosse, 2018; Quiggin, 2023; Kelly, 2022; Walker & Fontinha, 2022). Assuming that by allowing employees to utilize the 4-day workweek model, they can return to work rested with a revitalized outlook and newfound optimism for their jobs, leading to more engaged employees (Adam, 2023).

Research conducted by social scientists from the University of Cambridge and academics from Boston College over a 4-day workweek revealed a decrease in self-reported levels of employee anxiety and fatigue while mental and physical health improved (Lewsey, 2023). Employee health has improved in numerous ways, from reducing anxiety and stress to experiencing better sleep and allowing more time for exercise (Bushwick, 2023; Chakraborty et al., 2022). To illustrate, during the study, thirty-nine percent of the surveyed employees stated they were less stressed, and the researchers found a sixty-five percent reduction in sick days.

Work-life balance has become the second top priority for U.S. employees (Kelly, 2022). Not having a work-life balance has many adverse effects, such as increased burnout and lower career satisfaction. Burnout can affect employees' physical and mental health. It can make it difficult for organizations to keep talented employees, but with proper work-life balance, employees are more likely to work with increased focus and motivation (Abend, 2023; Adam, 2023). According to Lewsey (2023), sixty percent of employees participating in a 4-day workweek have an increased ability to manage their work with their care responsibilities. Many employees also stated they used extra days off to perform everyday chores, such as shopping and household chores. Men specifically reported utilizing their newfound time to contribute to housework and childcare. Employees can use extra days off to perform everyday chores, and properly use Saturday and Sunday for leisure (Lewsey, 2023; Villegas & Knowles, 2021). A pilot study revealed that a 4-day workweek reduced employees' commuting time and expenses (Walker & Fontinha, 2022).

Benefits of a 4-day workweek for employers

Employers can benefit from a 4-day workweek because it improves recruitment and retention, employee job satisfaction, and reduces overheads and other costs (Baltes et al., 1999; Gross, 2018; Stronge & Lewis, 2021; Paul, 2019; Walker & Fontinha, 2022). Energy consumption, electricity, and equipment, such as copiers, printers, and office supplies, depreciate more slowly. Employers can also attract and retain talent because a 4-day workweek is a benefit that decreases employee turnover from being too stressed and burnt out. Companies can see a boost in productivity because

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
employees are happy with a more manageable work-life balance. Employees who work fewer hours spend less time on non-work websites because of the pressure to complete their tasks and have more time outside work (Quiggin, 2023; Villegas & Knowles, 2021).

Results and high-quality work are important and stem from people who are passionate about what they do. A boost in productivity can equate to higher performance and profitability, and a 4-day productive workweek is more effective than a 5-day workweek that drags out. People are more likely to call in with a 5-day workweek for a break; however, with a 4-day workweek, companies can choose to have Mondays or Fridays off. Panasonic introduced this so that employees have more time to enjoy living because they support the well-being of their employees (Yeo, 2022). A 4-day workweek can include four shifts of ten hours or fewer with fewer days worked. Amazon performs a compressed schedule, where the 4-day workweek is 30 hours instead of 40 hours. People will be more committed to their employers, have fewer sick days, and will be less tired. Reducing hours does not always mean reducing work and tasks; however, managers must find the correct balance. This type of workweek can be successful if employees are focused, instead of distracted. The longer an employee is at work for a day, the better the chance of connecting with other people in different time zones. Microsoft also noticed a decrease in supply and electricity costs. Giving employees flexible working hours can boost creativity and reduce time wasted in meetings (Burkus, 2017).

On the third day off, people can spend more time with their families and have personal time to focus on mental health and exercise. This type of schedule can give companies a competitive advantage in attracting talent (Abend, 2023; Agovino, 2020). If a 4-day workweek enables employees to balance work and life, their physical and mental well-being, then job satisfaction will likely improve. The better employees' well-being and job satisfaction are in good shape, the more likely they will be willing to stay with the company and be productive (Pencavel, 2014). Such situations also attract potential job applicants.

