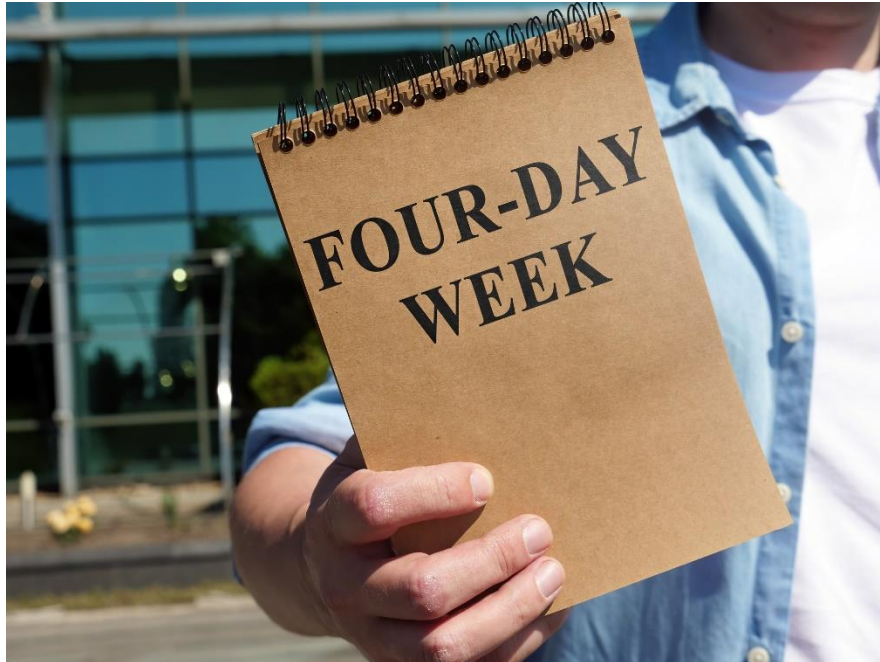


## Is a 4-Day Work Week in our Future?



Employees are beginning to feel burnt out, having a difficult time handling five days of work and only two days to catch up on responsibilities at home while also spending time with those that you love. Companies and the government are now trying to come up with a solution to handle the stress of a work-life balance in America, and what that would look like. After Covid-19, employers are realizing that if they can change where their employees work, then they can also change how much their employees' work.

### **History of the Work Week**

During the Industrial Revolution, employees would work 80-100 hours per week. After the Industrial Revolution, activists and colonists fought for change, asking the government to pass a law mandating the work week. In 1866, the National Labor Union, a newly found organization at the time, mandated that U.S. employees to only work 8 hours in a day. This began to change the scope of our "normal" work week. This led to President Ulysses S. Grant issuing a proclamation that guaranteed 8-hour workdays for government employees. This decision inspired many private-sector employees to push for the same rights.

Henry Ford is mainly credited for the 5-day 40-hour work week. Ford believed that his business ran best when his employees were there from Monday to Friday, mainly due to operations and manufacturing. During this time, this stood true and still stands true for many manufacturing jobs. Ford paid each worker \$5 per day, which was close to double what the average auto worker was making during that time. As more companies began implementing the same work week as Henry Ford, Congress decided to pass the Fair Labor Standards Act that required employees to be paid overtime if worked more than 44 hours. This eventually changed to more than 40 hours per week.

Throughout the evolution of the workweek, social norms began to change, and women began working full-time jobs. Now, in society, most households have both couples working full-time and handling their “second” shift responsibilities together, such as taking care of the kids and home. After Covid-19 sent many employees to work at home, our society is now going through a “Great Resignation.” Many women have decided to not return to work due to the workload of being a parent and a full-time employee. This has led to many women deciding to be stay-at-home moms or work remotely with more flexible hours.

### **Incorporation of the 4-Day Work Week**

U.S. Senator Sanders introduced a bill for a 4-day work week in America. This bill proposes the 100-80-100 model, which is 100% pay and 80% work in exchange for 100% productivity. Employees would be working 32 hours per week, rather than 40 hours per week without losing their pay for the fifth day of work. Companies in America have already begun some trials of this, and the results are interesting. Some companies and positions cannot handle a 4-day work week, but others transitioned into this very smoothly. It is hard to integrate a 4-day work week for construction workers during peak season, but this is an option for them in off-season, such as winter and the beginning of spring. But then we run into the problem of healthcare professionals, where they cannot necessarily incorporate a 4-day work week, especially when many physicians are even working on Saturdays. This idea may not be the perfect fit for everyone, but there may be a possibility that it is the beginning of a better work-life balance for most Americans.

