



Experimenting with a 4 day week in Australasia

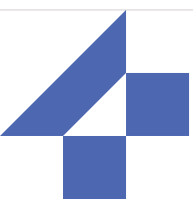
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Contents

Introduction	03
Sample information	04
Business outcomes	06
Health and well-being outcomes	08
Work-life balance outcomes	09
Environmental outcomes	10
A note from the founders	11





Introduction

Cited as one of the top reasons for optimism in 2023, the New York Times¹ believes a 4 day week should inspire hope for this year and beyond.

This is 4 Day Week Global's third set of pilot programme results, and the findings so far are extremely encouraging. From improved company retention to decreased rates of burnout, this report makes it very clear the 4 day week is a reason to be optimistic about the future of work.

The research was carried out by Professor Juliet B. Schor, Professor Wen Fan and Guolin Gu of Boston College. 4 Day Week Global is a not-for-profit organisation which runs pilot programs, works with governments to form policy and facilitates research, such as this report.

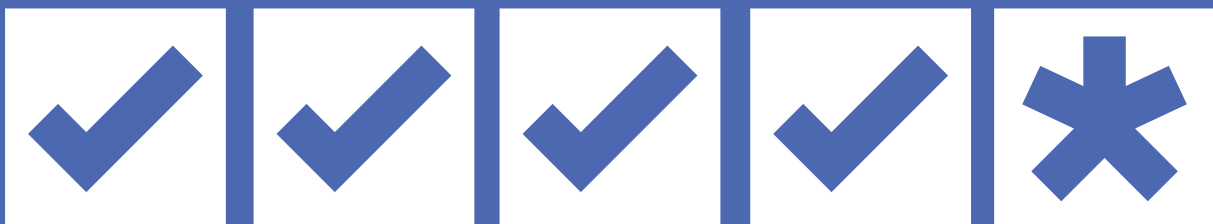
Trial format

In early 2022, 4 Day Week Global began recruiting organisations in Australasia to participate on their six-month pilot programme of a 4 day week. The design of the pilot involved two months of preparation, with workshops, coaching, mentoring and peer support once the trials got underway.

The research consists of two parts: administrative data from companies and survey data from employees. For both types of data, a pre- and post-methodology approach was employed. In the pre-trial phase, companies completed an “onboarding” survey with basic details about themselves, as well as providing six months of data to be used as a comparison, with corresponding data collected during the trial.

The employee surveys at baseline and endpoint included questions covering work experience, well-being, family and personal life, and energy use.

To participate in one of the programmes, companies were not required to institute a particular type of 4 day week. They were able to join, so long as they maintained pay at 100% and gave employees a meaningful reduction in work time.



¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/24/business/dealbook/optimisim-in-2023.html>





Sample information

In total, 26 companies participated in this pilot programme, which got underway in August 2022. The vast majority were situated in Australasia, with some organisations also based in Europe and North America (fig 1). Most (58%) of the organisations had between 11-25 employees (fig 2), with professional services, marketing/advertising and manufacturing being the most represented industries (fig 3).

In terms of how companies arranged their 4 day weeks*, the most popular approach was for all workers to not have the same

day off (41%). This could mean, for example, that each department had a different day off per week or everyone's day off rotated each month. 36% had Fridays (or mostly Fridays) off, 9% had Mondays or Fridays off, 9% had Wednesdays (or mostly Wednesdays) off, and 5% had Wednesdays or Fridays off.

758 people took part in the trial and 547 people completed both the baseline and endpoint surveys, producing a response rate of 74%. Employee findings set out in this report rely on that sample.

Figure 1

Company location

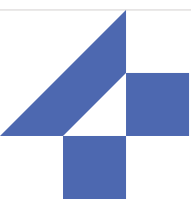
Country/Region	Number of companies	% of total
Australia	10	38%
New Zealand	9	35%
Europe	4	15%
US and Canada	3	12%

Figure 2

Company size

Employees	Number of companies	% of total
1-10	4	15%
11-25	15	58%
26-50	4	15%
51-100	1	4%
101+	2	8%

*Work time arrangement findings based on 22 responses.