Benefits of a 4-day workweek for the environment

Impacts on the environment from working can come in many forms of carbon emissions, including pollution from transportation, waste from office spaces, power consumers, and products used to generate power (Ashford & Kallis, 2013; Rojas et al., 2022; Walker & Fontinha, 2022). A greener and more environmentally conscious world is becoming more relevant than ever, and a 4-day workweek can provide a successful approach to support this and combat climate change. A 4-day workweek can increase morale and boost productivity, and it can also be used as a strategy to reduce emissions and potentially save the planet. Many studies have been conducted with encouraging and positive results, showing how a 4-day workweek can drastically impact the environment. One study from 2012, using data from 29 member nations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found that a ten percent reduction in work hours could lead to a 12.1 percent decline in global ecological footprint, a 14.6 percent decline in carbon footprint and a 4.2 percent decline in greenhouse gas emissions (Knight, Rosa, & Schor, 2012).

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
 Introducing a 4-day workweek and the corresponding 20 percent reduction in work hours could lead to exponential results and environmental improvements.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, transit, production, and consumption halted, resulting in a pronounced beneficial impact on the environment, including reduced deforestation, noticeable air and water quality improvements, and more prominent snow areas, as seen from space in data collected by NASA and other agency satellites (Bates, 2020). These benefits can be directly attributed to the pandemic when up to 37 percent of people in the U.S. alone were working from home, contributing to a 17 percent global reduction in greenhouse gases (Shreedhar, Laffan, & Giurge, 2022). In states across the U.S., traffic levels have fallen significantly, decreasing pollution linked to automobiles, as shown by satellite images of major metropolitan areas during the outbreak (Plumer & Popovich, 2020). Emissions are gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, as seen in the following graph. This can be partly blamed for more people returning to work, as observed in the following graph:

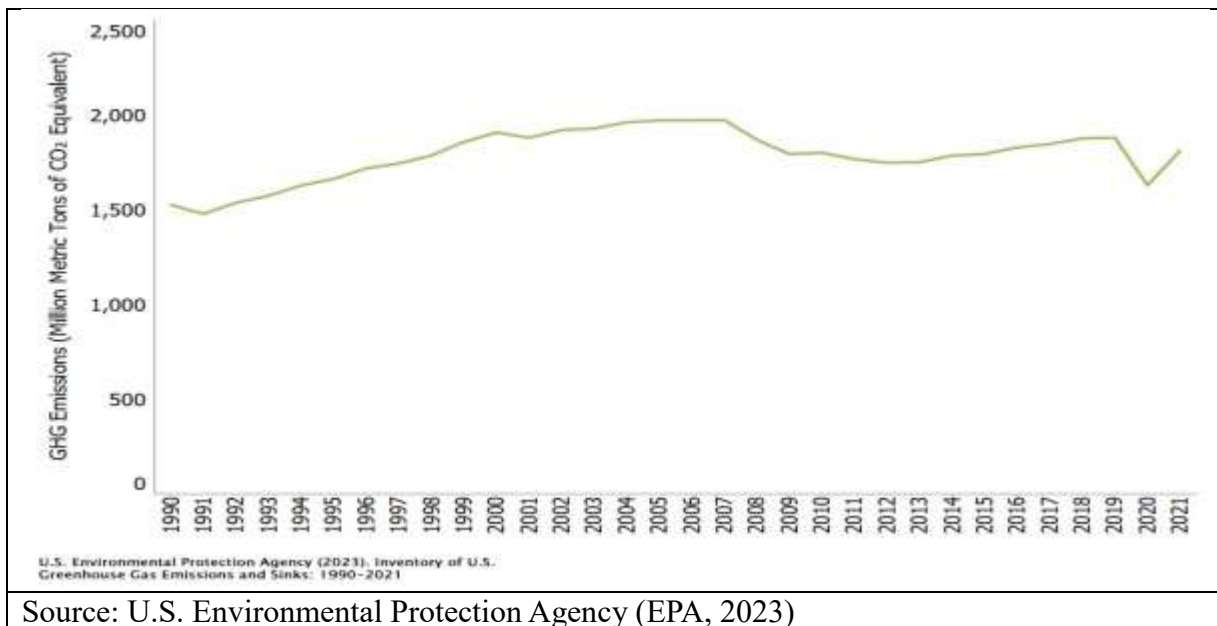


Figure 1 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Transportation, 1990-2021