Many other countries began incorporating a 4-day work week, such as Denmark and Norway, where employees are expected to only work eight hours per day in a 4-day week. Other countries also adopted this idea, but instead of completing eight hours of work per day, employees are expected to complete 10 hours of work per day within a 4-day work week. The results of a shorter work week include higher productivity, higher revenue, high quality applicant pool, lower turnover, decreased employee stress, and increased happiness. When employees were asked after the trial in America if they would return to a 5-day work week, 50% of employees

stated that they would want a 10-15% raise, 13% of employees stated that they would want a 50% raise, and 13% of employees stated that they would never return back to a 5-day work week.

In order to implement a 4-day work week, many of the tedious tasks assigned at work need to be eliminated. This means employers must be mindful of how long meetings are, the topics of discussion, and who is involved in those meetings. Employers also need to be mindful of the work being completed. This means that specific tasks should be assigned to particular employees to ensure that all the work is completed by the end of the week.



### Pros and Cons

#### Pros

- **Motivation** – The benefit of working less may motivate employees to perform better and more efficiently.
- **Cost Savings** – Due to employees not being in the office for five days, companies can expect to see lower facilities and utilities costs.

- **Less Downtime** – Companies that have trialed the 4-day work week have found that employees use fewer sick days due to having the availability to make appointments and handle important, personal activities.
- **Attracting Talent** - More and more employees are looking for a job that offers a shorter work week. Job postings for 4-day work weeks have tripled in the last 5 years, attracting many employees.
- **Retention** – When working a 4-day work week, employees are less likely to experience burnout and focus more on their well-being.

### *Cons*

- **Coverage** – Many businesses can't shut down for one day during the week. This means that half of the employees would need to take off Monday and the other half would need to take off Friday. This can make emergency meetings difficult due to the possibility of half of the employees being gone.
- **Reduced Work** – While most organizations have seen productivity rise after implementing the 4-day work week, there is still a chance that productivity may sink. This will depend on the type of organization and the commitment and maturity level of the team.
- **Compensation** – Salaried workers should be expected to perform and produce at the same level as their traditional schedule. However, this schedule may affect hourly workers. If hourly workers cannot finish their work in that amount of time, then they may need to be paid overtime for either staying later or coming in on their day off.
- **Added Stress** – Holding onto the benefit of having an additional day to your weekend may mean that there is more stress at work to ensure that you don't lose your "off" day.
- **More Work for Others** – 4-day work weeks can add more tasks, especially to managers. Managers will spend more time scheduling meetings, client contracts, and group tasks when employees are not in the office. Managers will also have to keep a close eye on overtime, project management, and performance.
- **Might Not Work for Every Employee** – There may be departments in your company that cannot handle a 4-day work week, such as employees on the front line or in manufacturing. This may cause resentment if office employees begin a 4-day work week.

Some state, including California, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Washington, are interested in implementing a shorter workweek after seeing its success in the UK trials. Apr 1, 2024

When working 4 days, employees will typically be scheduled for four 8-hour days (32 hours per week) or four 10-hour days (40 hours per week).

A 4/10 work schedule-otherwise known as a compressed schedule is when employees work a full 40 hours a week but in 4 days instead of 5 days. This means they'll work 10 hours a day for 4 days instead of 8 hours for 5 days. These compressed schedules aren't just for 9-5 office spaces.

What could a four-day work week mean for my paycheck?

Here's the good news: If you're a salaried employee, a four-day work week would likely mean you get more time off while receiving the same pay. In other words, no change to your regular paycheck. If you're an hourly employee, here could be changes to overtime pay.

66% of employees see a shorter workweek as an attractive job perk. 77% of employees express greater loyalty to employers who offer a 4-day workweek. 93% of employees in trial programs prefer the 4-day workweek. 59% of employees find more time for personal development within a 4-day week. It's been proven time and time again the employees are more efficient and effective while when working a 4-day work week. Definitely, something to consider!

**The four-day workweek is gaining momentum.** Thirty percent of large U.S. organizations are exploring new work schedules, such as four-day workweeks, according to KPMG's 2024 U.S. CEO Outlook Pulse Survey. May 6, 2024

August 29, 2024; Kaitlyn Keenan, McGregor Marketing/Communication Intern,  
Lee Ann O'Brien, CMO, McGregor

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