

# South Africa

A 4 Day Week Pilot Program  
**Report of Results**

November 2023

# South Africa Country Pilot - An unexpected success story

Contrary to initial skepticism, the 4 Day Week Pioneer Pilot in South Africa has defied expectations, emerging as an unexpected success story. The South African pilot is the first one to take place in a developing country and is the first African country pilot.

## A note from 4 Day Week South Africa Global Head of Partnerships



### Karen Lowe

Cape Town, South Africa

We seized our 'Moonshot Moment' to be the first African country to trial the 4 day workweek—an initiative met with much skepticism and frequent debate about its viability in South Africa. What we've experienced is a pioneering moment on the African continent. Our journey reveals success, despite numerous challenges facing South African employers and employees. The visionary companies that joined us have not only contributed to the success but have also laid the groundwork for further experimentation and research. I take immense pride in their forward-thinking commitment and I am grateful to everyone that has supported the pilot. Today, we can proudly guide South Africa and others into a new era of flexible and sustainable work.

***Listen to Karen and Dale introduce you to the research by watching below:***



## A note from 4 Day Week Global CEO



### Dr. Dale Whelehan

Kildare, Ireland

It is with immense pride and excitement that we present this landmark report on Africa's inaugural exploration of the 4 day week — a concept that has transcended borders and captured the imagination of workplaces worldwide.

This research represents a pivotal moment not just for South Africa, but for the entire continent and global community. While there were some deviations from trends observed in other regions, the vast majority of findings were consistent with prior research, demonstrating this is a universally beneficial policy.

As you delve into the following pages, I invite you to consider the implications and opportunities that lie ahead. The 4 day week is not merely a shift in schedule, but a catalyst for a new era of work-life balance. Together, we are shaping a future where work is not just a means to an end but a fulfilling and sustainable part of our lives. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

# Contents

*This is an interactive report. Click on the sections below to discover.*

<b>1</b>	Leading the Research & Academic Insights	4
<b>2</b>	Pilot Participant Demographics	7
<b>3</b>	The Results	10
<b>4</b>	Qualitative Analysis	17
<b>5</b>	Closing Remarks from our Founders	25

# **1** **Leading the Research & Academic Insights**

# Leading the Research

This research was conducted by Boston College, with local support and coordination in Stellenbosch University, South Africa.



## Prof. Juliet Schor

Boston College,  
USA



BOSTON  
COLLEGE

Juliet Schor is an economist and Professor of Sociology at Boston College. Schor's research focuses on work, consumption, and climate change. She has been studying working time since the 1980s. In 1992 she published *The Overworked American: the unexpected decline of leisure*, which became a national best-seller. Since 2021 she has been a lead researcher for 4 Day Week Global's work time reduction trials. She is particularly interested in barriers to work time reduction, the connections between working hours and carbon emissions, the well-being impacts of work time reduction, and how companies are implementing 4 day weeks. Her TED talk "The Case for the Four Day Week" can be found [here](#). Schor can be found @JulietSchor.

Her team members are Prof. Wen Fan Guolin Gu.



## Prof. Mark Smith

Stellenbosch Business School,  
South Africa



Stellenbosch  
Business School  
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Mark Smith is Professor at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He has worked in three triple-accredited business schools in three different countries while also conducting research for various international bodies. He is outgoing Director of Stellenbosch Business School and former Faculty Dean at Grenoble Ecole de Management (France). He also worked at Manchester Business School (UK). His research interests focus on careers and labour market policy, and outcomes for women and men including interests in working conditions, working time, and work-life integration.

His team members are Angus Bowmaker-Falconer, Charlene Gerber, Hellen Kadandara, Thato Matsoso, Tasneem Motala, Marius Ungerer, and Natasha Winkler-Titus.

# Academic Insights



**Prof. Mark Smith**  
Stellenbosch Business  
School, South Africa

## A note from the local Research Lead in South Africa

"The 4 day week is one of the most significant organizational innovations of recent years since it brings the rare combination of offering benefits for employees and employers through improvements in well-being, productivity and work organization. It is exciting to see South African results showing similar benefits to those we observe elsewhere around the world while also having unique aspects that make us excited for its potential for future participants and the wider economy."



**Prof. Juliet Schor**  
Boston College, USA

## A note from the Research Lead for 4 Day Week Global

"This is a landmark trial, as it is the first to be held outside the wealthy nations of the North. The results have been impressive. While hours didn't fall by the full eight per week, employees did see improvements in virtually all our measures of well-being, stress, burnout, fatigue, anxiety, mental health, work family balance, sleep problems and exercise frequency. One of the strongest results is a large improvement in self-reported productivity, without much increase in work intensity. Most employers are planning to continue with the four day schedule. If our prior results are any guide, working hours will fall even more and the benefits will show up as even bigger improvements in well-being and performance."