U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions increased by 6.5 percent during post-pandemic times in 2021, with people returning to the office and eager to travel, which drove emissions from major sectors, including transport, industry, power, and buildings (Rivera, King, Larsen, & Larsen, 2023). Emissions tapered off in 2022, with natural gas and renewable resources progressively replacing coal for power generation to a 1.3 percent overall increase, with the culprit pollutants coming from the transport, industry, and building sectors (Rivera, King, Larsen, & Larsen, 2023). As observed

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK in Figure 2, when we return to the pre-pandemic norm, standard workweeks again become toxic contributors to the pollution emitted from buildings, the only sector to return to pre-pandemic levels and transport, the most polluting sector. The considerable rise in GHG emissions in the building sector can be related to the increased energy consumption required for heating, cooling, lighting, and electrical devices in office populations, which can be attributed to commuters and business travel.

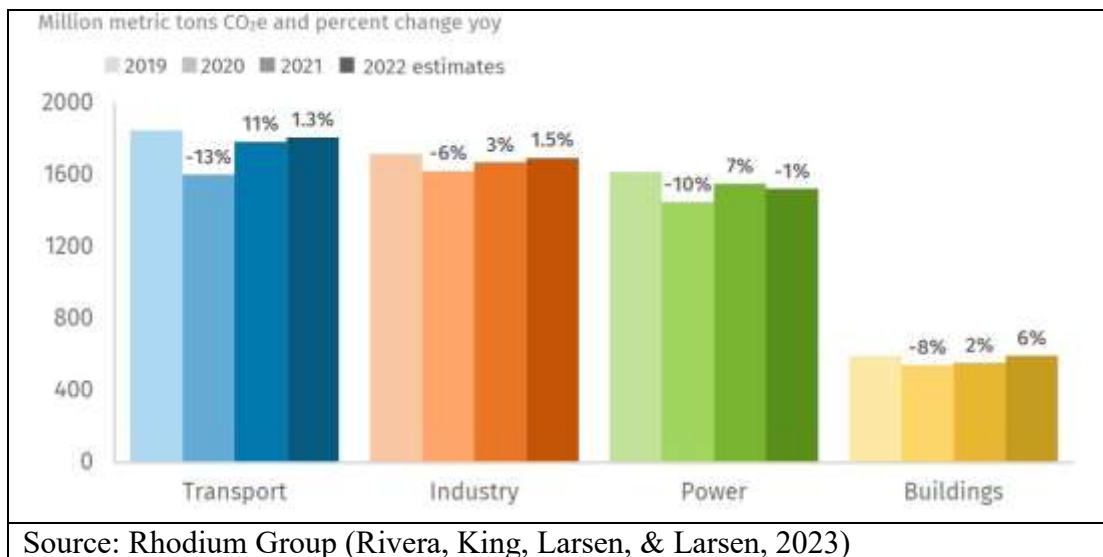


Figure 2 - Yearly Net Change in US GHG Emissions

A 4-day workweek would provide many benefits to the environment and turn an upward trend, as documented by numerous studies. In 2020, a U.S. Energy Information Administration report found that GHG emissions decreased in every major sector for the first time since 2012, and a 15 percent reduction in the transportation sector was a major driver behind this (Nakolan & Lindstrom, 2021). One would expect residential emissions to increase as more people work from home, but the residential sector will experience a 6 percent reduction by 2020 (Nakolan & Lindstrom, 2021). An emission reduction study in 2015 linking fewer emissions to fewer working hours found that a 1 percent decrease in work time corresponded to 0.7 percent and 0.8 percent reductions in energy use and GHG emissions, respectively (Nassen & Larsson, 2015). The same study found that a 1 percent increase in work hours increased energy consumption by as much as 1.3 percent (Nassen & Larsson, 2015). This is evident in research that found that if European Union (EU) countries, whose employees work 16 percent less than their U.S. counterparts, worked the same number of hours as the U.S., EU energy usage and GHG emissions would increase from 12 percent to 41 percent (Rosnick & Weisbrot, 2006). However, if the U.S. adopts a European work model with fewer work hours by shortening the workweek, it could consume approximately 20 percent less energy, directly translating to less GHG emissions (Rosnick & Weisbrot, 2006). Additionally, a

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
trial conducted in the Utah sector projected that a 4-day workweek would reduce emissions by at least 6,000 tons annually from Friday building shutdowns and another 12,000 tons from commuting, equivalent to removing 2,300 cars from the road each year (Peeples, 2009). Challenges of a 4-day workweek

Challenges of a 4-day workweek for employees

While there appear to be many benefits of moving to a 4-day workweek, there are some challenges for employees to consider by shifting to a 4-day workweek, either through a compressed work schedule with four 10-hour days totaling 40 hours per week or by moving to four 8-hour days totaling 32 hours. Some of these challenges include exhaustion, scheduling conflicts, resentment among workers who do not get the opportunity, inequality in the workplace, and pressure to complete the workload within a reduced workweek, which could lead to employee stress and burnout (Bird, 2010; Campblell, 2023).