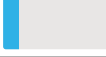

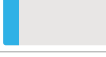
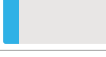
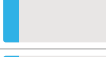

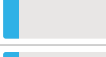



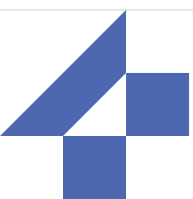


Sample information

Figure 3

Participant industries

Industry	Number of companies	% of total 
Professional Services	6	 27%
Marketing/Advertising	4	 18%
Manufacturing	3	 14%
Construction	2	 9%
Software	1	 <5%
Educations Services	1	 <5%
Health Care or Social Assistance	1	 <5%
Non-profit	1	 <5%
Real Estate	1	 <5%
Research	1	 <5%
Retail	1	 <5%





Business outcomes

Company findings

On a scale of 1-10, from very negative to very positive, 21 companies rated the overall impact of the trial an 8.2/10.

Rates of absenteeism fell significantly, with a 44.3% decline in the number of sick and personal days taken per employee per month. Average resignation rates per 100 employees fell by 8.6% (fig 4).

Companies rated the impact of the 4 day week to attract new employees at an 8.3/10, with productivity scoring a 7/10 and performance 6.8/10. As for plans post-trial, 95% of the 20 companies who indicated their intention would like to continue the 4 day week, with only one organisation not moving forward with the model.

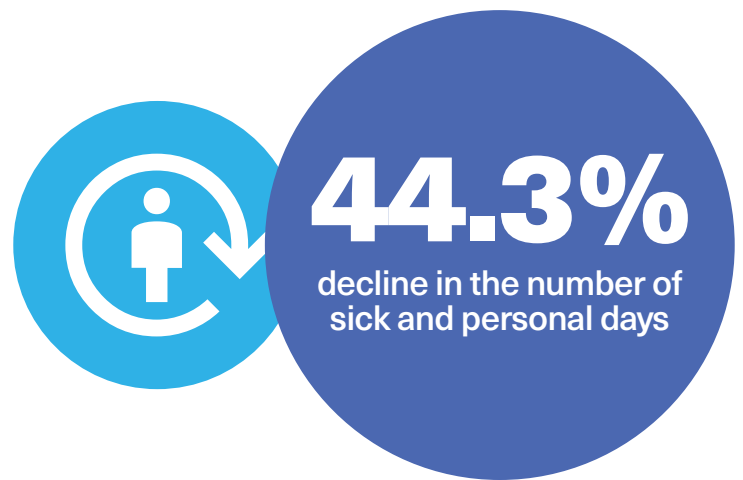
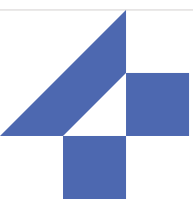


Figure 4

Metrics – Resignation and absenteeism rates

Weighted average	Comparison period	Trial period	% change	Number of companies who provided data
Resignation rate (per 100 employees)	2.44	2.23	-8.6% ↓	18
No of sick and personal days (per employee per month)	1.40	0.78	-44.3% ↓	17

“You can’t afford not to do this. You can improve productivity, improve the bottom line, improve employee well-being and improve staff attraction and retention.”
– CEO of Australian pilot company





Business outcomes

Employee findings

Employees rated the trial a 9/10, with 96% wanting to continue their 4 day week.

Meanwhile, there was a big increase in self-reported productivity, with over half (54%) of workers reporting an increase in their current work ability compared to their lifetime best.

Almost all participants (96%) reduced their worktime, with 88% getting one full additional day off per week.

When asked how much additional pay they'd require in their next job to go back to five days, 35% of employees said 26-50% more, 9% would require more than 50%, and over one in ten (11%) say no amount of money would induce them to go back to five days.



96%
of employees want
to continue their
4 day week



54%
of workers reported an
increase in current
work ability

**“No amount of money would induce
me to go back to five days”
– one in ten employees**

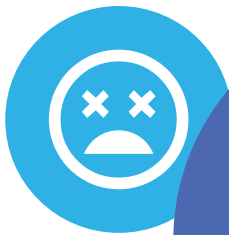


Health and well-being outcomes

Almost two thirds (64%) of employees experienced reductions in burnout, while 38% felt less stressed on a 4 day week.

Almost half of workers (49%) reported a decline in negative emotions, with positive emotions increasing for 62% of employees. Anxiety fell for a third of the sample, with significant increases observed in people's physical and mental health.