# 2

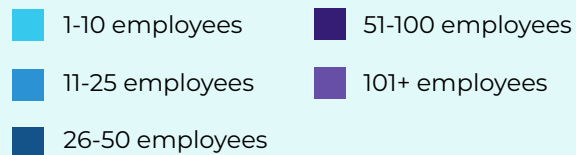
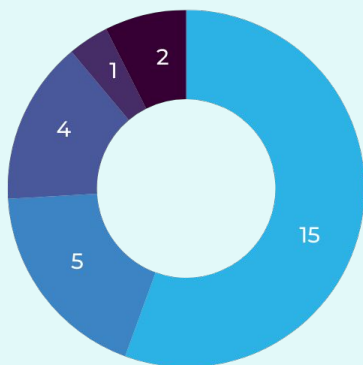
## Pilot Participant Demographics

# Pilot Participant Demographics

The first South African 4 day week trial took place for a period of six months from March to August in 2023. Baseline data was collected by the research team in March and endpoint data in September. The pilot participants were recruited prior to the trial and went through a planning and work-practice reorganization phase, coordinated by 4 Day Week Global, which involved two months of workshops, coaching, mentoring and peer support.

27 companies were based in South Africa and one was based in Botswana. The demographics of those organizations are outlined below. 470 employees participated in the trial, with 61% of those responding to both baseline and endpoint surveys. All employee statistics are based on that sample, unless otherwise stated.

## Company Size\*



\*n = 26 as two companies stopped the trial midway.

## Breakdown by Industry



'Social' refers to social services and law enforcement.

'Other' refers to all other services except public administration.

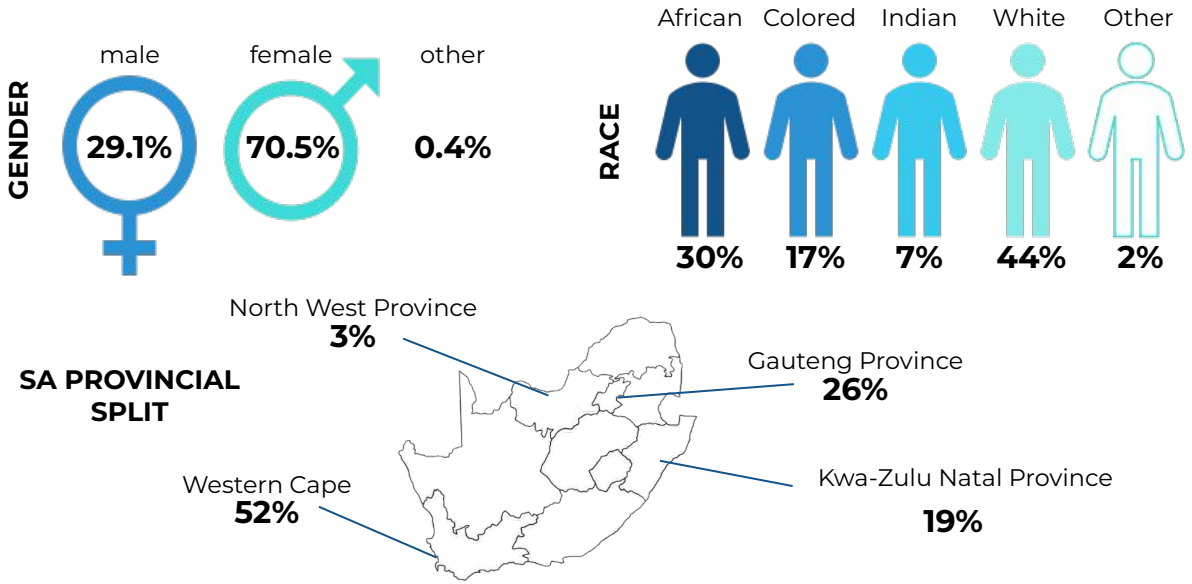
'Healthcare' refers to healthcare or social assistance organizations.

These three categories each contain one organization.

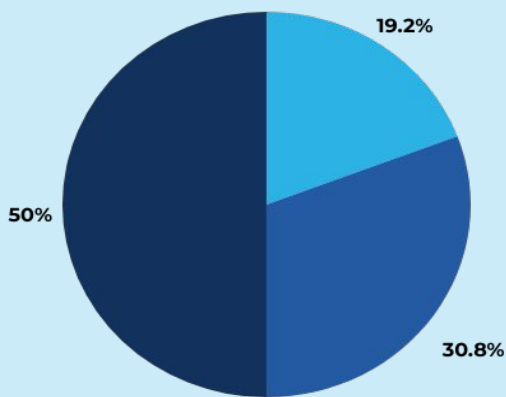
'Finance' refers to Finance and Insurance industry organizations.