Employees face challenges with changing work hours, moving from five 8-hour days to four 10-hour days. This schedule change could prove cumbersome for employees' home life, where childcare and school schedules typically adhere to the traditional 8-hour five-day workweek. Employees may also face challenges with less productive time overall because of the need to balance time for meetings, emails, and other work requirements. A key challenge for employees in the workplace is burnout, which has become an increasing phenomenon due to increasing workloads and intensity of work, with 67 percent of workers in 2021 reporting that stress and burnout have increased since the pandemic (Russell et al, 2022). The 4-day workweek could combat stress and burnout issues by reducing the number of days in the workweek. However, some companies may institute four 10-hour days, which could affect stress and burnout by needing to work longer days and complete the same amount of work at that time. Further, there were health concerns from the stress created by compressing five workdays into four days. Compression work could prove especially burdensome for workers already prone to overworking, which could lead to harmful health factors, such as stress (Dembe, 2019).

Employees may feel pressure to complete the same amount of work, despite working fewer hours per week. In client-facing industries, employees face balancing client needs with fewer hours devoted to scheduling conflicts. Additionally, work intensity may not decrease with a 4-day workweek, so employees face the challenge of managerial pressures surrounding performance, monitoring, and productivity. This could lead to employees taking fewer breaks and limiting "banter" or communication with co-workers, possibly stifling creativity and innovation as employees work harder to meet deadlines (Russell et al, 2022).

Moving to a 4-day workweek could also pose challenges for work-life balance, particularly by changing to a four 10-hour day schedule. Working more hours a day leaves less time for employees to spend with their families. Dembe (2019) discusses how working just two additional hours per day would limit parents' ability to be around their children during "prime time" socialization hours

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
from 5-7 pm. This scheduling conflict also poses challenges for employees with young children who require daycare or other childcare resources. Childcare and school typically adhere to the traditional 8-hour Monday through Friday schedules. Employees working extended hours must pay more to find suitable after-school childcare options, which can prove difficult. Additionally, these childcare issues could adversely affect female employees more than male employees because women often carry the burden of childcare and household responsibilities. Collins et al. (2020) studied how mothers of young children took time off four to five times more than men during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a growth in the gender gap in work hours by 20-50 percent. These numbers reflect how working mothers often bear the brunt of childcare duties, leading to reduced working hours, and ultimately, reduced pay. Changing to four 10-hour days could lead to further gender gaps in working hours and pay, as working mothers may have to adjust their schedules to address childcare needs.

