

The results are in: the UK's four-day week pilot

2 years ago



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The UK four-day week report from [Autonomy](#) details the full findings of the world's largest four-day working week trial to date, comprising 61 companies and around 2,900 workers, that took place in the UK from June to December 2022

Key findings

- The design of the trial involved two months of preparation for participants, with workshops, coaching, mentoring and peer support, drawing on the experience of companies who had already moved to a shorter working week, as well as leading research and consultancy organisations.
- Companies, which included a range of organisations from diverse sectors and sizes, were not required to rigidly deploy one particular type of working time reduction or four-day week, so long as pay was maintained at 100% and employees had a 'meaningful' reduction in work time.
- Resisting the idea that the four-day week must be 'one-size-fits-all', each company designed a policy tailored to its particular industry, organisational challenges, departmental structures and work culture. A range of four-day weeks were therefore developed, from classic 'Friday off' models, to 'staggered', 'decentralised', 'annualised', and 'conditional' structures.
- The report results draw on administrative data from companies, survey data from employees, alongside a range of interviews conducted over the pilot period, providing measurement points at the beginning, middle and end of the trial.
- The trial was a resounding success. Of the 61 companies that participated, 56 are continuing with

the four-day week (92%), with 18 confirming the policy is a permanent change.

- Some of the most extensive benefits of shorter working hours were found in employees' well-being. 'Before and after' data shows that 39% of employees were less stressed, and 71% had reduced levels of burnout at the end of the trial. Likewise, levels of anxiety, fatigue and sleep issues decreased, while mental and physical health both improved.
- Measures of work-life balance also improved across the trial period. Employees also found it easier to balance their work with both family and social commitments – for 54%, it was easier to balance work with household jobs – and employees were also more satisfied with their household finances, relationships and how their time was being managed.
- 60% of employees found an increased ability to combine paid work with care responsibilities, and 62% reported it easier to combine work with social life.
- However, other key business metrics also showed signs of positive effects from shorter working hours. Companies' revenue, for instance, stayed broadly the same over the trial period, rising by 1.4% on average, weighted by company size, across respondent organisations. When compared to a similar period from previous years, organisations reported revenue increases of 35% on average – which indicates healthy growth during this period of working time reduction.
- The number of staff leaving participating companies decreased significantly, dropping by 57% over the trial period. For many, the positive effects of a four-day week were worth more than their weight in money. 15% of employees said that no amount of money would induce them to accept a five-day schedule over the four-day week to which they were now accustomed.

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Joe Ryle, Director of the 4 Day Week Campaign, said: "This is a major breakthrough moment for the movement towards a four-day working week.

"Across a wide variety of different sectors of the economy, these incredible results show that the four-day week with no loss of pay really works.

"Surely the time has now come to begin rolling it out across the country."

Charlotte Lockhart, 4 Day Week Global Co-Founder and Managing Director, said: "We're delighted to add these overwhelmingly positive results to our ever-growing evidence base in favour of reduced-hour, output-focused working. Not only do these findings demonstrate that the UK pilot programme was a resounding success, but it is encouraging to note that they largely mirror the outcomes from our earlier trials in Ireland and the US, further strengthening the arguments for a four-day week.

"While the impacts on business performance and worker wellbeing are expected and welcome, it's particularly interesting to observe the diversity in findings across various industries. These results, combined with our previous research demonstrate that non-profit and professional service employees had a larger increase in time spent exercising, while the small group of construction/manufacturing workers had the biggest reduction in burnout and sleep problems. Certainly something to explore further in future pilots."

Dr David Frayne, Research Associate at University of Cambridge, said:

“The method of this pilot allowed our researchers to go beyond surveys and look in detail at how the companies were making things work on the ground.

“We feel really encouraged by the results, which showed the many ways companies were turning the four-day week from a dream into a realistic policy, with multiple benefits. We think there is a lot here that ought to motivate other companies and industries to give it a try”.

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