### Demographic Variables



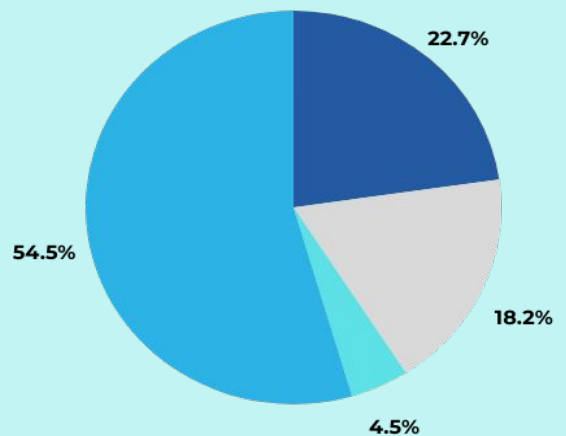
### Work Location Breakdown



- Fully in-person
- Fully remote
- Hybrid

Hybrid working is the most popular breakdown for participants in the South Africa 4 day week pilot.

### Worktime Reduction Breakdown



- No designated day off or flexible arrangement
- Friday
- Monday or Friday
- Wednesday or Friday

South African organizations were more innovative in their approach to work-time reduction and more flexible in allowing their employees to choose the day or times which best suited their needs whilst also ensuring their business' needs were met.

# 3 The Results

# South Africa Pilot Results

28

pilot  
companies

22

final survey  
respondents

8/10

trial rating by  
participants

92%

definitely going to  
continue the 4 day  
week or considering it



IMPACT ON  
BUSINESS  
OUT OF 10

7.1

impact on  
**company  
performance**

7.7

**overall** impact  
on company

7.5

impact on  
**productivity**



IMPACT ON  
HEALTH

57%

of participants  
experienced a  
**reduction in  
burnout**

36%

of participants  
experienced a  
**reduction in  
fatigue**

35%

of participants  
increased their  
**time spent  
exercising**



IMPACT ON  
WELL-BEING

47%

of participants  
experienced an  
**increase in  
work-life balance**

59%

of participants  
experienced an  
**increase in  
satisfaction with  
time**

35%

of participants  
experienced an  
**increase in  
mental health  
well-being**

## Starting the trial

The trial commenced when there were five consecutive weeks with public holidays in South Africa, meaning pilot participants were working a 4 day week anyway.

### Pilot Participant

*“It was quite fun. It wasn't a 4 day work week for me until June because I had to put some overtime in just to make sure the system is up and running. It's been a bumpy road from the start, but then as we went down the months and things were settling down at the office, it was very nice.”*

(Case 7, Employee 1)

Pilot participants **reduced** their work time during the trial period, however in comparison to other pilots, the reduction wasn't as significant.



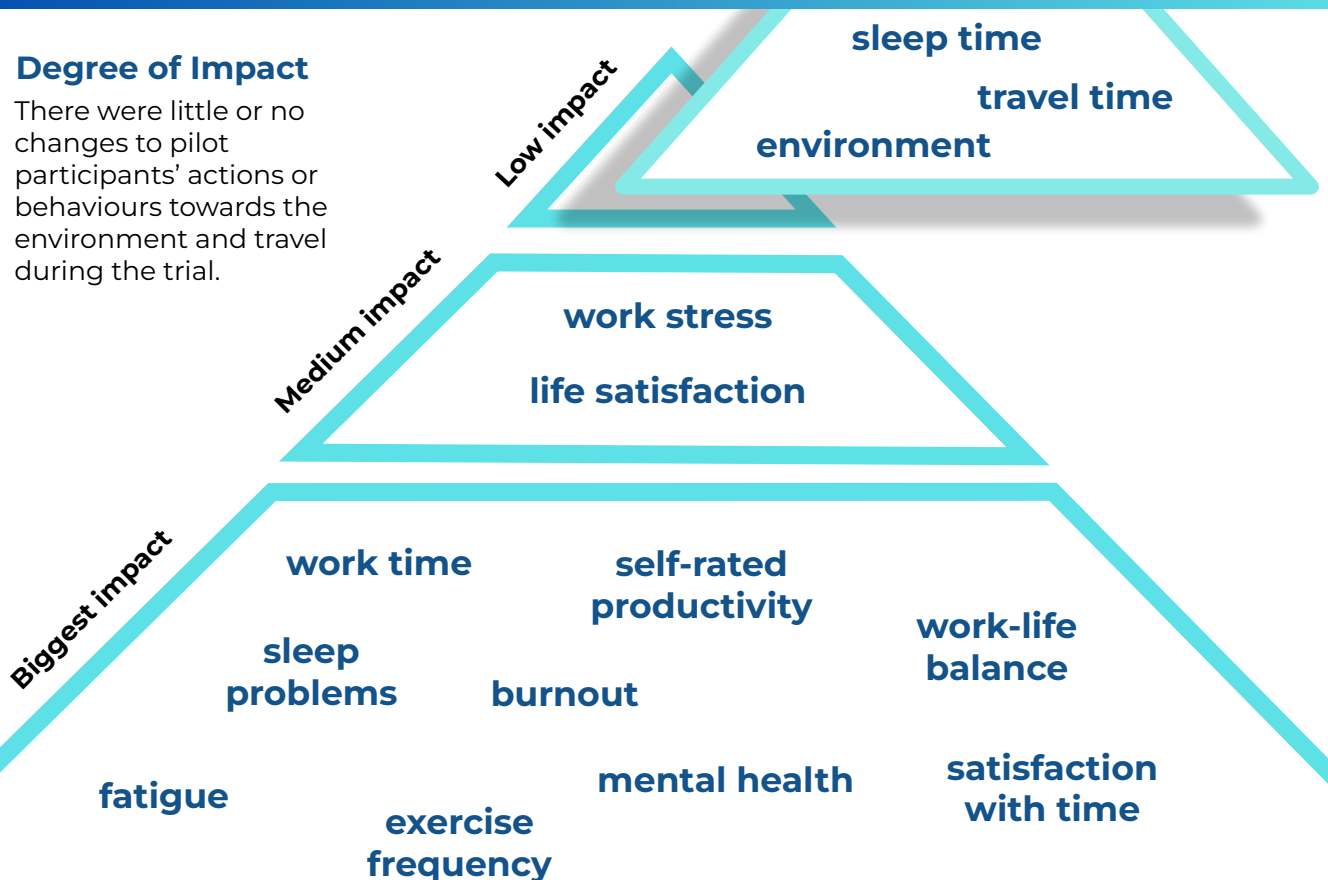
**64%** of people reported a **reduction** in **work time**.