Another challenge related to employees moving to a 4-day workweek is maintaining productivity with increased working hours per day in a 10-hour per day format. Working longer hours does not guarantee quality. For a 4-day workweek to be effective, employees must set performance goals and optimize their skills and strengths (Chakraborty et al, 2022). Another concern is that employees optimally use their time while working. Agovino (2020) discussed employees' two biggest time-consuming activities: checking social media and reading the news online. Additionally, she discussed how employees spend 1½ hours per day dealing with e-mails. Employees who work extended hours must know how to handle potential downtime to successfully complete their work throughout the day without distraction.

Challenges of a 4-day workweek for employers

While there are many benefits to moving to a 4-day workweek, some employers have a challenging time once they get into the details of how logistically they could make it work for their organization while supporting their customers and their bottom line (Bird, 2010). Some employers that made the switch early on have already abandoned and moved back to the original workweek, while others who made the switch struggle to continue to do so, but are still holding out in hopes that they can find solutions to the issues that have been created to better attract and retain their employee workforce.

An issue that companies have observed is the increased workload of employees. Employers and companies still have targets and metrics to achieve, which will not be reduced just because the workweek has shortened. Companies still have investors, shareholders, and creditors to whom they must report, requiring the same amount of work to be accomplished in a shorter time.

Some companies face the challenge of being unable to shut down business for a day to accommodate extra days off. Many companies run seven days a week, and when they start to factor in external participants, such as suppliers and customers, scheduling additional days off for full-

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
time employees is complicated. For most customer-based businesses, the slack created by allowing a 4-day workweek results in need for additional help.

Another challenge arises from the extra costs of hiring, training, wages, and the benefits of a new position within the organization. Even if employers are willing to pay extra for more help, they will have difficulty finding the right employee under these labor market conditions. Companies may then be forced to pay employees overtime to cover extra days to maintain their business. While, at first, it sounds like a great benefit to the employee, the company may have to raise their prices for their customers to offset costs.

Then come the legal concerns and everything done on the support side of a business, which might not be as evident when first thinking about the effects of a shortened workweek. How overtime is handled within a company may need to be addressed before moving to a 4-day workweek, particularly depending on where one lives. Suppose your company plans to move to four 10-hour workdays per week and is in a state with rules such as California or Nevada, eight hours of overtime each week for each employee have been created. These states require employees to be paid overtime for anything over eight hours daily. Employers may also want to consider revising their policies governing eligibility for leave, sick pay, time off, and other benefits, if they are based on the number of hours worked. Under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, eligibility depends, in part, on the number of hours worked (McLaughlin, 2023). In some states, such as California, legislation requires that employees have 24 hours of paid sick leave earned by the 120th day of employment (Kelly, 2022). If the company bases sick leave accrual on hours worked, the workweek goes from 40 to 32 hours. Under the current company policy, the employee may not earn enough leave in that time. Another major legal concern is the possibility of discrimination if employees are required to shift to a 4-day workweek. If the company plans to move to a four 10-hour workweek, it might have a disparate impact on parents within the company who cannot find additional childcare during the long working hours of the day. Additionally, to parents, some employees may be protected under the American Disability Act (ADA) protection and unable to work a long workday or work at a higher productivity level to achieve company goals in a 32-hour workweek. Unions also pose a hurdle, as work schedules are usually part of the collective agreement between the company and union, and any changes to them require the union's agreement.

Creative and innovative strategies for a 4-day workweek

Technological advances have enabled organizations to adapt to new working environments, including working from home and hybrid scheduling, to focus on promoting a positive work-life balance. Shifting to a 4-day workweek is possible with creative and innovative strategies designed to use employee time and resources better while maintaining business goals with strategic operations.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Organizations must strategically plan to organize the workload of employees shifting to a 4-day workweek. Managers should adopt frequent assessments, tracking, and re-evaluations to keep their eyes on business goals (Chakraborty et al, 2022). If organizations maintain the status quo of productivity, employees will feel overburdened and suffer from burnout when completing their work within a compressed workweek. Organizations must reevaluate workloads and work intensity to cater to schedule changes that may include reduced working hours.

