

AUTONOMY



Autonomy

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Autonomy

We are an independent think tank

Our area of expertise lies in the future of work

We develop policy adequate to the changing nature of work and technological innovation

We also run a consultancy service for organisations who want to trial shorter working hours for their staff

Autonomy

We work with governments, political parties, firms, trade unions, the private sector and other organisations





Working time reduction: what is it?

A shorter working week

The 'four day week': 32 hours

Retaining salaries at same levels

Variation in how these hours are distributed

The image features a light beige background with two large, thick black L-shaped brackets. One bracket is positioned in the upper-left corner, and the other is in the lower-right corner, framing the central text.

Working time reduction: why and how?

Why try a shorter working week?

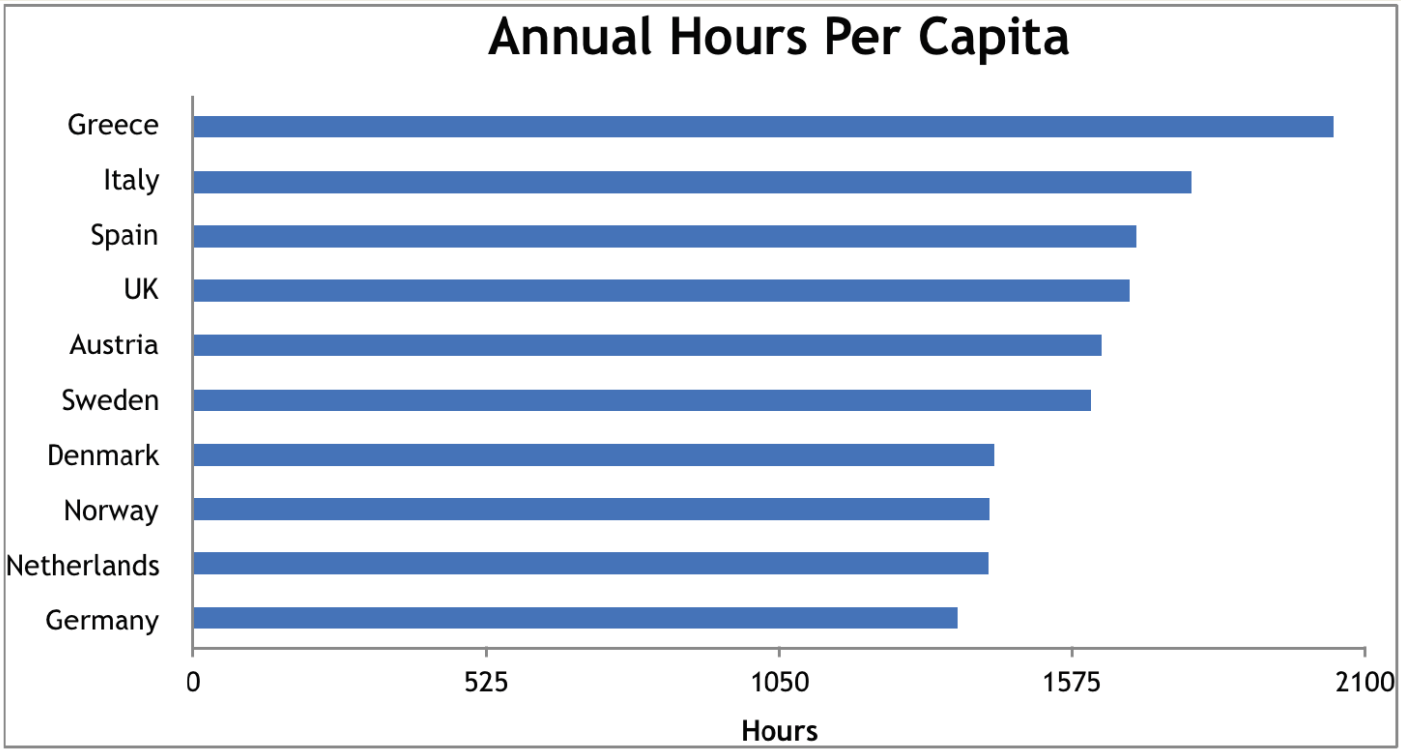
Working time is of interest to employees and employers alike.

Key (macroeconomic) point: there is no strict correlation between working hours and productivity.

The Shorter Working Week

In the UK we work some of the longest hours in Europe

And yet, our productivity lags behind countries that work less on average (e.g. Germany and Denmark)



(Source: OECD 2018)

More hours do not necessarily entail better output

Two key causes of under-performance:

- Overwork-related illness and presenteeism
- Lack of investment in labour-saving technology, damaging firm-level performance.

Overworked Britain

51%

of all sick days in the UK are due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety.

(HSE, 2020)

Overworked Britain

**17.9 million working
days lost**

Workload pressure is the number one cause of these cases.

(HSE, 2019)

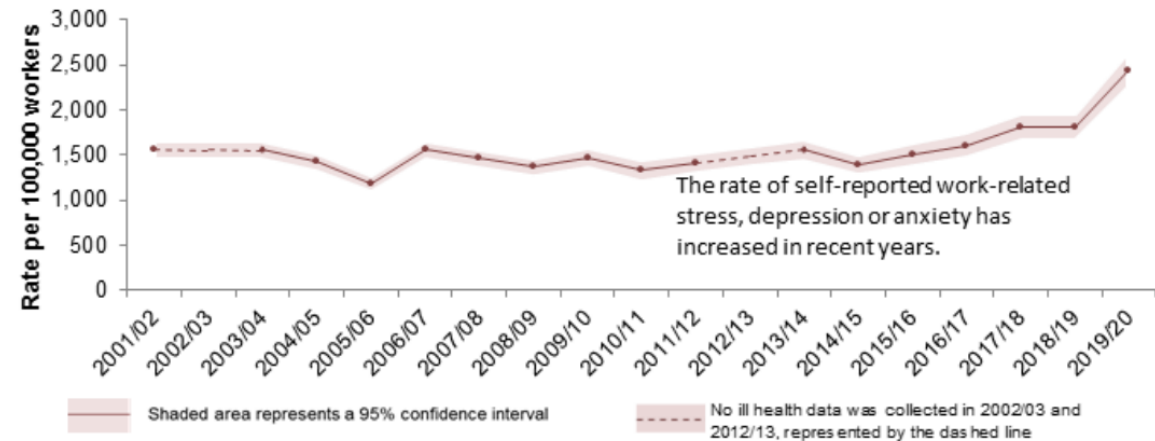
Overworked Britain

17.9 million working days were lost in 2019/20.

This is compared to 12.8 million days lost in the previous year

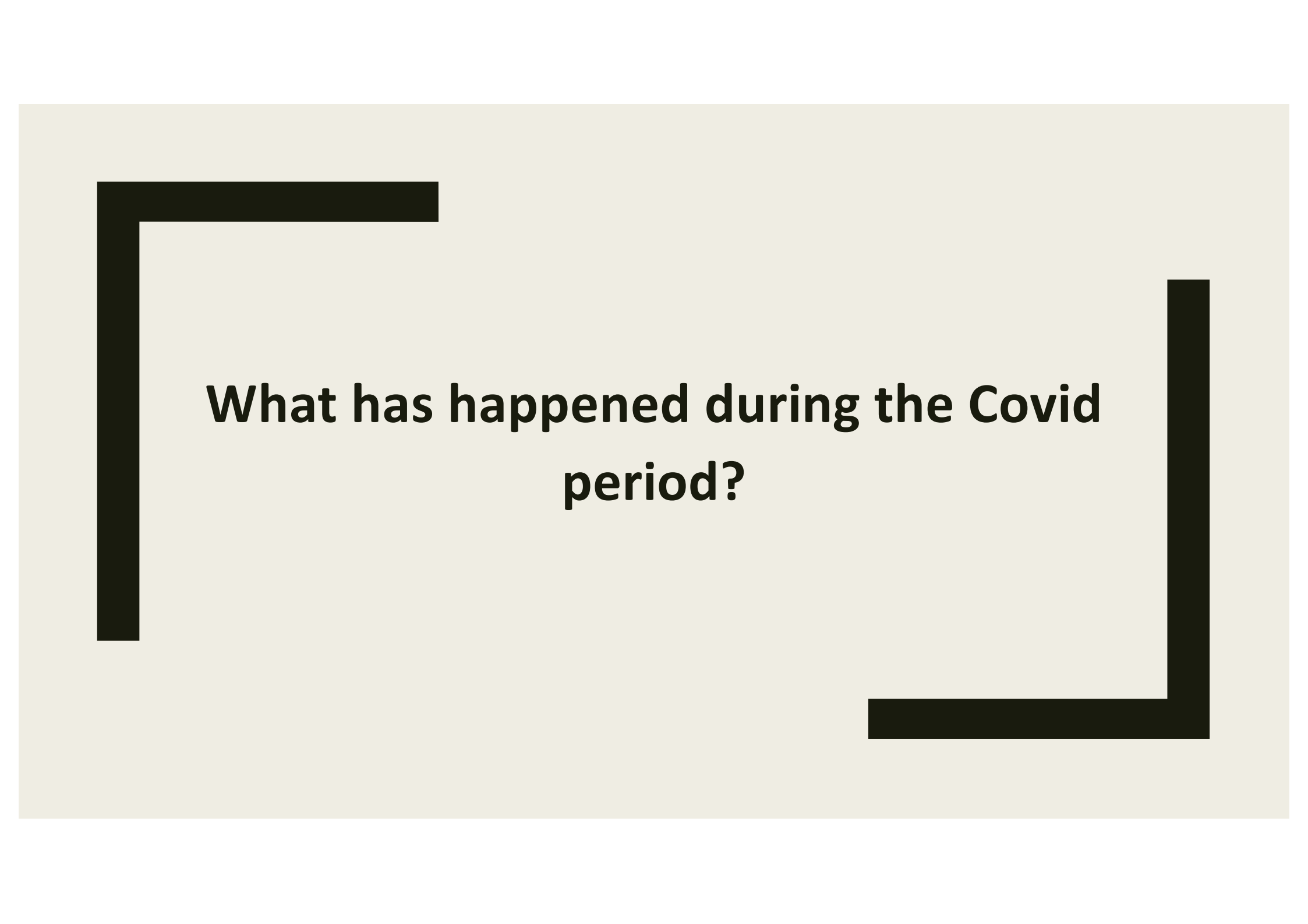
(HSE, 2019/20)

Figure 1. Estimated prevalence rates of self-reported stress, depression or anxiety caused or made worse by work in Great Britain, for people working in the last 12 months



Source: LFS annual estimate, from 2001/02 to 2019/20

**Overwork is not good for
business**



**What has happened during the Covid
period?**

Covid and working practices

Initial studies suggest:

- The collapse of the work/life distinction
- Number of meetings per person have increased by 12.9% (NBER)
- 12% of staff are now signing in before 7am and 18% still working after 7pm
- National surveys showing that prevalence of mental distress related to work across industries is worse for women. (Unpaid labour remains a factor)

The image features two large, thick, black L-shaped brackets. One is positioned in the top-left corner, and the other is in the bottom-right corner, framing the central text. The background is a light beige color with a subtle gradient.

**Reasons why organisations are
switching to new ways of working**

Why try a shorter working week?

Concretely, at the firm level, a reduced working week (with same pay) can speak to a number of issues for employers. Shorter hours can:

- Improve employees' health and wellbeing
- Bolster a friendly office environment / strong working culture
- Raise per-hour productivity
- Create a greater awareness of workload and time management amongst staff
- Attract and retain staff
- Reduce the environmental impact of an organisation

Is the move such a big jump?

- A shorter working week is 32 hours. Dropping from 36 or 37(4 or 5 hours across the week) is not the gulf it might seem.
- These hours could be spread across five days, or be taken in four, 8-hour days. It depends on the type of work.
- Part-time staff could be accommodated by shaving off the same *relative* amount, pro-rata.

Trial it

Trialling shorter hours is the ideal way to discover whether this practice is right for your firm.

It involves no hard commitment to shorter working weeks in the long term: **this is a pilot.**

There is literally no better way of knowing how your organisation will react and/or perform with a new working time regime: running a trial provides that ground-up knowledge.

Trialling it: Autonomy's service

We design and manage trials of reduced working hours in organisations.

Our practice is based on our extensive research as well as our recent on-the-ground experiences with private firms and charities.

The trial period is to be determined in initial planning meetings, but is usually between 2 and 6 months.

We aim to study staff experience, how workload is managed, as well as firm performance (however that is currently tracked)

Trialling it: our service

We design trials that are suited to the client's size, needs and interests. This includes:

- **Workshops** with staff: sourcing their knowledge on their current working practices and working through solutions and new modes of working that could be adopted moving forward.
- **1-to-1 interviews** with staff - usually at the beginning, at a halfway check-in and at the end.
- **Online surveys** at the beginning and end of the trial asking staff about expectations, experiences and general sentiments.
- **Tracking and evaluating existing KPIs and benchmarks** should the client be interested in this aspect.
- **Check-in meetings** with managers at the beginning and end of the trial period.
- **A final report** of our findings and set of recommendations.

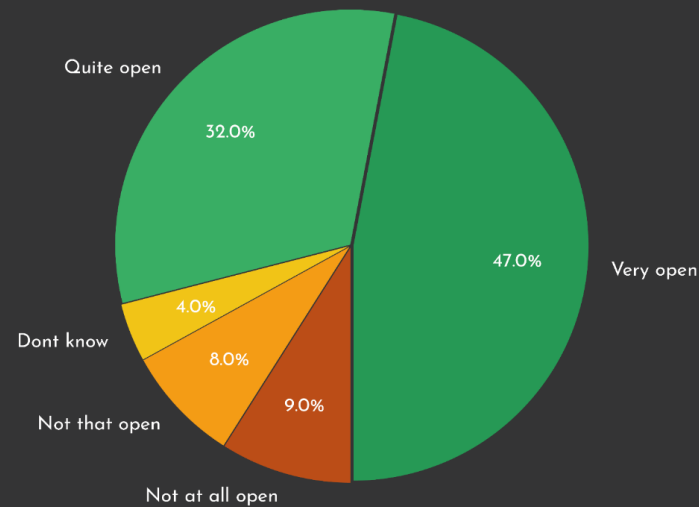
Business leaders are coming around to the idea

79% of business leaders are 'quite open' or 'very open' to a four-day working week.

(Survation polling, 2020)

Some businesses have moved to a four day working week as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and have reported a boost in productivity. Other businesses argue that a four day week will see their wage bill increase while paying current wages for shorter hours.

How open, if at all, would you be to a four day working week?

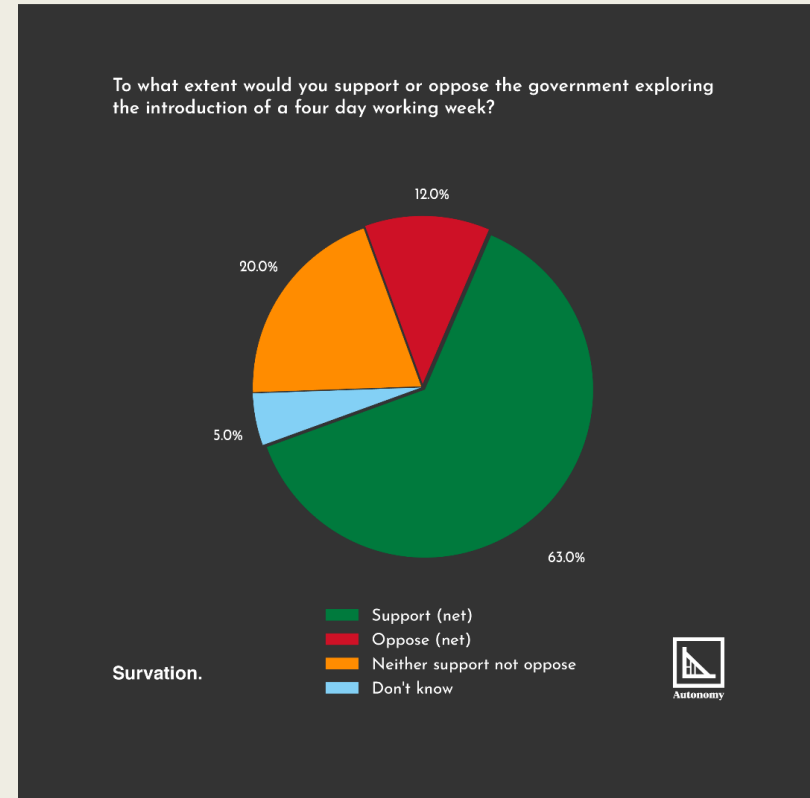


Survation.



Demand from the workforce

- New research from [TopCV](#), the world's largest CV-writing service, reveals that almost one-third (30 per cent) of UK job seekers had a [four-day working week](#) at the top of their Christmas wish list.
- Meanwhile, 19 per cent of seekers are hoping they are on the “nice list” this year, so they can work for an organisation committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I).



The change is already happening

Examples of past clients:

Big Potato Games

STOPAIDS

A housing association

A large trade union HQ

Awin

In talks with: councils up and down the UK, a huge European e-marketing firm, public sector organisations in UK

The 4 day week campaign has launched an accreditation scheme (2021).



The change is already happening: international

Unilever New Zealand to trial four-day working week

Consumer goods company says all 81 employees will be paid for five days but work four in 12-month experiment



▲ Companies in New Zealand have pioneered the four-day working week. Photograph: Fiona Goodall/Getty Images

The consumer goods company Unilever is poised to try out a four-day working week for all its [New Zealand](#) employees.

Spain to trial four-day week in response to Covid pandemic - will the UK do the same?

Under plans backed by the country's treasury, employers who cut their working week to 32 hours with no loss of pay will get financial backing from the government

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BY EMMA MUNBODH
11:34, 29 JAN 2021 | UPDATED 11:58, 29 JAN 2021



News > World > World Politics

Spain set to pilot four-day week as response to coronavirus pandemic

Government backs plan proposed by smaller party in exchange for congressional support

Jon Stone Policy Correspondent | @jonstone | Thursday 28 January 2021 17:59 | comments



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