**57%** of participants reported a **decrease** in **the number of days** they worked per week.

## Degree of Impact

There were little or no changes to pilot participants' actions or behaviours towards the environment and travel during the trial.



# Results in Detail

## BUSINESS BENEFITS

### REVENUE

**10.5%** average increase in revenue over the course of the trial period.



There was a significant increase in revenue over the course of the pilot. 13 of the 21 organizations reported their revenue both before and after the trial period. There was a 10.5% increase in revenue, weighted in accordance with company size.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES



*There is a lot more passion and I can definitely say a bit better work ethic that has stemmed from the 4 day week."*

(Case 22, Employee 3)

The 4 day week is more than simply working fewer hours. In advance of the trial, organizations underwent a significant review in the way they operated to achieve the same – or more – in less time; working smarter, not longer. Two months of workshops, coaching, mentoring and peer support pre-trial motivated owners, managers and employees to eliminate inefficiencies and enhance processes through a shared commitment to successful and sustainable change.

The changes to work organization included more structured focus periods throughout the day, shorter and fewer meetings, better communication, real-time sharing of work status, delegation, enhanced autonomy for employees, and automation. Interestingly, Many organizations used the opportunity to better deploy existing technology for routine tasks or to quickly implement technologies to assist with these matters. The technology was often well received, as it was seen as a means to improve productivity and thus support the continuation of the 4 day week. This employee illustrates the point :



*We started using [this software] and so far it's been a massive help on this because we were struggling with software like that for a long time until [this software] came along, and it's just made our work a lot easier."*

(Case 11 , Employee 2)

### PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity was positively impacted by the trial, both from an employee and company perspective. **The trial's impact on productivity was scored a 7.5/10 by business leaders.** Self-rated productivity was the most significant change in the job conditions and attitudes measurements. Almost half (49%) of employees reported an increase in productivity. This was significant given that 39% reported no change to their work intensity (25% reported a decrease while 35% reported an increase).

**Almost half** of employees reported an **increase in productivity** during the trial.





*They came back with new energy. They came back, willing to work. They came back revived and willing to give their level best.*

*The performance is better and it's also because our employees are motivated."*

(Case 1, Manager 1)

**Almost half (49%) of participants said their work ability increased during the trial**, with only 2% reporting a decrease. 62% reported an increase in work pace, meaning they were completing tasks more efficiently. 31% perceived an increase in workload, while 65% reported no change. **58% experienced an increase in creativity at work.**

### Employee sentiments on monetary value of the 4 day week trial

**90%** want to continue the 4 day week.

**Over half (51%)** would require a 21-50% pay increase to go back to a 5 day week at their next job.

**13%** say that **"no amount of money"** could induce them to go back to a 5 day schedule.

## ATTRACTING TALENT & ATTRITION

The trial was reported to have a positive impact on recruitment for participating companies, with an **average score of 7.9/10 given on its ability to attract new employees.**

Companies rated the trial a **7.9/10 for attracting new talent.**



**Resignation rates decreased by 11%** during the trial weighted in accordance with company size.

**The number of sick and personal days taken by employees also decreased** during the trial, with a 9% weighted decrease in absenteeism.