The American workforce has been changing and focusing on employee well-being in recent years. The pandemic has highlighted the negative effects of burnout on employees and organizations. An organization that promotes employee job satisfaction and overall health can benefit from moving to a 4-day workweek to create a positive, burnout-resistant culture. Lytle (2020) noted how leaders within a business could lead with a positive example by defining what is acceptable at work, showing vulnerability that leads to employee trust, providing more positive feedback, and introducing more benefits, such as expanded leave, childcare benefits, and pay equity.

Employee productivity is hampered by distracting elements such as emails. Burkus (2016,21) found that limiting email use increased productivity and reduced stress by reducing multitasking and distraction. Organizations can benefit from adopting innovative approaches by banning or severely limiting employee email usage. The benefit of banning or limiting emails is to increase personalized communication between coworkers. Increased communication can lead to shared creativity and innovation.

Another innovative strategy to make the 4-day workweek work is job sharing, in which two employees share the responsibilities of one position. They can typically work together on a task, and there is no hindrance to finishing it on time, even when working only four days per week. Thus, the company can adjust the weekly time off for employees to ensure that someone is always working on a project. This also reduces the workload of a single employee so that they can work efficiently on the task given to them.

When companies decide whether to move to a 4-day workweek, one of their best strategies is to involve employees early in the decision-making process. The most devastating disadvantage to the switch happens when employees cannot support their workload in the new schedule or do not have “buy-in” to it affecting their quality and production. Employees were involved in fostering intrinsic motivation and finding ways to overcome the challenges of a 4-day workweek. Allowing employees to participate in the decision-making process enables their commitment to the decision as they seek ways to ensure that their decisions do not affect the company’s current performance and quality objectives.

A 4-day workweek can wreak havoc on a company if not properly implemented, and introducing something such as a 9/80 work schedule can help companies adjust and ease a permanent 4-day workweek. The 9/80 work schedule means employees work the “standard” 80 hours in two weeks,

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK but their hours are spread out over nine days with an extra day off. This schedule results in extended workdays, offering more flexibility and a better work-life balance, with an additional day off every other week. It can also create challenges for a company, such as payroll and scheduling, but trial and error is required to devise a strategy for successfully implementing a 4-day workweek. For instance, companies such as BAE Systems, General Atomics, and Lockheed Martin adopted a 9/80 work schedule, and gauging from the reviews on Glassdoor, employees appear to be content with their work/life balance, which should promote more productivity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary data were used to conduct this study. Therefore, this study is a literature review. The authors reviewed relevant articles related to shortened workweek/4-day workweek using Google Scholar and other Internet resources.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

One main goal of this study is to discuss the benefits and challenges of a 4-day workweek. To this end, this study identifies several benefits and challenges associated with a 4-day workweek. While a 4-day workweek provides benefits to employees, employers, and the environment (e.g., enabling employees to balance work life, increasing employee job satisfaction, reducing commute time and expenses, enhancing physical and mental well-being, enhancing recruitment and retention, increasing employee productivity, and lowering organizational expenses), it also poses challenges (e.g., creating scheduling conflicts, leading to exhaustion, creating resentment among workers who do not get the opportunity, and negatively impacting work-life balance). Therefore, this study concludes that the benefits can exceed costs when a 4-day workweek is properly implemented. A 4-day workweek tends to be successful when at least the following factors are in place: clear policies, procedures, and expectations for the 4-day workweek; a strong collaboration among departments; leaders' will and commitment to the 4-day workweek; a pilot study is conducted before fully implementing the 4-day workweek; there is one size that does not fit all approaches; and there are productivity-focused strategies.

This study contends that though the 4-day workweek presents some challenges for employees and employers, the numerous advantages for employees, employers, and the environment provide a strong case for companies to work toward a 4-day workweek strategically.

This study is an excellent addition to the literature on a 4-day workweek because it discusses the benefits and challenges of a 4-day workweek, identifies critical factors, and highlights creative and innovative management strategies for implementing a 4-day workweek.

Although this study is a crucial step forward in understanding issues related to a 4-day workweek, it leaves a few questions open for future research. First, this study was mainly based on the experiences of the people in the United States, and therefore, the findings may not be generalizable;

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
future studies should focus on other parts of the world or compare the United States workers' experiences with those of other countries. Moreover, future research should target companies with the 4-day workweek option and examine the benefits and challenges over time through a longitudinal study. Such research can improve our understanding of the benefits and challenges companies face with a 4-day workweek program.

REFERENCES

- Abend, L. (2023, January 19). Why 2023 could finally be the year of the 4-day workweek. New York: *Time Magazine*.
- Adam, J. (2023, February 17). *How employees and employers can thrive with a 4-day workweek*. New York: *U.S. News*.
- Agovino, T. (2020, June 20). The phenomenon of the four-day workweek. *HR Magazine*, 65, 28-36.
- Ashford N.A. & Kallis, G (2013) A Four-day workweek: A policy for improving employment and environmental conditions in Europe. *The European Financial Review*, April-May pp.53–58.
- Baltes, B. B., Briggs, T. E., Huff, J. W., Wright, J. A., & Neuman, G. A. (1999). Flexible and compressed workweek schedules: A meta-analysis of their effects on work-related criteria. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4), 496–513.
- Bartel, J. (2021, May 7). The four-day workweek merits consideration. *Forbes* (Online).
- Bates, S. (2020, December 8). *AGU panel explores environmental impacts of the COVID pandemic, as observed from space*. Washington, D.C.: NASA.
- Bernstein, L. (1950). The Working People of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the General Strike of 1835. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 74(3), 322-339.
- Bird, R.C. (2010) The four-day work week: old lessons, new questions. *Connecticut Law Review* 42(4):1059–1080.
- Blakemore, E. (2023, March 24). How America settled on a 5-day workweek. Manhattan, NY: National Geographic.
- Brockell, G. (2021, September 6). That time America almost had a 30-hour workweek. Washington, D.C.: *The Washington Post*.
- Burkus, D. (2017). Under new management: *How leading organizations are upending business as usual*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Campbell, T.T. The four-day work week: a chronological, systematic review of academic literature. *Management Review Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00347-3>
- Carbonaro, G. (2023, March 17). *America is Ready for the 4-Day Workweek*. New York: Newsweek.
- Chakraborty, D., Bhatnagar, S.B., Biswas, W., Dash, G. (2022). The subtle art of effecting a four-day workweek to drive performance. *Management and Labor Studies*, 47 (3), 275297.
- CNN (2022). *Global 4-day week pilot was a huge success, organizers say*. Retrieved on May 29, 2023, from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/30/business/4-day-work-week-results/index.html>
- Collins, C., Landivar, L. C., Ruppanner, L., & Scarborough, W. J. (2020). Covid-19 and the gender gap in work hours. *Gender Work Organ*, 28 (S1), 101-112.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