“Working a 4 day week means I’m much more focused on my family, my health, and my life in general. I take that gratitude and calm into my office and it helps me make better decisions.”
– *Pilot participant, Australia*



64%

of employees experienced reductions in burnout



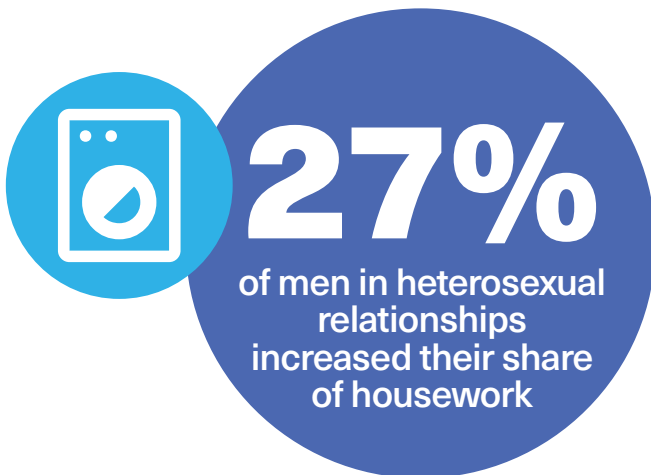


Work-life balance outcomes

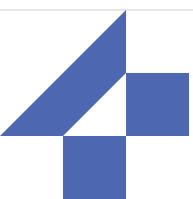
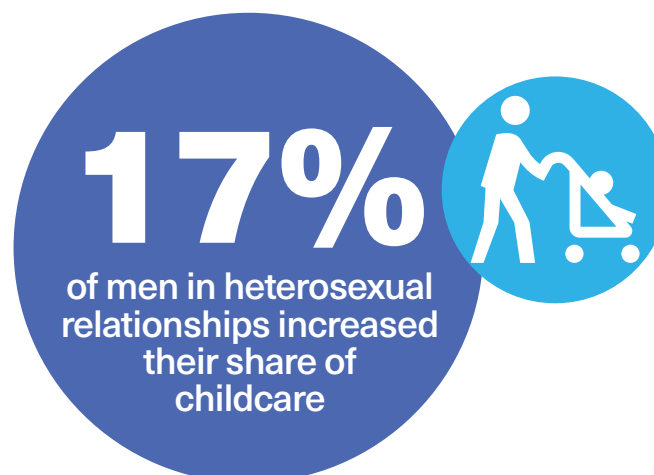
Overall, 65% of the employees were more satisfied with their time whilst on a 4 day week.

Work-to-family and family-to-work conflict declined for half the sample (49% and 48% respectively). 38% of employees were less fatigued and 35% had fewer sleep problems.

Frequency of exercise rose for more than a third of the sample (36%), while exercise duration went up an average of 20 minutes per week.



From a gender equity perspective, 27% of the men in heterosexual relationships increased their share of housework and 17% of men in heterosexual relationships increased their share of childcare, compared to 15% and 11% for women, respectively.



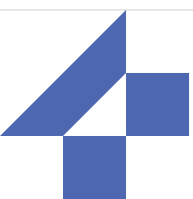


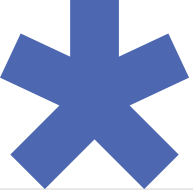
Environmental outcomes

Time spent commuting fell by a full 36 minutes per person per week during the trial.

There was also no 'travel rebound' identified, which is a common concern among critics, who assert people will increase their carbon footprint by spending their extra free time travelling.

In fact, 42% of employees did more environmentally friendly activities during the trial, such as recycling, buying eco-friendly items and walking and cycling, rather than driving.





A note from the founders

We're delighted to be back to where this all began and finally share the results of our Australasian pilot programme. In 2018, we rolled out a similar pilot in Andrew's company in New Zealand, *Perpetual Guardian*, which ultimately became the launchpad for 4 Day Week Global – so it's a full-circle moment to now be helping others in Australia and New Zealand with this transition.

As each new round of research is released, it becomes harder to deny the many benefits of reduced work time. As employers, we borrow people from their lives, and it is incumbent on us to ensure our workers don't spend any more time than is necessary away from their families and loved ones. This report clearly demonstrates a 4 day week is not only possible, but preferable. We commend each and every trail-blazing participant on this pilot and encourage others to make the leap – you won't regret it!

Thank you to our world-class academic team in Boston College, Prof. Juliet Schor, Prof. Wen Fan, and Guolin Gu for their work on this research. Thanks also to our wonderful in-house team, Dr Dale Whelehan, Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, Hazel Gavigan, Gabriela Brasil, Jack Lockhart, Nasr Bitar and Rebecca Roberts. We couldn't do this without you all.



Charlotte Lockhart and Andrew Barnes

Co-founders – 4 Day Week Global

4 Day Week Global is a not-for-profit organisation which runs pilot programs, works with governments to form policy and conducts research, such as this report.