Managers reported a change in retention in their organizations during the trial. One company, who experienced very poor retention due to the nature of their sector (they only ever had a six-month period where there were no vacancies in the history of the organization), experienced a significant uplift in their ability to recruit talent during the trial. They were able to attract two new hires from competitors, enticing these employees with their 4 day week policy.

Another account from a pilot organization found that an employee who was about to be poached by a competitor decided to stay in their original company because of the 4 day week policy, despite the new role offering better pay.



*One of our potential customers tried to pinch him and they offered him quite a bit of more salary than we offering him and he said no, he's going to stay because [of the] 4 day work week, or that's one of the factors that made him stay".*

(Case 14, Manager 1)

# Results in Detail

## BENEFITS BEYOND BUSINESS



*It really helped me in my mental health and it helped me in my physical health because I kept getting sickly and my sick days actually reduced from last year."*

(Case 7, Employee 1)

**59%** of employees reported an increase in their **satisfaction with time.**



## EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Employee well-being was measured subjectively. One of the most significant changes was **increases in work-life balance, with 47% of participants reporting an increase during the trial period.** They were also much more satisfied with their time, with 59% reporting an increase. 42% reported their life satisfaction to have increased, with over a third (35%) reporting an increase in their mental health.

Managers confirmed this impact on employee satisfaction, which was further reinforced in subsequent interviews with employees at the end of the pilot.

Between satisfaction with working environment, the balance between work and life outside work, and also wellbeing, a number of managers noted a clear change in behaviours and attitude.



*[The 4 day week] is a great way to create work-life balance and ensure that your employees have some extra time every week to do things that energise them".*

(Case 18, Manager 2)

## STRESS & BURNOUT

**A third of participants experienced a decrease in work stress** during the trial period, with **rates of burnout dropping for 57% of people.** This is despite an increase in workload for 31% of the sample.

Participants also reported an increase in creativity at work (58%) and work ability (49%).

**Creativity at work increased for 58% of people** during the trial period.



*"Morale is at an all-time high at the moment and people have the opportunity to run errands, like go and have their eyes tested for drivers licences."*

(Case 29, Manager 1)

## SLEEP

Three metrics were measured in relation to sleep. **Fatigue was reported to have decreased for 36% of the cohort**, with no change reported by 46%.

**A third of participants reported experiencing less sleep problems during the trial**, and **36% reported that they slept more hours**, while 41% reported that their sleep time remained the same.

**Time spent sleeping** was reported to have **increased for 36%** of people during the trial.



*We were very excited. As an elderly person - because you tend to tire easily - and you want to add some more rest or sometimes to do things that you don't get time for.*

(Case 23 , Employee 1)

## EXERCISE

There was a reported **increase for 35% of people in how frequently they exercised** during the trial period.



However, they reported little to no change in their physical health as a result of the shorter work week.

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Just over half (51%) of the pilot participants said they increased the amount of leisure travel during the six-month period.

Unlike other country trials, there was little to no change in childcare costs. Usually people with these costs save money on childcare when a 4 day work week is adopted, as they have more time to dedicate to childcare when they are not working.

Childcare costs were not impacted by this trial.



## SUSTAINABILITY

This is perhaps the area where the biggest difference is seen between the South African pilot results and more developed country results. There was no change observed in the amount of time spent by participants volunteering to help the environment. Both domestic and international travels also saw little change.





# 4 Qualitative Analysis

# Qualitative Insights

## A 4 Day Vision

Implementing a significant change to the way an organization works such as the 4 day week is not an easy task. Organizations and their managers faced challenges as they explored different options and pathways to achieve reduced working time. It is useful to think of the transition for reduced working time as a journey that has some challenges along the way, but for most organizations the end destination was considered worth it.

One of the key aspects was a clear communication of the rationale for the change to all internal stakeholders. The management buy-in at the outset was important. Not all organizations communicated to their external stakeholders that they were part of the trial as they were concerned clients might act adversely prior to seeing operations continued as normal.

Overall we found organizations were motivated by concerns for employee well-being, work-life integration, and concerns around recruitment and retention of talent in their expressed rationale for participating in the project.



*It felt like a risk that could make us better and I think that's the main thing is that it made it feel that we could have happier people, happier people are better performers and that's what I think got us excited about it. (Case 4, Manager 1)*

by  
**Mark Smith**

Stellenbosch Business School, South Africa



*Yeah, I think they were happy because it means that somebody is thinking about their well-being and is noticing and seeing them, seeing the hard work they put in, seeing the stress they're under". (Case 2, Manager 1)*

Addressing the challenges facing certain occupations that were stressful or creative or in demand was another key driver. There were a few organizational leaders that considered a 4 day week as a more holistic approach to rethinking the position of work in wider society and the need to develop a better global balance in the modern economy. This more existential consideration was captured by this manager:



*"The expectations of the clients are out of sync and the delivery outputs of the agency are not in line. And I think we're bringing in, burnt out stressed graduates into a burnt out, stressed industry vertical and it needs to change."*

(Case 17, Manager 1)

Others went further and underlined how time was the new commodity that needed to be considered as rare for employees.