- Dembe, A. (2019, May 23). *Why a four-day workweek is not good for your health*. Columbus: Ohio State University.
- EPA (2023, April 28). *sources of greenhouse gas emissions*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Facer, R.L. & Wadsworth, L. (2008). Alternative work schedules and work-family balance. *Review of Public Personnel*, 28, 166-175.
- Grosse, R. E. (2018). *The Four Day Work Week*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jones, E. (1963). New Estimates of Hours of Work per Week and Hourly Earnings, 1900-1957. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 45(4), 374-385.
- Kelly, J. (2022). Are shorter workweeks good for business? It is better to adopt better and more efficient ways to work. *HR Magazine*, 67(4), 32-33
- Knight, K., Rosa, E. A., & Schor, J. B. (2012). reducing growth to achieve environmental sustainability: The role of work hours. *University of Massachusetts Amherst PERI - Working Paper Series No. 304*, 11-12.
- Lewsey, F. (2023, February 21). *Would you prefer a four-day working week?* Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge.
- Lytle, T. (2020). Change is the new normal. *HR Magazine*, 65, 52-57.
- McLaughlin, K. (2023, January 31). *Are 4-day work weeks right for 4 employees?* Retrieved on May 15, 2023 from <https://www.laboremploymentlawnavigator.com/2023/01/are-4-day-work-weeks-right-4employers/>.
- Nakolan, K., & Lindstrom, P. (2021, April 12). *U.S. energy-related CO2 emissions declined by 11% in 2020*. U.S. Washington, D.C.: Energy Information Administration.
- Nassen, J., & Larsson, J. (2015). Would shorter working time reduce greenhouse gas emissions? An analysis of time use and consumption in Swedish households. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33(4), 726–745.
- Paul, K. (2019, 4th Nov.). Microsoft Japan tested a four-day work week and productivity jumped by 40%. London: *The Guardian* (Online).
- Peebles, L. (2009, July 24). *Friday? The environmental and economic pluses of the 4-day workweek*. Retrieved May 6, 2023 from Scientific American from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/four-day-workweek-energy-environmenteconomics-utah/>.
- Pencavel, J. (2014). *The productivity of working hours*. Discussion paper. IZA DP No. 8129.
- Plumer, B., & Popovich, N. (2020, March 22). *Traffic and pollution plummet as U.S. cities shut down for Coronavirus*. New York: New York Times.
- Quiggin, J. (2023). Four-day week. Johnstone, S, Rodriguez, J.K., & Wilkinson, A. (edits.). *Encyclopedia of Human Resource Management* (2nd). Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Rivera, A., King, B., Larsen, J., & Larsen, K. (2023, January 10). *Preliminary US greenhouse gas emissions estimates for 2022*. Retrieved on May 24, 2023, from <https://rhg.com/research/us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2022/>.
- Rojas, C., Muñiz, I., Quintana, M., Simon, F., Castillo, B., de la Fuente, H., ... & Widener, M.

- Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK
(2022). Short run “rebound effect” of COVID on the transport carbon footprint. *Cities*, 131, 104039.
- Rosnick, D., & Weisbrot, M. (2006, December). *Are shorter work hours good for the environment? A comparison of U.S. and European energy consumption*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Economic and Policy Research.
- Russell, E., Murphy, C., Terry, E. (2022 May 27). What leaders need to know before trying a 4day work week. *Harvard Business Review* (Online).
- Shreedhar, G., Laffan, K., & Giurge, L. M. (2022, March 7). Is Remote Work Actually Better for the Environment? *Harvard Business Review* (Online).
- Stefanuk, A. (2020, September 9). The History of the 40-hour work week. Retrieved on May 24, 2023, from <https://www.actiplans.com/blog/40-hour-work-week>.
- Stronge, W. & Lewis, K. (2021). *Overtime: Why we need a shorter working week*. London: Verso, an imprint of New Left Books.
- Tessema, M., Tesfom, G., Faircloth, M., Tesfagiorgis, M., & Teckle, P. (2022). The “Great Resignation”: Causes, consequences, and creative HR management strategies. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, 10, 161-178.
- Villegas, P. & Knowles, H. (2021, July 7). Iceland tested a 4-day workweek. Washington, D.C.: *The Washington Post*.
- Walker, J. & Fontinha, R. (2022). *The pandemic and the evolution of flexible working*. A white paper from Henley Business School. Henley Business School, Reading: UK.
- Whaples, R. (2008). Hours of work in U.S. History. In R. Whaples (Ed.), *EH.Net Encyclopedia*. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse: Economic History Association.
- Yeo, A. (2022, January 10). *Panasonic is introducing an optional four-day work week*. Mashable. Retrieved on May 4, 2023 from <https://mashable.com/article/panasonic-four-daywork-week>.