## Implementation of the 4 day week

Overall, we found that there were few organizations that worked a 4 day week in the way that it is often assumed by the wider public: Closing on a Friday. We found organizations were able to maintain five-day and even continuous operations with a diversity of working arrangements across the week. There were a variety of models in use as one employee pointed out:



*Yeah, I think that's quite the beauty of this whole experiment, seeing how everyone in the industry manages in their own way and how they implement different structures to make sure everything still keeps on working."*

(Case 14, Employee 1)

These temporal arrangements were complemented by explicit consideration of days when everybody was present or available in order to maintain organizational cohesiveness. In reality, post-covid flexible working arrangements had already established some of these practices and managerial responses to maintaining social links in their organizations.

For the organizations succeeding in implementing the 4 day week, there is clearly a boost in productivity as employees and the organisation as a whole achieve the same (or even more) output with reduced working times. This tends to be achieved through the reorganization of work, a focus on using time productively, and better use of technologies. Most organizations retained the option to work normal hours during busy periods or if/when there was urgent issues but in reality, among the successful companies, this was rarely used.

Nevertheless the concept that the 4 day week was something to be maintained rather than a right was a clear motivator.

The productivity increases of the successful companies mean that for a country like South Africa, with very high levels of unemployment and low levels of formal employment, the 4 day week should not be thought of as a policy or practice to address job shortages. It is certainly a means to improve low levels of productivity, particularly in service activities where productivity is difficult to measure and productivity gains hard to implement.

Indeed some organizations actually reported more productive and successful periods than the equivalent period of the preceding year. While this does not mean the 4 day week made the organizations more successful per se, it does demonstrate that some organizations were able to grow and expand sales while using the 4 day working week models i.e. it is not necessarily a constraint on growth for these organizations. However, there are limits and the 4 day week is not a panacea for simply having too much work as one manager describes:



*So do I feel a bit more burnt out and do I feel a bit more pressure? Yes, but again, it's not necessarily because of the 4 day week ... because of all of it. It's just again there's a growth every year and each one of those growth spurts, it's additional pressure... but the team is in a better space, they thinking about their work more intentionally, they seem happier."*

(Case 11, Manager 1)

## More than Reduced Working Time

The consequences for the employers and organizations of the 4 day week were both direct and indirect. There were indirect effects in the sense of promoting greater well-being and work-life integration of their employees which has the benefits of more rested, focused and calm employees. As one manager describes it:

*They came back with new energy. They came back, willing to work. They came back, revived and willing to give in their level best. The performance is better and it's also because our employees are motivated, you know, having to get an extra day off on his own in some sort of a motivation for our employees."*

(Case 1, Manager 1)

And employees noted this effect too:

*And so definitely there is a lot more passion and I could, I can, definitely say a bit better work ethic that has stemmed from the 4 day workweek."*

(Case 22, Employee 3)

There was also positive direct effects in terms of team cohesion and sense of purpose to make the project work. Furthermore some organizations that had struggled with recruitment and retention reported fewer problems. A number of managers went further and pointed out the fact they worked 4 days was now part of their Employee Value Proposition (EVP) for both retention and future recruitment. This manager captures that reflection:

*So if we have recruitment in this time, it is something that people will find attractive. It is something that, you know, actually overrides lower pay than in the corporate space. It is that flexibility and different way of working that is something that's attractive that would allow people who might not have, you know, previously considered working at a company like us and actually say this is a place I'd like to be involved."*

(Case 2, Manager 1)

These qualitative results seem to support that one of the stated rationales for talent retention was being achieved. Yet the benefits also extend to employees, as we have seen elsewhere in the world.

## Employee Benefits

The benefits of a better work-life integration meant employees had more time to do activities outside work. It was interesting to observe the wide variety of activities employees were doing with their free time.

Some might be considered productive or socially important while others simply relaxing and enjoyment – the important aspect being that employees were engaged in alternative activities that seemed to provide rejuvenation or reduce the feeling of being rushed to get everything done.

Some managers and owners were unable to take the free day as a day off but nevertheless appreciated quiet time to focus on deep work or longer-term projects.

Those managers who were able to take the time off often planned events for leisure commitments to ensure they made the time. Or they simply enjoyed a bit more flexibility which enabled them to spend more time with their family and be part of day-to-day household activities.

There was evidence among both employees and some managers of people benefiting from what some called “me time”. By this, we mean employees would spend time doing things for themselves. It was notable that women with young children for example would catch up with activities that were not possible when they were caring for children on the weekends.

Similarly, “me time” also included opportunities to relax by gaming, catching up on tv series, playing sports or simply sleeping in – all of these were regarded as positives that led to better well-being. Others found time to invest in education through part-time or distance courses and one person was writing a novel.



*I am a full time correspondent student and I work an eight to five job, so that's something that requires a lot of time and my personal life was I don't want to say suffering but it was lacking time for myself and to do the things that I like to do that are not work or school related.”*

(Case 23, Employee 2)

Those employees with children clearly spent more time with their families. This was notable for both male and female employees, although more marked for women. For all, there was widespread appreciation for the possibility to be more engaged in

family life, particularly for fathers with their kids or both women and men with older parents, and to enjoy quality time in a less-rushed manner.

But care is not only for children, particularly in a country where intergenerational caring responsibilities are high. For example:



*I would spend every Friday with my grandmother... and now ... [the 4 day week] gives me that ability to spend more time with her to have lunch with her on Friday.”*

(Case 22, Employee 4)

Meanwhile, mothers seem more likely to express an appreciation for a less hectic pace of integrating work and family. Since South Africa has a rather unequal division of labour in the home, the double burden felt by women is significant. These examples illustrate the pressure women face:



*As a mom and a daughter you always have to be there for everybody else and you put yourself totally last on the list. It [4 day week] makes you feel more relaxed, more comfortable, you feel you have achieved something for yourself.”*

(Case 23, Employee 1)

But not all women want to spend more time at home with their children, which underlines the diversity of experiences and needs of modern employees. One manager reported that a colleague had opted to remain working five days:



*[She] might be the only person in the agency that said: "Thanks, but I don't want to be home an extra day of the week because I don't want to look after my child an extra day."*

(Case 4, Manager 1)

One of the unique characteristics of the South African context is the number of people who have side hustles or embryonic entrepreneurial activities alongside their normal job. This was generally regarded as positive or at least normal. One employer organised the 4 day week schedule for their employee in order to permit that person to have a regularity to their time off for their entrepreneurial project. Most managers were relaxed about the possibility of employees working on other projects either in the same or different fields. For example:



*What it does is it actually makes them better creatives and it gives them some more exposure to the outside world. So 100%, we did actually encourage them and said use this for your side hustle, use that day for your freelance work, enjoy it."*

(Case 4, Manager 1)

For some managers there was a concern that employees may be "moonlighting" in their free time but most saw a benefit in the employees having time to explore a new professional activity while remaining engaged in their organization – the alternative being they may choose to leave for an organization more relaxed about the side hustle.

Another element of South African life is the time and energy to deal with some administrative activities since the online possibilities with public administration are limited. This manager alludes to this here, in relation to driving licences that need to be regularly renewed:



*Definitely morale is probably I have to say at an all-time high at the moment and people have opportunity to run errands, to go and have their eyes tested for drivers licences."*

(Case 29, Manager 1)

There is also the challenge of travel arrangements in a country that has poor public transport, problems of traffic congestion, or where individuals relocate from rural areas to urban areas for employment. This employee quote illustrate some of the South African specific challenges that are eased by the 4 day week:



*Last year, sitting in the traffic to get to the offices, then spending eight hours at the office and then coming travelling back home... so I basically spent like plus minus 12 hours on the road at work. Kind of away from home, so half of my day used to be dedicated to my job, and by the time I reached home I didn't have enough energy in me to be with my family or to be with my daughter."*

(Case 7, Employee 1)

## The 4 Day Week needs Leadership

It is evident from our work with the pilot organizations in the 4 day week trial that successful implementation does not happen without deliberate action – it takes leadership and commitment to roll out new flexible working arrangements. This commitment occurs at both organizational level and among individual employees and managers. In addition, it is clear that the transition to a 4 day week is a series of steps and iterations as an organization and its employees that learn rather than a one-off step change. This manager captures that ethos nicely:



*We constantly want to improve. We want to innovate our processes, all those things. I think this is the perfect mechanism to push that within our company, within the individual employees and within the country."*

(Case 11, Manager 1)

Furthermore it is important to note that organizations face unanticipated benefits and consequences that needed to be addressed collectively by the organization's members as well as by managers themselves. For example, a few organizations began with a partial 4 day week for some employees or some departments with subsequent rollout to wider group. In all cases, the successful implementation of 4 day week required commitment from managers and owners. Leaders were also role-modelling shorter working hours and a more balanced work life, even if they did not always achieve the "pure" 4 day week themselves.

One unexpected finding was the change in management style and leadership among some of the organizations that successfully rolled out a 4 day week. In many ways, our sample of pilot of organizations are led by individuals prepared to challenge the status quo and have a vision for a different way of working with a more balanced lifestyle. They also have a strong commitment to the stewardship and well-being of the employees in their charge.

Nevertheless, what was perhaps less expected was that managers had to delegate more of their activities in order to free up their own time to work less, therefore placing greater responsibility on their employees to achieve the tasks required. A number of managers were quite reflective about the experience.

Furthermore, some managers talked about adopting a more coaching style to leadership in order to help their employees focus, prioritize or work autonomously rather than surveillance of their work as previously done. One of the upsides of the delegation was that some managers reported having more time to look at the bigger picture and a bit further over the horizon at strategic issues.

## Challenges for Some

Although we found it harder to keep track of the organizations who faced the greatest challenges in implementing the 4 day week, they seem to have a number of characteristics. Those organizations that faced the demand for continuous or long operating hours face additional challenges but there were a number of organizations successfully rolling out the 4 day week who also had long and even continuous operating times.



In addition, there was evidence of some organizational similarities among those not achieving the 4 day week in terms of the method of roll out. Firstly, those who had a shorter time to plan and prepare for the transition to seemed to struggle.

Secondly, those who only partially rolled out of the 4 day week to certain employees or certain departments faced challenges.

Thirdly, those organizations where senior managers and leaders had explicitly excluded themselves from the 4 day week working arrangements as they were “too busy” were unable to role model the behaviours.

Some of the unintended consequences of the 4 day week trial were that organizations had to address the management of leave arrangements and how to deal with the cliff edge of the end of the pilot. As with other challenges in implementing the 4 day week, these are not deal breakers but do need consideration in order to ensure equity among employees, to maintain commitment to the project, and transparency.

Equally the 4 day week is not a panacea for all challenges. If an organization is already under-resourced or has other difficulties, these weaknesses are unlikely to disappear, as this quote illustrates:



*A lot of reasons for not being successful are unrelated to our 4 day work week. There are things that have always been a problem in our company that won't miraculously be solved by a 4 day work week.”*

(Case 22, Employee 1)

In terms of the leave arrangements, a number of organizations found they had to review their policies and practices. There was a variety of responses ranging from those who left leave arrangements and entitlements untouched, to those who required employees to use their leave entitlements against their full five working days in order to avoid an increase in an organization's liabilities.

In addition, there are those organizations that did not work 4 days when there was a public holiday in the week – this helped when there was an intense period of public holidays such as in April in South Africa. These minor adjustments seemed to be accepted among employees as part of the balanced deal of working four days per week, most weeks.

## A Final Word

The variety of experiences we unearthed with the qualitative research on the 4 day week trial support the quantitative results in terms of the positive outcomes for the organizations and employees involved. Where the organization succeeded, at least at the pilot, there is both a clear benefit to the business and the employees, something quite rare in many organizational changes.

A successful implementation requires management commitment, planning and leadership as well as the buy-in from employees. With many of the organizations continuing with the 4 day week arrangements, and others awaiting top management approval, it will be interesting to follow the trajectory of both the organizations and their employees as the arrangements mature.



# 5 Closing Remarks

# Closing Remarks from our Founders



## **Charlotte Lockhart & Andrew Barnes**

We are thrilled to share this momentous occasion with you, as we celebrate the results of Africa's first ever 4 day week pilot program. This marks a significant milestone in our collective journey towards redefining the way we approach work and life, both in terms of geographically expanding the movement, and proving it can work in any economy.

The journey to this point has been a collaborative effort, and we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this research a reality: Our quantitative team in Boston College, Juliet Schor, Wen Fan, and Guolin Gu; Our qualitative team in Stellenbosch Business School, Mark Smith, Angus Bowmaker-Falconer, Charlene Gerber, Hellen Kadandara, Thato Matsoso, Tasneem Motala, Marius Ungerer, and Natasha Winkler-Titus; Our South African partners, Karen Lowe and Nicola Paine; And our in-house team, Dale Whelehan, Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, Karen Lowe, Hazel Gavigan, Úna Harty, Jack Lockhart, Gabriela Brasil, Rebecca Roberts, Debbie Bailey, Victoria Scalise and Donia Osama. We couldn't do this without you all.

It's truly heartening to witness the widespread interest and commitment to exploring alternative work structures that prioritize employee well-being, productivity, and overall happiness. South Africa's presence in this groundbreaking initiative is just the beginning, and we look forward to expanding across the continent and global community.

*4 Day Week Global is the world's leading organization with a goal to change the future of work through working smarter, not longer. Through their pilot programs, they have guided businesses worldwide in the planning, trialling, and implementation of the 4 day week initiative, using their 100-80-100™ model.*

### **What's next for 4 Day Week Global?**

We are working towards creating a million years of new free time through our 4 day week programs across the globe.

### **What can you do to help?**

Share this report with a friend or a colleague. Follow us on socials. Donate to us (we're a not-for-profit). Enroll in our newly launched Foundation Course to learn the basics of implementing a 4 day week in your organization.

Discover @4dayweekglobal on:

