

Four-Day Week: Results from Portuguese Trial

Final Report

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In this document, we describe and evaluate the four-day week pilot project in Portugal. The report is divided into four parts that can be read independently. The first part describes the origin, definition, and development of the project. The second part details how companies implement the four-day week and how they appraise it. The third part evaluates the effects of the reduced working hours on workers. The fourth part proposes three stages to be followed in the future.



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Infographics

4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

PROJECT

PRINCIPLES



NO WAGE CUTS



WITH A REDUCTION IN WEEKLY HOURS



VOLUNTARY AND REVERSIBLE

SUPPORT FOR COMPANIES



NO SUBSIDIES



TRAINING FROM 4 DAY WEEK GLOBAL



OBJECTIVE

STUDY THE EFFECTS OF A REDUCTION IN WORKING HOURS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 4-DAY WEEK ON WORKERS AND COMPANIES



EXECUTION

1ST PHASE - DELIBERATION

3 MONTHS
5 Q&A SESSIONS



2ND PHASE - PREPARATION

3 MONTHS
9 PREPARATION SESSIONS



3RD PHASE - TEST

6 MONTHS
6 FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS



4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

PROJECT

INTEREST GENERATED IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY



ACADEMIC INVOLVEMENT

PARTNERSHIP WITH A TEAM FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO
6 MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS COMPLETED
14 MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS
1 DOCTORAL THESIS IN PROGRESS



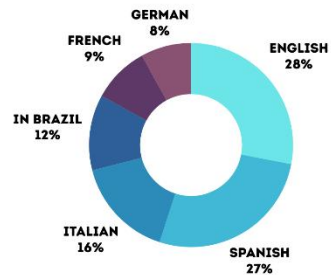
NATIONAL IMPACT

24 PRESENTATIONS \ EVENTS \ PODCASTS
15 OPINION ARTICLES WRITTEN
>70 OPINION ARTICLES PUBLISHED ON THE SUBJECT
>120 REFERENCES ON TV AND RADIO
>600 REFERENCES IN WRITTEN MEDIA



INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

35 PRESENTATIONS \ EVENTS \ PODCASTS
>260 REFERENCES IN THE MEDIA



4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL COMPANIES

NUMBER OF COMPANIES THAT HAVE IMPLEMENTED A 4-DAY WEEK IN PORTUGAL **41**



MORE THAN 1000 WORKERS

AVERAGE REDUCTION IN HOURS OF 13.7%



ONLY 20% OF COMPANIES COORDINATE THEIR DAY OFF ON FRIDAYS

REGIONS

12 (OUT OF 18) DISTRICTS REPRESENTED



GENDER

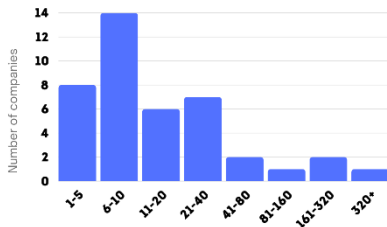
PROPORTION OF WOMEN LEADERS WHO INITIATED CONTACT



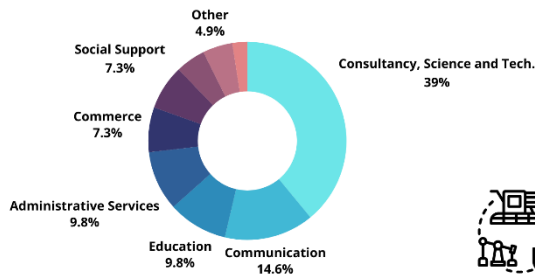
When only 27 per cent of companies in Portugal are led by women



NUMBER OF WORKERS

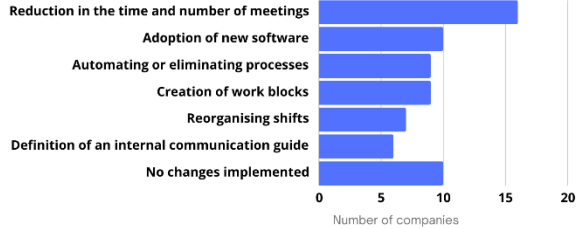


SECTORS

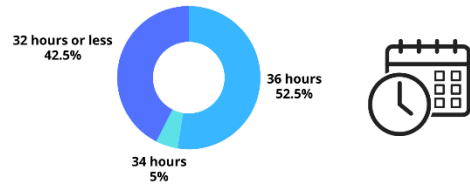


4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL COMPANIES

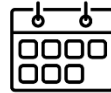
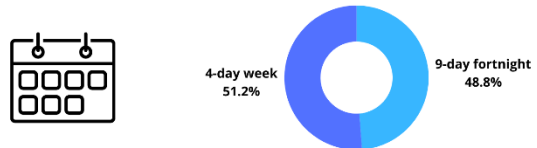
THE 4-DAY WEEK ISN'T JUST ABOUT REDUCING THE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED



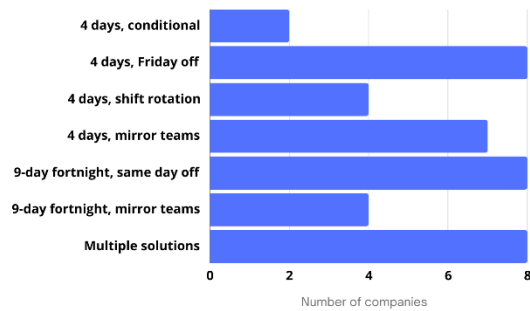
NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK CHOSEN



4-DAY WEEK OR 9-DAY FORTNIGHT?

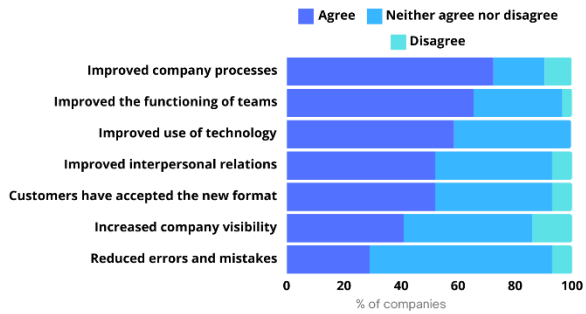


THE FORMAT MUST BE CHOSEN INTELLIGENTLY AND ADAPTED TO THE REALITY OF EACH COMPANY

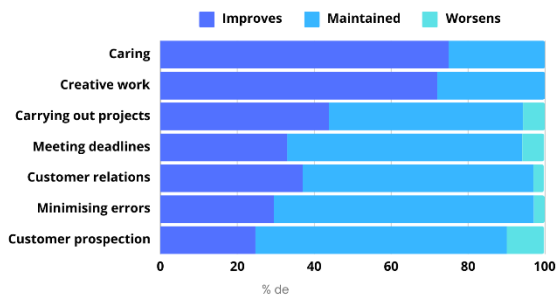


4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL COMPANIES

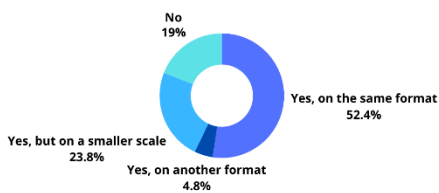
OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR COMPANIES



WORKERS' PERFORMANCE: IMPROVED OR MAINTAINED

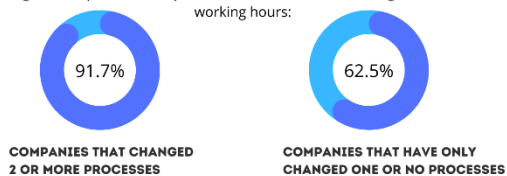


ARE YOU KEEPING A 4-DAY WEEK?



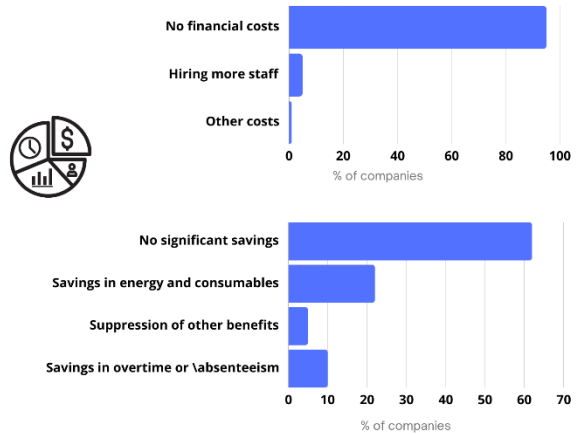
CHANGES IN PROCESSES ARE THE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE 4-DAY WEEK

Among the companies in the pilot, the likelihood of maintaining the reduction in working hours:

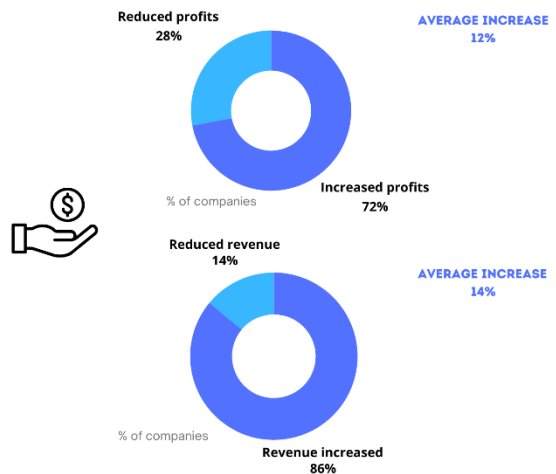


4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL COMPANIES

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT



PROFITS AND REVENUES COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR



HOW DO MANAGERS EVALUATE THE PROJECT FINANCIALLY?

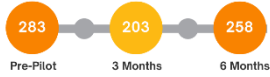


4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

WORKERS

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

332 workers in companies that took part in the pilot



CONTROL GROUP

160 workers in companies in the control group



WORKERS



- 67% FEMALE
- 55% LESS THAN 40 YEARS
- 79% BSC., MSC. OR PHD

HOURS ACTUALLY WORKED:

BEFORE THE PILOT

41.6 HOURS



DURING THE PILOT

36.5 HOURS

FRIDAY OFF?

60%



- 60% = 9-DAY FORTNIGHT
- 25% = 4 DAYS EVERY WEEK
- 10% = 4 DAYS EVERY MONTH

FREQUENCY OF OVERTIME

BEFORE THE PILOT

34%

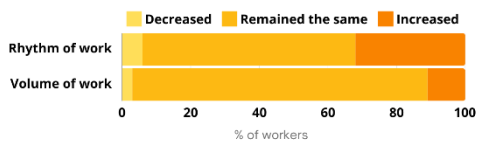


DURING THE PILOT

23%

% of workers who work overtime daily or several times a week

RHYTHM AND VOLUME OF WORK



4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

WORKERS

REDUCED EXHAUSTION AND FATIGUE

FEELS:	BEFORE THE PILOT	DURING THE PILOT
EXHAUSTION AT THE END OF THE WORKING DAY	71	47
THAT WORK IS EMOTIONALLY DRAINING	44	33
EXHAUSTION BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK	39	24
HAVING ENERGY FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS	61	80

% of workers answering that they feel it half the time, often or always



REDUCTION OF NEGATIVE MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS

SYMPTOM	BEFORE THE PILOT	DURING THE PILOT
ANXIETY	42	27
FATIGUE	64	42
INSOMNIA OR SLEEP PROBLEMS	37	30
BEING DOWN OR DEPRESSED	27	16
TENSION	39	25
LONELINESS	13	7

% of workers who have this symptom daily or once or twice a week



IMPROVED MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

	BEFORE THE PILOT	DURING THE PILOT
MENTAL HEALTH	15	31
PHYSICAL HEALTH	20	27

% of workers who evaluate it as very good or excellent



HOURS OF SLEEP

BEFORE THE PILOT

6H43M



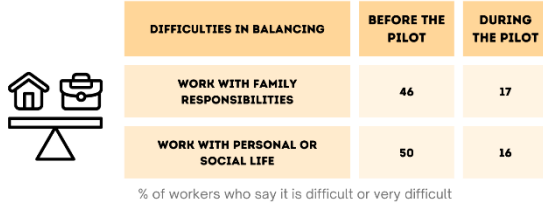
DURING THE PILOT

6H54M

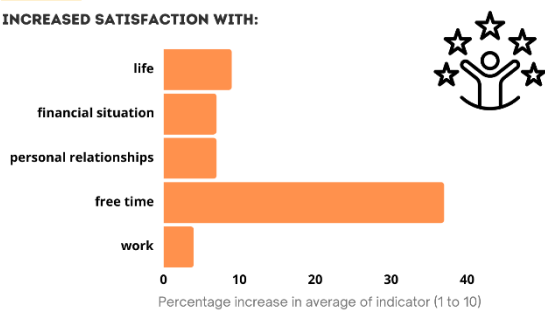
4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

WORKERS

BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE



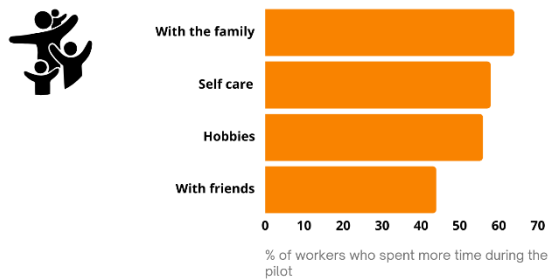
INCREASED SATISFACTION WITH:



GENDER DIFFERENCES



HOW WORKERS SPENT THEIR FREE TIME



SECOND JOB



4 DAY WEEK - PORTUGAL

WORKERS

OTHER USE OF FREE TIME



VALUE ATTRIBUTED TO THE 4-DAY WEEK



Value that workers give as a % of salary

CATEGORY	VALUE	
GENDER	MALE	21
	FEMALE	32
CHILDREN OR STEPCHILDREN	WITH CHILDREN OR STEPCHILDREN	32
	WITHOUT CHILDREN OR STEPCHILDREN	24
SCHOOLING	WITHOUT HIGHER EDUCATION	37
	BSC.	29
	MSC. OR PHD	24
SALARY LEVELS	LESS THAN 1100€	33
	MORE THAN 1100€	24

12% OF WORKERS WOULDN'T LEAVE THE COMPANY FOR ANYTHING

93% OF WORKERS WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE



Executive Summary

1. Four-day week pilot project

The working week evolved over the course of history alongside social, political, technological and economic development. The transition from a six-day to a five-day working week in Portugal occurred in the second half of the 20th century. This transition was gradual, with an important role played by unions after the Carnation Revolution in 1974, and it was consolidated by legislation in 1996. Today, criticisms of the four-day week echo the objections faced by the five-day week, but change is possible. With technological advancement and social changes, some companies are shortening the working week, motivated by concerns for workers' well-being and the potential increase in productivity. In Portugal, the four-day week faces challenges but also presents opportunities, potentially boosting the economy, reducing inequalities, and promoting a better work-life balance.

This project originated from a political initiative by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security of the XXIII Portuguese Government. In collaboration with the coordinating team, we articulated a vision and established principles and objectives for the project. The vision, now proven by the results, is that a four-day week can benefit both workers and companies, strengthening economic competitiveness. We defined three fundamental principles about the four-day week:

- It must not involve any salary cuts;
- It must imply a reduction in weekly hours;
- It must be voluntary for companies.

It is not about part-time work or compressed hours but rather a collective reorganization within the company to ensure that the reduction in working hours does not negatively affect its competitiveness or workers' salaries. The project's objective is to study the effects of this practice on efficacy, health, and well-being of workers, as well as on economic and operational aspects of companies. To this end, we conducted a trial.

Recognizing the disruptive nature of the idea and the general lack of knowledge about it, we approached it prudently, informing the public about international examples and the arguments in favour of a working time reduction. The project was designed to be flexible and adaptable, focusing on private companies, proposing a six-month voluntary and reversible test, without financial compensation from the government. We chose to start in the private sector due to its greater representativeness, agility, and lower politicization. Technical support was provided to participating companies by *4 Day Week Global*, a non-profit organization with international experience. This simple and agile model allowed us to learn during the process and prepare the ground for more ambitious models in the future.

By choosing not to offer financial incentives, we aimed to ensure the genuineness of companies' adherence, although it limits the generalization of results, as the participating companies are not representative of typical companies in Portugal. The study thus serves only as a 'Proof of Concept,' demonstrating that the four-day week can work under certain circumstances, illustrating the different formats chosen, and describing the implementation process, including the difficulties faced.

The project included 41 companies that adopted different formats of the four-day week throughout 2023: 21 companies coordinated the start of the test in June, joining another 20 companies that adopted it earlier. In total, more than 1000 workers were covered. There were also 55 companies interested in the project that decided not to participate and 24 companies that attended the preparation sessions but opted not to start the test. The impact evaluation of the four-day week is done at two levels: companies and workers. Companies were evaluated in terms of productivity, costs, and profits, while workers were evaluated in terms of well-being, quality of life, and physical and mental health. The evaluation of workers was done through three surveys: pre-pilot, three months, and six months into the test. The methodological innovation, compared to international pilots, was the inclusion of a control group of workers from companies that did not participate in the project. A cooperation agreement was established with a research team from the University of Porto, and the possibility of another agreement with the National Institute of Statistics to continue academic research after the project's conclusion is being studied, aiming for a more detailed and long-term analysis of the effects of the four-day week using administrative data.

During the project's first phase, from November 2022 to February 2023, the coordinators focused on raising awareness within the business community, using various dissemination strategies such as opinion articles, media interviews, and participation in business conferences and events. Additionally, online Q&A sessions were held for interested companies, where the team presented the project's objectives, testimonials from companies that had already adopted the four-day week, and the support offered to participants. In total, 120 companies expressed interest in the first phase, with representation in various sectors and regions of Portugal. Most companies highlighted concerns about workers' mental health and the need to improve talent retention and recruitment as reasons for their interest, emphasizing the need to address post-pandemic stress and improve workers' quality of life. Out of those, 45 companies decided to proceed to the second phase.

This phase revealed a first conclusion. Of those who initiated contact—typically CEOs, managers, or HR directors interested in the idea—more than 55% were women, double the incidence in the Portuguese business universe where only 27% of leadership positions are occupied by women. Female leaders showed greater openness to the idea compared to their male counterparts.

During the crucial preparation phase of the test, companies were challenged to deeply rethink their organizational practices. Over three months, from March to May 2023, eight preparation sessions were held in partnership with *4 Day Week Global*, covering topics from defining the four-day week format to communication with workers and clients. Participating companies were guided in creating evaluation metrics, process changes, and using technology to increase efficiency. Besides live sessions, support materials and individual meetings were provided to address specific issues of each company. Preparation required extra effort from managers and workers, but after carefully considering the implications and challenges involved, 21 companies started the test in June, joining another 20 companies that had already begun testing the four-day week earlier, some since 2020.

Many companies, both in the first and second phases of the project, faced various challenges which led them to withdraw or postpone a test. In the first phase, macroeconomic issues such as international political instability and high inflation created uncertainty. Additionally, the complexity of implementation, the necessary investment, and the preference for other benefits were also cited as reasons for not advancing. In the second phase, the timing of the test's start in June was an obstacle for many companies that were involved in other projects or facing internal changes. Others faced difficulties with clients. Some multinationals did not obtain approval from their headquarters.

Legal concerns, such as the framework for new work formats, were also raised. Despite the challenges, most of these companies remain interested in experimenting with the four-day week in the future.

During the six-month test, from June to November 2023, troubleshooting sessions were held to monitor progress and share experiences. In the first few months, there were expected adjustment challenges, especially during the summer months when many workers were on vacation. Companies were encouraged to try new processes to improve productivity and quickly adapt to potential failure. In the following months, companies evaluated the new routines and decided whether to continue the test.

The project garnered significant interest from national and international media, reflecting public interest in the four-day week. There were more than 800 references in national media and over 250 international articles in various languages, as well as TV reports in Germany, Spain, and Italy.

Participating companies evaluated the project positively, highlighting the professionalism of the coordinating team and the importance of the project in the context of labour relations in Portugal. Despite being an unprecedented project, the timeline was met, and participation was as expected.

2. The four-day week in companies

Most companies are initially interested in the four-day week due to concerns about worker well-being but soon realize that minimizing implementation costs requires a rigorous program of organizational best practices to increase productivity. Academic literature in management and economics emphasizes that these best practices are essential for company success, but their adoption can be slow, partly due to lack of worker involvement. The four-day week addresses this barrier by requiring worker commitment to increase productivity as a condition for maintaining the new work format.

During the planning phase, it is crucial to define clear objectives, indicators of performance, and create spaces for sharing learning and continuous feedback. The leadership team must define the schedule, the new workweek format, and success metrics. The most important decision regarding the four-day week format depends on customer requirements, industry work rhythm, workers' need for rest, and the value they place on potential days off. The process becomes more iterative, involving more teams and workers to determine work schedules, productivity and well-being metrics, HR policies, and communication strategies. Additionally, operational changes, such as meeting rules and daily schedules, should be outlined.

This study included 41 companies, mostly located in Lisbon and Porto, with fewer than 20 employees, spanning various sectors like education, healthcare, industry, and consulting. All companies are from the private sector, including some non-for-profit organisations. Companies adopted different work organization formats, effectively reducing weekly working hours. Companies with a 36-hour week offering a free Friday afternoon were excluded, as were those offering too much flexibility for workers to accumulate hours. Most companies reduced their typical 40-hour week to 36, 34, or 32 hours. Some adopted a uniform model with Fridays off, while others used rotating days off or mirror teams (some members were off on Mondays and some were off on Fridays, for example). Larger companies used multiple solutions for different functions or departments.

The success and sustainability of the four-day week depend on organizational changes to increase efficiency and performance. Seventy-five percent of companies implemented at least one organizational change, the most common being shorter meetings. Other changes included adopting management software, automating processes, and improving communication. Worker involvement was crucial, with 87% of companies reporting active worker participation in process changes.

Half of the companies faced difficulties defining productivity metrics, opting for a variety of financial, operational, and work-life balance indicators. Managing the four-day week during holiday periods was challenging, although clearer vacation rules could resolve this. More than one-third of companies highlighted difficulties in changing the internal culture regarding time management. In contrast, most found it easy to involve workers in process changes, to manage worker-raised issues, and to communicate the reduced hours to clients, who generally had a positive perception of the changes.

Productivity is a complex concept with multiple interpretations. Productivity per hour, a financial indicator at the company level, increases if the value of sales grows or intermediate costs decrease, maintaining total hours worked. With a four-day week, productivity gains come not from increased sales but from maintaining sales with fewer hours and possibly reducing other intermediate costs. Although direct financial data was not collected, most business leaders reported increased revenues and profits in 2023 compared to the previous year, suggesting the four-day week is not associated with negative financial performance. The project had minimal costs for most companies, with only one nursery (kindergarten) needing a 4.5% workforce increase. About 40% of managers identified savings, mainly in energy and other office expenses, and by removing some benefits (e.g., *yoga* and *Pilates* classes). Almost 80% of managers financially rated the project as neutral.

Operationally, managers noted significant benefits from the four-day week, such as reduced absenteeism, improved recruitment ability, and decreased staff turnover. They reported reduced stress levels, increased worker commitment, and stable quality and quantity of services. The four-day week was seen as beneficial for team functioning, internal processes, and technology use, with positive client acceptance and improved interpersonal relationships.

Workers also reported positive impacts on their performance, particularly in creative work and caregiving, with only a minority noting negative impacts in terms of getting new clients. The positive effect on workers becomes a competitive advantage in the job market. Most workers would only consider moving to a five-day job for over 20% higher pay, valuing the four-day week at 28% of their salary. Given the worker and talent shortages faced by companies during the period, this indicates a significant advantage.

The three-month interim evaluation was positive, with most implementation leaders rating it between 7 and 10. By March 2023, almost 80% of business leaders felt their company benefited from the four-day week experiment, with none considering it harmful. After six months, most companies chose to extend the test, with only four pilot participants returning to the five-day week and five scaling down the four-day week. Only 8% of companies that made two or more organizational changes reverted to the five-day week, compared to 38% of those that made none or only one change. Half of the companies that started testing before June already consider the new format permanent.

This report includes ten case studies of companies that experimented with the four-day week in different formats, independently prepared by the multidisciplinary research team at the University

of Porto, who conducted qualitative interviews with company leaders to understand the implementation process.

3. The four-day week for workers

Worker questionnaires were conducted before the pilot, at three months, and at six months into the test. The most significant methodological contribution of our study, compared to other international pilots, was comparing the effects on the experimental group with a control group of workers from companies which were initially interested in the project but decided not to move to a work-time reduction.

Pre-pilot survey data revealed that the workers participating in the pilot were younger, had higher educational attainment, and a higher representation of women compared to the national average. Most workers had 40-hour work contracts (80%), but many reported working more hours, especially in sectors like consulting and information technology. During the trial, there was a significant reduction in actual working hours, with the weekly average decreasing by 12%, from over 41 hours to 36.5 hours. The proportion of people working 40 hours or more decreased drastically, from 79% to 20%, indicating a substantial shift in workload. In contrast, there was no reduction in working time in the control group. Worker data aligns with company-provided information on the implementation format of the hourly reduction. Additionally, there was a decrease in overtime incidence among pilot participants, indicating better time management. Workers also reported a slight reduction in work pace and volume, along with a more pronounced decrease in stress and work pressure levels. These results suggest that the four-day week successfully reduced working hours without excessive intensification of the work rhythm. The vast majority of workers (93%) reported a positive appraisal of the trial and wished it to continue past 6 months.

Companies adopted the hourly reduction to improve employees' mental health and work-life balance, and the results show a clear improvement in these aspects. Workers' self-assessment of mental and physical health revealed significant increases. The percentage of workers classifying it as 'very good' or 'excellent' doubled from 15% to 30% in mental health, and increased from 20% to 27% in physical health. Additionally, there was an average increase of 11 minutes in sleep time per night and a decrease in exhaustion and negative mental health symptoms.

The results also indicated an increase in positive feelings and life satisfaction among pilot participants compared to the control group. Satisfaction with leisure time considerably increased, but also in other areas of their lives, including their personal relationships, financial situation, and current work. These benefits were observed in both men and women, but with a significantly greater effect among women. Most indicators experienced a slight setback between three and six months into the project, possibly due to seasonal effects. However, we cannot rule out that it may be caused by waning initial enthusiasm among workers.

The reduction in the working week not only improved workers' mental health but also had a significant impact on work-life balance. The results show a substantial reduction in the difficulty of balancing work with family and personal life, with a decrease from 46% to 17% in the percentage of workers struggling to balance work and family life, and from 50% to 16% with difficulties in balancing work and personal life. This improvement was more pronounced among women. There was a decrease in the frequency of problems focusing on work due to family responsibilities and in the feeling of post-work fatigue, indicating a better balance between work and personal life.

After the hourly reduction implementation, a large percentage of workers spent more time with family (64%) and friends (44%), as well as dedicating more time to self-care (58%) and hobbies (57%). There was also an increase in cultural and study/training activities. Regarding physical exercise, although there was a decrease in those not practicing at three months, the effects were weaker at six months. As for using leisure time to engage in a second job, its incidence increased from 15.5% to 17%, a marginal increase, indicating that the four-day week did not significantly accentuate this practice.

The four-day week had a significant impact on workers' lives, reflected in various well-being and work-life balance indicators. When directly asked, workers valued this benefit at 28% of their salary, being more valued by women, workers with children, those earning below €1100, and those without higher education. We live in a society where time scarcity is chronic, felt especially by female workers, who typically bear more family responsibilities. These responsibilities increase when they have children. Lower-income workers face a similar time pressure to other workers but have less financial capacity to alleviate this pressure by purchasing services. On the other hand, workers earning more than €1100 have more resources to buy free time and alleviate pressure, whether by hiring domestic help or ordering prepared meals. Workers with lower qualifications also have less access to remote working and less autonomy in managing their hours. Therefore, they greatly appreciate the day off, which allows them to engage in various activities that were previously more difficult to reconcile compared to workers with higher qualifications.

4. The future of the four-day week

This report aims to inform a discussion in Portuguese society about the reduction and reorganization of working time, based on concrete data and without biases. The main conclusions drawn are:

1. The four-day week is a legitimate and viable management practice that provides operational benefits to companies, such as a better work environment, reduced absenteeism, and increased attractiveness in the job market. However, successful implementation requires a profound reorganization.
2. The four-day week can be applied in all sectors, but the adaptation of the hourly reduction format must be analysed case by case, in order to maximize productivity effects.
3. The results of this study serve to inform but do not justify implementation by legislation. The research methodology, based on self-selection of companies, prevents the results from being generalized.
4. It is important to encourage more organizations, especially large companies, to test the four-day week.
5. *Startups* and companies wanting more gender equality may benefit more from testing the four-day week. *Startups* can more easily avoid the adaptation difficulties faced by established companies. Women, in general, value the reduction of the working week more.
6. The positive impact on workers' quality of life—reduced stress, improved mental health, and personal satisfaction—is significant and should not be underestimated. We are not aware of other company-level interventions that can have such large impacts on people's lives.

7. Workers with lower salaries and qualifications are the ones who value the four-day week the most, as they have less flexibility and resources to manage their free time. This challenges the notion that this practice is only intended for a highly qualified elite.
8. Concerns about an increase in a second job are not supported by the data from this project, where we only observe a marginal increase in the percentage of workers with a second job.

It is important to recognize that such a profound change in work organization will take several years to generalize and requires a **prudent and gradual approach**. It is essential that this process be evidence-based and involve various stakeholders, including academics, civil society, social partners, government and local authorities, public institutions, and political parties. We believe that the four-day week represents a promising goal, and we outline a plan anchored in three stages, with concrete proposals to be achieved over a period of 10 years.

Stage I: Experiment

- Provide the material and recordings resulting from this project to interested companies, continuing academic research and monitoring participation. If the interest of companies is significant, professionalize technical support.
- Encourage large companies to conduct tests, involving workers' committees.
- Conduct a pilot in the public sector.
- Promote sectoral and regional tests, involving unions, associations, and local authorities.
- Carry out a national three-month experiment, changing the dates of all public holidays over a year, concentrating them on Fridays in the months of April, May, and June of that year.

Stage II: Incentivize

- Implement incentives at the worker level, such as facilitated access to part-time work, or as a benefit for parents with young children or workers near retirement age.
- Offer incentives to companies adopting the four-day week, including tax benefits or relief from bureaucratic regulations.
- Develop sectoral strategies for the adoption of the four-day week, facilitating dialogue between social partners and offering financial support.

Stage III: Legislate

- Include provisions in the labour code regulating the four-day week.
- Implement labour legislation on maximum weekly hours, starting with large companies.
- Promote initiatives at the European level for the reduction of working time, in collaboration with other EU member countries.

This plan proposes a feasible path for the implementation of the four-day week over a period of 10 years, clearly defining expectations for economic agents. In the coming years, we should aim to experiment in various contexts, moving to other stages only once we have gathered enough knowledge. The four-day week would improve the quality of life for workers, but we believe that if the implementation process is well executed, it could also boost productivity, satisfaction, and innovation in companies, thus contributing to the socioeconomic development of the country.



Part 1: Project

In this first part, we begin by explaining the project's guidelines: the vision, objective, team, and research methodology. Then, we describe the three phases of the project and its impact. Finally, we present the evaluation of the project by the involved companies and our own assessment.

- [1.1 Historical, international and political context](#)
- [1.2 Vision, definition of the four-day week and objective](#)
- [1.3 Team](#)
- [1.4 Project characteristics](#)
- [1.5 Timeline of the adoption of the four-day week](#)
- [1.6 Evaluation methodology and limitations](#)
- [1.7 Overview of the 1st phase of the project](#)
- [1.8 Overview of the 2nd phase of the project](#)
- [1.9 What are the obstacles to starting a test?](#)
- [1.10 Overview of the 3rd phase of the project and the post-pilot](#)
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1.1 Historical, international and political context

The duration of the working week is a social, political, and economic construct. In the 19th century, people worked six days a week. In the United States, at the beginning of the 20th century, some companies began adopting the five-day workweek as a management practice. By 1940, this practice was extended to large companies through legislation. The current criticisms about the four-day week are exactly the same criticisms made regarding the five-day week in the 1930s. At that time, the criticisms disappeared shortly after the legal implementation of the five-day week. The widespread acceptance was due to a change in public perception and recognition that the five-day week was a better way to organize the economy in the 20th century.

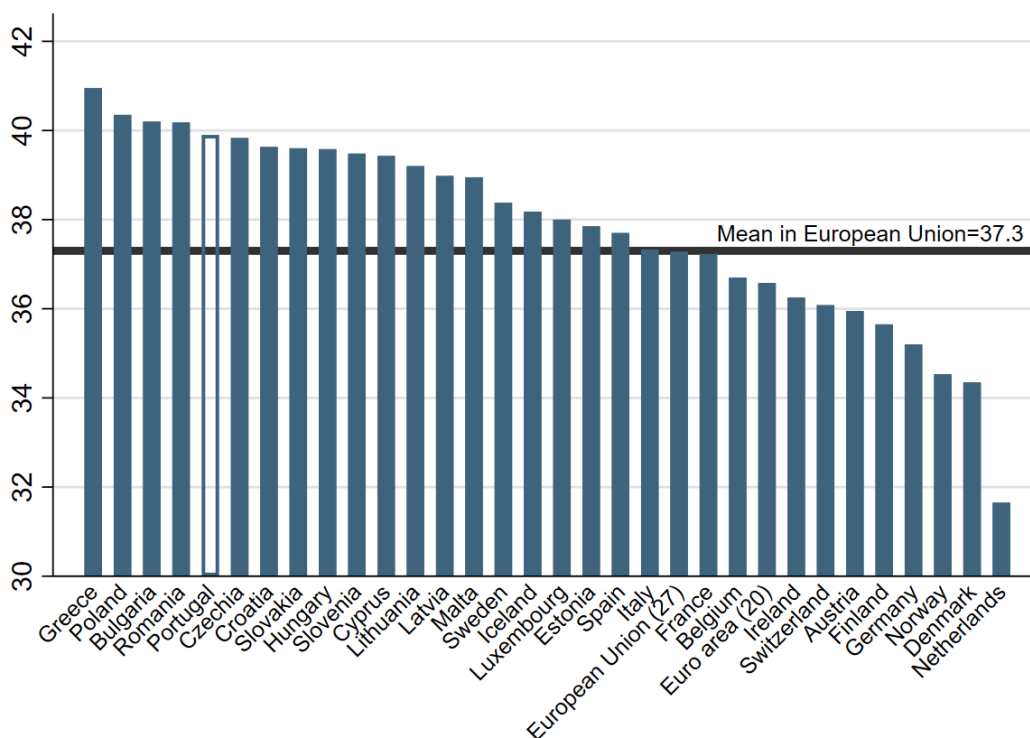
Since then, society has changed – the speed of communication, the nature of work, technology, management practices, wealth produced, level of qualifications, family structures, participation of women in the workforce, longevity, and social interactions. Given all these changes, one might question whether the five-day week continues to be the best way to organize the economy in the 21st century, or if it persists merely due to the difficulty of transforming such an entrenched reality.

Similarly to a century ago, several companies from different sectors worldwide have been experimenting with shortening the working week, this time to four days. The four-day week as a management practice – without a pay cut and with an actual reduction in weekly hours (distinct from part-time work or compressed weeks) – has been adopted with the aim of increasing productivity and competitiveness, promoting worker well-being by reducing stress and burnout cases. The gains for companies largely depend on the sector. These gains include lower recruitment and training costs due to reduced staff turnover, lower costs for temporary workers due to reduced absenteeism, lower costs with raw materials due to fewer production errors and defective products, or potential energy savings due to less time in the office. The gains for families translate into increased well-being and quality of life, better physical and mental health, more time for family and hobbies, improving work-life balance, and reducing gender inequality.

In Portugal, the five-day week became widespread in the 1970s and 1980s, with a significant role played by trade unions after the Carnation Revolution in 1974, although it was only consolidated in labour legislation in 1996. Currently, Portugal has one of the highest weekly working hours in the European Union. In 2022, according to Eurostat, the average number of usual hours worked in Portugal was 40 hours, behind only Romania, Greece, Poland, and Bulgaria. In that year, when the project began, there were already some companies operating on a four-day week in Portugal, albeit in small numbers, indicating an existing interest in this management practice.

In addition to the potential benefits for companies and families, it is possible that it brings other advantages for the economy as a whole. More free time could stimulate the economy through increased demand for products and services in the leisure, culture, hospitality, and tourism industries, and promote so-called hybrid entrepreneurship – creating a company while maintaining a full-time job. Reducing the working week could also protect jobs that are more likely to be automated and use artificial intelligence, provide time for professional retraining, and create market conditions for sustainable wage increases and reduced inequality. Socially, it could possibly contribute to greater gender balance and increased birth rates or reduced carbon emissions. Given all the potential

Figure 1.1: Average number of usual weekly working hours in the main activity



Note: Eurostat data for 2022 (all workers aged between 15 and 64).

benefits for workers, companies, and the economy, it is natural that in recent years, the first organized pilot experiments on the four-day week have taken place. These experiments always involve a set of entities simultaneously adopting the four-day week, with the aim of evaluating its effects, although they may take different forms.

The first type of pilot experiment corresponds to the model recently adopted in the United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where private sector companies practice the four-day week voluntarily for six months. These experiments have not been organized by their respective governments but by a non-profit organization, *4 Day Week Global*. This organization was founded by Andrew Barnes, who, in 2018, introduced what he called the ‘100-80-100 rule’ in his own company in New Zealand. That is, workers receive 100% of their salary, work 80% of the time, if they can maintain 100% of collective productivity. The experiment was successful, and two years later, Barnes created *4 Day Week Global*, a non-profit organization, to provide technical support to companies interested in adopting the four-day week. This support, in the form of workshops held in the three months preceding the pilot, focuses on changing internal processes to release a day of work while maintaining collective productivity. In the most recent trial in 2022, in the United Kingdom, with 61 companies and more than 3000 workers, 89% of participating companies maintained the four-day week one year after the end of the pilot, and more than half of the companies have already made it permanent.

The second type of pilot experiment corresponds to the model adopted in Iceland between 2014 and 2019, implemented only in the public sector. It began as a pilot study organized in the

municipality of Reykjavik, in central services, and in the child protection department. Given the initial success, it was expanded to the central government, covering administrative workers, but also various shift workers in police stations, schools, and even hospitals. In total, 2500 workers were involved, seeing their working week reduced from 40 to 35 or 36 hours. The success of this pilot, both in terms of benefits for workers and in terms of the unaffected provision of services, had an impact on collective bargaining. Currently, 86% of Icelandic workers have reduced their weekly hours or have the right to do so in the future. In 2024, the Scottish government began a pilot experiment with the four-day week, following the Icelandic approach, by restricting the application to the public sector.

Finally, the Spanish government opted for a third type of approach. Its pilot experiment is being conducted by the Ministry of Industry and stipulates a longer study period, associated with an allocation of around 20 million euros. Although negotiations began in early 2021, the bases of the call were only published in August 2022. It is aimed at industrial companies, will last two years, and involves large subsidies that can go up to 250,000€ per company, for investment or worker training. The idea is not so much a change in processes as the philosophy of *4 Day Week Global*, but rather investment in physical capital, and tools that allow the time of workers to be freed up. In addition to the Spanish government project, the regional government of the Valencian Community has also implemented measures to encourage the adoption of the four-day week. Among them, they promoted a regional one-month experiment in April 2023, through the readjustment of holidays.

More recently, in the last two years, several other countries have started tests. Without government support, pilot projects have already taken place in Germany, Brazil, South Africa, and other pilots are planned for Italy, the Netherlands, and France. The Scottish government began a test in the public sector in 2024, the Belgian government is preparing a test with private sector organizations, and the French prime minister ordered a study of the four-day week in the public sector.

This project starts from the principle that the effects of the four-day week should be studied in the context of Portugal's economy. Since the Portuguese reality is different from that of other European countries, it is possible that the benefits may not be exactly the same, possibly bringing other advantages from an economic point of view, either by contributing to an increase in productivity per hour – chronically low in Portugal – or as a factor in attracting skilled labour.

Although acknowledging that this idea is seen as radical or impractical by some, and with scepticism by many, we believe there is legitimacy for conducting this study. The economic legitimacy lies in the favourable precedent from companies that are already adopting the four-day week, including in Portugal, and in the historical parallel with the reduction of the working week from six to five days. On the other hand, the development of this pilot project was framed within the political design of the XXIII government, election manifesto:

“To promote a broad national debate and social dialogue on new forms of management and balance of working time, including the consideration of the applicability of experiments such as the four-day week in different sectors.”

1.2 Vision, definition of the four-day week and objective

This project originated from a political initiative of the government, under the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, which, together with the coordinating team, articulated the vision, defined the principles, and established the underlying objectives of the project.

Our vision is that the four-day week can bring mutual benefits to workers and companies, and consequently, to the economy. Through collaboration in the reorganisation of work, it allows to free up days from workers, while maintaining or even strengthening the competitiveness of companies. We see the four-day week not only as a way to improve the lives of Portuguese workers but also as a way to address specific problems faced by Portuguese companies. We are aware that this is not the usual vision of the four-day week among social partners, economists, or even in society at large, but it is the vision we adopt for this project.

One of the difficulties we encountered during the initial public debate about the four-day week was that there was no agreement on its meaning – different definitions coexisted, making the discussion very complicated. Therefore, alongside with this vision, we established three fundamental principles that define the four-day week:

- It cannot involve any pay cuts.
- It must involve a reduction in weekly hours.
- It is voluntary and reversible for any company.

Our definition of the four-day week is not allowing workers to access part-time work with a reduction in their salary, nor allowing the compression of the 40 or 35 weekly hours into four days. These schemes are already included in the labour law. The fundamental distinction is that, in our definition, the four-day week involves a change at the company level, not at the worker level. This change implies a restructuring of the functioning and organisation of collective work within the company, which can reduce working time for the majority of workers without ever reducing their salary. Companies are more than the sum of their workers – they are teams – and their productivity lies not only in the individual capacity and effort of the workers but above all in the quality of their interaction. Coordinating work at the company level is an essential aspect of the four-day week.

Finally, we established that the objective of this project would be **to study the effects of the four-day week as a management practice on the efficiency and physical and mental health of workers, as well as its economic and operational impact on organisations**. To enhance the quality of the study, we determined that, in addition to including companies that have already adopted this practice, we would conduct a pilot experiment involving the adoption of the four-day week by other organisations. This pilot experiment allows for monitoring of the entire process. Describing and explaining how the four-day week was implemented, with all its challenges and obstacles, is as important as evaluating its effects.

1.3 Team

Coordinating team

Prof. Pedro Gomes (Lisbon, 1981) is a Professor of Economics at Birkbeck, University of London, where he has been since 2017. Previously, he was an Assistant Professor at Carlos III University of Madrid for seven years, Visiting Professor at the University of Essex, and has also worked at the European Central Bank and the Bank of England. He completed his undergraduate degree in Economics at the Lisbon School of Economics and Management from the University of Lisbon in 2003 and obtained his PhD from the London School of Economics in 2010, supervised by Christopher Pissarides, Nobel Prize winner in Economics. A researcher in public sector employment, he has published numerous articles in specialized journals and chapters in books. In 2021, he published *Friday is the New Saturday* in the United Kingdom, his first book in which he defends his vision of the four-day week as a better way to organize the economy. The book received excellent reviews, being one of the books of the month according to the *Financial Times*, and has been translated into Portuguese, Korean, Italian, and Spanish.



Dr. Rita Fontinha (Abrantes, 1984) is an Associate Professor of Strategic Human Resource Management at Henley Business School - University of Reading, since 2015. She is also Director of Flexible Working at Henley's *World of Work Institute*. Prior to joining Henley Business School, she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Portsmouth Business School. She has a joint PhD from the University of Lisbon (Portugal) and the University of Leuven (Belgium). Before becoming a full-time researcher, she worked in human resource management. Rita Fontinha has published several research articles in scientific journals, as well as several book chapters, and is co-author of the book *Research Methods in Human Resource Management*. She has been involved in research into flexible working practices, and co-authored a UK research study on the four-day working week, which was widely cited in the media worldwide.

The agreement was made with their universities to allocate 20% of her time over the course of one year to dedicate to this project.

Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)

The IEFP was responsible for all logistical aspects with the companies and all contractual and financial matters. Heading the project was the Director of the Employment Department, Adélia Costa, who collaborated with technicians from her team, namely: Elsa Mano, Filipa Ferreira, Paulo Leite Ribeiro, and Henrique Silva.

Office of the Secretary of State for Labour

The coordinating team worked in partnership with the office of the Secretary of State for Labour of the XXIII Government, Miguel Fontes, and his team, which included Dr. Sara Ramos, Rita Dantas Ferreira, and Rita Resendes. Also involved were Ana Silva, Diogo Torres, and Patrícia Halm, as well as communication advisor Marisa Ferreira. Their team was responsible for the political management of the project, coordination with IEFPP, and communication with social partners, parliament, and media outlets.



Dr. Sara Ramos



Rita Dantas Ferreira



Rita Resendes

4 Day Week Global

Non-profit international association, established to support companies testing the four-day week. Founded in 2019 by Andrew Barnes and Charlotte Lockhart, entrepreneurs from New Zealand, *4 Day Week Global* seeks to rethink how we organize work, focusing on productivity and outcomes rather than hours worked, aligning with the vision of this project. It has already organized several international trials, guiding companies in planning and testing the four-day week, using the 100:80:100 principle. In 2023, it was chosen as one of the 100 Most Influential Companies of 2023 by Time magazine. The most involved members of *4 Day Week Global* in the project were community manager Gabriela Brasil, author of the book *Conexão Essencial*, and research and innovation director Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, author of several books such as *Rest, Shorter*, and *Work Less Do More: Designing the Four Day Week*.



Annex: I (Acknowledgements)

1.4 Project Characteristics

The objective of this project is solely to study and credibly evaluate the impacts that the four-day week has on companies and workers. Nevertheless, the project began surrounded by considerable scepticism, with little enthusiasm from unions and the strong opposition from employers' organizations. This scepticism was natural, given the disruptive nature of the idea and the widespread ignorance about what it entails. We sought to respect it, privileging the prudence of decisions, and to engage it in a positive way, informing the public about examples of companies and international developments, as well as explaining the arguments in favour of this practice, supported by data obtained in previous studies.

Given its exploratory nature, we wanted this project to be flexible and adaptable, capable of gathering as much information as possible at minimal cost. We did not aim to reach the largest number of organizations or workers. In designing the project, we sought to articulate the advantages and minimize the risks of different types of studies conducted in other countries, establishing that the trial would take place as follows:

- The study would focus on companies in the private sector.
- We would organize a six-month pilot, voluntary and reversible.
- The trial would be conducted without any financial compensation for the companies.
- The government would provide technical support in preparation for the transition.

We decided that the trial should start in the private sector, which accounts for over 80% of employment, is less complex to evaluate, more agile to execute, and less politicized than the public sector. We agreed that, depending on the satisfactory evolution of the pilot, this trial could, at a later stage, be extended to the public sector. In November 2022, the Ministry of the Presidency took on the task of studying the organization of work in the public sector and possibly developing a pilot experiment, not before 2024.

The trial, open to all companies wishing to participate, was inspired by the pilot experiments conducted in the UK, Ireland, United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand by *4 Day Week Global*. Over three to four months, several Q&A sessions aimed at companies would be conducted to explain how the entire process would unfold. At the end of this period, companies would register to participate in a four-day week trial, with no salary reduction and with a reduction in weekly hours, lasting six months, voluntary and reversible, with the explicit support of workers. The experiment had to involve the vast majority of workers, except for large companies where it could be tested in just a few establishments or departments. The six-month trial period would be followed by a reflection period, during which management would evaluate the experiment and determine whether to extend the trial period in the same format or in an alternative format, or even return to the five-day week.

Our main decision was not to offer any financial compensation for conducting the test. The main reason was to preserve the quality of the evaluation. Offering a subsidy would bias the evaluation, as it would be too complex to separate the effects of the new work organization from direct funding to the company. Furthermore, although it would naturally attract more companies, it would not be clear how many companies would have a genuine interest in this management practice. Another benefit of not directly subsidizing companies is that it made the project operationally more agile, legally simpler with no bureaucracy for companies, and financially much less expensive for

taxpayers. Since the State did not offer any financial compensation, no specific format or exact number of weekly hours was stipulated, which could be 32, 34, or 36 hours, defined by agreement between management and workers (with the safeguard that there had to be a minimum reduction to 36 hours weekly, on average). The autonomy of companies to choose the format that best suits their situation is fundamental to subsequently design a legal framework in a work regime that serves Portuguese companies.

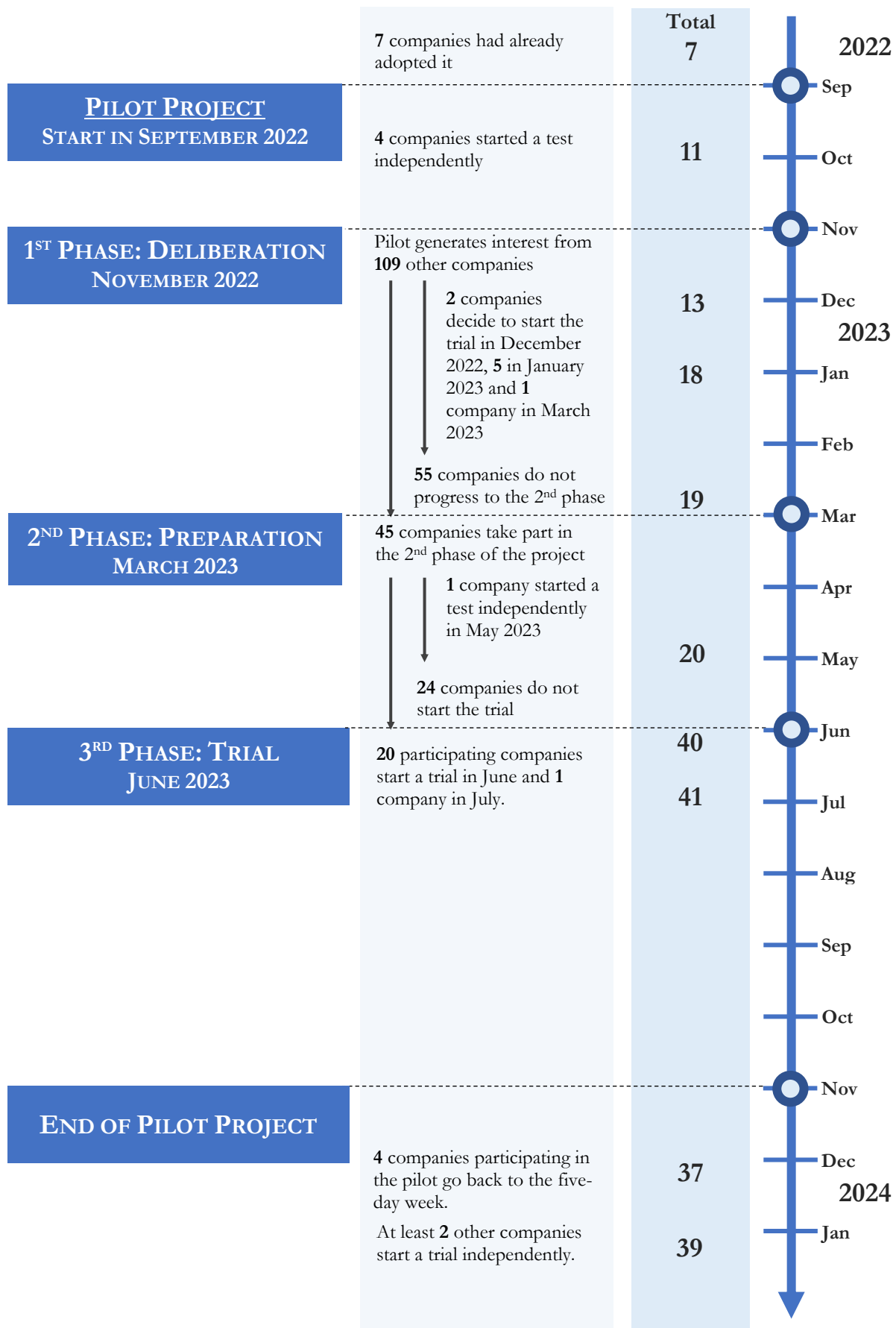
Instead of financial support, we provided technical support to participating companies through a specialized service in advising companies in this change, focusing on changing internal processes and resolving the problems that naturally arise with such organizational change. We decided to contract the services of *4 Day Week Global*, the non-profit association that has developed most of the international pilots. The decision to choose this organization was influenced by the fact that it has the most know-how on the subject, having already supported over 1000 companies in different countries and sectors. In Portugal, among universities and consulting firms, there was no systematized knowledge about the implementation of the four-day week. The main drawback of this option was that much of the material provided by *4 Day Week Global* was in English, and although the vast majority of their sessions would be in Portuguese, some would be in English. To minimize this inconvenience, the coordinating team ended up being more involved than initially planned, in the unfolding of the pilot preparation sessions, and also in the translation of material.

In designing the pilot experiment, we opted for this simpler and low-cost model. This model allows for: learning during the process and, evaluating whether there is adherence from companies, and understanding the most frequent solutions among Portuguese companies that fit the project's principles. Above all, it is an agile model, without bureaucracy. This knowledge, systematized in this report, will allow testing a more ambitious model in more favourable conditions in the future, for instance with a public sector trial, or testing with a quasi-experimental design, where one group of companies adopts the change and another group serves as a control.

We established that the pilot experiment would take place in three phases:

- 1st Phase: Deliberation (November 2022 to February 2023)
 - Dissemination of the project
 - Q&A sessions and explanation of benefits
 - Involvement of leadership
 - Survey of business leaders
- 2nd Phase: Preparation (March to April 2023)
 - Preparation sessions
 - Individual meetings
 - Involvement of teams
 - Initial survey of workers
- 3rd Phase: Trial (June to November 2023)
 - Troubleshooting and process optimization sessions
 - Individual meetings
 - Involvement of workers
 - Company surveys (operational manager)
 - Worker's surveys (three months, six months)

1.5 Timeline of the adoption of the four-day week



1.6 Evaluation methodology and limitations

Given the decision not to offer financial incentives, project participation depended on the interest the initiative could generate in the business community. However, at the same time, it ensured that all interest was genuine and that the results were not biased by additional financial revenue. The generalization of results is difficult due to the fact that this experiment operates based on company self-selection, regardless of the number of participants. The companies that decided to participate share the motivation to do so, which may bias the results. Even if these companies recognize the benefits of the four-day week and continue it after the experimental period, we cannot assume that these benefits would occur in all companies. However, if this management practice did not work in these companies - the ones with a genuine interest in it - then it would hardly succeed if generalized to other national companies, and would therefore be an indicator not to proceed. Essentially, this study serves as a 'Proof of Concept' - proof that the four-day week can work in certain situations as a management practice. More than unequivocal evidence, it will be an important indicator to proceed to more in-depth studies in other contexts.

It was planned that if less than 40 companies participated, the trial would include all companies, and the evaluation would be done by comparing the results before, during, and after. If there was much greater participation, we would randomly divide the companies into experimental and control groups, which would allow for a more robust evaluation of the effects of the four-day week, but this possibility did not occur. In the end, our study includes 41 companies. Although these companies have adopted different formats of the four-day week, they share the fundamental principles that characterize this project - no pay cuts and an effective reduction in weekly working hours. The working week had to be reduced, at least to 36 hours, on average. We did not consider companies that reduced the weekly working hours without increasing workers' free days, excluding many companies that implemented free Friday afternoons. The experiment was voluntary and reversible at any time. Our study also includes 55 companies that expressed interest in the pilot project but decided not to proceed to the test preparation, as well as 24 companies that attended the preparation sessions but chose not to start the test in June 2023. The intention is to understand what variables block them from testing a four-day week.

The study of the impacts of an hourly reduction within the framework of the four-day week is conducted at two levels: for the company and among the workers. On the company side, the main focus is on productivity, competitiveness, intermediate costs, and profits. Specifically, it is important to analyse the effects on absenteeism rates, recruitment capacity, organization of internal processes, financial and operational performance indicators, and the consumption of intermediate goods, both raw materials and energy expenses, depending on the sector of activity. On the workers' side, it is important to measure the effects on well-being, quality of life, mental health, and physical health, as well as their level of commitment to the company, job satisfaction, and intention to stay in the organization. It is also relevant to study workers' use of time on days off, to understand where and how non-working time is used.

At the company level, our analysis is systematized through three questionnaires, supplemented by information collected during our regular contact. The initial questionnaire was conducted during

Four-Day Week Study Summary Table

	No	Companies			No	Workers			
		Surveys				Surveys			
Empresas incluídas		Initial	Intermediate	Final		Pre-Pilot	3 months	6 months	Retrospect.
Adopted before June	20	13	18	16	733				42
Participants in the pilot	21	21	21	17	332	283	203	258	
Control group	14					160		122	
Did not move forward									
2 nd phase	24	23	22						
1st phase	55	50							
Total	120								

Note: The number of final responses to questionnaires or surveys.

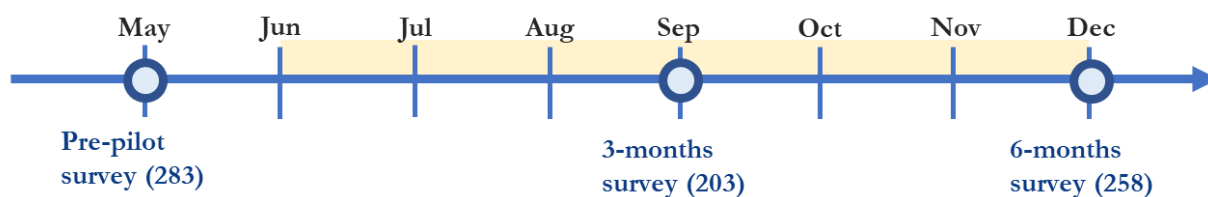
the registration that took place during the first phase between November 2022 and January 2023 and was filled out by a business leader or human resources director. The intermediate questionnaire took place in October 2023, already with the pilot underway, and was filled out by the person responsible for implementing the four-day week, therefore having a more operational character. The final questionnaire was filled out by a business leader in 2024 and focused on financial aspects related to the four-day week and the final assessment of the experiment.

The evaluation of the impacts of the four-day week on the workers of the companies participating in the pilot is done through three surveys (pre-pilot, at three and six months). The questionnaires were developed by a research team at Boston College (which included Wen Fan, Guolin Gu, Orla Kelly, and Prof. Juliet Schor) for use in pilot projects by the *4 Day Week Global*, and were translated, adapted, and validated for the Portuguese reality by the project's coordinating team. These surveys were very detailed and took on average 20 to 25 minutes to complete. The evaluation is done by comparing the pre-pilot survey (May 2023) with the surveys at three and six months (September and November). To reinforce the study methodologically, we compared the data obtained in the experimental group of 21 companies with the data from a control group, composed of workers from companies that decided not to test the four-day week. Although the choice was not random, these companies included in the control group showed a concern for human resources by expressing interest in the project. None of the international trials conducted to date had a control group, making it a methodological innovation.

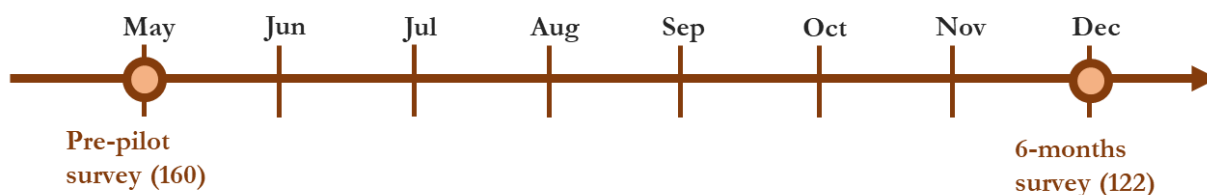
For the workers of companies that started before June 2023, as the effects cannot be measured by comparing them with data prior to the experiment, these had less value in terms of research. Nonetheless, the companies were offered the application of a retrospective survey in April 2024, but with the participation of only 5 companies (total of 45 responses) since most already had their own instruments to evaluate worker's wellbeing and did not want to overload them.

To further enhance the study, we signed a cooperation agreement with a multidisciplinary research team at the University of Porto, led by Dr. Sofia Cruz and Dr. Ana Isabel Couto and composed of six other researchers and several master's students. The team contacted us after

Treatment group (21 companies)



Control group (14 companies)



creating the project ‘Organization of working time: The four-day week’, funded by the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto. The agreement aimed to promote technical-scientific collaboration between the two teams. In particular, we coordinated access to interested companies, so that they could conduct qualitative interviews about the implementation process, as well as case studies carried out by master’s students as part of their dissertation. This agreement allowed us to expand the scope and methodology of research, seeking to strengthen the study by allowing independent analysis by other researchers. We also supported, as far as possible, some master’s students from other universities who contacted us independently.

We are also discussing the possibility of establishing a second agreement with the National Institute of Statistics (INE), which aims to transfer all data collected throughout the project to the INE, which would commit to anonymizing the company data, cross-referencing it with other administrative databases, and making it available to other national researchers under all access conditions that preserve data anonymity and security. This protocol, which depends only on legal aspects, would enable the continuation of academic research after the end of the project and overcome many of the methodological criticisms of international pilot experiments. Specifically, it would allow: measuring in more detail the effects of the four-day week on companies; comparing with companies that did not move forward, or with a synthetic control group; evaluating a comprehensive set of indicators in administrative national databases; analysing labour market effects for workers; following companies and their workers for several years (measuring long-term effects); studying companies that did not want to move forward; facilitating access to other researchers for data transparency.

These agreements aim to promote the study of the four-day week beyond the effective duration of the project. After the project is completed, the coordinating team intends to continue academic research on the topic, conducting a survey of workers one year after the start of the experiment, and monitoring new companies that shorten the working week. We will also continue to involve and support the Portuguese academic community as much as possible.

Annex: II (Involvement of the academic community)

1.7 Overview of the 1st phase of the project

The first phase of the project aimed to raise awareness among the business community about the project. For its dissemination, the coordinators promoted arguments for the adoption of a four-day week in a constructive manner, targeted towards companies. We wrote several opinion articles, gave interviews to newspapers, radios, and podcasts. Since the beginning of the project, the media has shown great interest in covering the topic. In this first phase, we focused on disseminating existing examples of national companies, trying to maintain the anonymity of interested companies.

The coordinating team also participated in various human resources conferences and business events, where we had the opportunity to promote the project to an audience of leaders who were more open to the importance of valuing workers. In addition, we made some efforts to promote the project abroad, hoping that international impact could also foster interest among the Portuguese business community.

Expression of interest from companies in the pilot project was done through the IEFPP website, where the project was advertised, and where they filled out a small form and registered for an information session. Between December 2022 and January 2023, we organized five online information sessions. Each session followed this format:

The coordinating team presented the project's philosophy, described the main results of international studies, and explained the potential benefits of the four-day week for companies, namely:

- Well-rested workers perform better and more creatively on other days (improving mental health and reducing presenteeism).
- It allows for changes in processes that improve teamwork and increase productivity.
- Reduces turnover and improves the company's attractiveness in the labour market. It is an alternative to wage increases when the company's financial conditions do not allow for it.
- Reduces other intermediate costs (energy expenses, recruitment or absenteeism costs, other employee benefits).

A representative from a company in Portugal that already implements the four-day week gave first-hand testimony about the advantages in their company's context and the difficulties in implementation. The support of these companies was crucial to demonstrate to interested companies that national examples already existed.

The representative from *4 Day Week Global* presented their platforms, the advantages of participating in the pilot project, and the support they could expect from our partners, in terms of training, mentoring, community, and research.

The coordinating team explained the project's timeline and allowed time for questions and answers. All information sessions, lasting between 60 to 90 minutes, were recorded for audit purposes and future evaluation.

Figure 1.2: Location of companies (by municipality)

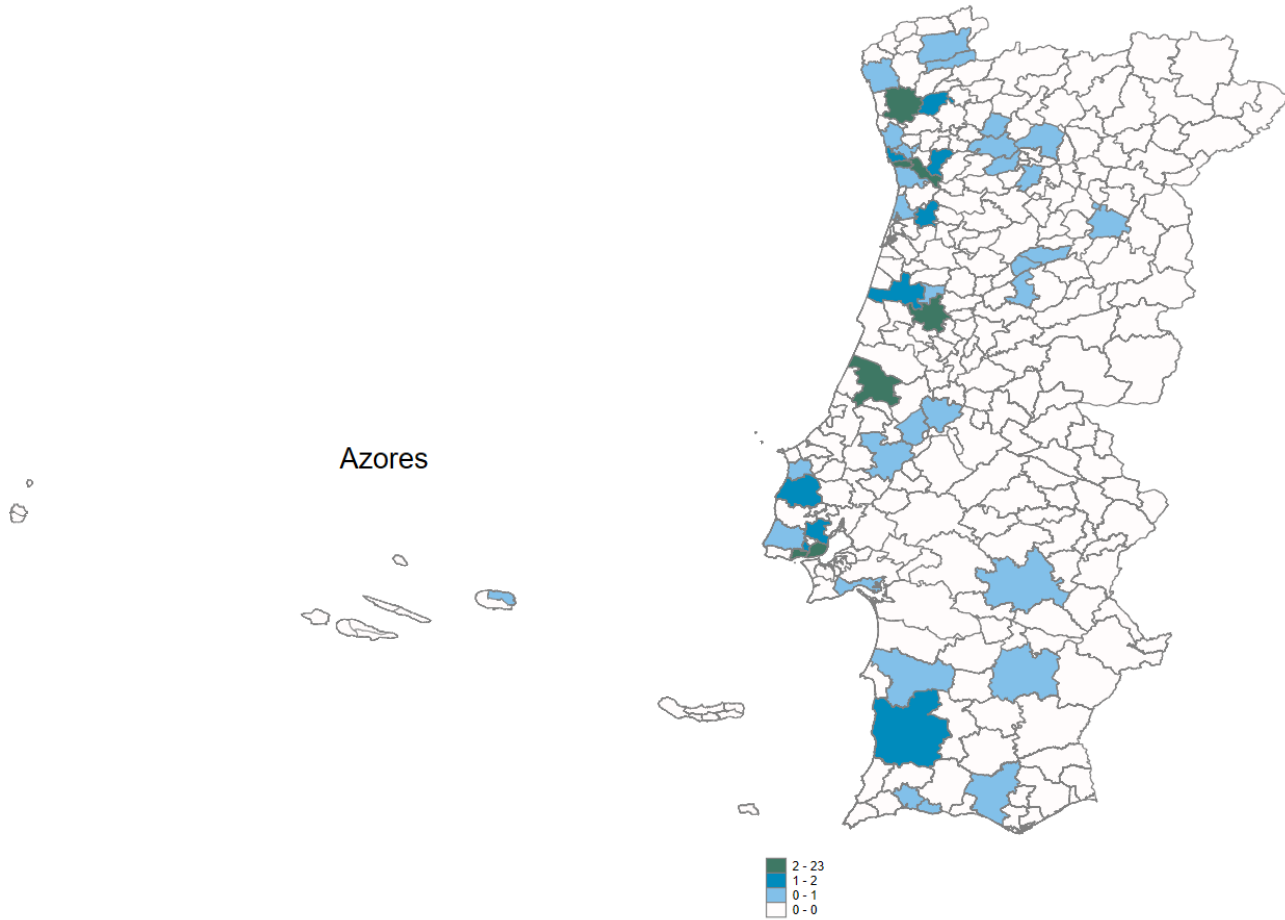
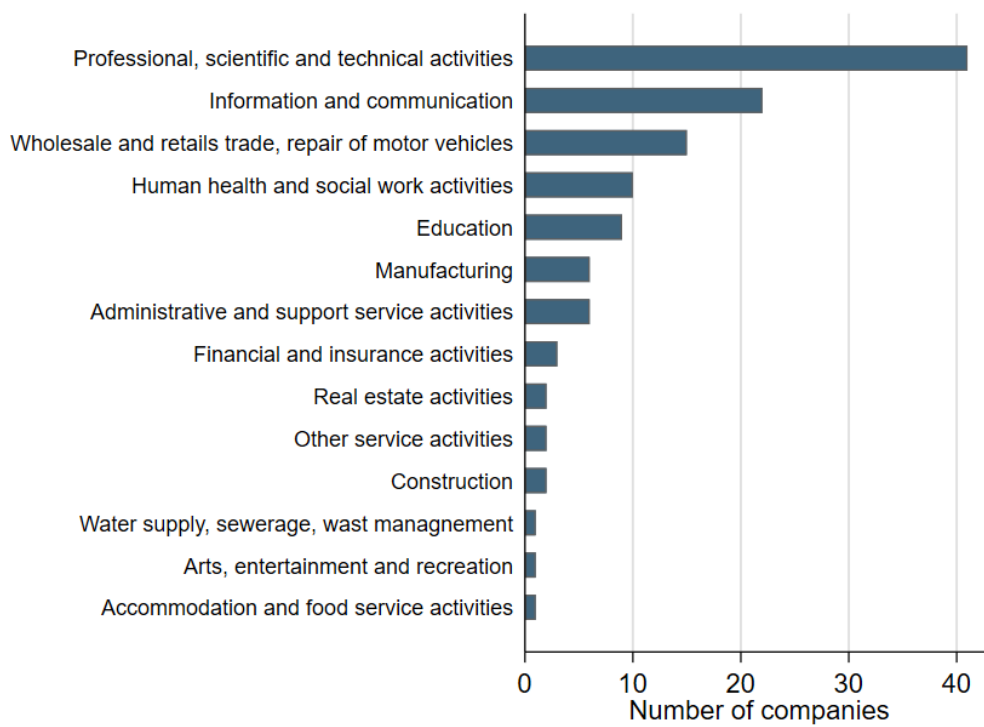
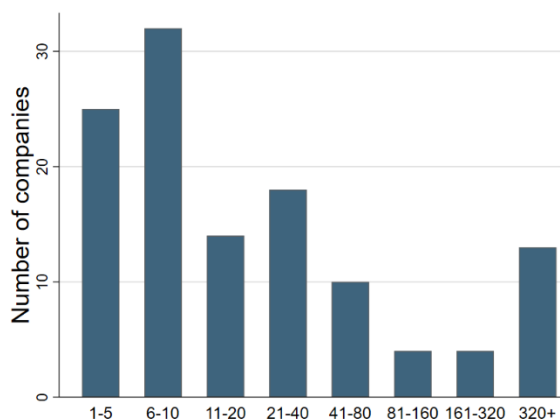
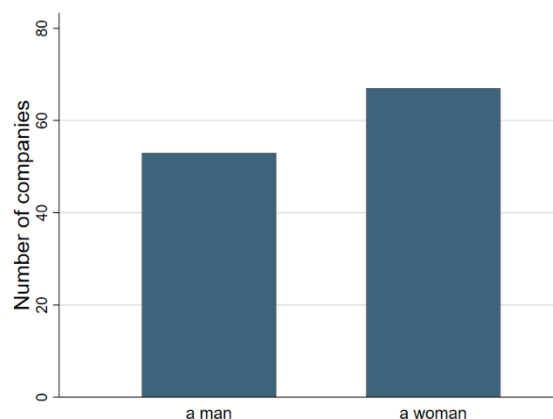


Figure 1.3: Industries



Note: Data from the 120 companies that took part in the first phase.

Figure 1.4: Size (number of employees)**Figure 1.5: Contact initiated by**

Note: Data from the 120 companies that took part in the first phase.

Following the sessions, we sent a document, *Information for Interested Companies*, which explained in writing the important elements of the project, and translated a short *Persuasion Guide*, outlining a strategy to strengthen the arguments for a four-day week, with the aim of convincing the company's leader or board of directors. Between January and February 2024, we had several individual meetings with companies that requested them to discuss their context and answer their questions.

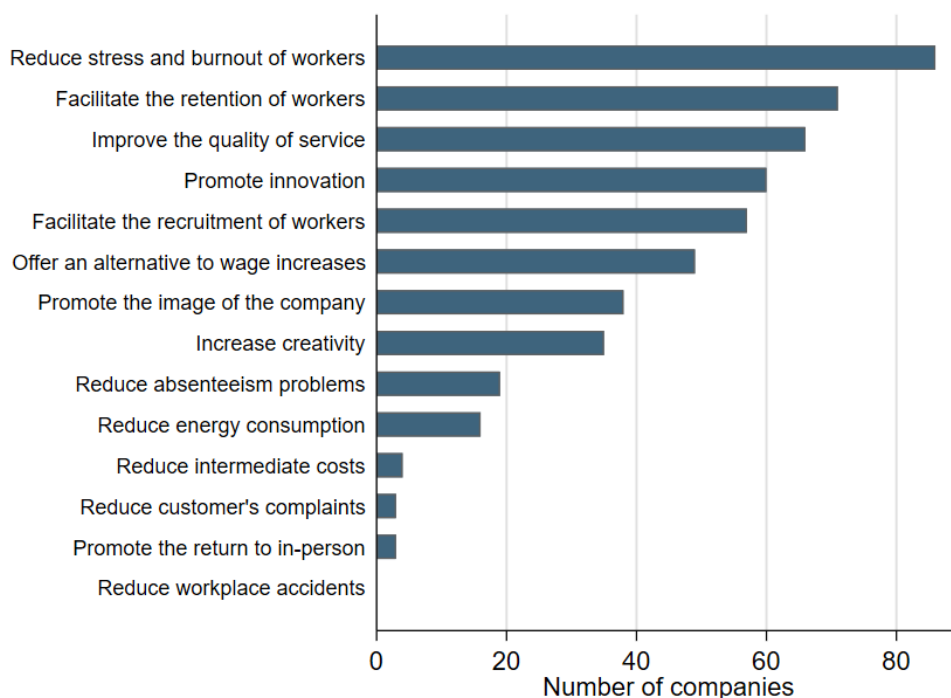
The first phase of the project involved a total of 120 companies. This number includes the 11 companies that were already implementing the four-day week (some of which we contacted). The vast majority participated in the information sessions, although a minority contacted us after the sessions and watched a recording afterward.

Many companies were based in the Lisbon district (46 companies), Porto (21 companies), and Coimbra (9 companies), but the remaining 44 were scattered throughout the country, including one company in the Azores, as shown in Figure 1.2. In total, 15 districts of mainland Portugal were represented.

More important than the number itself is the diversity of companies involved. In terms of sector of activity, the vast majority of companies worked in the consulting and information technology area - typical 'office' jobs - but companies in manufacturing, commerce, construction, education, and activities related to human health and social support were also interested in the four-day week trial (Figure 1.3). Regarding size, the companies were also representative of the business structure in Portugal, with a predominance of smaller companies. More than half of the companies had fewer than 20 employees. Nevertheless, we counted 13 large companies with more than 320 workers, 11 of which had more than 1000 workers (Figure 1.4).

A particularly interesting element is that 55% of the people who initiated contact with the IEF, and therefore hold a leadership position in the company, were women (Figure 1.5). This value contrasts with the Portuguese business universe where only 27% of leadership positions are held by women, according to data collected by *Informa DB*. This was the first indicator of a fact that became evident as the project progressed: that the four-day week appeals more to women than men. We associate this finding with the fact that women feel more time pressure in their daily lives due to gender imbalances in household and family tasks.

Figure 1.6: Main reasons for interest in the four-day week



Note: Data from 106 companies that answered the initial questionnaire. Each company chose up to five reasons.

When we asked companies about the reasons why they were interested in the four-day week, the vast majority revealed a concern for human resources, particularly in seeking to reduce the level of stress among workers (Figure 1.6). It was often mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic required a great effort in adaptation and ended up leaving many workers with sequelae, manifesting signs of stress and burnout. Many companies already offered benefits to try to improve mental health and wanted to assess the advantages and disadvantages of this potential additional measure.

Concern for the mental health of workers also has a more pragmatic goal of improving the company’s attractiveness in the job market. More than 70 companies cited the reason of facilitating worker retention, and nearly the same number mentioned worker recruitment and hiring. During this period, one of the biggest problems Portuguese companies faced was difficulties in hiring. This issue affected companies in sectors as diverse as information technology, commerce or hospitality. Some small and medium-sized enterprises, which did not have the financial capacity to compete with large companies through wage increases, sought alternatives for valuing the jobs they offer.

Among the other reasons, several companies believed that the four-day week could increase service quality, boost creativity, promote innovation within the company, and enhance its image. More than 20 companies cited reduced absenteeism as one of the reasons for their interest. Among the companies that expressed interest in the project, it was clear that they perceived the advantages of the four-day week at the human resource management level.

In their own words

Initial testimonials from contact persons

“We are a company with a strong investment in our people, with various initiatives and benefits to promote their well-being in all dimensions, their happiness in the company, and the balance between professional, family, and personal life. The four-day week is something that is part of our goals, and we want to better understand how to implement it.”

“Evaluate the pros and cons of a change that seems inevitable in the medium/long term.”

“Our work area is very demanding, so the adoption of this method could be a way to provide extra motivation and reduce the psychological fatigue associated with it.”

“Due to the high demands of our activity, stress levels may be higher than normal, and we would like to promote more consecutive rest days for our employees to maintain good mental and physical health.”

“At the beginning of the year, an Employee Survey was conducted where it was identified that the benefits area was quite deficient. Due to the fact that we have great recruitment difficulties, we believe that having a 4-day work week will make us competitive compared to the competition.”

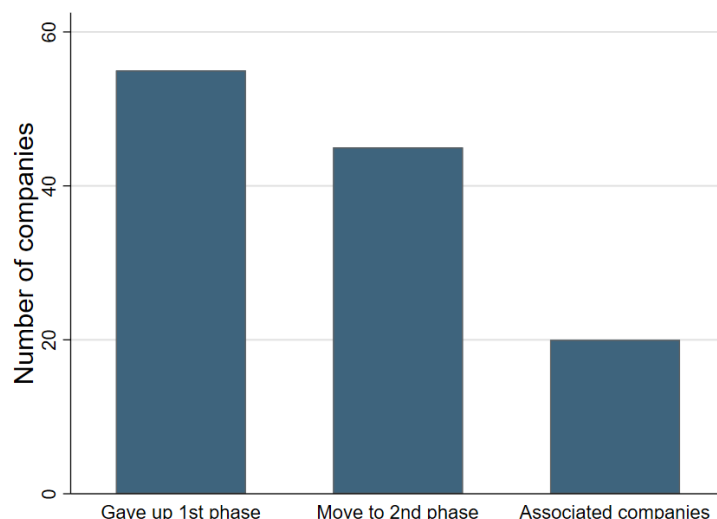
“The company operates in an area closely related to business management, with many stress factors related to meeting deadlines. With this program, I believe we can reduce workers' stress levels and improve their quality of life. By improving the quality of life and satisfaction of workers, we are confident that it will also improve the quality of the services we provide and the overall satisfaction of our customers. At the same time, we can promote the benefits of these types of programs and work organization to our clients.”

“Trying to achieve a better work-life balance for employees. Reducing costs, ensuring greater productivity and competitiveness in the market through the implementation of new activities to develop and/or new, more innovative technologies.”

“The fact that we have an activity that requires great creativity, with work-life balance being very important for people to feel motivated and stimulated to develop research and innovation activities. Additionally, as we work with a very young population, we believe this pilot could be an excellent opportunity to create a work environment more aligned with the expectations of young people.”

“Believing that it can be a measure with the potential to improve employee retention, as well as to provide salary appreciation.”

“It is not easy to manage a small-sized company in Portugal. It requires a lot of time, work, and sacrifice. However, we understand the importance of having free time, whether to have a more organized life or in terms of family. We would like to try to take advantage of the opportunity to provide this to our employees because when you rest enough, you are also more productive. Unfortunately, it is something that would be impossible for us to do without technical support, so we decided to take advantage of this opportunity and be part of the project.”

Figure 1.7: Status in the 2nd phase

Note: Data from the 120 companies that took part in the first phase.

These 120 companies represent the universe of companies interested in the four-day week in 2022. As occurred in international pilot experiments, it was natural that some of these companies would not proceed to the second phase. Even among those that did, some would not start a trial, and among those that did start the trial, not all would continue. This aspect was always emphasized in external communication by the coordinating team, but the message did not always get through to the media, which often referred to the number of companies that expressed interest as the number that would implement the four-day week.

To these companies, we asked them to decide during the month of February whether they wanted to proceed to the second phase: the trial preparation phase. A total of 45 companies decided to move forward. Seven companies had already begun the four-day week experiment over the preceding months, and therefore would not participate in the evaluation, but they would be classified as ‘associated companies’ along with the companies that provided testimony in the clarification sessions. We also included as associated companies two other companies that started a trial in March and another in May. Fifty-five companies decided not to proceed to the second phase.

Before the start of the second phase, the main concerns or challenges identified by the companies were:

- How to avoid a reduction in productivity?
- What would be the customer perception?
- Work hours and workload.
- Fairness and equity towards employees.
- Misunderstanding from some colleagues.
- What would be the costs associated with the project?
- What would be the format of the workweek?
- What success or productivity metrics would they use?
- How to reconcile with peak workloads?

1.8 Overview of the 2nd phase of the project

This was the most important phase of the pilot project, as it was during this phase that the company had to think and decide on how to operationalize the four-day week in its context. When starting to consider the concrete implications of implementing the four-day week, managers quickly realized that it is more than just a policy to improve mental health or employee happiness; it is a profound management intervention of the organization of work.

Over three months, between March and May 2023, we conducted eight trial preparation sessions in partnership with the non-profit organization *4 Day Week Global*:

- Two Masterclasses with Alex Pang and Andrew Barnes (English).
- Three Masterclasses with Gabriela Brasil.
- Three training and Q&A sessions with project coordinators.

All sessions, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, were recorded for auditing and future evaluation purposes, as well as to provide them to companies that may express interest in conducting a four-day week trial in the future. The initial sessions aimed to support companies:

- Defining the format of the four-day week and designing a new calendar.
- Determining metrics for evaluating the trial's success and designing an evaluation panel.
- Setting expectations and communicating to employees that it is a trial and not a right, and that it requires commitment from everyone.
- Communicating the decision to clients in a way that does not alarm them and designing an external communication strategy to enhance the positive impact on the company's image.
- Designing scenarios and considering the most unfavourable ones and establishing red lines that would indicate that the trial should stop.

Other sessions focused on more specific aspects of process changes, technology usage, meeting rules, and daily time blocks that improve company operations and allow for increased efficiency on working days. In addition to live sessions, *4 Day Week Global* provided:

- Access to their *Notion* and *Circle* platforms with support material translated into Portuguese.
- Access to live guidance sessions and sessions from other international trials.
- Individual meetings with companies.

Documents were also prepared to facilitate test planning and organization, including a *4 Day Week Design Manual* and various Excel calendars. As the trial start date approached, the coordinating team had several individual meetings with each company to help address the small problems that arose.

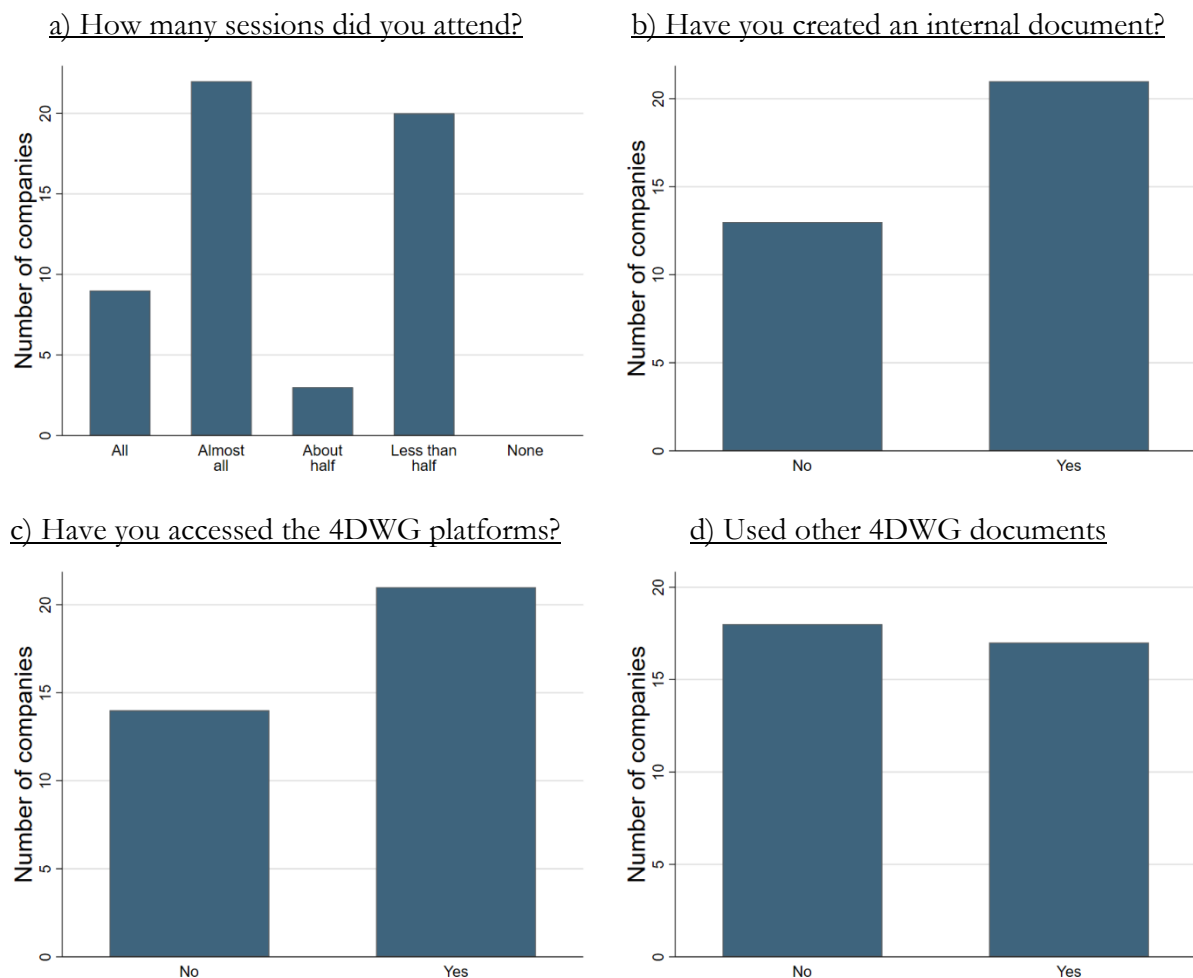
Preparing a test is a demanding process for both the company and its employees. On top of the daily pressure, they added extra work with participation in the project, including attendance at weekly sessions, several internal meetings with the coordinating team, and a lot of individual work by the project manager (65% of companies created a formal project document).

About 30 companies regularly attended the preparation sessions, 20 synchronously and 10 viewed the recordings later. Among these are 13 companies participating in the pilot, 4 companies that started the trial before June, and another 13 companies that ultimately did not proceed. Between 15 to 20 of these companies registered on the *4 Day Week Global* platforms and used their support materials. The other companies attended less than half of the sessions.

In terms of communication, we wanted to protect the companies as much as possible during this phase until we were sure they were ready to start a trial. Between March and April, we continued to promote examples of associated companies. In May, some companies were already indicating they were ready to start the trial and wanted to publicly announce their participation. This disclosure was made through a press release.

For the evaluation, we prepared the questionnaires that served as the basis for assessing the impact of the four-day week on workers. These surveys were conducted in May 2023. The initial data collection phase involved the participation of 283 workers with whom the four-day week is being implemented (experimental group).

Figure 1.8: Involvement of companies in test preparation

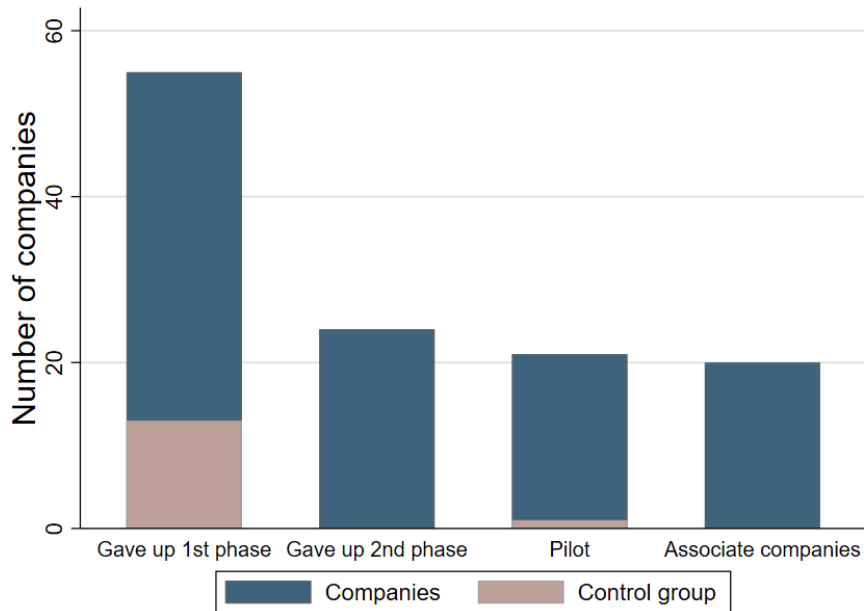


Note: 35 companies: 21 participating in the pilot and 14 companies that started the test before June.

In parallel, we contacted all the companies that expressed interest in learning more about the project in November 2022 but did not proceed to the second phase, asking if they would like to conduct a survey among their workers to serve as a control group. Among the 55 companies contacted, 13 agreed to participate. In addition to these 13 companies, one of the large companies participating in the pilot, which implemented the four-day week for a group of 30 workers, also selected another 30 workers for a control group. The data from the experimental group were compared with the data from this control group of 160 workers who are not undergoing the four-day week (the second data collection moment from this control group was coordinated with the six-month survey of the experimental group).

As the months passed, several companies realized they were not adequately prepared to start the pilot. In the end, 20 companies actually began a trial in June, and one company postponed by a month and started in July.

Figure 1.9: Status in the 3rd phase



1.9 What are the obstacles to starting a test?

As mentioned, it was already expected that many of the companies interested in the project would not proceed to start a trial. Of the 55 companies that withdrew in the first phase, 28 responded to a short exit questionnaire about the reasons for not advancing. The most frequently cited obstacle was the macroeconomic conditions. The year 2022 was marked by significant political instability and a high level of inflation, creating a scenario of much uncertainty. Some companies also pointed to the complexity of implementation or the need for financial investment, including hiring more workers to execute the project. Other companies simply preferred to explore other types of benefits to promote work-life balance.

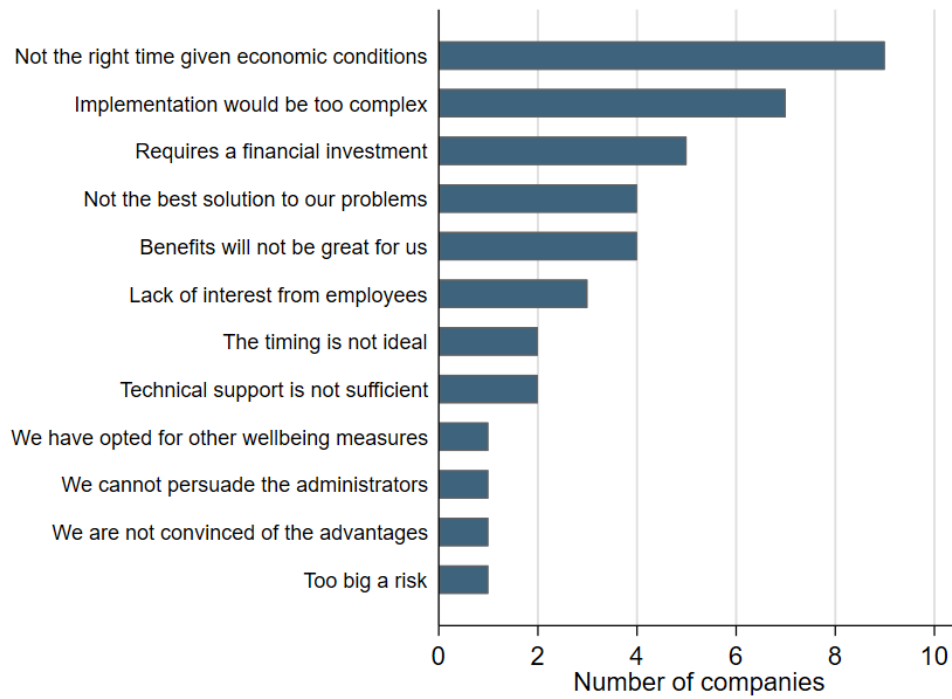
Of the 24 companies that withdrew in the second phase after attending the training sessions, 22 responded to an exit questionnaire. The most cited reason for not proceeding was that the timing of starting the trial in June was not suitable for the company. Several companies were unable to prepare sufficiently well because they had other ongoing projects that required significant involvement from the workers. In some cases, they were relocating premises or had lost some key workers, and therefore decided to postpone the start of the trial. Since there was no financial compensation provided to the companies, they had complete autonomy and flexibility in choosing when to initiate the implementation of the new model. As they participated in our sessions, the companies realized that the four-day week is more than a measure to promote the well-being of workers. To maximize its benefits for the company, it requires changes, sometimes profound, to the organization of work. In this sense, many considered it more prudent to wait than to rush into a trial when they were not sufficiently prepared for it.

Three multinational companies did not obtain approval from their international headquarters to start a trial. Two companies highlighted difficulty with clients, with whom they have contracts that establish defined working hours or require availability for contact every day. Among the 'other reasons' cited, some companies already granted Friday afternoons off and decided to maintain this system. One company stated that the reaction of the workers was not particularly positive.

Another concern of some companies was the lack of legal framework for the new work formats. As we will explain in the second part of this report, although all the solutions found are naturally within the law that sets maximum limits on working hours, they had implications for the calculation of allowances, reporting of hours to social security, calculation of vacation days, and interaction with other exception regimes. The lack of a concrete response ultimately deterred some companies.

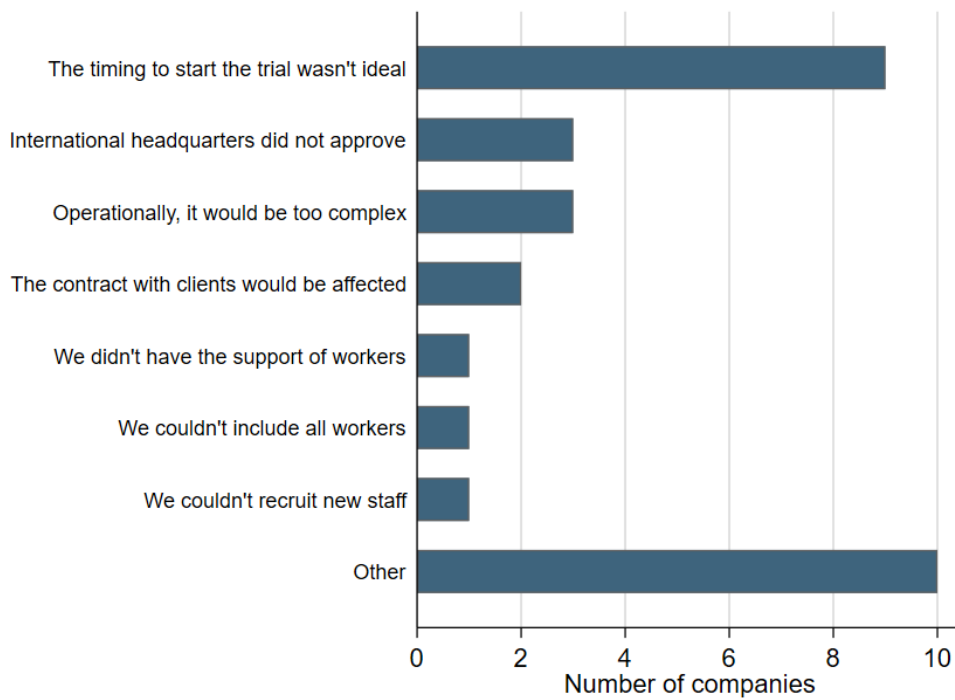
Of these 22 companies, 20 still expect to try the four-day week in the future. Seven companies hope to start a trial in 2024, and five companies are planning for 2025.

Figure 1.10: Main reasons for not progressing to 2nd stage



Note: Data on 28 companies that answered the first phase exit questionnaire.

Figure 1.11: Main reasons for not progressing to 3rd stage



Note: Data on 22 companies that answered the exit questionnaire for the second phase.

In their own words

Companies that withdrew from the 1st phase

“The initiative continues to deserve our full interest. However, given the phase of major transformations in our company, due to the start of large projects that are ongoing throughout the year 2023, we feel that the organization may not be able to take on this challenge simultaneously with the need to meet our short-term obligations. Therefore, we prefer to attempt participation at a later period, should such an opportunity arise.”

“Although there is recognition by both the business leaders and the workers of the benefits of the change. Both parties acknowledge that this change does not correspond to an effective increase in salary since, nominally, the worker receives the same, that is, they continue to be unable to provide for their subsistence in better conditions.”

“We are very committed to the four-day week, but we probably cannot proceed in 2023. This year of 2023, we have already implemented an additional measure beyond all the other flexibility measures we have, which is to close the company on the afternoon of the last Friday of each month.”

Companies that withdrew from the 2nd phase

“Previous dynamics of our company, core business, and established habits in some of our clients and services in the market (such as events and team buildings) greatly hindered the realistic adoption of this test to the point where we could consider it a significant test.”

“We have already been implementing reduced hours since the beginning of the year, but by 4 hours weekly, in this case, it’s an afternoon on a chosen weekday.”

“We were not ready to start at this moment, as we already have a four-and-a-half-day workweek and need some more time to operationally prepare ourselves to transition to a four-day week, but we will reconsider the matter in the near future.”

“The reason why we couldn’t proceed with the implementation of the four-day week project was solely due to the fact that the company is in the process of changing locations. We were not organized enough to proceed with the project at this time. However, we intend to do so as soon as possible and would very much like to be in a position to move forward at the beginning of next summer.”

“Although the project is very interesting and could clearly bring benefits to organizations and people, it is necessary, even in a pilot project environment, to have the impacts and necessary adjustments more clearly defined based not only on labour legislation but also on existing company agreements.

“The company is undergoing restructuring and obtaining international certification, so there are currently no available resources to dedicate to implementation.”

“There are ongoing dialogues with the workers, ongoing changes (constant innovation in the company), changes in locations, which still do not allow for this leap. At the moment, they (workers) prefer to go from 40 to 36 weekly hours. A situation that is being seen as a priority for us (and is already happening with more flexibility in lunchtime).”

“I think we had the expectation of a personalized conversation at our premises to discuss more specific issues of our entities, a situation that did not occur. It seems to me that these processes are complex, and serving as a catalyst for them requires more personalized advice.”

“We are in the recruitment phase, which would make the implementation of the project difficult.”

1.10 Overview of the 3rd phase of the project and the post-pilot

During the six-month trial period, between June and November 2023, we conducted six troubleshooting sessions. These sessions were meant to help sharing experiences and monitoring the evolution of the trial.

According to results from other international trials, the first month of testing is quite chaotic. In the initial months, minor adjustment issues, communication failures, or difficulties when some workers are on leave are unavoidable. In the Portuguese case, the first three months coincided with July and August when several workers were on vacation, making the management of the four-day week more challenging. Whenever failures occurred, teams had to find solutions. During these initial three months, we encouraged companies to test new processes to improve productivity. Our advice was to experiment, fail quickly, and try again.

In the second three months, it was already expected that the new routines had entered a new normal and indications began to emerge whether the new work format was working or not. As we approached the end of the trial, concern turned to what to do when it ends. The choice of six months for the duration of the pilot has a simple rationale. Six months is not enough time to know if it works, but it is enough to know if it doesn't. In companies where the test worked very well, our suggestion was to extend the test for at least another six months to complete a one-year cycle. In companies where too many operational problems occurred, our suggestion was to interrupt the test. Finally, some companies felt that it worked well overall, but there were some issues. These companies had to assess whether these issues can be overcome with an adjusted format, adoption of new technology, or possibly hiring more workers to cover gaps in some departments, or if they preferred to revert to a five-day week.

In terms of communication, we tried to give visibility to all companies that wished. Several companies preferred not to have contact with the media. On the one hand, making participation in the pilot public can be a good opportunity for the company in terms of visibility, but on the other hand, it can involve additional work in contacting journalists in teams that are striving to accomplish the same work in fewer days. The coordinating team continued to present at various academic, human resources, or civil society institution events, both nationally and internationally.

Finally, in terms of evaluation, we conducted the six-month survey of workers in September, with 203 workers participating. In October, we also conducted another survey of companies, filled out by the project implementation manager, to try to structure the implementation details among companies. We obtained 39 responses. From these two surveys, we prepared an Interim Report, published in December. Finally, we conducted the six-month survey of workers from participating pilot companies (258) and also from the control group (122), which serve as the basis for analysis in Part 3 of this report.

After the end of the pilot, we did not have any more collective sessions with the companies. However, we maintained individual meetings to support companies in determining which format to adopt after the pilot. In December, we provided companies with an automatic report with aggregated responses to the three worker surveys, so that it could be used by managers as an additional element for the final decision. Initially, we wanted to create a personalized report, but we did not have the capacity to do so in a timely manner, opting for the automatic report. The

systematization of the companies' final decision was done with a final survey of business leaders conducted throughout March. In the end, of the 21 participating companies that coordinated the start of the test in June, only four reverted to the previous format and five scaled down the test, for example by adopting a four-day week only in the summer months. The remaining twelve companies continued the test, in the same or another format. Among the 20 companies that started earlier, half have already made the new format permanent, and eight companies are still testing. We did not receive confirmation from two companies.

The Intermediate Report, published in December, with the description of the adoption process by the companies and the initial results of the workers, generated a lot of interest from national and international media outlets. We also presented the results at universities, associations linked to unions, and civil society.

As we concluded this report, we took steps to pave the way for continued academic research. Following the cooperation agreement signed with the research team at the University of Porto, access was provided to interested companies, which were interviewed to generate more qualitative information. Fourteen master's students are developing dissertations during the academic year 2023/24, in addition to six dissertations carried out in the previous academic year, as well as a doctoral student in Social Sciences from the University of Valencia, who is conducting a comparative study of British, Spanish, and Portuguese cases. The case studies presented in the second part of this report were conducted by the team from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto.

In June, after this project was completed, we sent a 12-month survey to the workers of the companies participating in the pilot to assess the effects of the four-day week after a year. Naturally, we plan to write academic articles that offer a more in-depth analysis of the data. If the protocol with the National Institute of Statistics is established, the coordinating team will be responsible for organizing all the data and transmitting it so that it can be anonymized, cross-referenced with administrative databases, and made available to other researchers.

Since the end of the test, we have received several contacts from companies wishing to start their own test. We try, as much as possible, to support them. To this end, we prepared a list of materials and all the links to the recorded sessions during the pilot. We then decided to use the material and prepare a *Starter Pack* for companies wishing to test the four-day week in the future. The *Starter Pack* will work as follows:

- Companies fill out a small form expressing their interest.
- We will send a link with the initial questionnaire to be filled out by all workers.
- Once completed, we will send the list of materials and sessions to help prepare for a test.
- After one year, we will send another survey to workers and managers, finding out if it was implemented or not, and measuring the effects.

Although we do not have the capacity to offer any technical support beyond what was developed during the pilot, we can provide companies with the results of the worker surveys. In this way, we will be able to continue research and monitor the growth of the four-day week in the Portuguese business community.

1.11 Communication and impact

Since the beginning, the project has sparked great interest from the media, which sought to document its evolution. We believe this interest reflects the desire that the four-day week arouses among the general public. We tried to meet this demand as much as possible, as a way to bring attention to the project, constructively conveying our vision of the four-day week, and give visibility to participating companies, as long as it did not clash with their best interest. Media curiosity can demand a lot of time from companies and sometimes requires a dedicated person to respond. Several companies preferred to remain anonymous during the process, while others sought to leverage the visibility. In a non-exhaustive list, we counted over 800 references in national media outlets.

We feel that this interest in following the project was not matched, with the same energy, by a broader debate in the media, among commentators, columnists, or opinion makers. In a listing of opinion articles or comments, the majority of the 70 articles were from anonymous individuals, often in secondary outlets such as regional newspapers. We feel that we conveyed the message that the four-day week is a complex idea with many ramifications, not conducive to easy opinions, and therefore ended up generating some silence and a ‘wait and see’ approach regarding the final results of the project. We hope this report can serve as a basis for that broader, data-driven, and unbiased debate.

There was also a lot of curiosity from the international media. We counted over 250 references in foreign media outlets or websites, in English, French, Spanish, Italian, and German, as well as in Brazil. Several television channels – German (ZDF), Spanish (TVE), and Italian (RAI 3) – came to Portugal to report on the pilot project, the latter of which aired a long 10-minute report during prime time. The discussion about the four-day week is taking place in various countries, and many have looked at the Portuguese project very positively due to its organization and vision.

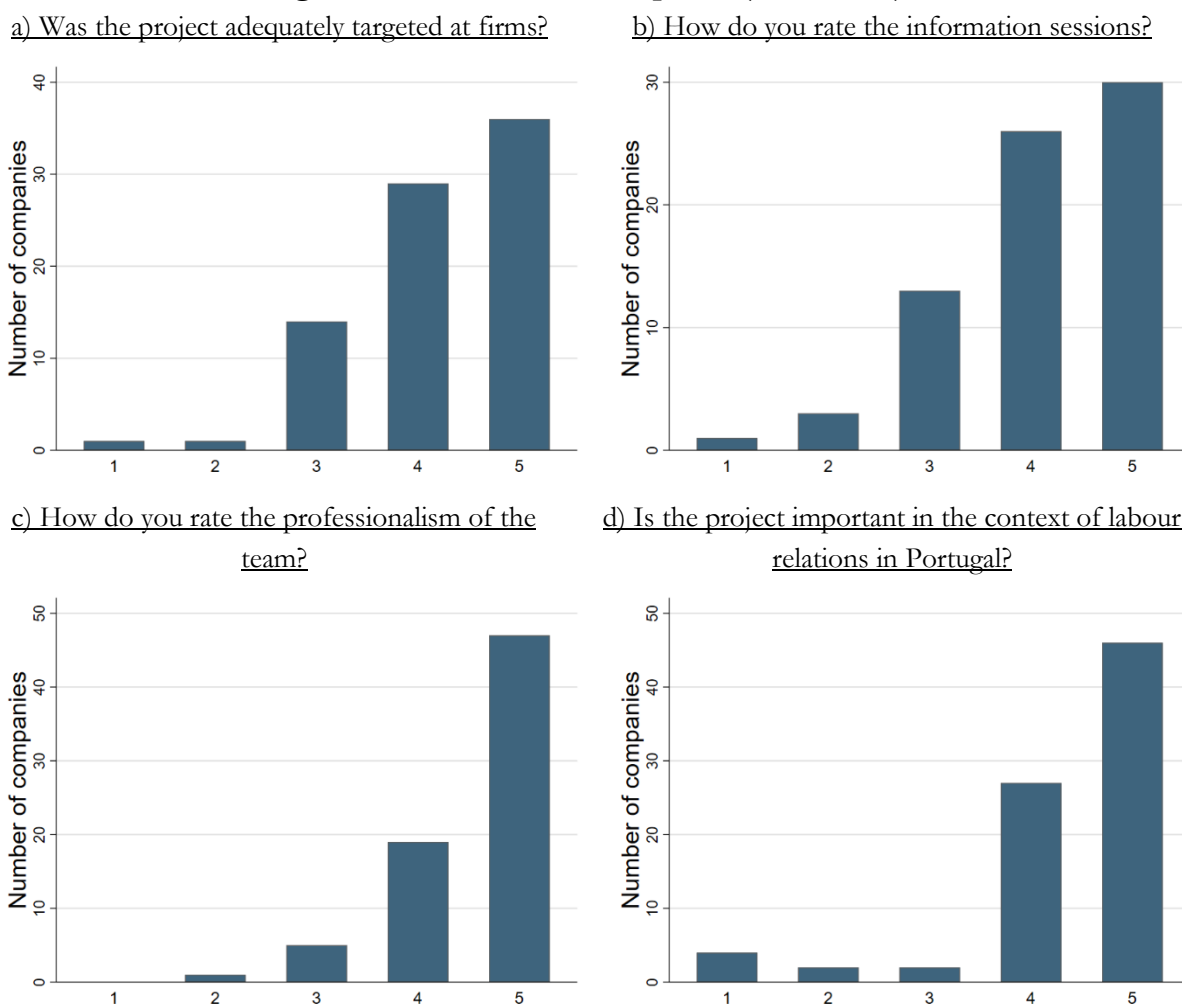
- The Belgian government decided to start its own project, based on our format, and received advice from both coordinators.
- In Spain, there is a public discussion about legislation for a reduction of the workweek, and several articles about the Portuguese pilot project have been written in leading newspapers. We have been invited several times for interviews in newspapers and radios.
- In the United States, there have been several legislative initiatives over the past year for reducing the workweek or creating a pilot project, at the federal or state level. The coordinating team was invited to write two written testimonies for the Maryland State Senate.
- The coordinating team supported research in the Brazilian trial, conducted by *4 Day Week Global*, which involves 21 companies.

1.12 Project evaluation and self-evaluation

In each phase of the project, we asked companies to evaluate us. At the end of the 1st phase, in February, we received responses from 81 companies, including 43 companies that progressed to the 2nd phase, 11 associated companies, and 27 companies that dropped out in the 1st phase. The companies rated the project very positively (Figure 1.13). On a scale of 1 to 5, they rated the professionalism of the team at 4.6 and the clarification sessions at 4.1. The companies considered that the project was adequately directed towards them (4.2) and that it was important in the context of labour relations in Portugal (4.3). These results give us confidence that the companies understood the potential benefits of the four-day week, even those that did not proceed.

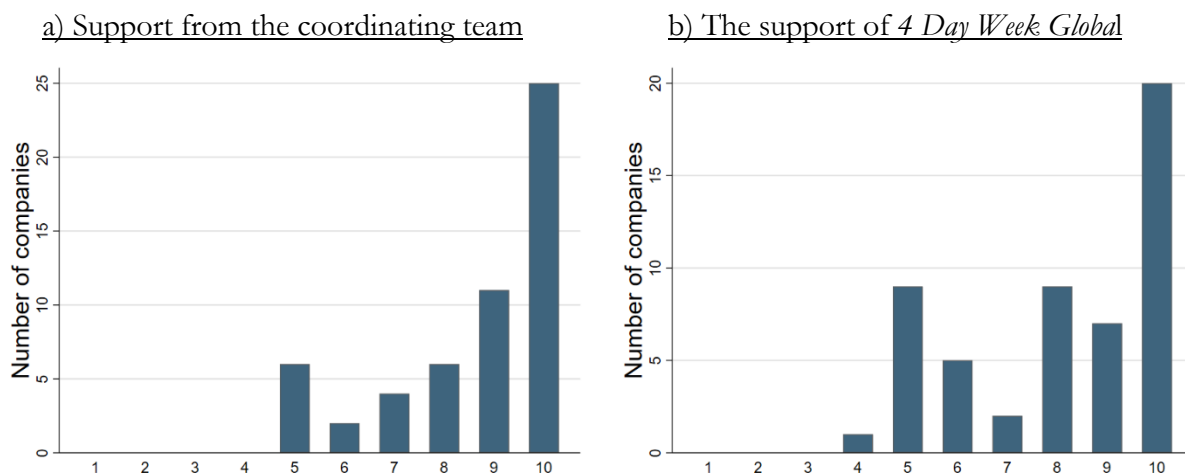
In October, we asked the companies participating in the second phase to evaluate the support provided, both from the coordinating team and from our partners at *4 Day Week Global* (Figure 1.14). On a scale of 1 to 10, the support from the coordinating team was rated with an average of 8.6 (8.9 by the pilot participating companies and 8.4 by the companies that did not proceed to the test). The support from *4 Day Week Global* was rated at 8.0 (8.3 by the pilot participating companies, 8.1 by the other companies that reduced the workweek before June, and 7.5 by the companies that did not proceed to the test).

Figure 1.13: Evaluation of 1st phase (from 1 to 5)



Note: 81 companies: 43 companies that progressed to the 2nd phase, 11 associated companies and 27 companies that dropped out in the 1st phase.

Figure 1.14: Evaluation of 2nd phase (from 1 to 10)



Note: 51 companies: 21 participants in the pilot, 11 companies that started the test before June but were associated with the pilot and 22 companies that took part in the 2nd phase and didn't progress.

In its organizational form, this was a unique project worldwide. Since there was no financial incentive, the number of interested companies was uncertain. With no existing material in Portuguese and without knowing which solutions best served the needs of the companies, it implied that we would have to learn a lot throughout the process. Planning was difficult, and we would have to be flexible. In this context, we consider that the project went extremely well. The timeline set in November 2022 was met. While not huge, we had significant participation, with large companies in the first phase and companies from various sectors starting the test. We were able to tailor our support to the needs of the companies, prepare them for a test, and convince some to start the test and maintain the new work organization format. The working relationship with the Office of the Secretary of State for Labour was very positive, always in search of a balance between the political and technical aspects of the project.

From our experience, we offer some reflections on what we could have done differently. If we were to start the project again, we would have promoted the pilot project more with direct email outreach to companies through the IEFPP. We did not choose this path because we were not sure of what we could offer and the difficulties that companies would encounter. We didn't want to promise more than we could deliver. Now, we would have more confidence that the four-day week can work, even with Portuguese companies.

Methodologically, we would ask all companies that participated in the first phase or advanced to the second phase to send an initial survey to the workers to have more companies and workers in a control group. We did not do this because the surveys were not translated at that time. We would also choose not to have a survey at three months. In international pilots, this survey, in addition to intermediate data collection, also allows for an additional communication moment. However, the logistical weight it adds and the risk of survey fatigue, in our opinion, outweigh the advantages in terms of collecting more data.



Part 2: Companies

In this section, we characterize the 41 Portuguese companies that tested the four-day week in 2023, explaining how they did it, what the operational and financial effects were, and what evaluation was made by the business leaders and those responsible for organizing the test. Finally, we present ten case studies, conducted independently by a research team from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Porto, based on qualitative interviews with business leaders.

- 2.1 Characterization of the participating organizations
- 2.2 How did they implement it?
- 2.3 Financial and operational impacts
- 2.4 Employees' perspective on their performance
- 2.5 Final decision and evaluation
- 2.6 Case studies

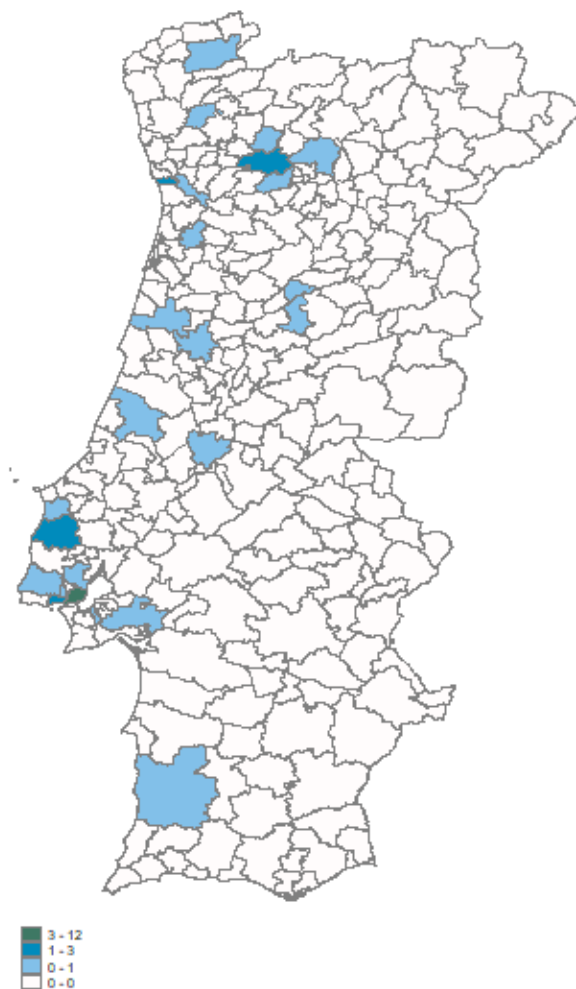
2.1 Characterization of the participating organizations

The 41 companies that tested the four-day week reflect a variety in geography, sector, and size. Most of the companies are in the Lisbon District (21) and Porto (6), but the districts of Coimbra (3), Braga (2), Setúbal (2), Aveiro (1), Santarém (1), Viana do Castelo (1), Beja (1), Leiria (1), Vila Real (1), and Viseu (1) are also represented.

These companies reflect the business structure in Portugal, with a predominance of smaller companies – 22 companies have fewer than 10 employees (Figure 2.5). Nevertheless, 15 medium-sized companies (between 11 and 80 employees) and four companies with more than 80 employees are participating. Of these four companies, two have opted for partial implementation involving 20/30 employees.

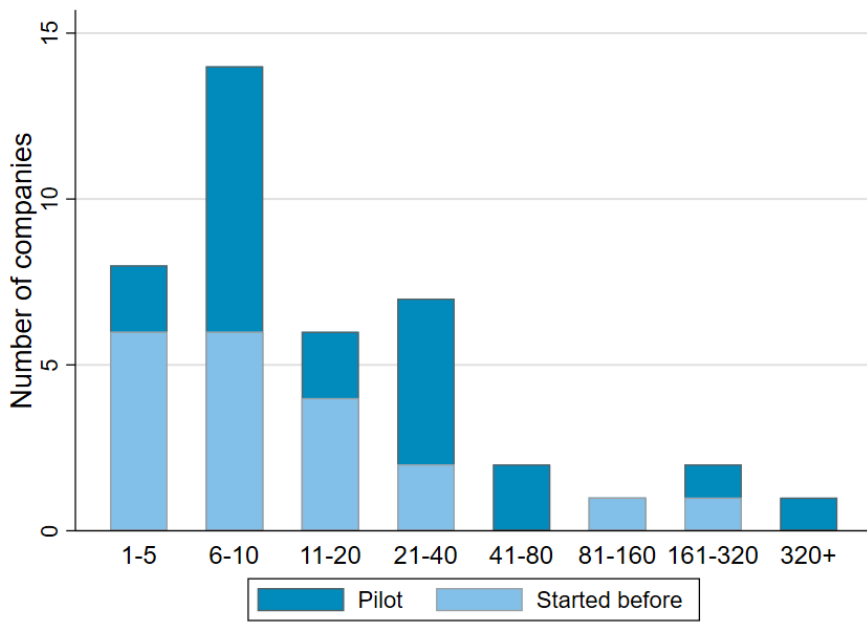
More important than the number of participants is their diversity: a nursery, a social centre, a research centre, a stem cell bank, entities from the social sector, industry, and several training and management consultancy companies (Figure 2.6). All the organizations are from the private sector, but four are not-for-profit.

Figure 2.4: Location of companies (by municipality)



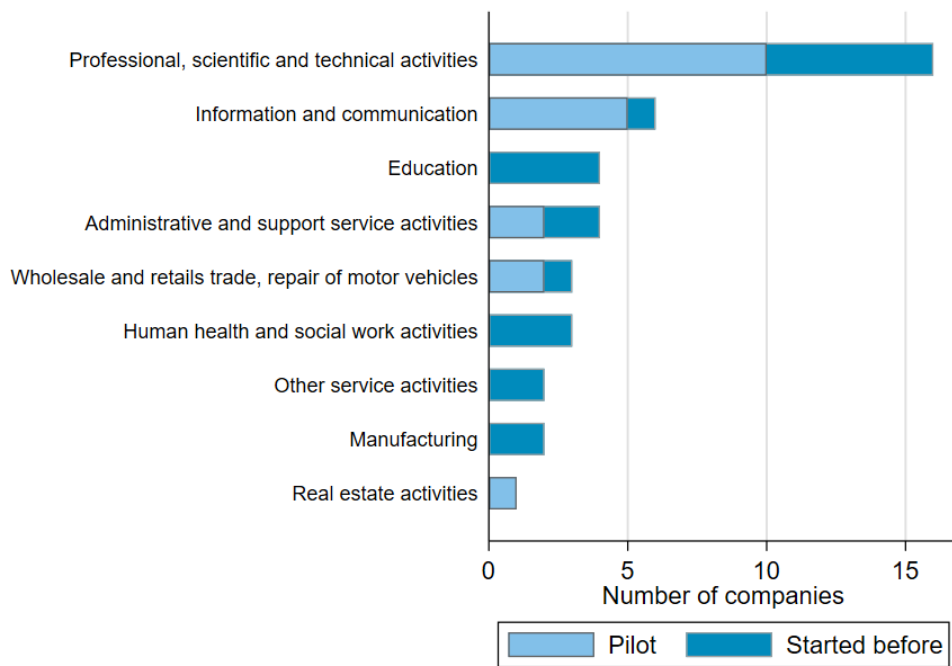
Note: Data from the 41 companies testing the four-day week.

Figure 2.5: Size (no. of employees)



Note: Data from the 41 companies testing the four-day week.

Figure 2.6: Industries



Note: Data from the 41 companies testing the four-day week.

2.2 How did they implement it?

Several companies in Portugal already adopt different formats of work organisation, and it is not always easy to categorise them. We included in the study companies that effectively reduced the weekly working hours, giving workers more days off, and (preferably) coordinating these changes at the company level. We excluded from the study several companies that offer a 36-hour week by giving Friday afternoon off. We believe this option, although commendable, is not transformative, either for the company (it doesn't force organisational changes and the hours worked on Friday morning are not very productive) or for the workers (they still must commute and do not 'switch off'). On the other hand, we included a company that, offering the same 36 hours, allows these to be accumulated and facilitates workers taking a Friday off (for example, by never scheduling meetings on that day). We excluded companies that give workers a lot of flexibility to organise their work, accumulating 40 hours over other days to free up Friday (this model is also known as a compressed workweek). However, we included a company that adopted a four-day week for all workers with a reduction to 38 weekly hours (increasing daily hours to 9.5) in 2021, as we believe that, given the nature of the work, the effective reduction in working hours was significant. In 2024, the company reduced to 36 hours. Finally, we excluded some companies that were reported in the media as having a four-day week but could not be verified through the questionnaire or direct contact.

One of the principles of this trial is that companies must reduce the number of weekly working hours. Most companies started from 40 weekly contractual hours. Among these 36 companies, 20 took an intermediate step by reducing weekly hours by 10% to 36, while 14 companies reduced to 32 hours and one to 34 weekly hours. Only 5 companies started from 35 hours, typically with 7-hour workdays. In these companies, the reduction was smaller, to 34, 32, 30, or 28 weekly hours (Figure 2.7). On average, the weekly hours reported by the companies decreased by 13.7%, from 39.3 to 34 hours (in the companies participating in the pilot, the reduction was 12.3%).

Figure 2.7: Reduction in weekly hours

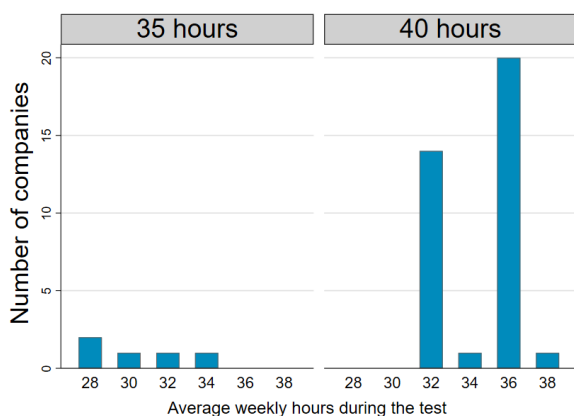
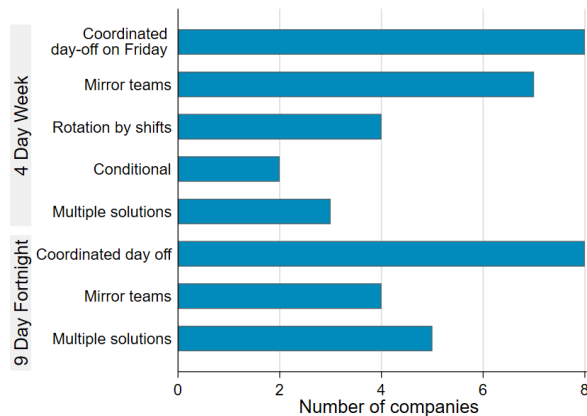


Figure 2.8: What format is used?



Note: Data from the 41 companies testing the four-day week.

The most important decision that companies must make is the format of the four-day week (Figure 2.8). This decision depends on several factors: customer requirements, the work pace in their industry, the need for worker recovery, and how much workers value the day off attached to the weekend. Of the 23 companies that opted for a model where they worked four days a week, 8 companies coordinated the day off on Friday, the least busy day, with fewer customer demands and more accumulated fatigue. However, several companies need to remain open or have customer demands throughout the five days, so they opted either for a rotation of the day off in shifts or the creation of mirror teams, which take days off on different days (usually Monday and Friday). In two companies, the day off (on Friday) is ‘conditional’ in the sense that if it is necessary to complete certain tasks or if there are customer needs, the worker may have to work on that day.

Several companies, especially larger ones, opted for multiple solutions, depending on the type of function and the work pace in each department. The goal was to keep all employees on the days when there are work peaks and to free up the day that least interferes with the functioning of each department or function. In this case, it is very important that all the different formats within the company can coexist in a way that does not create communication or internal coordination problems. This effort to define the multiple formats of implementing the four-day week usually falls on the human resources directors, along with the heads of various teams, and can create an extra workload for these individuals.

Among the 20 companies that opted for a reduction to 36 hours, three chose to increase the duration of the workday to 9 hours. On the other hand, 17 companies considered that an increase of one hour per day would bring other problems for employees and opted for an alternating four-day and five-day week – a nine-day fortnight. Some companies coordinate the day off, and others work with mirror teams to maintain continuous operation. The biggest problem with the nine-day fortnight is the greater complexity in organising the scheduling of the day off, especially for larger companies. For workers, a nine-day fortnight also offers less predictability in planning the day off. However, it was considered an appropriate option in a transition phase, especially in the context of an economy that mainly operates from Monday to Friday (or twenty-four hours, seven days a week, in some sectors).

The vast majority of companies reduced the week for all employees, but nine companies decided to conduct a partial test (Figure 2.9). Implementation across the entire company is important because it forces the reorganisation of work and involves all employees in this change. Leaving some employees out creates obstacles to organisational changes and can create tensions among employees, requiring skilful management of expectations. The companies that opted for a partial test did so for one of four reasons. In the case of a large company, due to the scale of the change, a test involving all employees would not be feasible. In these cases, it was decided from the outset that it would be a partial test, in a department or a set of functions. In some companies, for example, a Physiotherapy Clinic or a Social Centre, reducing the workweek was more difficult in some functions and would require an initial financial investment to hire more workers, so they decided to start in jobs that allowed work reorganisation without the need for additional hiring. One of the companies subcontracts some of its workers to other companies. Given that the contracts are predefined, this company did not include these workers in the initial test. Finally, some companies decided to exclude

Figure 2.9: Full or partial implementation?

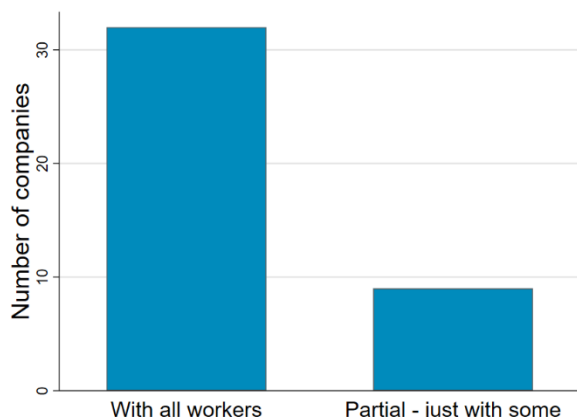
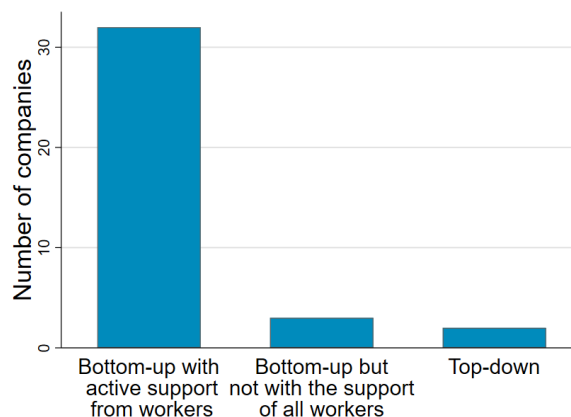


Figure 2.10: Was there active worker participation in the reorganization?



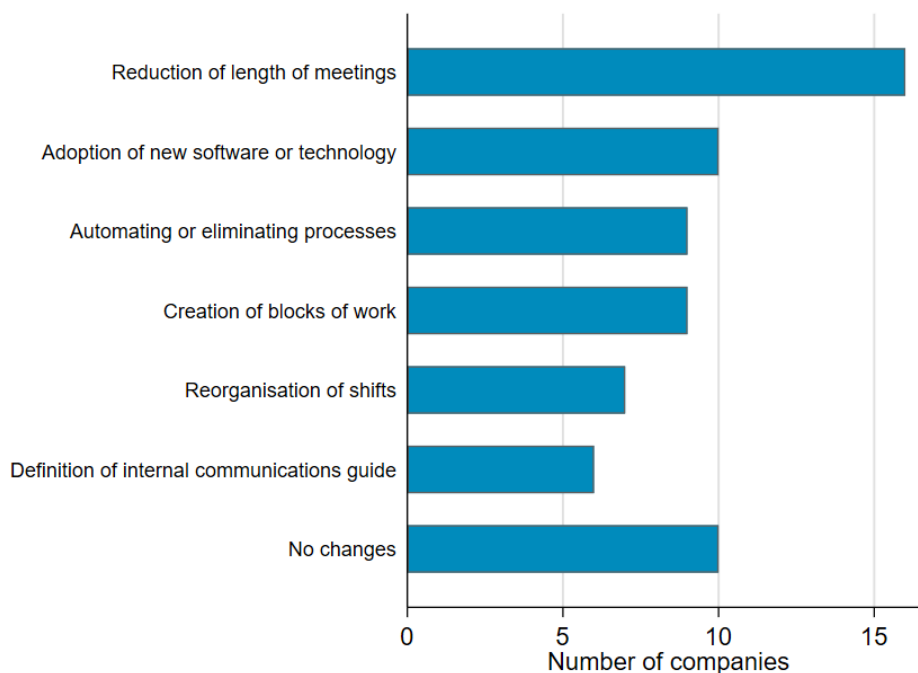
Note: The data in Figure 2.9 is based on the 41 companies that tested the four-day week and the data in Figure 2.10 is based on 39 companies that answered an intermediate questionnaire.

newly hired workers from the test, as they often already have days dedicated to training, or workers on special regimes, such as breastfeeding leave or student-worker regime.

The crucial aspect for the success of the four-day week as a management practice is the organisational change within the company that enhances the efficiency and performance of teams and workers on the other days. This was one of the aspects we focused on most during the preparation sessions. In the most successful international examples, companies took advantage of the enthusiasm generated by the four-day week trial to involve workers in discussing and designing process changes. This approach is based on the principle that they have the most knowledge of existing inefficiencies in processes and can contribute most to their improvement. In Portugal, 87% of companies involved workers actively in designing process changes. Of the remaining companies, three tried to involve workers but did not feel engagement from everyone, and two decided to implement the changes top-down, without worker involvement (Figure 2.10).

In Portugal, 75% of companies made at least one organisational change (Figure 2.11). The most common is, undoubtedly, the reduction in the number and duration of meetings. Several companies created ‘time blocks’ throughout the day, others adopted or deepened their knowledge of some organisational tools, software, and others automated or eliminated processes. Many of the problems that companies are currently facing are related to multiple communication channels: emails, meetings, phone calls, WhatsApp, or management software, which overlap, creating friction in information transmission. Some companies created a communication guide, committing to the organisation and documentation of information that allows asynchronous access for any worker without needing to interrupt or involve colleagues. Other changes include adjustments in scheduling meetings with clients or suppliers or providing training in time management.

The preparation for the trial involved considerable effort from the teams responsible for implementing the changes, who faced some difficulties. There was no unanimous difficulty, but we identified three aspects that companies pointed out as the most problematic (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.11: What organizational changes have taken place?

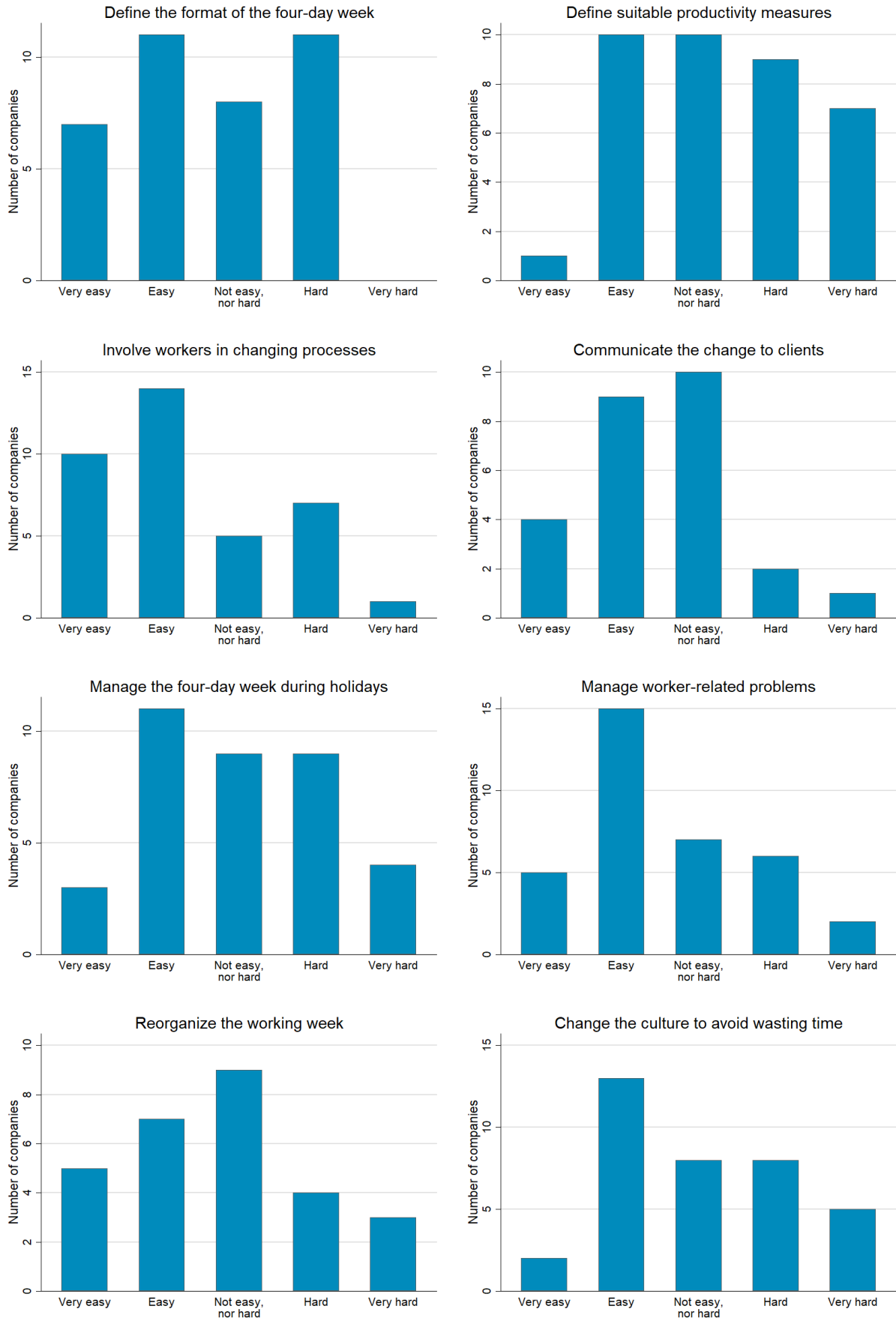
Note: Data from 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire

Nearly half of the companies considered defining productivity metrics to be difficult or very difficult. Officially (statistically), productivity per hour is the *value added* of the company (value sales minus other intermediate costs) divided by the total number of hours worked. This metric is common to all private sector companies. However, few companies define productivity in this way and have a more operation view. We found that most companies have difficulties measuring and quantifying output, leading to a natural tendency for managers to associate working hours with productivity. In the end, companies will use a mix of indicators, including financial indicators (revenue, profits, personnel expenses, or other expenses), operational indicators (meeting deadlines, customer satisfaction, absenteeism, the number of voluntary resignations), in addition to work-life balance indicators for workers that will be calculated by the coordinating team based on worker surveys (Figure 2.13).

A second difficulty encountered was managing the four-day week during holiday periods. The first half of the trial took place in July and August, coinciding with pre-scheduled holidays, which created team management problems. We believe this problem will not be significant if companies continue with this model and that a solution could involve creating better-defined rules for scheduling holidays. Finally, more than a third of companies highlighted the difficulty of changing the internal culture to avoid wasting time. The four-day week forces everyone to have a different relationship with time – to respect their own time and that of their colleagues more – and requires changing various existing habits such as long coffee or lunch breaks, arriving late to meetings, or interrupting colleagues to talk about football.

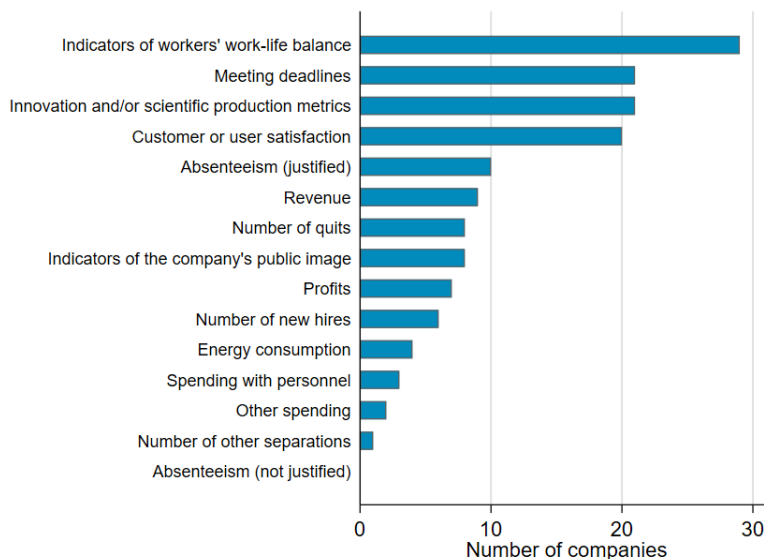
On the other hand, most companies found it easy or very easy to involve workers in process changes, manage the issues raised by workers, and communicate the reduction in hours to clients.

Figure 2.12: How difficult was to...



Note: Data from the 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire

Figure 2.13: What indicators will you use to evaluate the test?



Note: Data from the 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire

Figure 2.14: Communicated with clients?

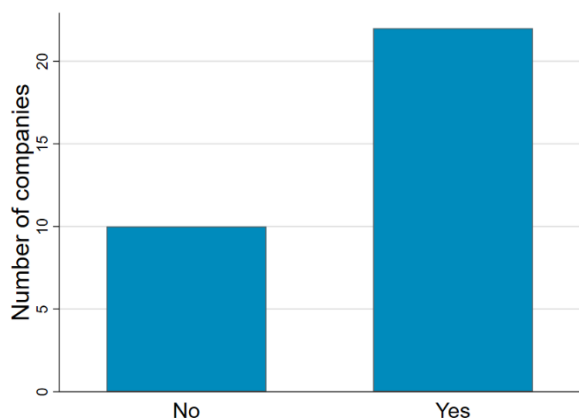
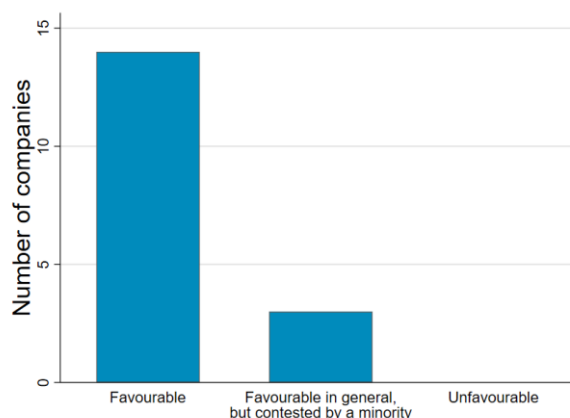


Figure 2.15: What was the reaction like?



Note: Data from the 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire

Some companies reported occasional problems with employees, such as minor jealousies because some had Fridays off while others had a different day off, or because some had an extra day off compared to others due to the alignment of public holidays. In general, explaining that equity is not equality and that the format of the four-day week would need to be different for various teams to maintain the best functioning of the company was sufficient to manage the situation.

At the start of the project, companies expressed significant concern about how to communicate their participation to clients, fearing their reaction. When communicating to clients, it is important to convey that the four-day week is a way to improve the company and that they will never sacrifice the quality of service and customer care, reinforcing that they will be available in case of emergencies. More than 75% of companies communicated their participation in the pilot test to clients, and the vast majority received a favourable reaction, with much interest and curiosity about the process. Only three companies said the decision had been contested by a minority; no company described the reaction as unfavourable (Figure 2.15). Some companies decided not to communicate to clients, in some cases to use potential changes in client feedback to evaluate the success of the reduced hours.

In their own words

Testimonials at 3 months from project leaders

“Although we are halfway through the pilot, there is a strong willingness from all workers to adhere to and maintain this work format. Depending on the departments, some are beginning to indicate that they could reduce their week to four days without significant issues, permanently.”

“At this stage of the process, it is difficult to know the impact of the four-day week (4DW) on productivity and the ability to complete tasks that were previously spread over five days, as the evaluation is typically based on annual achievement goals, which will only be assessed in January 2024. Conversely, it has been possible to gauge the participants’ perception of the impact of the 4DW on their satisfaction levels and their work-life, family-life, and personal-life balance, and it is already possible to conclude that this model is preferred over the classic work organisation model.”

“In our case, we still need to work on improving internal processes to be able to continue in 2024 with the reduction of working hours to an average of 36 hours per week or move to 32 hours. For now, we treat the project as if the day off is a new event on the company calendar that we know will be good for our people and consequently for the company, and that is why we are committed to continuing with the plan. There have been instances where we had to change the day off, but we never gave it up.”

“The impact this project has shown in improving quality of life and consequently in the relationships among colleagues within the organisation.”

“We feel that there hasn’t been an increase in production in the company; however, there also hasn’t been a decrease. For this reason, even working 8 hours less per week, employees have been able to achieve the same goals they had with the 40-hour workweek, which means that individually they were more productive, completing the same work in less time.”

“The main difficulty with the 34 hours distributed over 4 days is related to periods of higher workload, where there may be a need to work beyond the 34 hours on days already filled with 8.5 hours. However, what we have found is that to avoid this extra increase on days already with some workload, or to benefit from our extra day off without compromising our work, we have done our best to be more productive in the 34 hours of the week. We believe that’s where the increased productivity comes from. The motivation of the four-day week results in 34 hours of great dedication to work with very little wasted time.”

“We recommend gradual changes and, in this process, we have noticed that the apparent level of happiness in the workplace has increased, the capability/quality of work has likewise improved due to the greater number of days off, and productivity and revenue are at least equivalent or higher. We note that managing holidays becomes just a bit more complex. On each of the 4 days, clearly more is produced than was produced on each of the previous 5 days.”

“We believe that this pilot project has shown that the world of work is changing, and our experience has shown us that a good balance between personal and professional life is very important. Spending more hours at the workplace does not mean greater productivity or being better professionals.”

In their own words

Testimonials at 6 months from business leaders on major difficulties

“Scheduling to maintain service to clients, support for consultations, and back-office operations. Difficulties were overcome with an exhaustive analysis of tasks and the best times to perform them.”

“Splitting the team into shifts to ensure clients always received a response.”

“Mainly, process-related difficulties. However, everything has been overcome through rethinking work methods and adopting continuous improvement processes and strategies.”

“The biggest difficulty was the interpretation by different employees of what a reduction in hours implies. Something that, from our perspective, has not yet been fully overcome.”

“Ensuring that employees understood that a reduction to 36 hours had to objectively mean at least a 10% increase in productivity.”

“It was necessary to change work habits to avoid wasting time with ‘water cooler conversations’, prolonged coffee breaks, and meetings that extend far beyond the scheduled time. To overcome this difficulty, we created an internal schedule with focus periods during which individual work should not be interrupted, and periods dedicated to meetings or social breaks. We worked with department managers to discipline these schedules, as well as meeting times.”

“Mainly, organising the team during weekly tasks. However, we implemented more frequent monthly task check-ins, which significantly helped in meeting deadlines.”

“Scheduling with clients. In some cases, team members had their day off on a different day than the rest of the team.”

“Managing holidays and sick leave. Coordinating with mandatory public holidays.”

“At first, we did not communicate with clients to avoid discomfort. Only a year after implementation did we inform them of this change.”

“Increased workload for project managers.”

“Getting participants to internalise changes in procedures and task scheduling.”

“Managing employees who were not part of the pilot – we emphasised the responsibility of the pilot group and the goal of achieving positive operational results to implement the change across most areas of the company.”

“In preparation, we had to consider various variables, which were easily resolved. Perhaps the most complex was scheduling of holiday.”

“Absences due to emergencies.”

2.3 Financial and operational impacts

The term ‘productivity’ is frequently used in everyday discourse, but its widespread use often overshadows the complexity of the concept and its calculation. Labour productivity (per hour) is calculated in official statistics by dividing the gross value added by the number of hours worked. The gross value added of a company is the value of the production sold minus the cost of intermediate consumption, such as raw materials, energy, outsourcing services, insurance payments, client lunches, and more. This represents the company’s – both management’s and workers’ – contribution to value creation in the economy.

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Gross Value Added}}{\text{Number of hours worked}} = \frac{\text{Value of sales} - \text{intermediate consumption}}{\text{Number of workers} \times \text{hours per worker}}$$

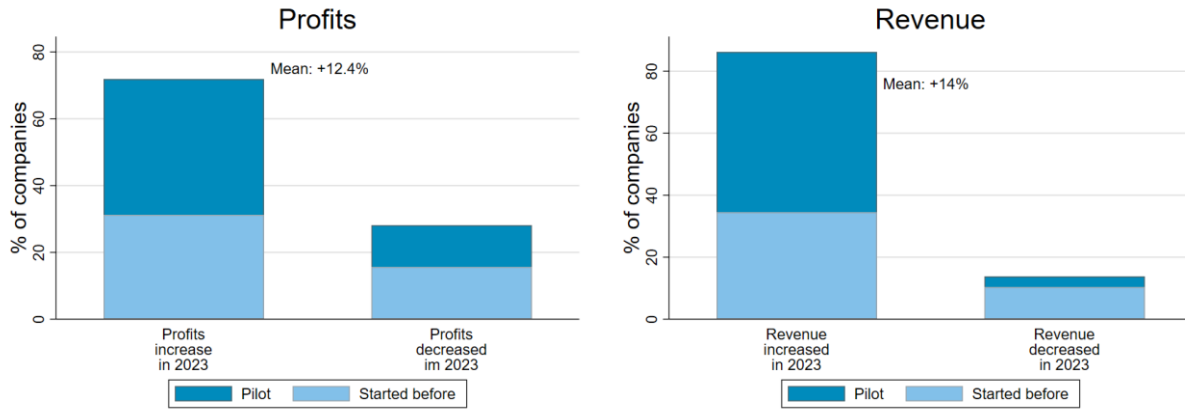
Hourly productivity is essentially a financial concept, calculated at the company level rather than the individual worker level. Note that productivity is independent of how the company’s added value is divided between wages and profits. When considering the productivity challenge, there are two perspectives. Productivity can increase by producing more with the same resources or by producing the same amount with fewer resources. Our tendency is to think of the former, but the latter is just as valid—though less intuitive.

Productivity increases if a company can boost sales while maintaining the same number of hours worked. However, in reality, this possibility is often out of reach for established companies or those in consolidated markets, as it largely depends on external conditions. Some companies focus on reducing intermediate costs to increase their *value added*, but this approach has its limits. Most companies seek to reduce the number of hours worked by reducing the workforce while maintaining service levels. This often leads to a consolidation plan accompanied by employee layoffs, which explains the resulting mistrust and lack of dedication from the remaining employees.

In the case of a four-day work week, productivity gains do not come from increasing sales but from maintaining sales and service quality while reducing the number of hours worked. However, the reduction in hours is achieved not by laying off workers, but by decreasing the hours per worker, which explains their commitment to improving productivity. Additional gains in value added may come from reduced intermediate costs for the company.

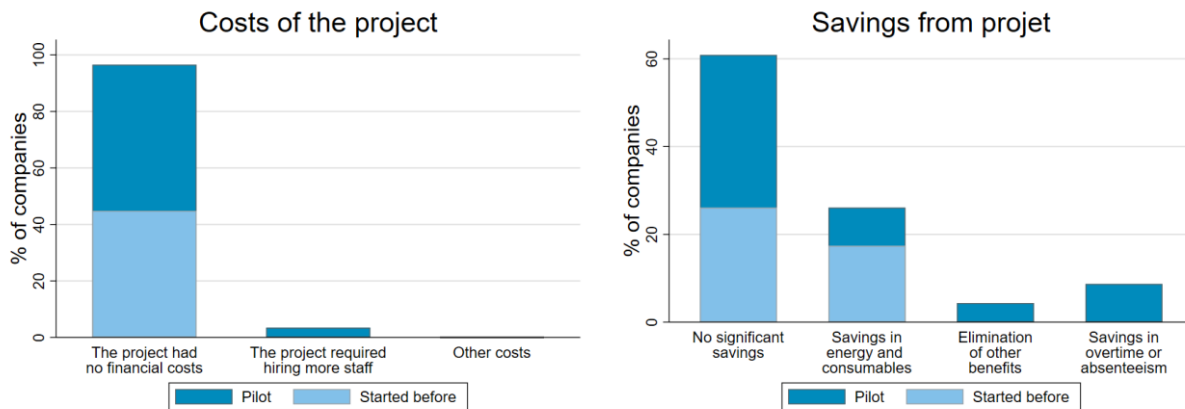
In the pilot project, we did not collect financial data directly from the companies due to its confidential nature and the lack of financial incentives, as too many requests could lead to companies dropping from the project. Additionally, without a control group of similar companies, any increase or decrease in revenue or profits over the year cannot be causally attributed to the four-day work week. We hope that the protocol we aim to establish with the *Portuguese National Institute of Statistics* will allow us to cross-reference data with the databases used for official statistics, enabling us to concretely calculate the effects on productivity and compare them with an average of other companies in the same sector.

Figure 2.16: Profits and revenues in 2023 compared to the previous year



Note: Data from the 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors

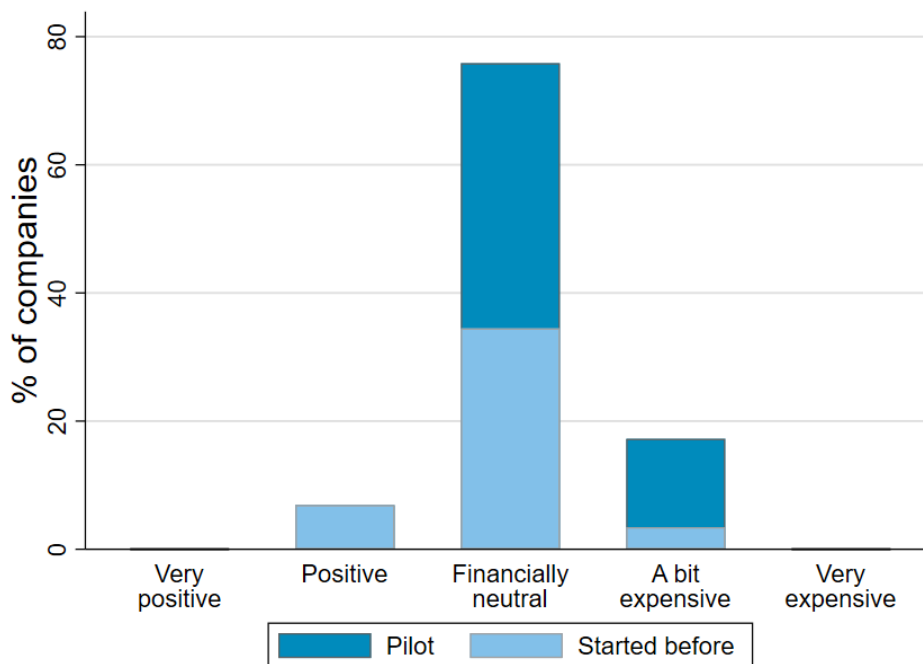
Figure 2.17: Project costs and financial savings



Note: Data from the 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors

Alternatively, in the final survey to the business leaders, we posed a series of questions about their assessment of financial aspects (Figure 2.16). During the year 2023, compared to the previous year, more than 80% of companies reported an increase in revenues, and 70% saw an increase in profits. On average, revenues increased by 14% and profits by 12%. It is important to highlight that these data do not indicate that the profits increased due to the implementation of the four-day week, but they suggest that its adoption is not associated with a negative performance in revenues or profits.

As shown in Figure 2.17, regarding the costs of the project, only one organization—a nursery/kindergarten—had to hire more workers to implement the four-day week (in its case, one worker out of 22, see the first case study). All others did not report any significant costs besides the hours spent on coordination, preparation, implementation, and evaluation by human resources, and occasionally the acquisition of software or time management training, which were already included in the projected expenses.

Figure 2.18: Financial evaluation of the project

Note: Data from the 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors

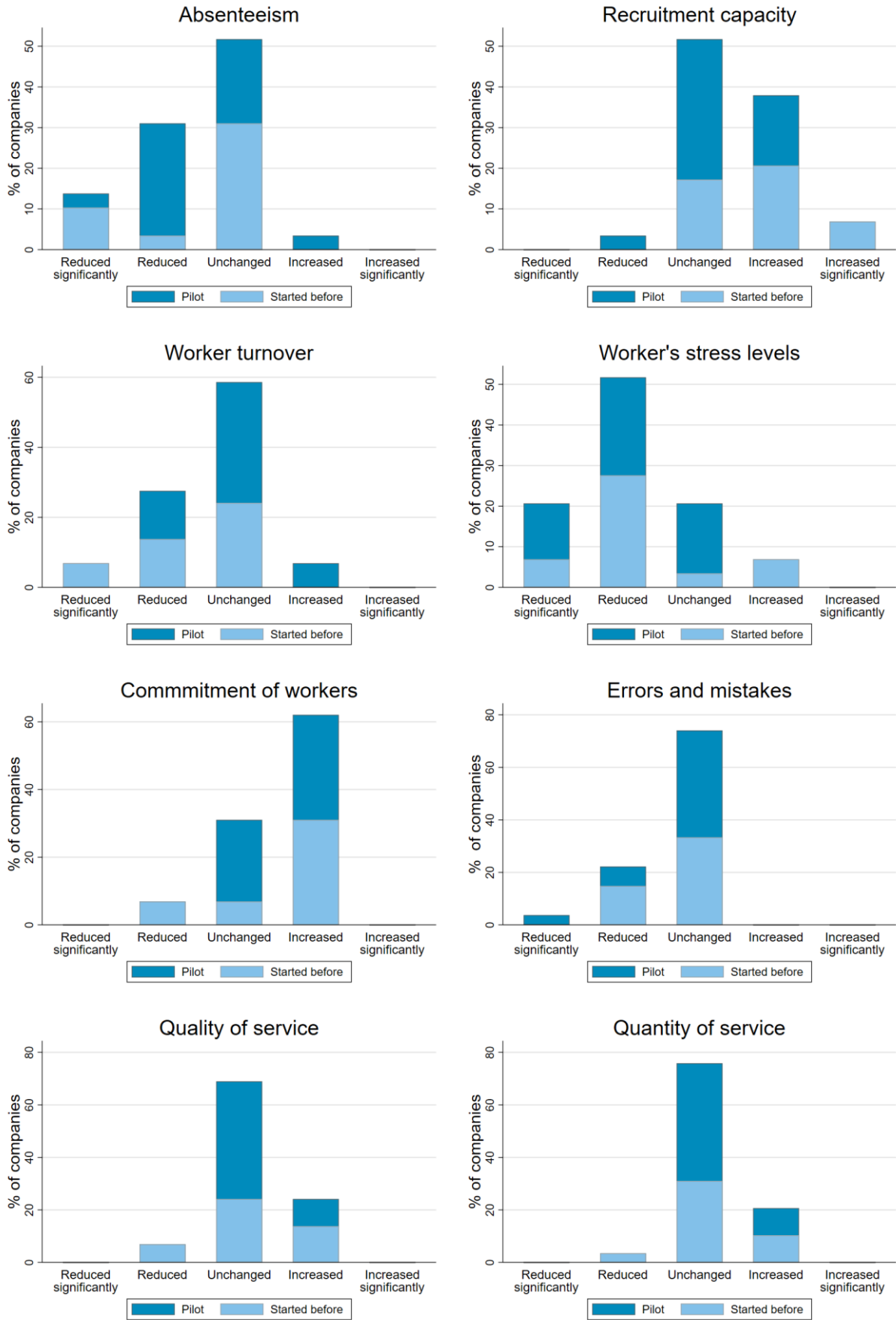
Regarding savings, 60% of managers did not identify significant economies. Among the remaining, a higher percentage pointed to a reduction in spending on consumables such as water, electricity, coffee, or even paper (resulting from the digitization of processes). Some companies mentioned savings due to reduced absenteeism and overtime hours. Lastly, some suspended other existing benefits, such as pilates classes or the provision of public transport passes.

When conducting the financial assessment of the project (Figure 2.18), 75% of managers considered it financially neutral. No company found it very costly, 17% found it somewhat costly, and 7% considered it advantageous. These results confirm that in the vast majority of companies, it is possible to test the four-day week without incurring significant additional costs.

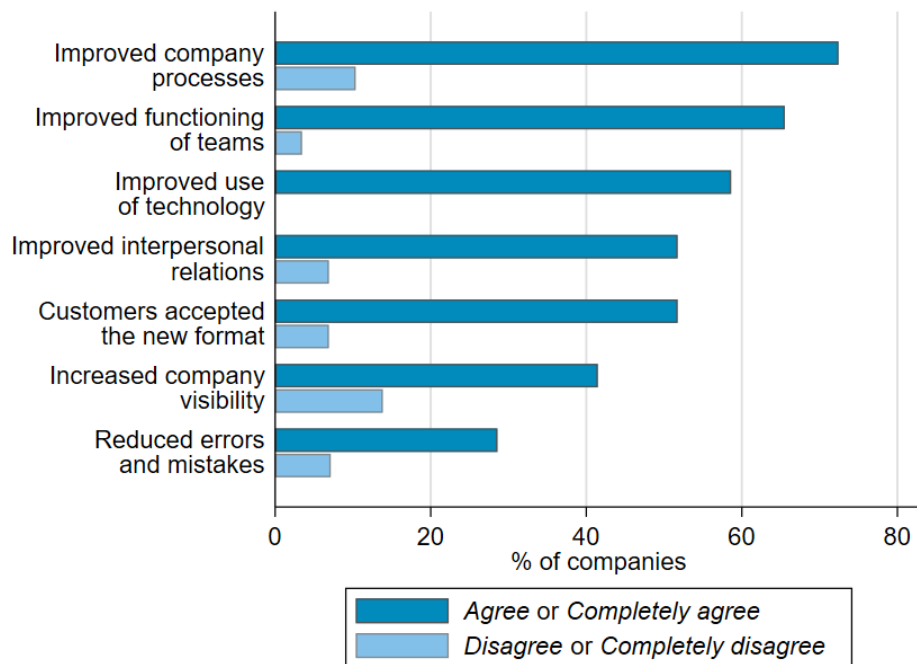
Regarding operational impacts, companies observed positive results from the four-day week, as evidenced by Figures 2.19 and 2.20. Naturally, the challenges faced by companies are diverse and vary according to the sector and specific circumstances of each. Companies have different concerns, and since not all collected quantitative data on all elements, we could not make a rigorous quantitative comparison. Alternatively, we asked business leaders whether the four-day week led to an increase or reduction in different operational dimensions.

Regarding absenteeism levels, a reduction was observed in about 45% of companies. Recruitment capacity increased in almost half of the companies, while employee turnover levels decreased in 30% of the companies. These effects seem to be more pronounced in companies that started the four-day week test earlier.

Figure 2.19: Operational impact of the four-day week



Note: Data from the 31 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors

Figura 2.20: Operational improvements

Note: Data from the 31 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors

Three out of four managers identified a reduction in stress levels among workers, nearly 60% reported an increase in employee commitment, and 20% indicated a reduction in errors and lapses. About 75% of managers stated that the quality and quantity of service produced remained unchanged, with less than 5% reporting a decrease.

We also asked managers to rate a series of effects of the four-day week on a Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Figure 2.20 shows the percentage of managers who agree or strongly agree, compared with the percentage who disagree or strongly disagree. Most managers agreed that the four-day week improved team functioning, company processes, and the use of technology, with few disagreeing. Additionally, most agreed that there was acceptance of the four-day week by clients, 40% reported improvements in interpersonal relationships within the company, and 25% agreed that errors and mistakes decreased.

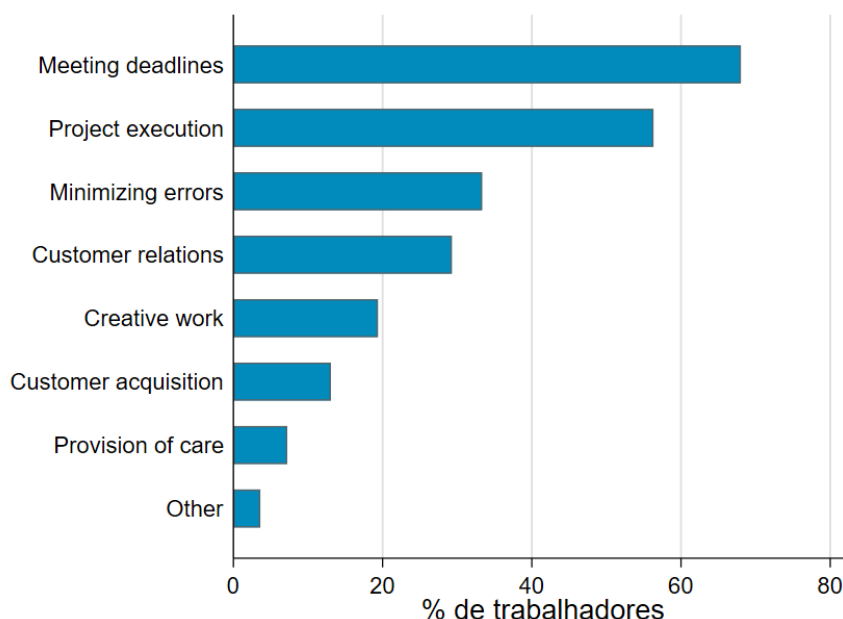
2.4 Employees’ perspective on their performance

We wanted to understand whether workers shared the positive perception of managers regarding the operational effects and to evaluate how the four-day week influenced workers’ views of the company. This dimension is crucial in the context of labour relations. We started by asking workers their opinions on the impacts of the four-day week on their work performance. As noted, companies had difficulties defining productivity metrics for project evaluation. This is because productivity is an aggregate concept at the company level, which depends on individual worker performance but also on interactions among workers and teams, as well as other external factors such as economic conditions.

Workers have a more precise view of their performance definition, often related to meeting deadlines, executing projects, creative work, client acquisition, direct relations with clients or users, or providing care. Figure 2.21 shows that more than 60% of workers in these companies define meeting deadlines and executing projects as the most suitable performance indicators.

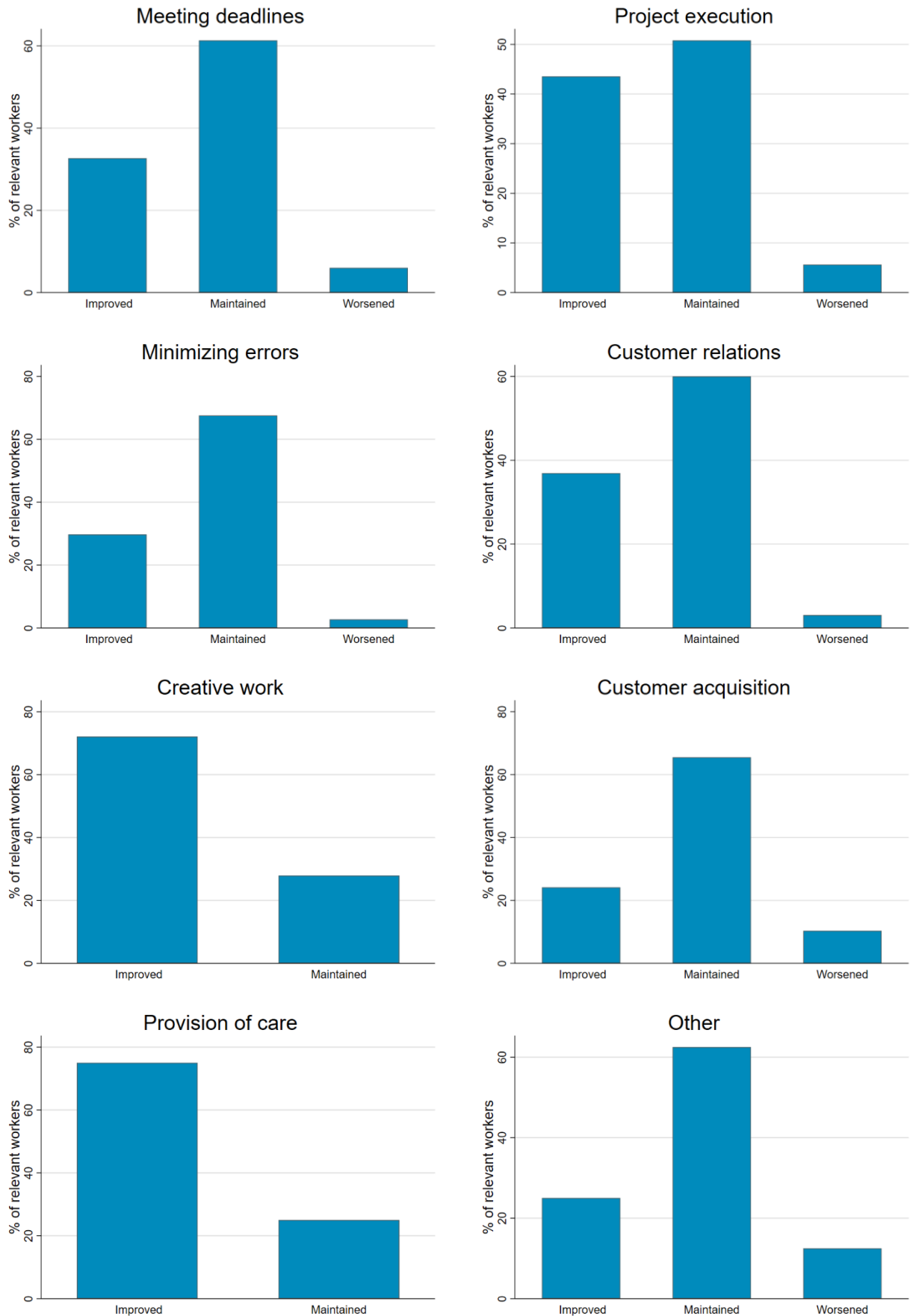
We asked workers to evaluate the impact of the four-day week on each performance indicator they considered relevant to their work context (Figure 2.22). Workers clearly believe that the four-day week positively impacted their performance. About 40% reported improvements in meeting deadlines, executing projects, and maintaining relationships with existing clients. The categories with the most significant positive impact were creative work, with 70% of workers considering their performance improved, and care provision, where almost 80% of workers stated their performance improved. Only a minority of workers reported that their ability to meet deadlines, execute projects, or maintain client relationships worsened with the change.

Figure 2.21: Which dimensions best characterize how your performance can be measured?



Note: Data from the 222 employees of the companies participating in the pilot at six months.

Figure 2.22: How did the reduction in the working week has impacted on your ability to...

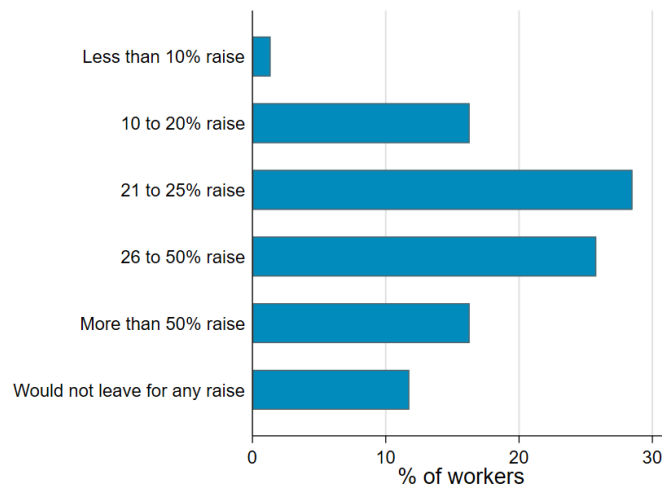


Note: Data from the 222 employees of the companies participating in the pilot at six months.

The last aspect we aimed to quantify is the value workers place on the new work format. We asked workers to imagine a hypothetical scenario where they were seeking alternative employment compared to their current job. In this hypothetical scenario, how much more would they need to be paid (compared to their current salary) to switch to another organization where they would work five days a week (Figure 2.23). It is notable that around 82% of workers would only switch to a new job with a five-day workweek if they were paid more than 20% above their current salary, and 12% of workers would not leave for any amount. Almost 30% would require a salary increase of 20% to 25%, and a quarter of the workers would require an increase of 25% to 50%. These results are important indicators of the monetary value workers assign to the four-day week and how it reduces the likelihood of them leaving the company.

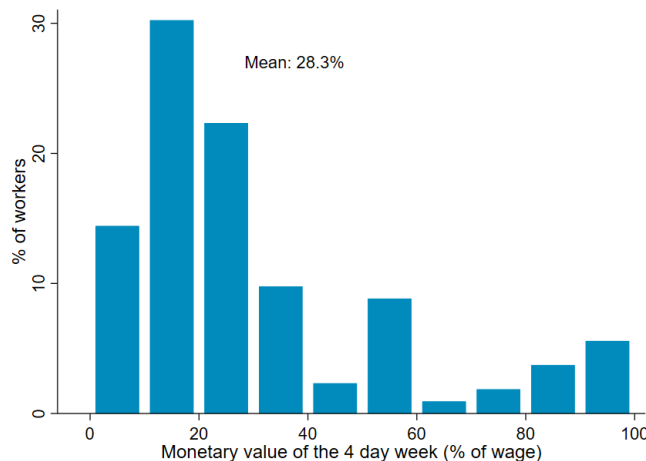
In another question, we directly asked workers to quantify the value they attribute to the four-day week as a percentage of their salary (Figure 2.24). On average, the valuation is 29% of the salary. This value is an important reference for companies, alongside the financial and operational impact of the four-day week.

Figure 2.23: Salary increase needed to leave the company for a job with a five-day week



Note: Data from the 222 employees of the companies participating in the pilot at six months.

Figure 2.24: Monetary value of the four-day week (% of salary)



Note: Data from the 222 employees of the companies participating in the pilot at six months.

In their own words

Workers' testimonies about changes at work

“There have been improvements in adopting the four-day week. It ends up giving more willingness to meet goals because there is an extra day to recharge. It did not bring any negative impact on the company or any deficits in the work of each team member. On the contrary, it promotes a greater readiness to face daily challenges at work.”

“The project was a challenge not only in terms of doing within the budget but also in maximizing and managing work time. It is noteworthy that a sense of belonging to a workgroup is crucial for successful execution in any process. The team's dedication and relationships were crucial for fulfilling and executing the daily work plan. Strategic meal breaks in common areas were considered to foster synergies, a mirrored work model was implemented to mitigate absences, and priorities were managed based on client potential, volume, and financial return. Daily orientation for difficulties and on-the-spot adjustments were made as needed. Challenges were seen as opportunities for new strategies, clients were sensitized to absences, and contact with other intermediaries was encouraged. Recruitment activity was decentralized to provide a broader sense and equip recruiters with new skills. Summarizing, it was a challenge accepted that allowed us to discover new work practices, unlock new potentials in each member, and grow both personally and professionally.”

“I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this project. Having more free days improves quality of life and well-being. To perform my job, I had to reduce break times and respond more promptly, but the benefit of having an extra free day makes up for it.”

“I had to increase my work pace, partly because there was an increase in workload. My department eliminated the telework day in the week with four working days, which did not allow for reduced commuting expenses.”

“Feeling less anxiety and more motivation to complete tasks.”

“I reorganized my way of working to spend less time on tasks that did not add value. This way, I was able to meet my job objectives.”

“I am very pleased that the company I work for is participating in a pioneering project that I believe will become a reality in the future. Personally, I feel much less pressure and psychological fatigue. On working days, I feel more focused and productive. The main changes in my work approach include focusing on what is truly important, revising priorities, and delegating tasks to the right people.”

“What I gained most from this program was the work methodology rather than the reduced hours. Techniques to shorten meeting times, task timeboxing, etc., were essential for increasing my productivity and ensuring fewer tasks were left ‘in the pile’ of less urgent things.”

“Participating in the project motivated a change in behaviour, especially regarding work methods, according to the best practices recommended by *4 Day Week Global*.”

“There was an attempt to change the way of working, but it may not be suitable for all departments/people, which led to a tendency not to respect it. The biggest challenge is undoubtedly changing mindsets. If we manage to do that, we will also realize that with adaptations and commitment, it is possible!”

“I really liked the project, I feel it changed my life for the better, and the adaptation was good because we all helped with it.”

“The company adapted well overall. It required greater organizational capacity and work planning, but I believe it is very positive to achieve that. I think it's a work model that fosters better worker productivity.”

“The four-day week is, for me, a critical factor in choosing the company I want to work for. It is important for me to balance good work with free time, and this balance is much better with a four-day week.”

“I had to adapt my way of working to achieve the same objectives, adjust my focus, and on some days, work a bit longer to compensate. Overall, it was a rewarding experience that brought me more quality of life.”

“Adaptation in the company varied greatly from department to department due to their specific demands. Adaptation also varies from person to person; some consider the project a personal benefit and enjoy the free days while ensuring their work is not negatively impacted. Others cannot take advantage of the free days to avoid harming or delaying work because they couldn't adapt or needed to be present for different reasons, and some take it as an acquired right without worrying about the impact or adapting.”

“Adaptation was smooth; I didn't feel any changes in the way of working; I didn't face difficulties but had the added concern of never leaving work undone for colleagues during my absence.”

“There were changes in the way of working, and my company implemented a schedule with focus periods. The number of meetings was slightly reduced, and my productivity and organizational capacity increased.”

“The four-day week helped me become a more effective and efficient person at work. Despite some difficulty in adopting new habits, I now feel happier, and the reward of an extra day makes a big difference in my life outside of work.”

“In general, I really like this work model (an average of 36 hours/week). It improved the recording and planning of tasks, both individually and as a team. It may have created some distance with colleagues because more effective planning can also generate more autonomy and complementarity in task execution. I live happier with my time and better organization, but I think there are still aspects to improve. I feel that good practices are not continuously or regularly shared between departments. It was only done in the initial phase, and maybe people are adapting individually.”

“I would like to thank the project because we managed to improve performance together, both professionally and personally. We acquired new work methodologies, optimizing time in various situations. I believe there were no difficulties from my perspective, just more pragmatism in the projects. I hope the project continues into 2024. Thank you very much, pilot project!!!!”

“In our team, it was super easy to implement the model. Besides the initial motivation to make everything run smoothly, the work distribution was managed very well so that the non-working day was not even noticeable.”

“The company I work for adapted well to the four-day week. In my view, the work is well organized, and we have sufficient resources that allow us to develop work according to expectations. There were several changes in how we work, especially in terms of task execution efficiency and work organization. The biggest difficulties were the need for some people to change their mindset towards the new working methods implemented.”

"I enjoyed participating in this project. I was able to have more time for my family. At work, I realized that I could accomplish the same tasks in less time, thus making better use of my free time."

"Easy adaptation, no difficulties, with more time to manage personal life. Very good project."

"I really enjoyed participating in the project because it allowed me to see that by improving organization and time management, I could maintain my performance unchanged while working fewer hours per month. Having more time to spend with family and friends was a highly appreciated and valued bonus."

"In the company, the adaptation and effort were evident to ensure everything always went smoothly and nothing failed."

"Regarding the children at the nursery, I felt they were always comfortable and well-being was high, even when one of their key caregivers was absent. They always had another adult in the room and quickly got used to it, making the versatile assistant a new reference figure."

"My company adapted very well and easily came up with strategies to keep the project going."

"In terms of work... the children in the room adapted beautifully, everything flowed very well (routines, new projects...). I didn't notice any change in the environment or the way of working. Everything was done calmly without feeling the rotation of people in the room."

"It was great to see my team very happy and satisfied with the four-day week! The satisfaction was palpable, and there was less fatigue and absenteeism!"

"The company's adaptation was very good. I did not witness any difficulties; on the contrary, I only saw benefits."

"I really enjoyed participating in this project. Knowing that I had more free days to do what I wanted made me feel slightly more motivated in my work. I think there needs to be an urgent change in mentality regarding the weekly working hours. I fear that the company I work for might not continue with this model. Congratulations on the initiative and for giving many companies a push to become pioneers in this project."

"My participation in the project was positive; I was able to take advantage of almost all the planned days to rest and do other things with more time and calm. I think I managed to ensure that the reduction in working days did not negatively impact my work performance."

"Very grateful for the opportunity to participate in this project; having more free days is very good as it allowed me more time for my personal life. Although to meet objectives, I had to work some extra time; there were changes in the way of working in the company that were gradually adopted; it wasn't immediate, but it seems to me that people adapted over time."

"For me, this experience was very beneficial as it allowed me, on the one hand, to have more quality time with my family and, on the other, to return to work more focused as the extra day allowed me to rest more, thus improving my capabilities compared to a normal weekend. Obviously, not everything is easy, as meeting work deadlines requires an ability to orient and prioritize, which isn't always easy to achieve, but with continuity, I believe it will improve. Overall, I believe the pilot was beneficial for both employees and employers."

In their own words

Workers' testimonies about operational difficulties

“This program has a lot of potential, despite the current implementation at my company. The inability to predefine which weeks will be four-day weeks in advance prevents good personal organization for the day off. Due to the lack of internal organization within the company, there is sometimes unnecessary stress about whether the week will be four or five days.”

“The introduction of the four-day week coincided with an unusually intense period of work, which was also accompanied by the absence of the second member of my team. This prevented me from experiencing this system in a non-typical scenario, so my opinion and responses should be taken with caution. In any case, an extra day off made all the difference in dealing with the peak stress I went through, and I believe it has numerous benefits for my quality of life. It undoubtedly poses many challenges to work management, especially when the work depends on other departments/colleagues whose schedules are different from mine (different rest days). Additionally, I would like to point out that in my company, the previous schedule was 35 hours per week, seven hours per day. This means that adaptation to an eight-hour daily system was necessary, which, although the norm in most companies, was not the case for us. This was undoubtedly the most challenging adaptation, although in my case, combined with one less workday, it contributed to better organization/planning of tasks. The introduction of this system in companies like mine, however, should perhaps be analysed independently, as the ‘fatigue’ or increase in exhaustion may be related mainly to the increase in daily work hours rather than the change in the model.”

“I still have some difficulties in managing the schedule with service provider companies.”

“When working very close to the limit, having a four-day week does not help; it complicates things. There is an increase in stress. And you cannot say there is an effective experience when, for a long period of time, the four-day week is cancelled due to excessive work and lack of resources.”

“Point to improve: many companies operate on a day off, which becomes complicated if there is an unforeseen event with the client on that day. This remains the biggest challenge.”

“Although some adaptation is necessary, it allows me to organize my professional and personal life differently. However, I consider that psychologically receiving emails on the day we are absent creates some anxiety about not being able to respond or perform the necessary activity.”

“It would be a beneficial project if the company were not overwhelmed with a large number of new projects, which effectively prevents taking advantage of the initially planned free time. However, the ‘off’ days allow for greater flexibility in our schedules.”

“One of my concerns (which never happened) was if I got sick one day or if one of my children got sick and I had to miss work. I knew that on that day my colleagues would have double the work and there might not be an extra person to help them.”

“As for me, I found it difficult to do the four-day week myself, and as part of the coordination, I sometimes had more work coordinating schedules and schedule changes. But even that was manageable!”

“Working mainly with external service/maintenance providers who do not have the same schedule model (four-day week) makes it extremely difficult to reconcile and schedule

“After a turbulent period that did not allow me to fully appreciate this scheduling model, in the last two months, I have managed to feel the value of having more rest time. Since I have Friday as a fixed additional rest day, I feel on Sunday that I have truly rested, something that did not happen before. However, I notice that the disadvantage of having one less day occurs mainly when our work depends on deadlines. Seven fewer hours a week makes a difference, and I end up spreading out this time that I work. This means that I have worked more consecutive hours per day than before (by choice). But this ‘additional effort’ tends to be more than compensated for by the additional rest.”

“I feel more tired at the end of each workday, but the free day is very rewarding. It allows me to have time for myself and my interests, it allows me to be more creative, which I value greatly, and to do family and household tasks more calmly. However, I notice that in recent months, in some weeks, it has not been possible to enjoy the free day without some work-related constraints - a meeting that must be on that day, preparation or response to some issue that I could not address in the four workdays, etc. I feel privileged to be part of this pilot project. I believe that the way work is organized - over five days, with rigid schedules and many consecutive hours - should be reviewed for the sake of people’s health and the planet. I think the company adapted very well to this model, also contributing to the elimination of fixed-hour platforms, the maintenance of the hybrid telework regime, and the self-responsibility of each worker. The biggest difficulties are related to the coordination between different departments, which is a point to be improved.”

“The biggest challenges remain the implementation of the new concept during periods of higher work volume.”

“Coordinating schedules between the company and clients is extremely difficult, particularly in the commercial area, where there is no trust relationship, and scheduling a meeting is systematically refused if the only available day they offer is our day off. Those ‘free’ days cease to be free.”

“The biggest difficulty in my particular case is managing interaction with other companies in the group we belong to, which often reserves intra-group project meetings for Friday, which is usually my day off. The management of the remaining workdays necessarily had to change, with the time gains achieved when focusing on what is really important at each moment, without distractions, being very visible.

“I only enjoyed six free days within the context of this project, so I did not feel a significant impact on my personal life. If the project is implemented permanently, and assuming that I can enjoy it in the same way as employees from other departments, I hope to be able to use the extra days to rest. For now, there have been no changes in the way of working, and the biggest difficulty was finding days with enough staff so that it was possible to enjoy the extra days off.”

“I enjoyed participating in this project, which helped me rethink the daily organization of my work. The difficult part was consolidating my absence on the day off due to belonging to an operational area. When I am absent, if I do not solve problems over the phone, it is inevitable to ask for help from colleagues who are not off that day.”

“The biggest difficulty was coordinating vacation periods with the four-day week in a team context. The project proved positive in improving resilience and creativity at work.”

“The main difficulties are meeting deadlines and increasing pressure.”

“Some difficulties arise from contacts with other colleagues not included in the program.”

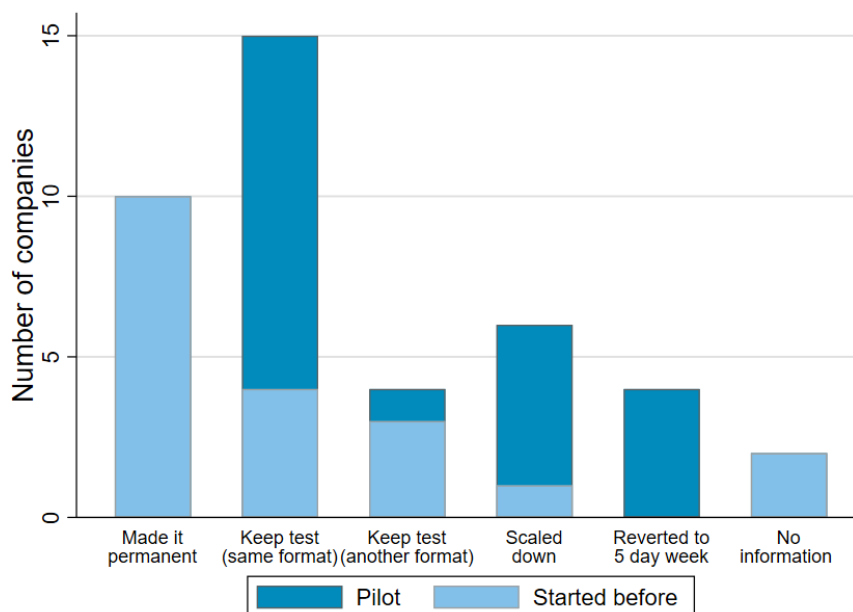
2.5 Final decision and evaluation

In March 2023, we contacted the companies to learn about their decisions, some through a final questionnaire to the business leaders (we obtained 33 responses), supplemented by phone calls (Figure 2.25). Among the 21 companies participating in the pilot, more than half chose to extend the trial. Only four companies decided to return to the five-day week. Five other companies chose to scale back the four-day week. Two maintained the reduced hours but coordinated by giving Friday afternoons off. An organization which had tested the four-day week is now experimenting with a nine-day fortnight. Two other companies will reduce the workweek only during the summer months, from June to August.

Companies that started the trial before June were at a more advanced stage, and almost all had the opportunity to test the reduced workweek for another year. Half already consider the new format permanent, and seven are continuing the trial in the same or different formats. A company that initially tested a four-day week with Fridays off now holds a team meeting on Friday mornings every two weeks. We did not receive confirmation from two companies. What explains the reversal of some companies? Among the pilot-participating companies that made two or more process changes, only 8% of the companies reverted to the five-day week. On the other hand, among the companies that did not make changes or made only one change, 38% went back. The success of the four-day week crucially depends on commitment to work reorganization.

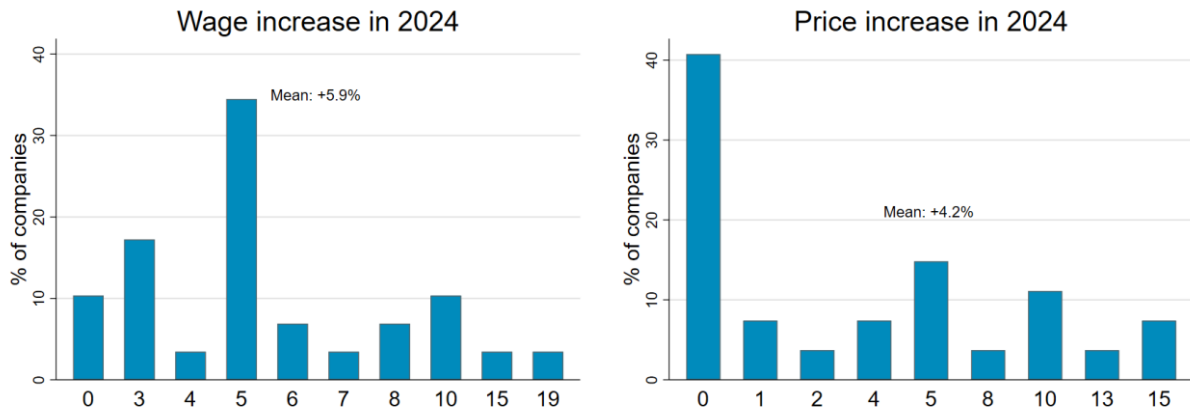
To understand the decision-making process and how it relates to other strategic decisions of the company, we asked about the established salary and price increases (Figure 2.26). On average, there was a salary increase of 5.9% and a price increase of 4.2%. More than 60% of the companies also expressed the intention to hire more workers in 2024 (Figure 2.27). When asked if they took the four-day week into account in these decisions, two-thirds said yes, either fully or partially.

Figure 2.25: Companies' decision after the test



Note: Data from the 41 companies participating in the study.

Figure 2.26: What is the increase in wages and prices in 2024?



Note: Data for 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors.

Figure 2.27: Will you hire more workers in 2024?

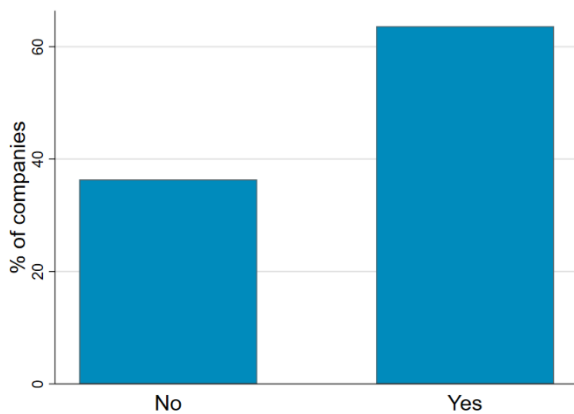
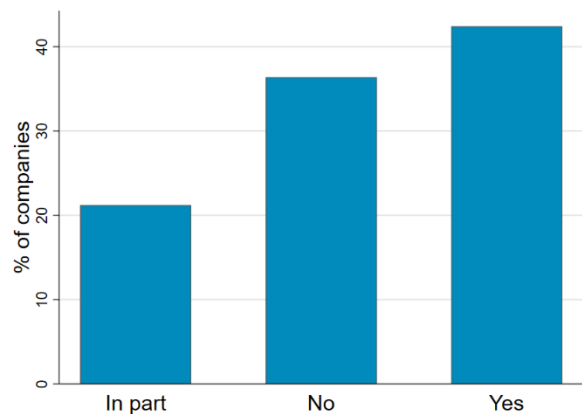


Figure 2.28: Did you take the 4-day week decision into account in your decisions?



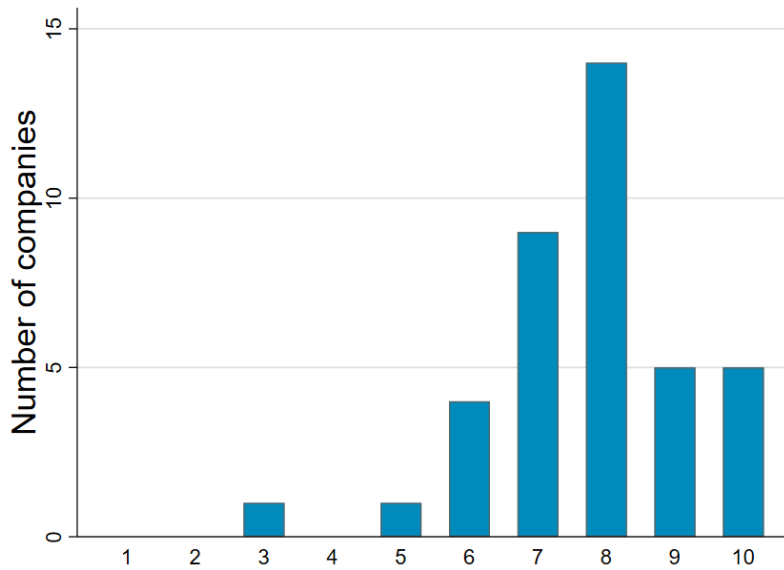
Note: Data for 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors.

At the three-month mark of the trial, the assessment from the teams responsible for the project regarding the four-day week was quite positive. Out of 39 responses to an interim survey, 37 companies rated it between 6 and 10 (Figure 2.29), with an average of 7.7. The assessment was more positive among the companies that started the trial before June (8.1) than among the pilot participants (7.4). This difference is natural, as among the companies that started before June, many had already begun the trial more than a year ago and had already permanently adopted the new format.

Only two companies expressed a negative evaluation of the reduced hours. In one of these companies, a participant in the pilot, “despite the employees being motivated and wanting to present improvement proposals and metrics to evaluate performance, the managers (middle managers) never allowed the employees or project leaders to present,” which in practice meant that no changes were made in the organization.

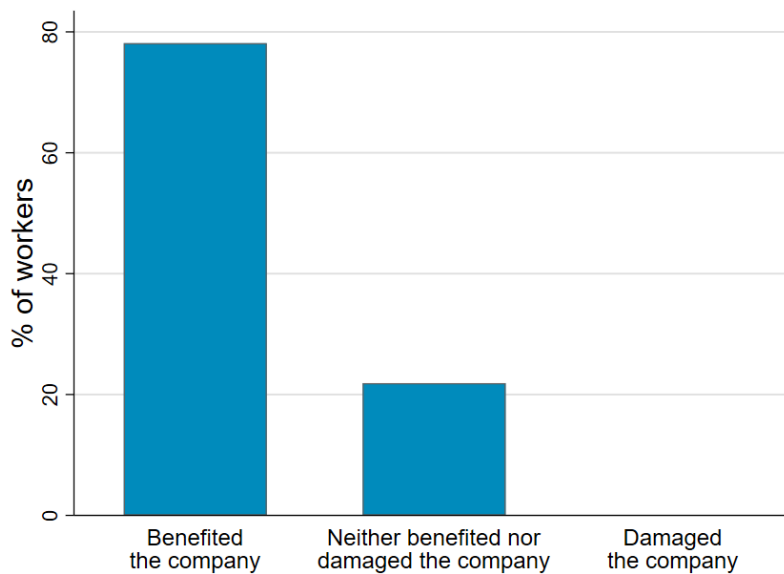
At the six-month mark, in parallel with the final decision of the business leaders, we asked whether the experiment of the four-day week had benefited or harmed the company. Almost 80% of the business leaders considered that the company had benefited, while the rest considered that it neither benefited nor harmed the company. None of the business leaders considered that the experiment had harmed the company.

Figure 2.29: Evaluation of the experiment after 3 months (from 1 to 10)?



Note: Data from the 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire

Figure 2.30: Evaluation of the experiment after 6 months



Nota: Data for 33 companies that answered the final questionnaire to directors.

In the final section of this part of the report, we present ten examples of companies that experimented with the four-day week in different formats. These case studies were independently developed by members of the multidisciplinary research team at the University of Porto, led by Dr. Sofia Cruz and Dr. Ana Isabel Couto, and composed of six other researchers and several master's students. The researchers conducted qualitative interviews with managers from various companies about the implementation process. The authors of each case study are identified in the subtitle.

2.6 Case studies

Caminhos de Infância

Sofia Cruz, Martha Hoth

Organization Description: *Caminhos da Infância* is a Private Institution of Social Solidarity, with a team of 22 people who work in the association and in the nursery/daycare. Its primary mission is the prevention of child abuse and the promotion of positive parenting.

Reduced Hours Format: Before the pilot, educators and childcare assistants worked 35 and 37 hours per week, respectively, while kitchen and general service assistants worked 40 hours per week. With the implementation of the four-day week, the former group started working an extra half-hour per day (30 hours per week), except for two employees who did not accept the additional half-hour and preferred to maintain the 7-hour daily schedule. Every three weeks, they work a five-day week with 1 day of 6 accumulated hours in those 3 weeks. The latter group had one less working day per week (30 hours per week). The latter group reduced one day per week and half an hour per day (30 hours per week). The management of days off and work hours was carefully planned to ensure that the adult-child ratio was maintained, taking into account the individual needs of the professionals. Communication with parents was also a priority throughout the process. In this regard, a communication company was hired to assist in drafting clear and informative messages about changes in working hours and their impact on daily daycare activities.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: Concern for the well-being of the workers and the promotion of a healthy work environment were the main motivations for the implementation of the four-day week.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: There was some initial resistance from some educators regarding the increase in working hours. There was also difficulty in maintaining open and consistent communication among all team members, resulting in delays in disseminating important information and problem-solving. Another challenge faced was the need to hire an additional worker to cover the reduced hours.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: A definitive decision has not yet been made regarding the continuity of the measure implemented since January, which consists of adopting a four-day week every 15 days. This can be operationalized without additional hiring.

Crioestaminal

Celso Pais, Sofia Cruz

Organization Description: *Crioestaminal* is dedicated to the cryopreservation of stem cells (in the area of tissue and cell banking) and also conducts research and development activities that led to the creation of a pharmaceutical manufacturing unit from these cells. It has 65 employees, who are hierarchically distributed among administration, departmental management, and operational area management.

Reduced Hours Format: During the pilot, the company reduced the working hours from 40 to 36 hours per week, with one day off every two weeks.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: Concern for the teams' mental health strain constituted the primary motivation for implementing the four-day week in the company.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: There was difficulty in the teams accepting the new schedule, partly because it was initiated during the summer vacation period, leading to greater obstacles in organizing the teams to ensure tasks were covered. There were also objections raised by directors and operational managers, who claimed that the new schedule would not be possible due to the small size of the teams. Additionally, there were fears about the change, resulting in some resistance. These fears were related to the employees' feeling of being seen as surplus due to not working all 40 hours of the schedule. There was also the perception that not working on the day off made the employee feel unnecessary to the company, and the idea that they would have to work more on other days to make up for the day they didn't work.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: The administration decided to maintain the 36-hour week on average. There will be an adjustment to the number of vacation days, meaning employees under the reduced weekly hours scheme will have 22 days of vacation. However, there are 10 people working in the cryopreservation laboratory who are outside the 36-hour weekly schedule and therefore enjoy 25 days of vacation.

Onya Health

Sofia Cruz, Beatriz Freitas

Organization Description: *Onya Health* is a Portuguese marketing and communication agency in the healthcare sector, located in Braga, and with 8 employees. It focuses on creativity in every project it develops, and it is based on this creativity that it carries out its daily work. It operates in the areas of strategy, design, production, copy & content, public relations and media relations, and event planning.

Reduced Hours Format: Before the pilot project, work was organized for 40 hours per week, over 5 days, with flexible hours (with only the obligation to attend meetings at set times). Before participating in the project, they experimented with reduced working hours in the summer of 2022 (between July and September) after a demanding period of work, giving Friday afternoons off to everyone and closing the company. With the implementation of the pilot project, it was decided, with the participation of all employees, to adopt a 100% remote regime, fixed hours from 9 am to 6 pm, and a reduction to 36 hours per week, with every other Friday off.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The main motivation for *Onya Health's* participation in the pilot project was the increasing value and concern for the well-being of the workers and the balance between professional and personal/family life. The positive feedback about the trial they had conducted in the summer of 2022 led the company to invest more structurally in reducing working hours, which is why they turned to the pilot project.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: There were no major difficulties detected in the process of implementing reduced hours. However, it became necessary to redesign some processes in the daily work routine, especially regarding meetings, team communication, and the technologies used. A bi-weekly planning for focused time and feedback was implemented, and rules were created for its compliance. Internal deadlines were redefined to ensure that the company could meet external deadlines without having to extend them.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: The reduced hours at *Onya Health* remain, however, after the pilot project, the company decided to create mirror teams to avoid closing every other Friday and ensure that it can respond to any urgent requests that may arise.

Cooperativa António Sérgio para a Economia Social - CASES

Rita Madeira, Carla Juliana Torres

Organization Description: The António Sérgio Cooperative for Social Economy (*CASES*) is a third sector organization, with 33 employees and headquartered in Lisbon (plus two employees on unpaid leave). Its main objective is to develop the social economy in Portugal by recognizing, promoting, energizing, and strengthening it. *CASES* is a public interest cooperative, resulting from a partnership between the State and social economy organizations.

Reduced Hours Format: Work at *CASES* was organized for 35 hours per week, over 5 days. During participation in the pilot, the weekly working hours were reduced to 32 hours, distributed over 4 days. The reduction was optional, with 1 out of the 33 workers choosing to continue with the previous schedule. The management of days off was designed to allow the cooperative to function fully, thus mirror teams were created, where one member had Mondays off and the other Fridays off.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The motivation and well-being of the workers, as well as the attractiveness of the organization in terms of human resources retention, were the main motivations for *CASES* to reduce hours. Additionally, they considered that, as a third sector organization and of public interest, they had an increased duty to implement this and other measures that promote well-being and balance between personal and professional life.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: The first difficulty is related to the type of organization: as a public interest organization resulting from a partnership with the State, they have characteristics that closely resemble those of typically public organizations. In this sense, there was, notably, the need to validate with the Ministry of Labour the integration of the cooperative into the pilot. Additionally, they consider that communication became less fluid, requiring better organization regarding the record of who is (or is not) working. Managing the 4-day week during vacation periods is also a challenge.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: They intend to maintain the reduced hours implemented during the pilot project, although they are dependent on the Ministry of Labor to make that decision. There is a possibility that they may not be able to maintain the new schedule due to the principle of equal treatment in the public service, which would require a broader implementation in various public institutions.

Drivewiz Consultoria

Rita Madeira

Organization Description: *Drivewiz Consultoria* is a company specialized in providing consulting and business management services, particularly in the areas of accounting, security, supervision, environmental management, human resources, and training. Based in Loures with a branch in the Madeira island, they have around 50 employees. They offer various services to clients from different sectors, providing integrated solutions to foster the acquisition of tools necessary for sustainable business success.

Reduced Hours Format: During the pilot, the company implemented a partial reduction in working hours affecting 15 employees. They transitioned to working 9 days over a span of two weeks, meaning they had a day off every 15 days on Fridays. Two groups with alternating days off were defined. The remaining employees of the company continued with the five-day workweek, totalling 40 hours per week.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The primary goal and motivation for the reduced hours stemmed from the desire to reward employees for their work. As a relatively small company, they lacked the capacity to provide financial rewards. Therefore, they opted for reduced hours as a compensation measure to improve the quality of life for employees.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: At *Drivewiz Consultoria*, there were no significant difficulties encountered in the preparation or implementation of the four-day week. Nonetheless, there was some resistance to change from one particular individual, as well as the need to constantly be aware of the existence of two distinct groups (those who participated in the pilot and those who did not) to prevent conflicts between them.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: At this moment, they remain in a testing phase for another six months. They plan to maintain the measure and even expand the reduced hours to other employees, but they will only make the decision after a full year of testing. The objective is to conduct a more thorough analysis regarding the functioning of the measure and its impacts in terms of productivity.

18-25 Research Studio for Architectural Visualizations

Rita Madeira, José Soeiro, Sofia Cruz

Organization Description: *18-25* is an architecture and design studio located in Lisbon, consisting of 18 specialized workers skilled in visualizing and representing architectural projects. Part of their work involves research into innovative projects that intersect areas such as art and technology, as well as research into more effective working methodologies in the realms of imagery, computer graphics, or architecture. Constant adaptation to new technologies is a key aspect of the studio, which promotes continuous training for its workers and aims for the ongoing optimization of processes and labour outcomes.

Reduced Hours Format: Work at the *18-25* studio was organized into 40 hours per week, spread across 5 days. During participation in the pilot project, various hypotheses for reducing working hours were analysed. The *18-25* studio ended up developing and implementing its own model, which involved a reduction in working hours to 32 hours per week (organized into 4 days of work) whenever it was possible to arrange work in that manner. Simultaneously, they created a bank of 2 extra hours per week managed by the team for exceptional situations and for training purposes—masterclasses and workshops under the *18-25* Academy project (essentially, worker's are expected to work one Friday per month).

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The primary motivation for *18-25* studio's participation in the pilot project is its continuous pursuit of quality. Reduced hours are seen as a way to improve the work environment and ensure a balance between the professional and personal lives of the workers. Additionally, they associate the measure with worker training, which allows for the development of skills to enhance the quality of services they provide.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: Defining the reduced hours model was the main challenge, as the modalities implemented by other companies in the pilot did not apply to the *18-25* studio. Thus, it was necessary to create a specific format for *18-25*. During the implementation process, there was an initial difficulty in terms of some anxiety among the workers regarding the uncertainty of Fridays as a working or non-working day. Regarding this aspect, the studio considered that the team should plan and define (with autonomy and flexibility), in advance, whether it was necessary to work.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: Reduced hours at the *18-25* studio remain in an experimental phase but are currently expected to maintain the adopted format in the future.

Randtech Computing

Ana Isabel Couto, Rita Madeira

Organization Description: *Randtech Computing* is a software development company headquartered in Porto. Founded in 2015, it focuses on creating technological solutions for the insurance market, both for insurers and distribution (mediation and brokerage). Additionally, it provides implementation and integration services with other systems, data migration, training, and technological consulting. It has 25 employees in Portugal and 2 in Angola.

Reduced Hours Format: In 2022, *Randtech Computing* introduced, on its own initiative, reduced working hours, and has therefore been operating on a 4-day workweek since then. Employees can enjoy a weekly day off, without a fixed day, with scheduling being the responsibility of the employee to ensure greater flexibility. This flexibility was already a concern of the company: even before the reduction in working hours, with 40 weekly hours, employees could choose their time of entry and exit from work.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The main reasons for adopting this work time organization model were: (i) to alleviate perceived fatigue levels among employees due to the increased number of clients in the previous year (2021), thus hoping to contribute to increased levels of satisfaction and well-being among workers; (ii) to favour the balance between work, family, and personal life; (iii) to send an explicit signal to employees that the company cares about them and their well-being.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: There were no difficulties in the preparation and implementation of reduced working hours, with an internal system allowing employees to schedule their day off, ensuring only that the company remains active 5 days a week. They consider that the implementation was easier than expected and very successful: on the one hand, everyone in the company considers it a great measure; on the other hand, customers and other external entities did not notice any changes in the company's service.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: Given the success of the initiative, the four-day week has become the permanent format for organizing working hours.

Lean Health

Sofia Cruz, Diana Tavares

Organization Description: *Lean Health* is a consulting company focused on the healthcare sector, based in Lisbon and with a team of six employees. Its main objective is to promote continuous improvement in the provision of healthcare services, aiming to enhance the experience of both users and professionals working in healthcare organizations.

Reduced Hours Format: In 2022, *Lean Health* introduced, on its own initiative, reduced working hours. Initially, the working hours were 40 hours per week, spread over 5 days. The implementation of a reduction in the weekly hours consisted of reducing it to 36 hours, now distributed over 4 days, with each working day totalling 9 hours and with Friday as the fixed day off. This change was applied to all employees of the company.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The motivations for reducing the workday were initially driven by the need for the company to reinvent itself after Covid-19, along with its strong culture of innovation. Additionally, one of the fundamental reasons was the attraction of new talents, which could provide competitive advantages over competitors. Furthermore, the importance of balancing personal and professional life was valued.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: Overall, the company did not face major difficulties, since the model was developed in collaboration with the employees, which allowed anticipating existing difficulties and doubts. However, the difficulty of not working on Fridays was still felt in the first 2/3 months, as well as the difficulty for workers to distinguish between what was a priority and what was an urgency. Additionally, some workers expressed anxiety and concern about not being able to complete the entire task list by Thursday afternoon.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: The company intends to maintain the reduced week. However, it is currently considering the pros and cons of alternating between having a day off on Mondays or Fridays. This approach would allow the company to remain open for five days a week, while employees would continue to have only four working days.

European Welding Federation (EWF)

José Soeiro, Ana Isabel Couto

Organization Description: *EWF* is headquartered in Portugal, with 28 employees, managing International Training, Qualification, and Certification Systems for individuals and companies in the field of connection technologies and additive manufacturing. It coordinates and participates in European Training and Research and Development projects in the industrial manufacturing areas. Founded in 1992, it operates in 42 countries, issuing 40 to 80 thousand diplomas and certificates per year. Work is hybrid, mostly remote, with employees being physically present at the company only one or two days a week.

Reduced Hours Format: In December 2022, a four-day week was introduced, initially in a one-year pilot program. There was a reduction in the normal working hours from 40 to 32 hours, covering all employees and focusing on eliminating work on Fridays. To ensure that clients did not notice any difference in the company's responsiveness, efforts were made to improve work organization and digitalization. New employees work five days a week for a period of 6 months to one year to ensure better integration into the company and its activities (currently two employees are in this situation).

Motivation for Reduced Hours: The main motivations were achieving a better work-life balance (complicated by employees' frequent travels), retaining employees, and reducing turnover (which was higher during the pandemic), aiming to increase job satisfaction levels. It was a decision integrated into an effort to increase efficiency, which included the introduction of new work tools to accomplish the same tasks in fewer hours.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: The first challenge was that the company provides services to other organizations worldwide that operate five days a week and communicate with *EWF* on Fridays. The management seeks to ensure that the service is provided at the same level as before. The most critical situations occurred with urgent requests received on Thursday evenings or Fridays. Thus, there is a concern to hold employees accountable to address these situations, even if it means working exceptionally on Fridays. There was also a need to review vacation scheduling procedures, counting Fridays for this purpose and ensuring work on Fridays when a holiday falls on another working day that week. The challenge of dealing with inequalities among employees regarding exceptional work on Fridays remains, particularly regarding deadline compliance.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: The year 2023 was conceived as a year of adaptation, and 2024 as a year of consolidation. The four-day week is to be maintained, with evaluation indicators being developed for each area.

Listor

Sofia Cruz, Sara Rodrigues

Organization Description: *Listor* is a company specializing in the import and distribution of flooring and wall coverings based in Lourinhã. It employs 20 workers, assigned to administrative, logistics, commercial, and marketing areas. *Listor's* commitment lies in the design of its products, their variety, and customer satisfaction, within an innovative framework that distinguishes it from other companies in its sector due to its proactivity and constant search for innovative solutions.

Reduced Hours Format: In 2022, *Listor* introduced, on its own initiative, reduced working hours. Work at *Listor* was organized for 40 hours per week, spread over 5 days. During the pilot program, the weekly working hours were reduced from 40 to 32. The introduction of the four-day week was optional, meaning workers could choose between working one less day per week or receiving a salary increase. Thus, out of the 20 people in the company, 9 started working four days a week, 3 chose not to join the project, and the 6 workers in the commercial area and the 2 administration members were not included in it.

Motivation for Reduced Hours: Concern for the well-being of the workers was the main motivation for implementing the four-day week at the company. Therefore, the administration took the initiative to award workers with a bonus in the form of a reduction in the weekly workload, so they could have an extra day for rest and family.

Main Challenges Encountered in the Preparation and Implementation of Reduced Hours: Implementation in the logistics area posed the greatest difficulty, given the specific tasks involved and the unexpected situations of absenteeism that arose, causing constraints especially for those who had to cover these absences, requiring greater organization by the workers, as well as better stress management.

Future Work Schedule in the Organization: The administration decided to maintain the reduced hours and considers extending it to workers in the commercial area.

Part 3: Workers

In this section, we begin by characterising the workers involved in the pilot project. Next, we analyse the effects on working hours, mental and physical health and work-life balance, comparing them with a control group of other companies that did not reduce the working week. Finally, we analysed which activities the workers used their time for and identified which workers valued the four-day week the most.

- [3.1 Characterization of the workers involved in the pilot project](#)
- [3.2 Workers' view about changes at work](#)
- [3.3 Effects on mental and physical health and life satisfaction](#)
- [3.4 Effects on work-life balance](#)
- [3.5 Time use](#)
- [3.6 Value of the four-day week](#)



3.1 Characterization of the workers involved in the pilot project ‡

In this section, we present data collected from surveys administered to the 332 employees of the companies participating in the pilot project. The pre-pilot survey, conducted in May, received 283 responses (an 85.2% response rate), and the survey conducted three months after the start of the pilot (in early September) received 203 responses (a 61.1% response rate). The final survey, conducted at the end of November, had 258 responses (a 77.7% response rate). All surveys were anonymous and took 20 to 25 minutes to complete. In each survey, employees were asked to create a personal code with a defined structure to link their responses across different surveys. We have a sample of 225 employees for whom we have both initial and final responses.

To validate the results, we created a control group of employees from 14 companies that initially showed interest in the project but did not proceed to the second phase. As expected, the response rate in these companies was much lower. We had 160 initial responses and 122 responses in the six-month survey, but only 75 observations with responses to both surveys.

Initially, we provide a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by an overview of the labour characteristics of the participants, and then a comparison of labour quality of life indicators before and after the reduction in work hours.

Figure 3.1 provides a demographic breakdown of the initial sample of 283 employees from the companies participating in the four-day work week pilot project in Portugal. Compared to the national average, these employees are younger, have higher levels of education, and there is a higher representation of women.

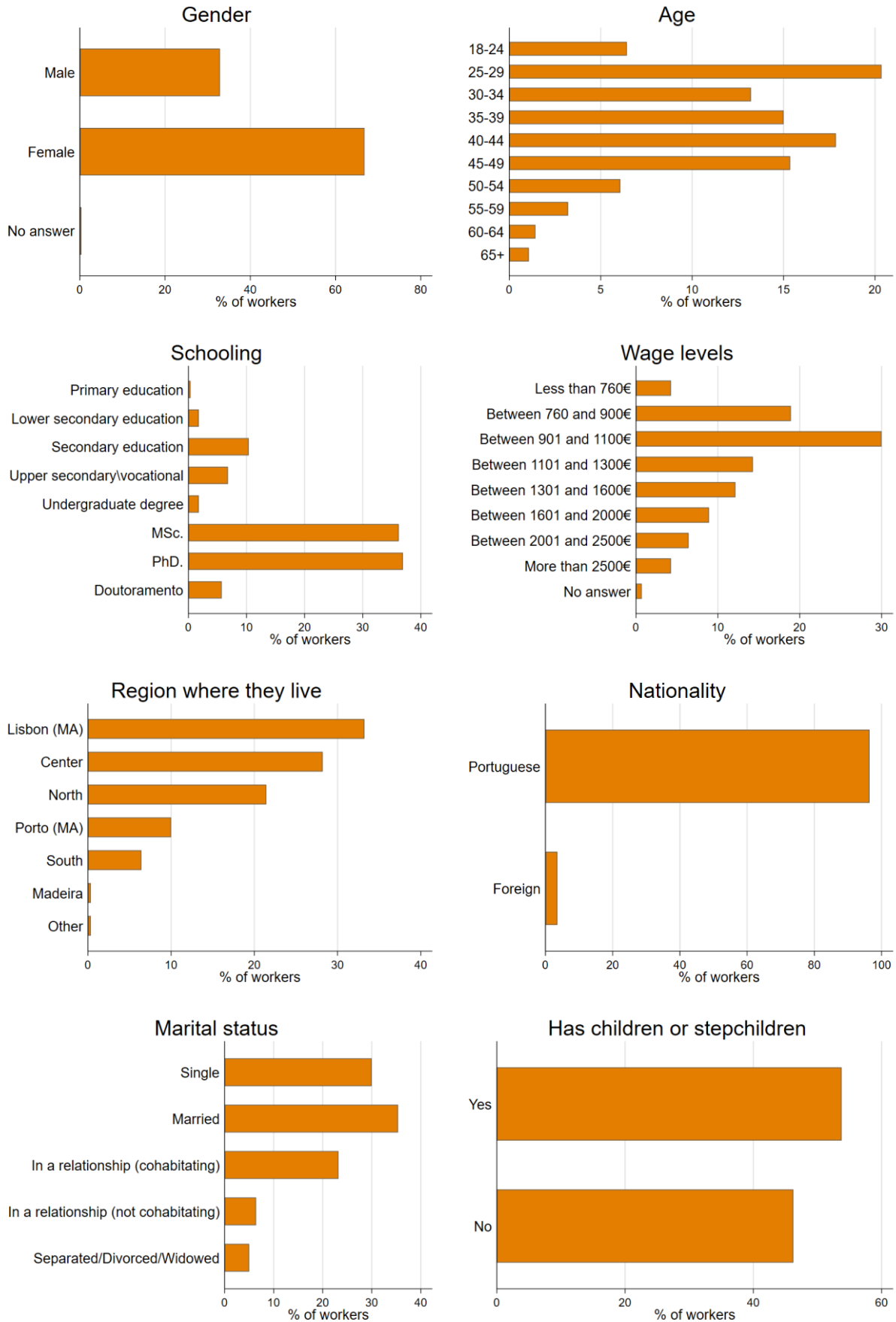
In this sample, there is a higher proportion of female employees (67%), while the national workforce has a slight majority of male workers. This overrepresentation supports the perception we've had since the project's inception: that the four-day work week generates more interest among women than men. Regarding age, our sample includes younger workers compared to the national average. Workers under 44 years old represent 49% of the total workforce in Portugal, but in our initial sample, they represent 73%. The most common age group is 25 to 29 years, with one-fifth of the workers, though there is a balanced distribution across the following age groups, with the median category being 35 to 39 years.

Another dimension that differs from the national average is educational attainment. About 80% of the respondents have attended higher education at the bachelor's, master's, or doctoral level. Only 35% of workers in Portugal have higher education. The salary levels of the survey respondents are consistent with the salary distribution in Portugal. More than half of the employees earn less than 1100 euros per month, with the most common salary range being between 901 and 1100 euros.

Regarding the region of residence, 33% live in the Lisbon metropolitan area and 28% in the central region, despite the pilot project including various companies in the Porto metropolitan area and the northern region (31% of the workers). More than 58% of the employees are married or cohabiting with a partner, and 54% have children or stepchildren. The vast majority of respondents are Portuguese nationals (96%).

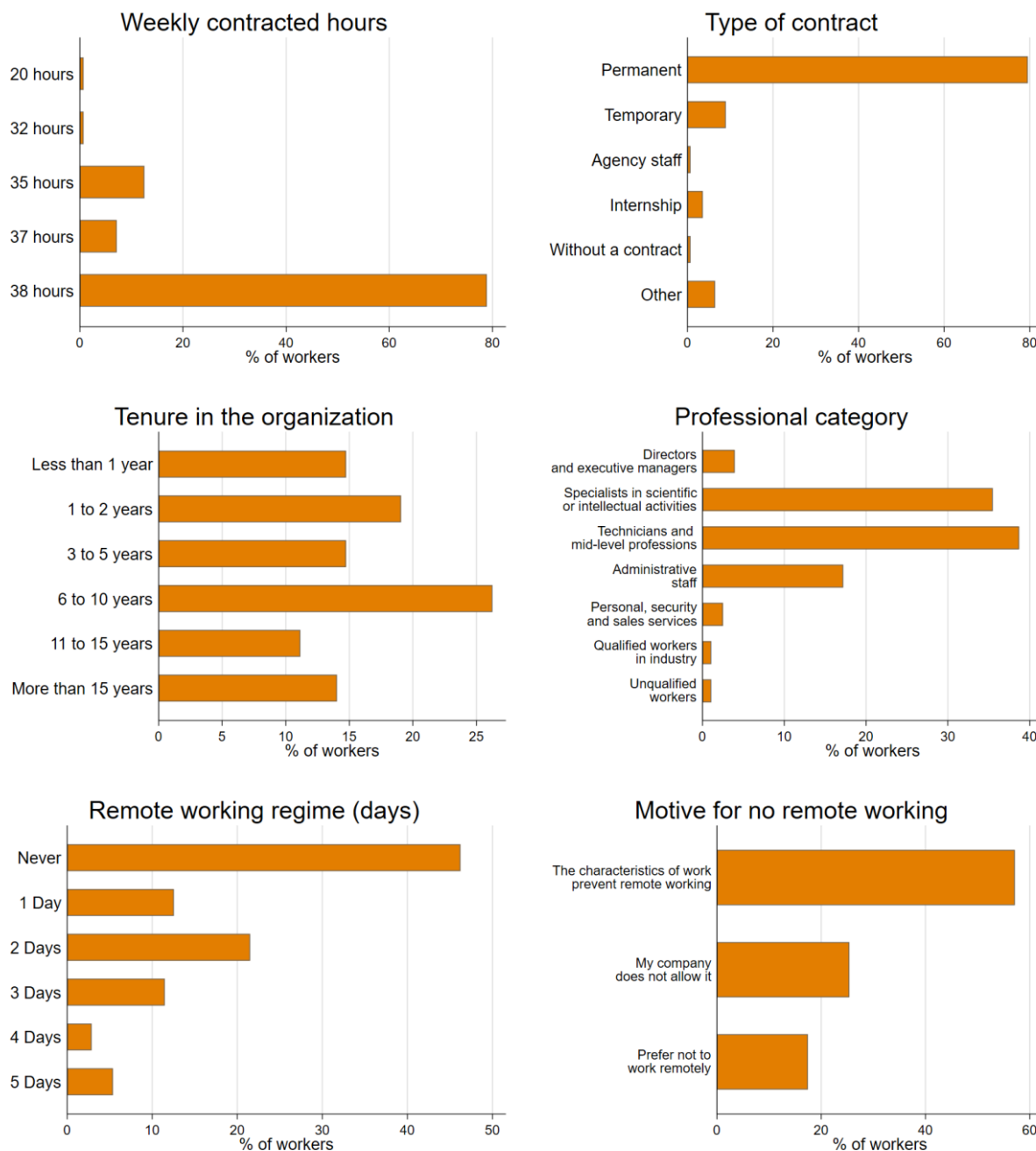
‡ The following sections are based on surveys developed by a research team located at Boston College, which included Wen Fan, Guolin Gu, Orla Kelly, and Prof. Juliet Schor, for use in pilot projects run by *4 Day Week Global* and translated and adapted to Portuguese by the coordinating team.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of the initial sample of workers by...



Note: Data from the 283 workers of the participating companies who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of the sample of workers by ...



Note: Data from the 283 workers of the participating companies who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of workers by employment characteristics. The majority of workers have 40-hour contracts (79%), while 13% have 35-hour contracts. These numbers are consistent with the data provided by the companies.

The percentage of workers with permanent contracts is 80%, slightly below the national average (83.5%). The high percentage of workers with permanent contracts aligns with longer tenures at the company. More than 26% of workers have been with their company for 6 to 10 years, and over 25% for more than 10 years. Most participants in the pilot project fall into the category of specialists in intellectual and scientific activities (particularly in physical sciences, finance, or legal matters) or in technical and intermediate-level professions. Regarding work arrangements, 54% of

workers have the flexibility to work remotely at least one day a week. For the 46% of workers who do not work remotely, the primary reason is that their job characteristics do not allow it.

Table 3.1 details the distribution of workers across various characteristics and compares this distribution with a smaller sample of workers for whom we could longitudinally link the surveys. These two samples are very similar demographically, demonstrating that the observed attrition (non-response rate) is not immediately related to observable worker characteristics.

The table also compares the sample with the control group of workers. Focusing on the initial sample (at the first data collection point), the control group workers are also younger, have higher levels of education, and a higher representation of women compared to the national average, but this difference is less pronounced than in the pilot participants. In the control group, 38% are men, 20% are over 50 years old, and more than 40% do not have higher education. Among the pilot participants, 33% are men, 11% are over 50 years old, and about 20% do not have higher education. The control group has a lower percentage of workers from Lisbon, a higher percentage of workers with 40-hour contracts, and a lower percentage of workers who work remotely at least one day a week.

Since the companies in the control group did not participate in the project, the administered questionnaires were generic, without references to the four-day week. Due to their length (taking 20 to 25 minutes to complete), a lower response rate and higher attrition between the first and second surveys were expected. We could not link almost 40% of the six-month survey responses to the pre-pilot survey. Thus, we ended up with 75 observations. Among these, the distribution of demographic characteristics and employment relationships is similar to the initial survey.

Although the control group companies were not chosen randomly, their interest in the pilot project and participation in the information sessions indicate a similar concern for human resources as the companies participating in the project. Many commented that they were implementing other measures to promote worker well-being. We believe that, from the workers' perspective, there is no reason to think they would differ from the pilot participants, a fact supported by the similarity of the sociodemographic characteristics of the samples.

The control group is also important for controlling seasonal effects. The pre-pilot survey was administered in spring, and the six-month survey was conducted at the end of November. Certainly, there can be seasonal effects on well-being and mental health.

Figures 3.3-3.6 evaluate other more subjective work-related characteristics. These figures reveal the sample's heterogeneity in terms of work contexts (Figure 3.3), autonomy in organizing work hours (Figure 3.4), the types of tasks involved (Figure 3.5), and workers' feelings about different aspects of their work (Figure 3.6). These figures also show that the control group is relatively similar. Perhaps the only significant difference is that 20% of workers in the control group work shifts, whereas shift workers represent a marginal proportion among the pilot participants. Regarding work sentiments, they appear slightly worse in the control group, with lower satisfaction regarding working conditions and a higher proportion of workers wanting to leave their job.

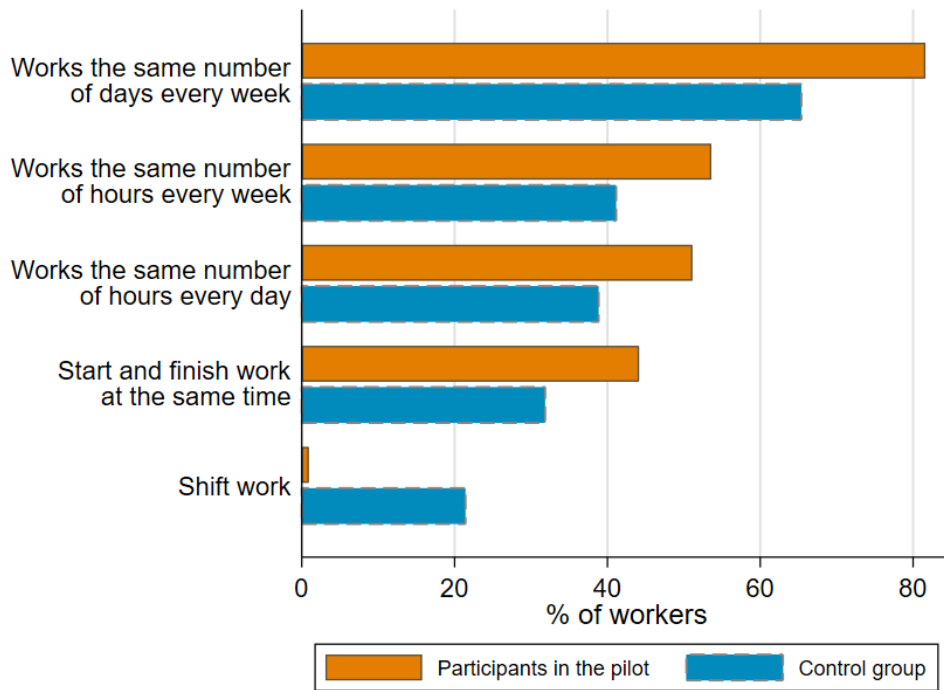
Table 3.1: Distribution of the sample of workers by characteristics

	Participants in the pilot		Control group	
	Pre-pilot	Pre-pilot and during pilot	Pre-pilot	Pre-pilot and during pilot
Observations	283	225	160	75
Gender				
Male	32.97	31.70	37.74	38.67
Female	67.03	68.30	62.26	61.33
Age				
18-24	6.43	6.22	6.92	6.67
25-29	20.36	20.00	18.87	16.00
30-34	13.21	14.67	13.84	16.00
35-39	15.00	16.44	16.35	14.67
40-44	17.86	17.33	14.47	10.67
45-49	15.36	15.11	8.81	14.67
50-54	6.07	6.22	8.18	12.00
55-59	3.21	2.22	6.92	9.33
60-64	1.43	0.89	3.14	0.00
65 ou mais anos	1.07	0.89	2.52	0.00
Education				
Primary education	0.36	0.45	2.52	0.00
Lower secondary education	1.79	1.34	1.26	1.33
Secondary education	10.39	10.71	20.75	21.33
Upper secondary\ vocational	8.60	8.93	16.98	17.33
Undergraduate degree	36.2	36.61	45.28	48.00
MSc.	36.92	36.16	11.95	12.00
PhD.	5.73	5.80	1.26	0.00
Region				
Lisbon (Metropolitan area)	33.21	35.11	21.38	24.00
Porto (Metropolitan area)	10.00	10.22	11.32	10.67
Center	28.21	29.78	41.51	37.33
North	21.43	17.78	23.27	24.00
South	6.43	6.22	2.52	4.00
Other	0.72	0.88	0.00	0.00
Nationality				
Portuguese	96.43	97.33	94.94	94.59
Other	3.57	2.67	5.06	5.41
Marital status				
Single	30.00	31.11	30.19	34.67
Married	35.36	34.22	37.11	41.33
In a relationship (cohabitating)	23.21	24.00	21.38	14.67
In a relation (not cohabitating)	6.43	6.22	2.52	1.33
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	5.00	4.44	8.81	8.00
Has children or stepchildren				
Yes	53.76	52.68	55.35	53.33
No	46.24	47.32	44.65	46.67

Table 3.1: Distribution of the sample of workers by characteristics (cont'd)

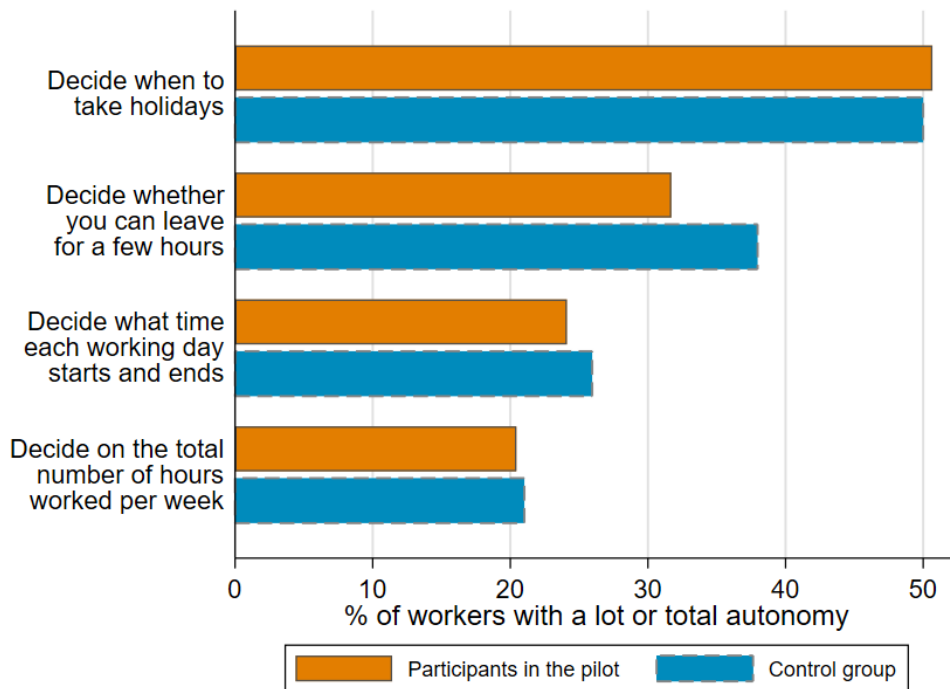
	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot and during pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot and during pilot</u>
Wage levels				
Less than 760€	4.32	3.59	6.29	5.33
Between 760€ and 900€	19.06	17.49	24.53	22.67
Between 901€ and 1100€	30.22	30.94	19.50	24.00
Between 1101€ and 1300€	14.39	15.70	16.98	14.67
Between 1301€ and 1600€	12.23	12.56	12.58	13.33
Between 1601€ and 2000€	8.99	10.31	6.92	8.00
Between 2001€ and 2500€	6.47	6.73	5.66	5.33
More than 2500€	4.32	2.69	7.55	6.67
Contracted hours				
20 hours	0.71	0.00	7.01	2.66
32 hours	0.71	0.89	0.00	0.00
35 hours	12.5	13.39	1.91	0.00
Between 35 and 40 hours	7.14	6.69	1.28	1.33
40 hours	78.93	79.03	89.81	96.00
Type of contract				
Permanent	79.57	80.36	80.5	89.33
Temporary	8.96	8.93	8.18	6.67
Agency staff	0.72	0.89	2.52	2.67
Internship	3.58	3.57	5.03	0.00
Without a contract	0.72	5.80	0.63	0.00
Other	6.45	0.45	3.14	1.33
Tenure				
Less than 1 year	14.75	15.70	8.18	5.33
1 to 2 years	19.06	17.04	19.50	16.00
3 to 5 years	14.75	17.04	25.79	30.67
6 to 10 years	26.26	27.35	21.38	21.33
11 to 15 years	11.15	10.31	8.18	4.00
More than 15 years	14.03	12.56	16.98	22.67
Professional category				
Directors and executive managers	3.94	4.02	2.58	2.70
Specialists in scientific or intellectual act	35.48	34.82	30.97	22.97
Technicians and mid-level professions	38.71	40.63	30.97	28.38
Administrative staff	17.20	16.07	22.58	31.08
Personal, security and sales services	2.51	2.23	7.10	9.46
Qualified workers in industry	1.08	1.34	4.52	4.05
Unqualified workers	1.08	0.89	1.29	1.35
Remote working regime				
5 days	5.38	4.91	4.40	6.67
4 days	2.87	3.13	6.92	9.33
3 days	11.47	10.27	6.92	9.33
2 days	21.51	25.45	5.66	4.00
1 day	12.54	13.39	13.84	17.33
Never	46.24	42.86	62.26	53.33
It's not possible	26.42	26.73	55.13	48.00
Employer does not allow	11.74	10.14	6.49	5.33
Prefer not to telework	8.07	5.99	0.65	0.00

Figure 3.3: Work context



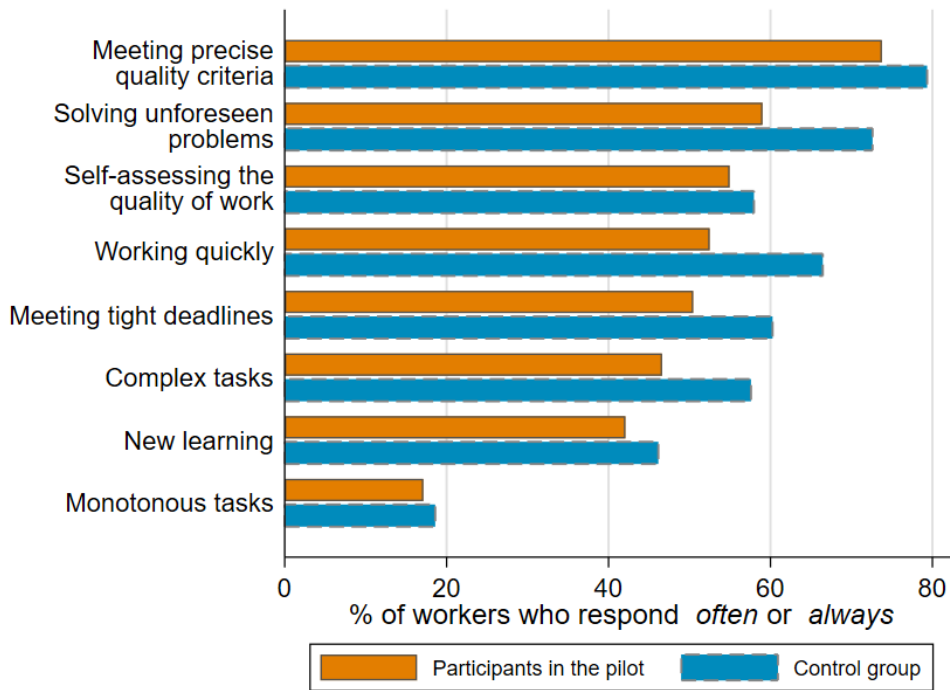
Note: Data from the 283 employees of the companies participating in the pilot and the 160 employees in the control group who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

Figure 3.4: Autonomy at work



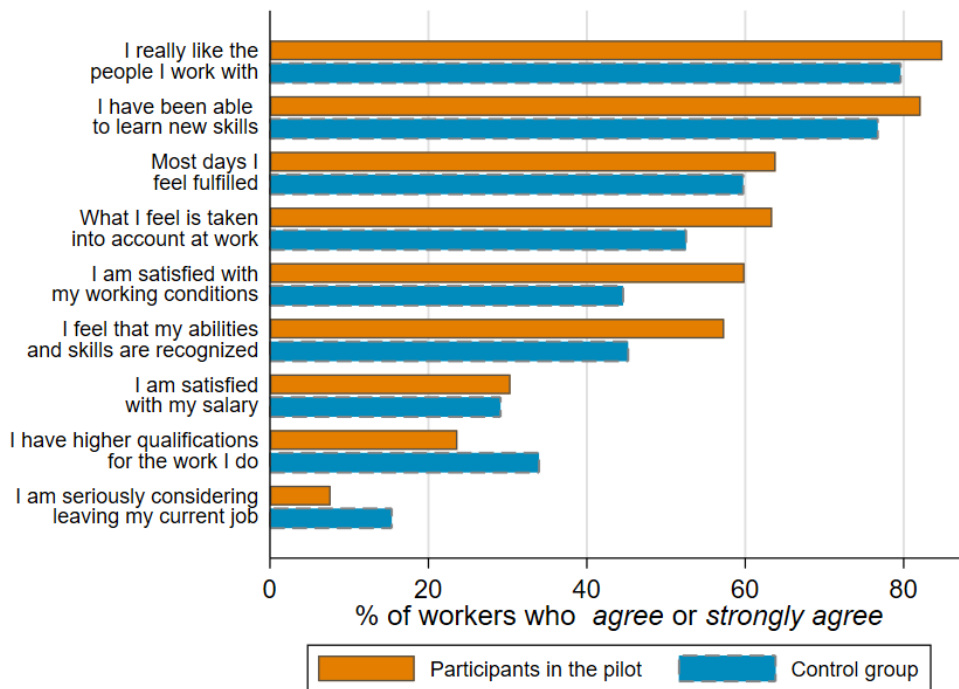
Note: Data from the 283 employees of the companies participating in the pilot and the 160 employees in the control group who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

Figure 3.5: Work often or always involves:



Note: Data from the 283 employees of the companies participating in the pilot and the 160 employees in the control group who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

Figure 3.6: Feelings in the workplace



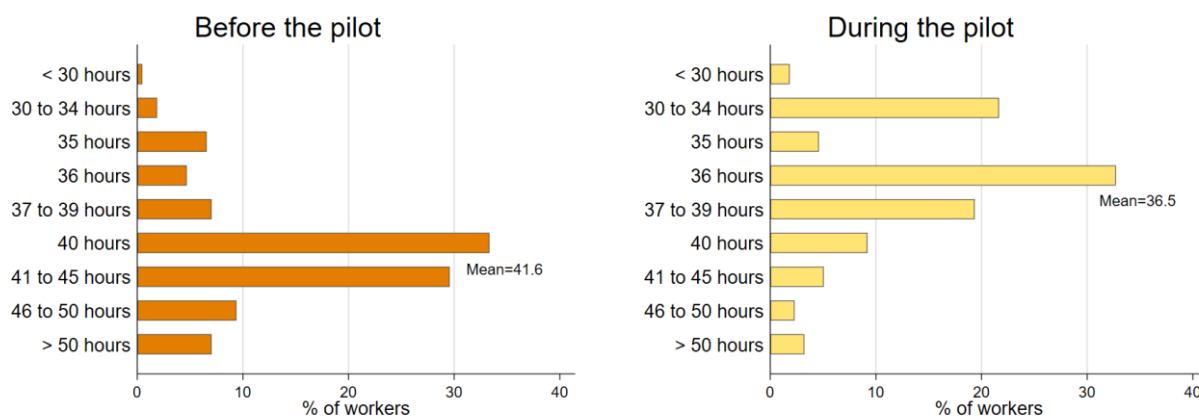
Note: Data from the 283 employees of the companies participating in the pilot and the 160 employees in the control group who responded to the pre-pilot survey.

3.2 Workers' view about changes at work

According to the pre-pilot survey data, corroborated by company information, 80% of workers have 40-hour weekly contracts. However, as we know, there can be a significant discrepancy between contracted work hours and actual hours worked, especially in sectors like consulting or information technology. In fact, before the pilot began, more than 45% of workers reported working more hours per week than their 40-hour contracts.

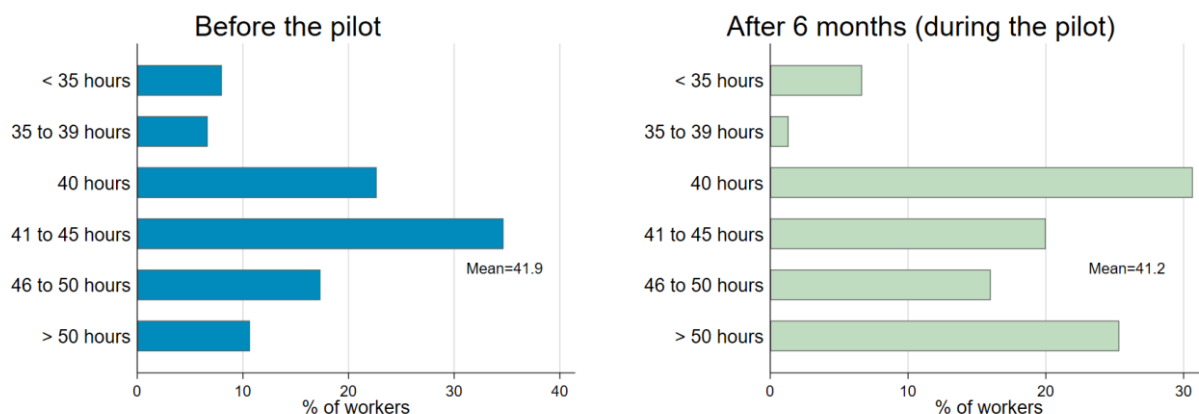
As shown by comparing the two graphs in Figure 3.7, there was an effective reduction in hours worked. Before the pilot project, workers reported an average of more than 41 hours worked per week. Three months into the test, the average weekly hours worked dropped to 36.5 hours, a reduction of 12.1%, which aligns with the 12.3% reduction reported by the companies. The percentage of people working 40 or more hours decreased significantly from 79% to 20%, with 20% workers indicating they worked between 37 and 39 hours, and almost 5% still working more than 50 hours.

Figure 3.7: Hours actually worked before and during the pilot



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies taking part in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. The difference in the average number of hours actually worked between these people is statistically significant ($t=-12.4, p<.001$).

Figure 3.8: Hours actually worked in the control group



Note: Data from the 75 workers from the companies in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. The difference in the average number of hours actually worked between these people is not statistically significant ($t=-0.49, p<.625$).

Figure 3.9: How do you describe the process?

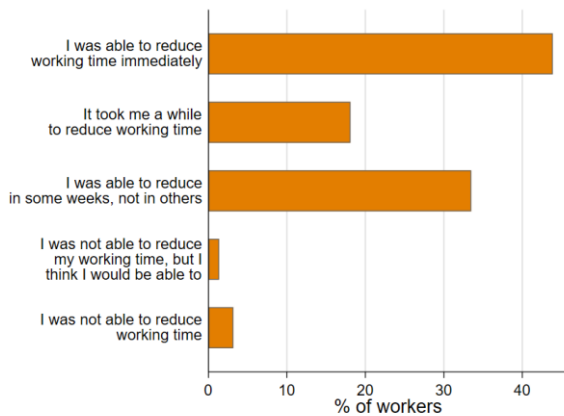
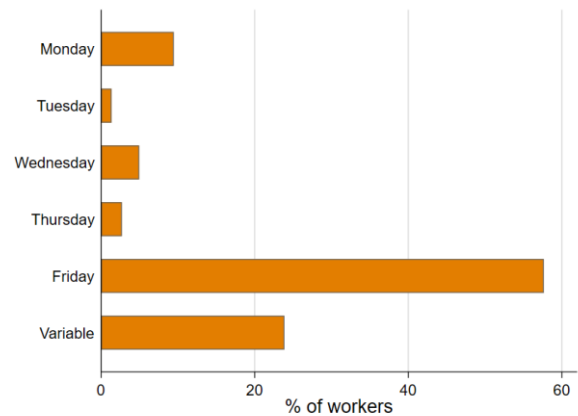


Figure 3.10: Which day is free?



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.11: Free day frequency

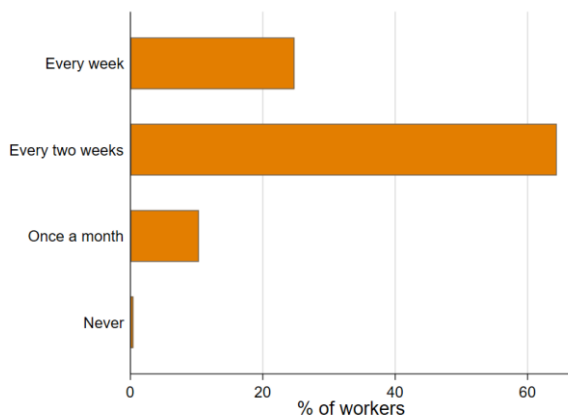
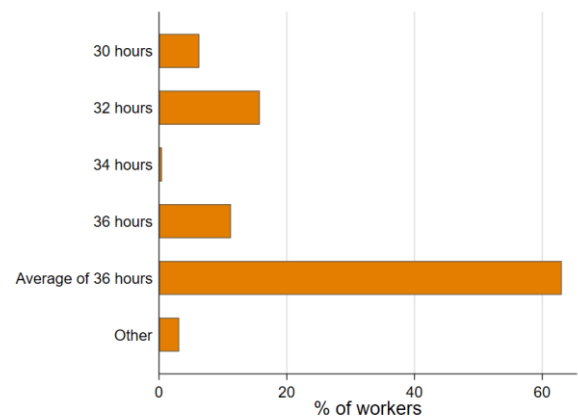


Figure 3.12: Hours set in the pilot



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

In the control group (Figure 3.8), naturally, there was no significant reduction in work hours. The average hours decreased from 41.9 to 41.2 hours per week, while the percentage of workers working more than 50 hours increased from 10% to 25%.

According to Figure 3.9, over 40% of workers were able to reduce their work hours immediately, but this experience was not unanimous. Half of the workers took some time to reduce their work hours or could not benefit from the reduced hours every week. In several comments, some workers confided that they ended up completing pending tasks on their day off. It is common for some difficulty in adjustment to occur in the first few months, and it is natural for some habits to take time to change, but by the end, only 5% of workers could not take advantage of the day off.

Still, the workers' data is consistent with the information provided by the companies, confirming an effective reduction in work hours. Workers also confirmed the data provided by companies regarding the chosen format for implementing the reduced hours. More than 60% of workers had a four-day week every two weeks with an average of 36 hours per week. Almost 25% had it every week, and over 10% had it once a month (Figures 3.11 and 3.12).

Table 3.2: Frequency of overtime and absenteeism

	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>
Frequency of overtime work				
Daily	7.66	3.17	17.57	14.67
Several times a week	26.13	19.46	29.73	33.33
Several times a week a month	27.93	29.86	25.68	25.33
Never	38.29	47.51	27.03	26.67
Absenteeism (previous month)				
Never	96.43	91.40	97.33	89.19
1 or 2 days	2.68	6.79	1.33	5.41
3 to 5 days	0.89	1.36	1.33	0.00
6 to 10 days	0.00	0.45	0.00	1.35
More than 10 days	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.05

Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

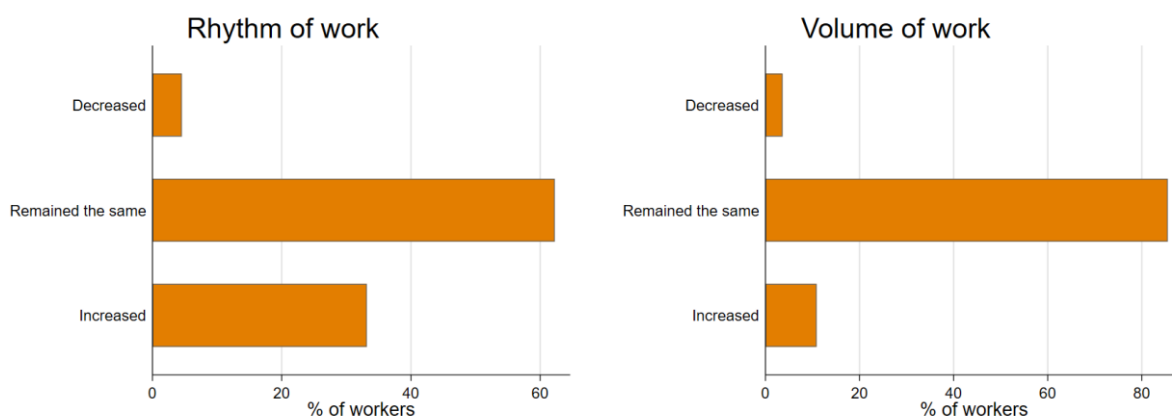
Although only two participating companies coordinated the day off on Fridays, in most cases (almost 60%), the day off was on Friday. Among the rest, half had a variable day off, and the rest had a fixed day off on another day of the week. Among the other days, Monday was the most common (Figure 3.10).

Table 3.2 details the frequency of overtime and absenteeism. Regarding overtime, it is a common practice in Portuguese companies. However, the incidence of overtime among pilot participants was lower from the start. While 34% of pilot participants worked overtime daily or several times a week, this percentage was 47% in the control group. Although we might expect the incidence of overtime to increase during the four-day week test, this was not the case; instead, it decreased. After six months, the proportion decreased to 23% among pilot participants, while it marginally increased in the control group to 48%. This result may indicate the implementation of prioritization and time organization strategies learned during training sessions with *4 Day Week Global* and the project coordinating team.

Table 3.2 also analyses changes in absenteeism. Among pilot participants, absenteeism increased by 5 percentage points. Before the pilot, only 3.6% of participants had missed work in the previous month, and after six months, this percentage had increased to 8.6%. However, in the control group, absenteeism increased by 8 percentage points, from 2.7% to 10.8%. This example illustrates the importance of having a control group. In this case, comparing a period from May to November, when more illnesses affect workers and their dependents, a before-and-after comparison is misleading due to seasonality.

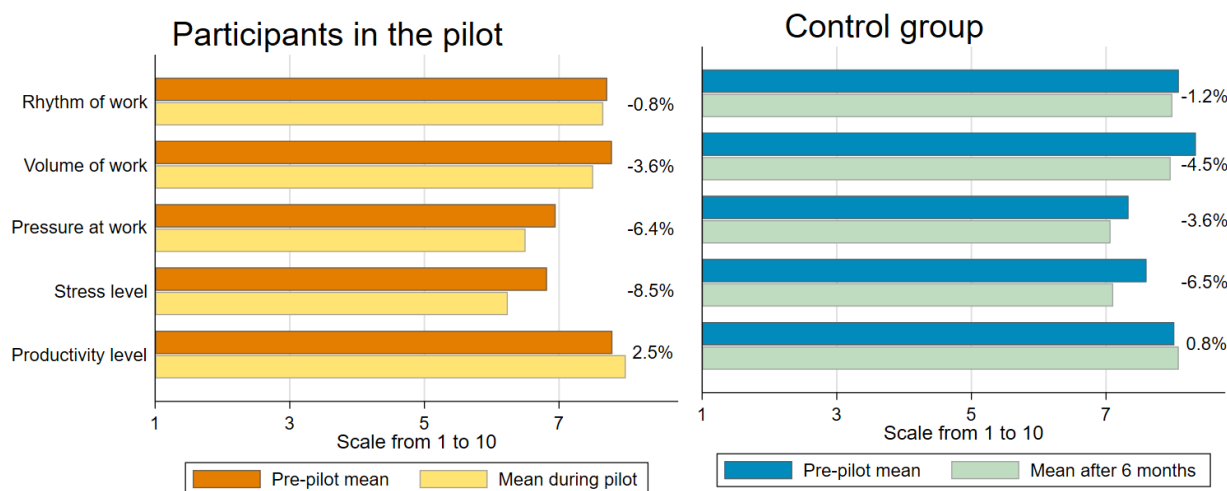
The idea of reduced hours within the four-day week framework is not to do the same work in less time but to work better on those days. One of our main concerns was precisely to avoid excessive intensification of work. Some increase in work pace on other days is expected, but if it is too much, it can be counterproductive. We assessed this dimension by directly asking about changes in work rhythm and volume as a consequence of the pilot (Figure 3.13) or by comparing numerical evaluations before and during the pilot (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.13: How has the rhythm and volume of work changed?



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.14: Intensity at work (from 1 to 10)



Note: Data from the 225 workers from the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. Among the participants in the pilot, the differences between the pre-pilot and six-month surveys are not statistically significant for Work pace, but they are for the other four items ($t=-0.623, p=0.533$; $t=-2.79, p=0.005$; $t=-3.46, p=0.001$; $t=-3.94, p=0.000$, $t=2.10, p=0.037$). In the control group the differences were statistically significant for Rhythm and Stress level ($t=-0.556, p=0.579$; $t=-2.14, p=0.034$; $t=-0.96, p=0.337$; $t=-2.03, p=0.045$; $t=0.325, p=0.745$).

Regarding the total volume of work, when asked directly, more than 90% of workers said it either remained the same or decreased, and only 10% said it increased. As for the rhythm of work, almost 70% of workers believed it stayed the same or decreased, and a little over 30% thought it increased.

However, our second, quantitative measure asked workers to evaluate various aspects related to work intensity, including rhythm, volume, and work pressure, as well as stress levels and productivity, on a scale of 1 to 10. We observed a slight reduction in work rhythm of 0.8%, in line with the 1.2% reduction in the control group. The reduction in the work volume index of 3.6% was

also slightly smaller than the reduction in the control group (4.5%). The most significant decreases were in the average work pressure and stress level, with reductions of 6.4% and 8.5%, respectively, larger than those in the control group (3.6% and 6.5%). On the other hand, workers reported an increase in productivity levels (an index increase of 2.5%), greater than the increase observed in the control group (an increase of only 0.8%).

Together, these data indicate that the four-day week was achieved with an effective reduction in work hours and without a significant increase in work intensity.

As shown in Figure 3.15, workers rated the four-day week experiment very positively. More than 83% rated it between 8 and 10 (on a scale of 0 to 10), and only a minority of 5% rated the experiment negatively. Consequently, 93% of workers wanted, or really wanted, the experiment to continue (Figure 3.16).

This result may not seem surprising, but it is important to highlight that the four-day week involved many changes in how work is organized, which are also disruptive for workers, and we know that, in general, such changes bring discomfort. In our case, it appears that the benefits brought by the reduction in work hours far outweigh the discomfort caused by the changes. In the following sections, we describe the effects of the four-day week on workers' lives to understand these benefits.

Figure 3.15: How do you characterize the experiment?

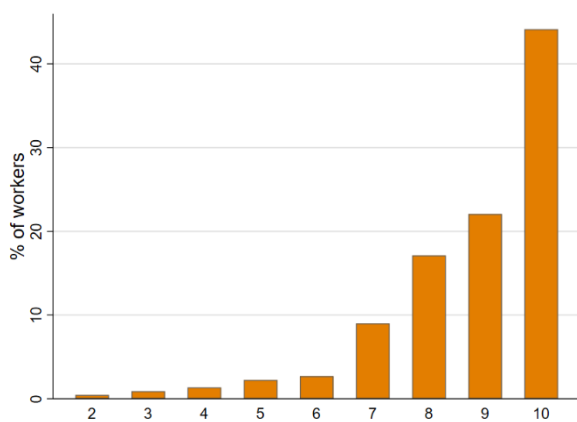
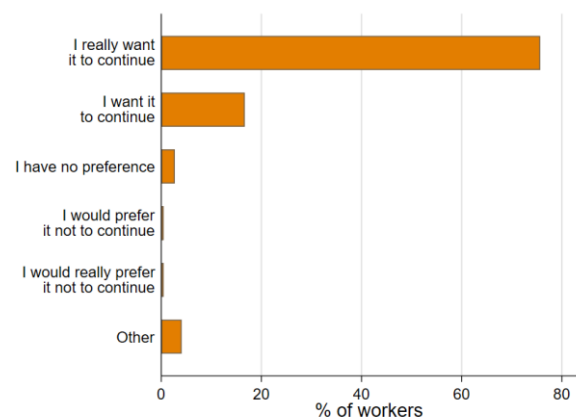


Figure 3.16: If given the choice:



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

3.3 Effects on mental and physical health and life satisfaction

One of the main motivations cited by companies for adopting reduced working hours in this pilot project was to improve workers' mental health. Having verified that there was indeed a reduction in working hours, we want to assess whether this reduction translated into improvements in physical and mental health indicators, as well as in work-life balance and satisfaction.

Table 3.3 presents the distribution of self-assessment of mental and physical health by workers before and six months into the test, for both participants and control group workers. The percentage of workers with very good or excellent mental health doubled from 15% to 30%. In comparison, in the control group, the percentage decreased from 26% to 17%. On the other hand, the percentage of workers who rated their mental health as poor or fair decreased from 40% to 23%, while in the control group it decreased from 47% to 37%.

The same positive effects were observed in physical health, although less significantly. The percentage of workers with very good or excellent physical health increased from 20% to 27%. In comparison, in the control group, the percentage decreased from 15% to 12%. Conversely, the percentage of workers who rated their physical health as poor or fair decreased from 39% to 27%, while in the control group it increased from 32% to 43%.

Clearly, workers who experienced a reduction in working hours felt an improvement in both physical and mental health. Besides these self-assessment indicators, the questionnaire included several other questions, with different scales, qualitative or numerical, allowing for a deeper analysis. One aspect that improved was sleep hours. The average number of sleep hours increased by 11 minutes from 6h43m to 6h54m, still below the 7 hours of sleep recommended as a minimum by international institutions. In comparison, in the control group, sleep hours were 6h43m and 6h46m in the two periods.

Table 3.3: Mental and physical health (self-assessment)

	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>
Mental health				
Poor	4.04	2.70	10.67	12.00
Fair	36.32	20.72	36.00	26.67
Good	44.39	45.95	26.67	44.00
Very good	13.45	27.93	17.33	13.33
Excellent	1.79	2.70	9.33	4.00
Physical health				
Poor	3.59	4.05	2.67	4.00
Fair	35.87	23.42	29.33	38.67
Good	40.36	45.95	40.00	32.00
Very good	18.39	23.87	20.00	20.00
Excellent	1.79	2.70	8.00	5.33
Hours of sleep	6.72	6.89	6.71	6.77

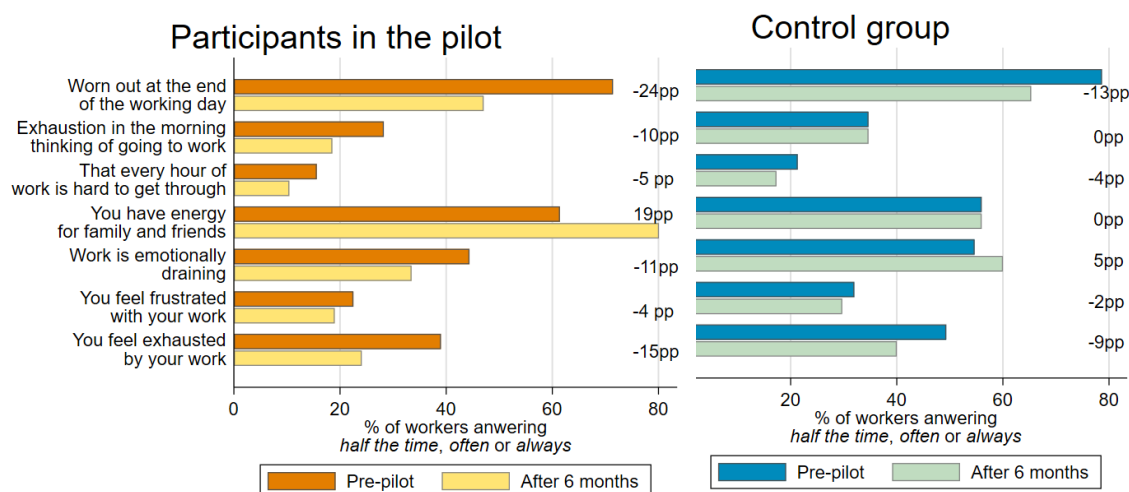
Note: Data from the 225 workers from the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. Among the participants in the pilot, the difference in hours of sleep between the two periods is statistically significant ($t=3.56$, $p<0.01$). In the control group, the difference was not statistically significant ($t=0.72$, $p>0.01$).

The magnitude of this effect is comparable to international studies on sleep. The report *Why Sleep Matters – The Economic Costs of Insufficient Sleep* by Rand Europe quantifies that unrealistic time pressures at work reduce, on average, 8 minutes of sleep per day.

Figure 3.17 presents responses to seven questions assessing work-related fatigue and exhaustion, rated on a scale of: (1) *Never*, (2) *Sometimes*, (3) *About half the time*, (4) *Often*, and (5) *Always*. We can see those levels of exhaustion due to work and end-of-day fatigue decreased after the implementation of reduced working hours across all indicators (with energy levels increasing in the fourth indicator). The percentage of people who frequently experience these negative effects decreased by an average of 12 percentage points (p.p.), whereas in the control group the average reduction was less than 4 p.p. For example, the percentage of workers who often felt end-of-day fatigue decreased from 71% to 47%, a reduction of 24 p.p.

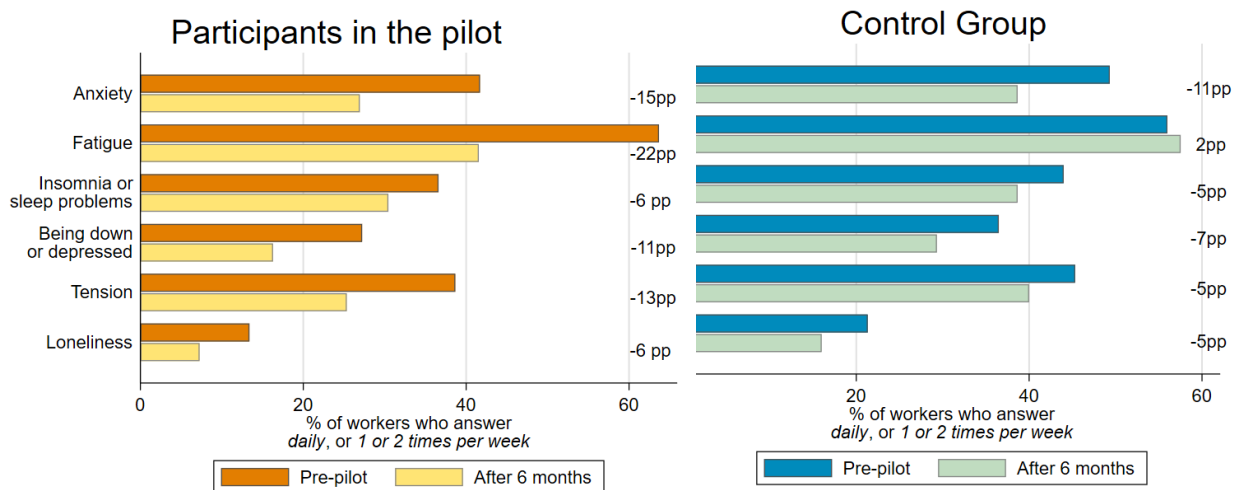
The results are even stronger concerning the reduction in the frequency of mental health-related symptoms (Figure 3.18). We asked workers to evaluate the frequency over the previous month of anxiety, fatigue, depression, tension, loneliness, and insomnia or other sleep problems on a scale of: (1) *Never*; (2) *Once or twice a month*; (3) *Once or twice a week*; and (4) *Daily*. This allows us to see that mental health symptoms improved six months after the start of the pilot project, particularly fatigue. The percentage of workers reporting frequent anxiety symptoms decreased by 15 p.p., fatigue by 22 p.p., insomnia or sleep problems by 6 p.p., depressive states by 11 p.p., tension by 13 p.p., and loneliness by 6 p.p. The control group also shows a reduction in incidences, but on average by only 6 p.p.

Figure 3.17: Effects on exhaustion and wear



Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.18: Effects on negative mental health symptoms



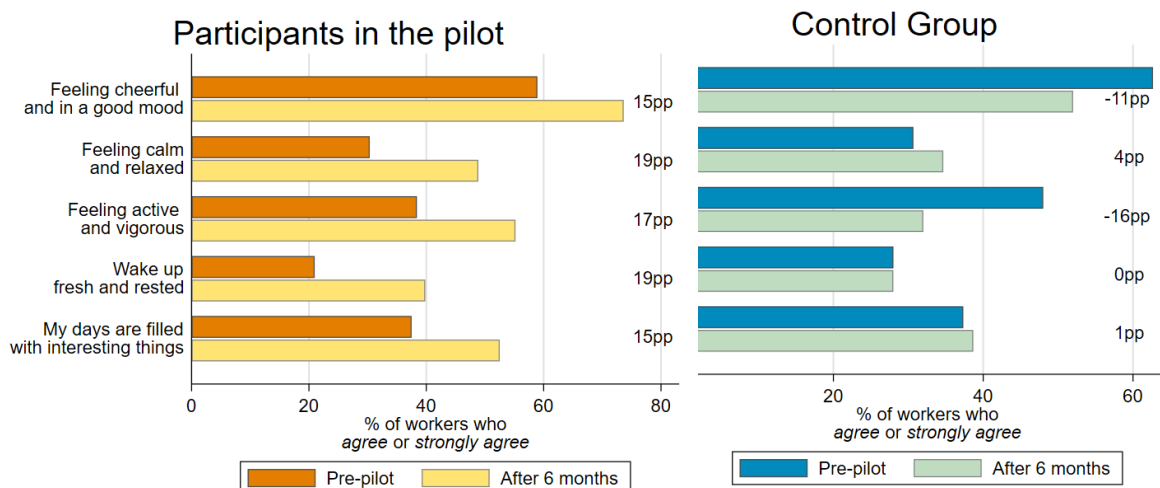
Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies participating in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

The flip side of the reduction in negative mental health symptoms is the improvement in positive feelings and life satisfaction. We asked workers to rate five statements related to positive feelings in their lives on a Likert scale from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (5) *Strongly Agree*. Figure 3.19 shows that the percentage of workers who have been feeling cheerful and in good spirits, calm and relaxed, active and vigorous increased by an average of 17 percentage points. The percentage of respondents who say they wake up feeling fresh and rested doubled from 20% to 40%. Those who say their days are filled with interesting things increased by 15 percentage points. In contrast, the control group saw a significant decrease in these indicators.

Workers are happier, and this is also reflected in their satisfaction with various aspects of life. We asked workers to rate their satisfaction on a scale from (1) *Not at all satisfied* to (10) *Very satisfied*. The average satisfaction with life increased by 9%, with personal relationships by 7%, and with their current job by 4%. Even the indicator of satisfaction with financial situation improved by 7%. The element where satisfaction increased the most was, naturally, with free time. On average, it increased by 37%. Before the pilot, both among participants and in the control group, the aspect with the least satisfaction was precisely the free time to do things they enjoy. Among pilot participants, after six months, this indicator moved from last to third place. In the control group, the average satisfaction with life and financial situation decreased by 6%, while the other three indicators remained unchanged (Figure 3.20).

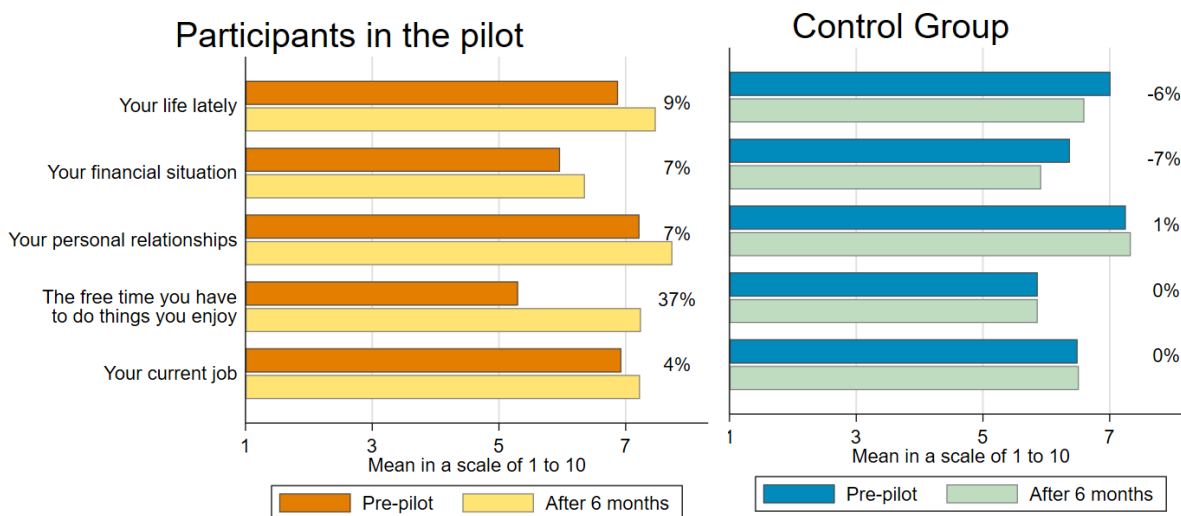
The benefits of the reduced workweek also led to improved overall satisfaction among workers with life, financial situation, personal relationships, use of free time, and the job itself.

Figure 3.19: Effects on positive feelings



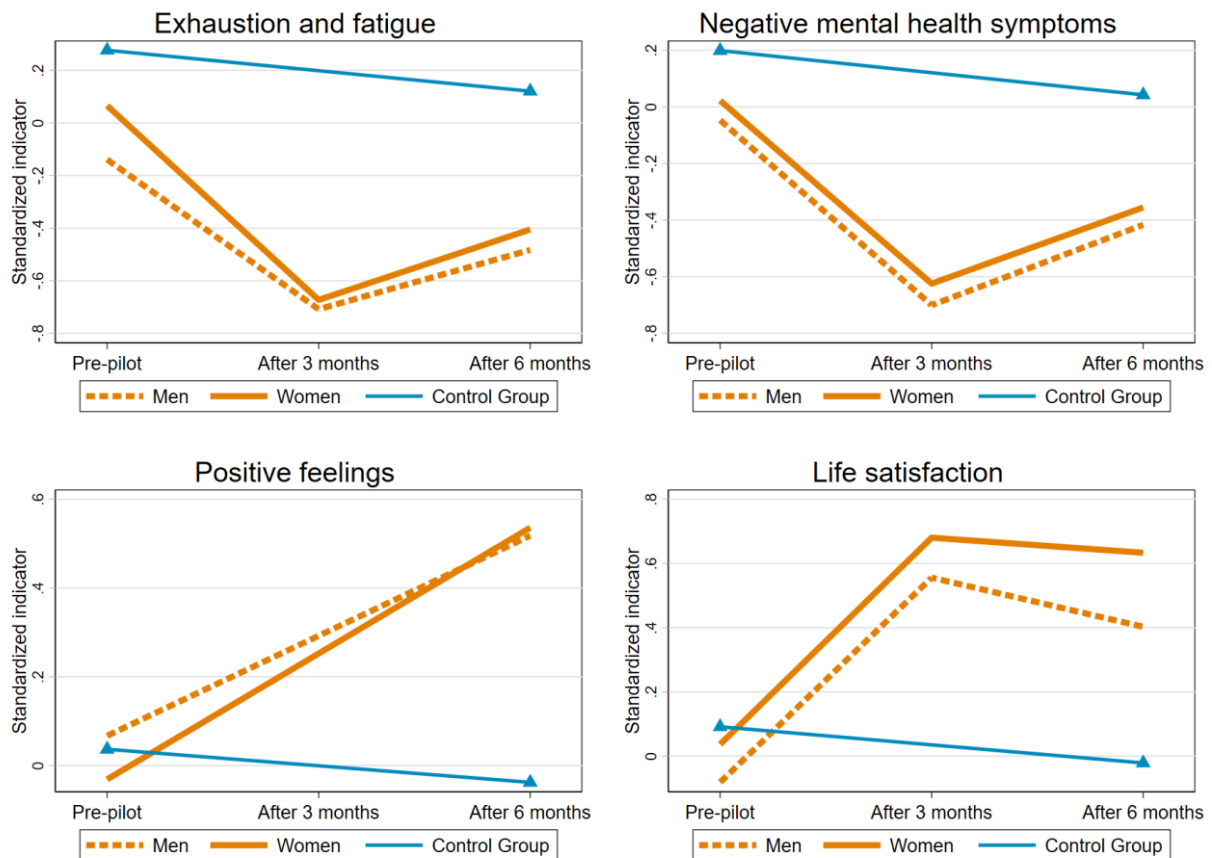
Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.20: Effects on life satisfaction



Note: Data from the 225 workers from the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. Among the participants in the pilot, the differences between the pre-pilot and six-month surveys are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) in all items ($t=4.82$, $t=3.32$, $t=4.37$, $t=11.86$, $t=-2.93$). In the control group, the differences were not statistically significant ($p > 0.01$) in all items ($t=-1.66$, $t=-2.11$, $t=0.32$, $t=-0.22$, $t=0.17$).

Figure 3.21: Effects over time, by gender



Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. Among the participants in the pilot, the differences between the pre-pilot and six-month surveys are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) for all four indicators ($t = -7.66$, $t = -6.32$, $t = 6.61$, $t = 7.94$).

To delve deeper into the analysis, we constructed four indicators: exhaustion and fatigue, negative mental health symptoms, positive feelings, and life satisfaction. Each indicator is calculated by taking the arithmetic mean of all subcategories and dividing by the standard deviation of the pre-pilot sample of pilot participants. This way, the variable should be interpreted as deviations from the pre-pilot mean, in proportion to the average deviation present in the data. Figure 3.21 presents the evolution of the various indicators, divided by gender, also for the interim three-month questionnaire.

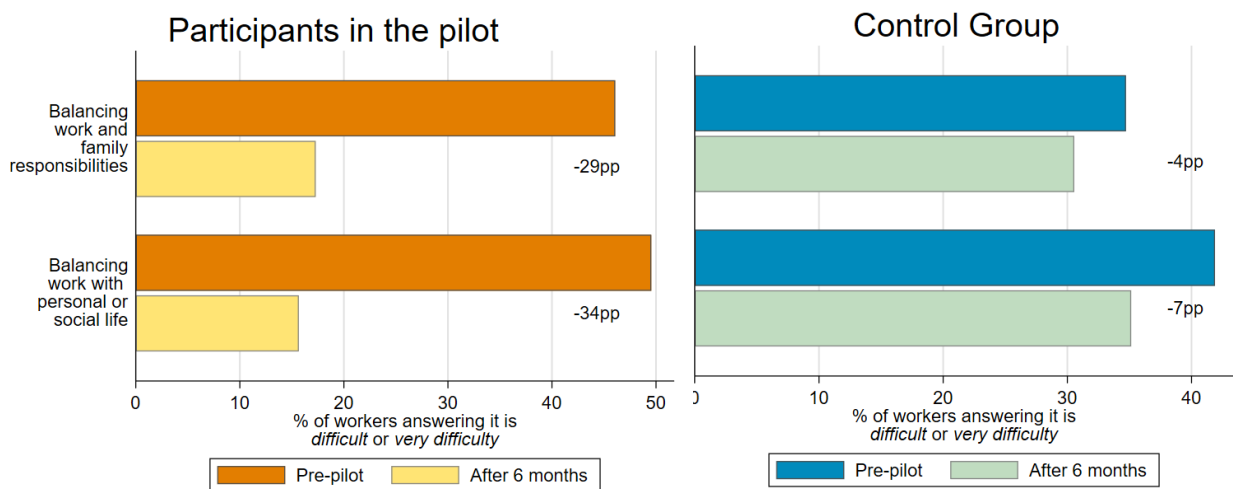
From the four graphs, we can draw three conclusions. First, the magnitude of the effect is quantitatively very significant. The change in the mean of each of the four indicators is between 0.4 and 0.6 of its standard deviation. Second, although the evolution is similar between genders, the effect is quantitatively larger for female workers. The only exception is the negative mental health symptoms indicator, where the reduction is equal between genders.

Finally, comparing the evolution of the indicators, we see that, in general, there is a greater effect at three months and a small regression at six months. This can be interpreted as a seasonal effect, given that the three-month survey was conducted at the end of summer, when people are generally more rested and happier. However, we cannot exclude the possibility of a regression effect. It is possible that the four-day week initially generated great enthusiasm that may have diminished over the months. Nonetheless, this regression is small.

3.4 Effects on work-life balance

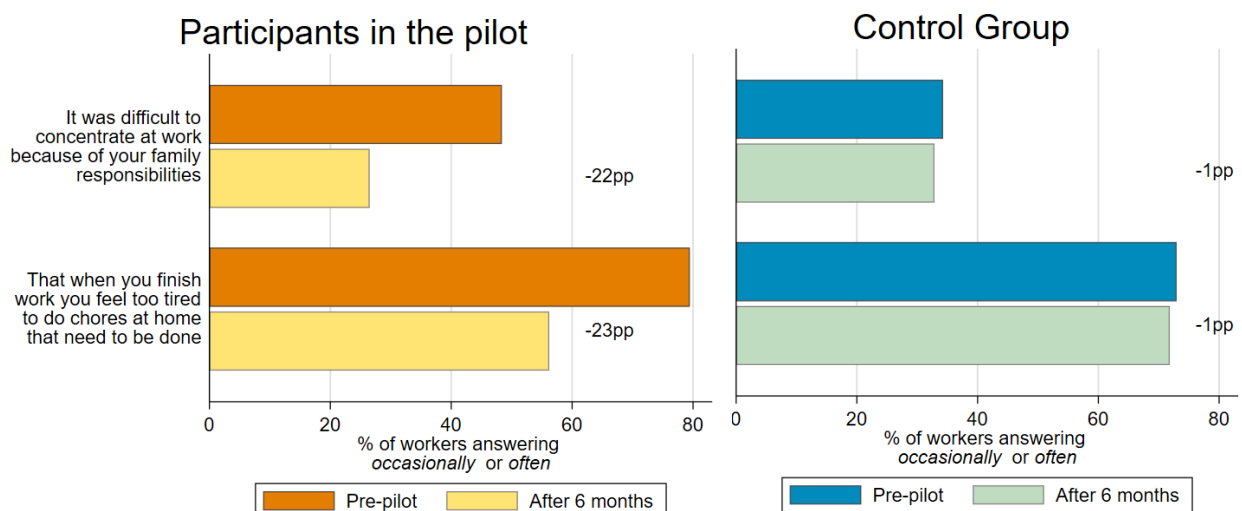
The improvement in mental health was accompanied by a clear enhancement in balancing work with family and personal life (Figure 3.22). We asked workers to rate their ability to balance work and family and personal life on a scale of: (1) *Very difficult*, (2) *Difficult*, (3) *Neither easy nor difficult*, (4) *Easy*, and (5) *Very easy*. The percentage of workers who found it difficult or very difficult to balance work and family decreased from 46% to 17%. The percentage of workers who found it difficult or very difficult to balance work and personal life decreased from 50% to 16%. Among the control group, the percentage of workers struggling to balance work with family and personal life decreased by only 4 to 7 percentage points, respectively.

Figure 3.22: Difficulties in balancing work, family and personal life



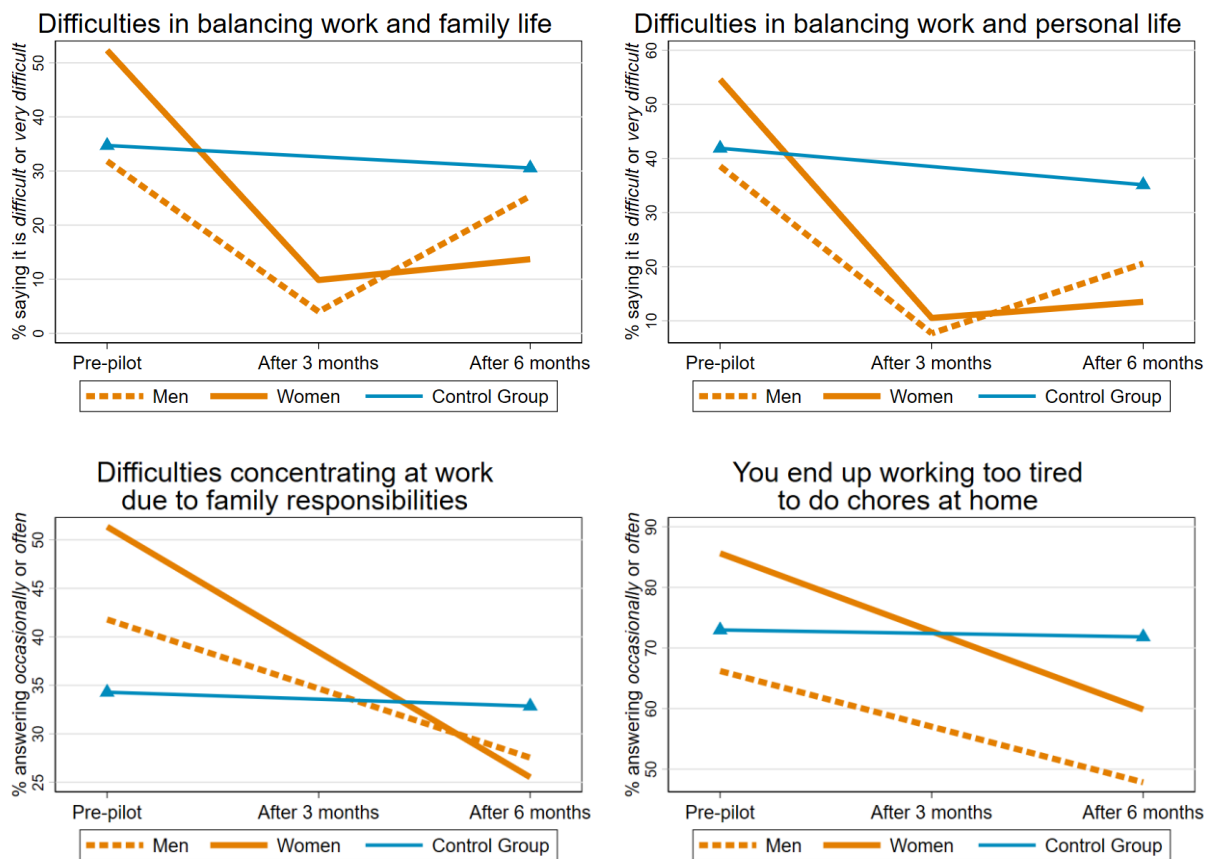
Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.23: Work-life balance



Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Figure 3.24: Effects on the difficulty of balancing work and life, by gender



Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

We asked two other questions related to work-life balance, categorized on a scale of (1) *Never*, (2) *Rarely*, (3) *Occasionally*, and (4) *Often*. The percentage of people who said they occasionally or often have trouble concentrating at work due to family responsibilities decreased from 48% to 26%. The percentage who said they are too tired to do household chores after work decreased from 81% to 56%. In the control group, the proportion decreased by only 1 percentage point (Figure 3.23).

Figure 3.24 shows the evolution of these four indicators of work-life balance difficulties, by gender. On one hand, we can see that the effects are more significant for female workers. Before the pilot, more than 50% of women said it was difficult or very difficult to balance work with family and personal life, compared to around 35% of men. Six months into the project, less than 14% of women were in these categories.

As with the mental health indicators, we observed a slight regression in two of these indicators between the third and sixth months of the project, only for men.

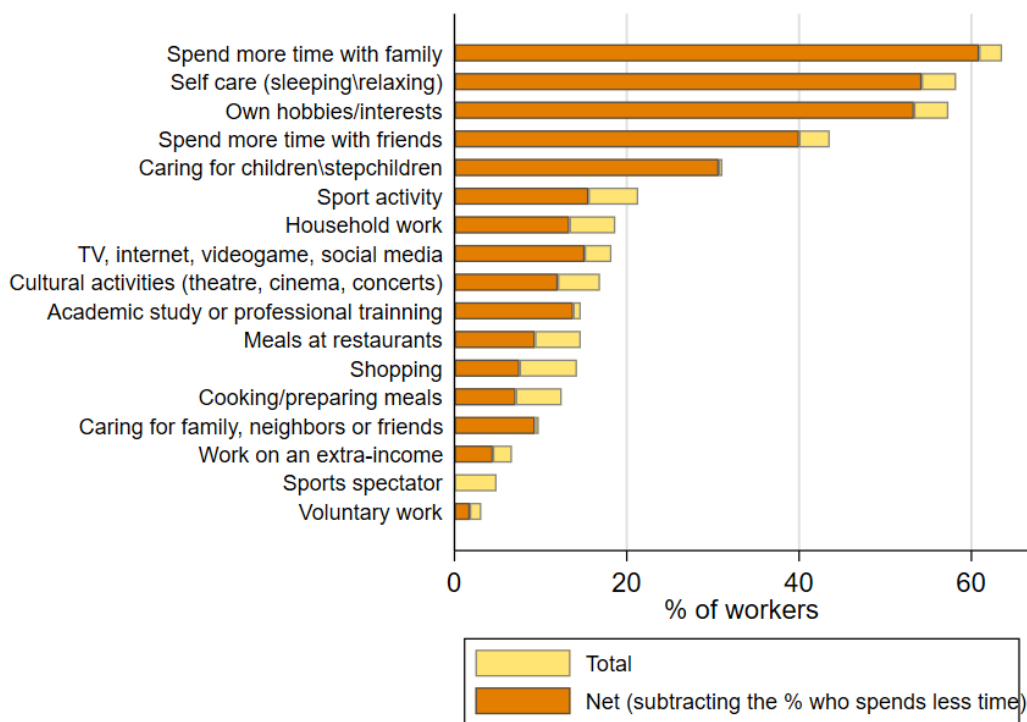
3.5 Time use

Another dimension we are interested in evaluating is how workers use their free time. Figure 3.25 shows the patterns of time use after implementing reduced working hours in the pilot project. The full bars indicate the percentage of workers who spend more time on a specific activity. The shorter bar subtracts the percentage of workers who report spending less time on that activity. We find that 64% of workers spend more time with their family and 44% with friends, also dedicating more time to self-care (58%) and hobbies and interests (57%). These figures suggest that the implementation of reduced working hours has had a predominantly positive impact on family and social relationships, as well as on time dedicated to individual activities, which are surely associated with better mental health indicators and work-family balance.

An interesting aspect is that 15% of workers spend more time in restaurants, but considering that 5.3% go to restaurants less often, the net value is around 9%. On the other hand, 12% of workers spend more time preparing meals at home (5% report cooking less). There seems to be a heterogeneity regarding the groups of people who consume meals at restaurants or prepare meals at home, but still, the effect on the restaurant sector is positive.

Other sectors seem to benefit even more from the increase in free time, as 14% of workers spend more time shopping and 17% on cultural activities (theatre, cinema, concerts, exhibitions). It is also interesting that 15% of workers spent more time on academic study or training activities, but only 3% on volunteering.

Figure 3.25: Percentage of workers who spend the most time on each activity



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

Table 3.4: Time usage in selected activities

	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>	<u>Pre-pilot</u>	<u>During pilot</u>
Academic activity or training				
0 hours	74.22	67.11	76.00	72.00
1-2 hours	14.22	15.56	13.33	14.67
3-5 hours	4.00	8.00	6.67	8.00
6-9 hours	2.22	4.00	2.67	0.00
More than 10 hours	5.33	5.33	1.33	5.33
Volunteering				
0 hours	92.00	91.11	96.00	97.33
1-2 hours	3.11	6.22	1.33	1.33
3-5 hours	2.67	0.89	0.00	1.33
6-9 hours	1.33	0.89	1.33	1.33
More than 10 hours	0.88	0.89	1.33	0.00
Cultural activities				
0 hours	60.44	52.00	64.00	66.67
1-2 hours	31.56	36.00	28.00	22.67
3-5 hours	7.11	8.44	6.67	9.33
6-9 hours	0.00	3.11	1.33	1.33
More than 10 hours	0.88	0.44	0.00	0.00

Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

In the worker surveys, we asked them to estimate the number of hours they spent per week on each activity. Table 3.4 details the distribution of hours in three activities, pre-pilot and six months into the project, among participants and the control group. One of the largest effects was observed in time spent on cultural activities. Initially, 60% did not dedicate any time to this activity. This number dropped to 52%, while in the control group the percentage rose from 64% to 67%. Another activity with a significant increase in participation was academic study or training activities. The percentage dedicating time to these activities increased from 25% to 33% (from 24% to 28% in the control group). The already high initial percentage in this category is certainly due to our sample having younger workers. In the distribution by hours, we see that the categories with the most increases were between 3 and 9 hours per week. The activity where no significant increases were observed was volunteering.

Two other dimensions deserve a deeper analysis. The first dimension is physical exercise. Workers' statements suggest a positive effect, as 21% of workers said they spent more time on sports activities and only 6% spent less time. In the intermediate survey, we found that, at three months, the number of workers who did not exercise had dropped from 27% to 14.5%. After six months, the effects were weaker. In the various questions we asked, we did not observe any increase in the percentage of physically active people. We also did not see a significant increase in the duration of exercise sessions, which remained around 51 minutes. However, in the control group, the percentage of workers who never exercised increased from 19% to 21%, but these differences are not statistically significant (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Physical exercise and sports practice

	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	Pre-pilot	During pilot	Pre-pilot	During pilot
Sports practice (hours per week)				
0 hours	38.22	38.22	25.33	28.00
1-2 hours	31.56	30.22	36.00	44.00
3-5 hours	20.00	20.44	16.00	16.00
6-9 hours	8.00	6.22	12.00	8.00
More than 10 hours	2.22	4.99	10.67	4.00
Exercise (number of sessions)				
Never	27.56	26.24	18.67	21.33
Less than once a week	18.22	23.08	16.00	21.33
Once or twice a week	37.33	31.67	38.67	32.00
3 or 4 times a week	13.33	14.93	18.67	17.33
5 times a week or more	3.56	4.07	8.00	8.00
Exercise (minutes per session)				
Mean	51.71	52.73	50.13	50.05

Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

The second dimension that deserves a closer look, as it concerns many observers, is the issue of workers having a second job. In the three surveys, we asked several questions on this topic. As we can see in Table 3.6, in the initial questionnaire, 15% of workers reported devoting hours to a second source of income. The most common sources were sporadic or regular second jobs, freelance work, or property rentals. On average, workers dedicated 9 hours per week to this activity, which provided an income increase of around 28%.

After six months, 7% of workers reported spending more time on these income sources (2% of workers spent less time). In the extensive margin, in the various direct questions we asked, we observed an increase of only 1.5 percentage points in the number of workers with a second activity (from 15.5% to 17%), an effect we consider marginal. In terms of the intensive margin, among workers who have a second activity, they spend an average of 2.5 more hours on this activity, less than the 3.5-hour increase observed in the control group. Therefore, we conclude that the four-day week did not particularly accentuate this dimension of the labour market in Portugal. Although the idea that a four-day week might lead more easily to a second job arises, this aspect did not prove significant in our sample.

The use of additional time also has a gender dimension. Figure 3.26 shows the difference between the percentage of women who report spending more time on a given activity and the same percentage for men. A higher percentage of women spend relatively more time caring for children or stepchildren, with friends, or with family. The three categories with greater increases for men were other paid work, academic or training activities, and TV, internet, video games, or social media.

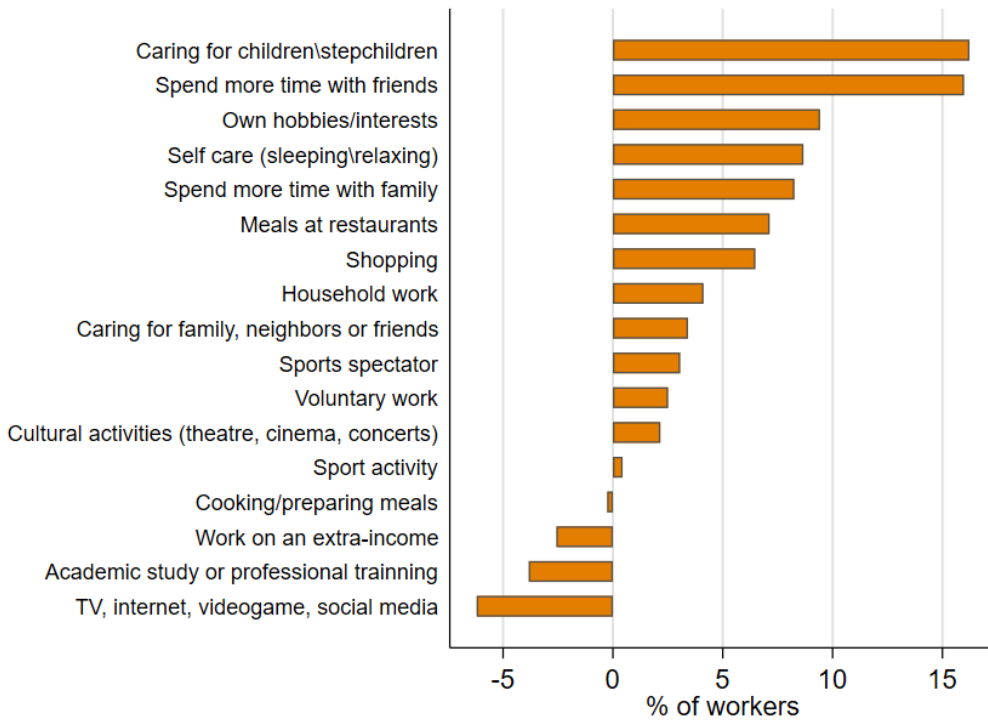
Table 3.6: Other paid work

	<u>Participants in the pilot</u>		<u>Control group</u>	
	Pre-pilot	During pilot	Pre-pilot	During pilot
Other paid work				
(question included in time use)				
0 hours	84.44	82.66	88.00	86.67
1-2 hours	2.67	3.11	1.33	5.33
3-5 hours	4.89	6.22	6.67	5.33
6-9 hours	3.11	4.89	1.33	0.00
More than 10 hours	4.88	3.08	2.67	2.67
Other paid work				
(direct question)				
No	84.54	83.25	85.33	85.33
A 2nd regular job	1.82	3.17	1.33	2.67
A 2nd sporadic job	4.54	3.62	5.33	2.66
Freelance work	2.26	2.71	1.33	1.33
Work on digital platforms	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Online sales	0.00	0.45	0.00	0.00
Property rental	2.27	3.17	4.00	5.33
Work in agriculture	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other self-employment	2.27	2.71	2.67	1.33
Other	2.27	0.90	0.00	1.33
Hours spent at other work				
Mean	9.27	11.74	5.18	8.90
Percentage of extra income				
Mean	27.81	26.83	25.90	21.81

Note: Data from the 225 workers in the companies taking part in the pilot and the 75 workers in the control group who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

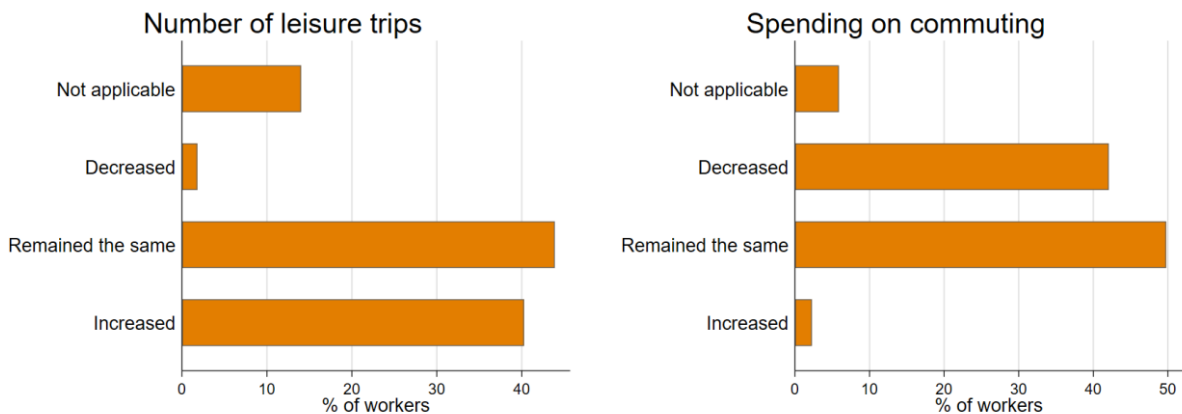
Finally, two other indicators are interesting. Among other changes in rhythm and volume, we also asked workers if their spending on transportation between home and work, and domestic travel changed (Figure 3.27). Before the pilot, workers reported spending an average of €70 per month on transportation between home and work. In terms of time, workers spent 35 minutes on each trip. More than 40% of workers stated that these types of expenses decreased. On the other hand, 40% of workers said they increased the number of leisure trips.

Figure 3.26: Difference between women and men in the percentage who spent more time, by activity



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies taking part in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months. The figure shows the percentage of women who claim to have spent more time on a particular activity minus the same percentage for men. For example: 36% of women said they spent more time looking after children, stepchildren or grandchildren, compared to 20% of men (a difference of 16 p.p. as shown in the graph). With regard to TV, internet, video games and social networks, 16% of women spent more time, compared to 22% of men (a difference of -6 p.p. as shown in the graph).

Figure 3.27: How have leisure trips and travel expenses changed?



Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

3.6 Value of the four-day week

The four-day week had a significant impact on the lives of workers and reflected in many of the well-being and work-life balance indicators we presented. This well-being has a real value for workers. Naturally, as it is a feeling, it is difficult to quantify, despite the use of globally validated scales. However, the unit that offers the best comparison is the monetary equivalent. We quantify the value of the four-day week by directly asking the worker what value they attribute to this benefit as a percentage of their salary. Direct questions of this nature have limitations, as a worker saying they value this benefit at a certain value does not mean that in a real situation, their choice would be the same. However, given the impossibility of having a better method to 'reveal preferences' with the collected data, the assigned value ends up being the best possible indicator. The results are in Table 3.7.

On average, workers value this benefit at 28% of their salary, a very significant amount given that the reduction in working hours was on average 12%. More relevantly, calculating the value for different groups of workers helps to understand who values the four-day week more and why. Unsurprisingly, women value the four-day week more than men (32% versus 21%). It was among women that we observed the greatest positive effects of reduced working hours. In terms of age, although the younger generations are the ones asking for the four-day week, it was the workers over 40 who valued it more when implemented (31% versus 26%). This is likely largely due to the presence of children, which is a major determinant of the value of the four-day week. Workers with children or stepchildren value it at 32% compared to 24% for those without children. Regionally, workers in Greater Lisbon and Porto value the four-day week slightly more than those in other geographic areas of the country.

Some observers assume that the four-day week is only for a highly qualified elite. In reality, the table shows that it was the less qualified workers and those earning below 1100€ who valued it the most. Workers earning less than 1100€ attribute a value of 33% compared to 24% for those earning more. In terms of education, the more qualified they are, the less they value this benefit. Workers without a college degree value it at 37% of their salary, those with a degree at 29%, and workers with qualifications above a degree value it at 24% of their salary.

More qualified workers have more autonomy in choosing their work schedule, have access to remote work, and have more means to 'buy' free time, and therefore, end up benefiting less from the four-day week. Workers with little autonomy in choosing their hours (an indicator calculated with data in Figure 2.24) or who cannot telework attribute a value of 33%, and those with more autonomy or who can telework value it at only 23%. In terms of occupational categories, directors and executive managers or professionals in intellectual and scientific activities attribute a value of 22%, technicians and intermediate professions attribute a value of 31%, and other categories such as administrative staff, salespeople, or unskilled workers value it at 35%.

Table 3.7: Value of the four-day week (% of salary)

Category	Value	Number of workers
Total		
Average	28.29	215
Gender		
Male	20.84	70
Female	31.97	144
Age		
18-39	26.21	124
40-65	31.13	91
Children or stepchildren		
With children or stepchildren	32.00	112
No children or stepchildren	24.20	102
Education		
Less than university degree	36.73	45
Degree	28.62	78
Higher than university degree	23.88	92
Region		
Greater Lisbon and Porto	31.74	99
North, Center, South and Others	25.34	116
Salary level		
Less than 1100€	32.93	109
More than 1100€	23.52	106
Professional category		
Managers and intellectual activities	22.11	84
Technicians and intermediate professions	30.70	86
Others	35.22	45
Teleworking		
No	33.79	90
Yes	23.84	92
Autonomy in choosing working hours		
Little autonomy	33.22	111
A lot of autonomy	23.02	104
Transportation time		
Less than 30 minutes	27.28	119
More than 30 minutes	29.54	96
Time reduction (effective)		
Less than or equal to 4 hours	26.30	86
More than 4 hours	30.45	129
Negative symptoms		
More frequent	28.88	86
Less frequent	27.89	129
Work-life balance		
Difficult	28.69	118
Easy	27.80	97

Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

In other indicators, there are no significant differences in the valuation of the reduction in the workweek. Among workers who take more or less than 30 minutes between home and work, among workers who initially had higher or lower incidences of negative mental health symptoms, among those who had more or less difficulty balancing work and personal life, and even among workers where the actual working hours reduced by more or less than four hours; in all these categories, the difference in valuation is only 2 or 3 percentage points.

Throughout the report, we opted for simpler statistical analyses with direct interpretation, leaving more complex analyses for future academic articles. However, we decided to explore a slightly more advanced technique that allows us to statistically distinguish the most important determinants of the value of the four-day week. We estimated a linear regression that measures the additional effect of each characteristic, controlling for the effect of all the other variables. We started with all the characteristics presented in Table 3.7 and removed those that were not statistically significant. Table 3.8 presents the results of two regressions, controlling or not for the fixed effect of each company. We ended the process with four determinants. What we can call the base value of the four-day week is estimated around 12%-13%. In additional terms, female workers value it 8.2% more, having children or stepchildren adds 8.5%, having an education level below a degree adds between 3.5% and 7.5%, and having a salary level below 1100€ adds 9%. With these numbers, we can construct various scenarios. For example, a man with a degree, a salary below 1100€, and with children will value the four-day week at around 29%, as much as a woman with a degree, with children, earning more than 1100€.

Table 3.8: Linear regression of the determinants of the value of the four-day week
(measures the additional effect of one controlling for the effect of all other variables)

Category	(1)	(2)
Base effect		
Constant	12.917 (t=3.60) [p=0.000]	11.866 (t=1.29) [p=0.197]
Additional effects		
Female	8.205 (t=2.25) [p=0.025]	8.201 (t=2.12) [p=0.035]
With children or stepchildren	7.498 (t=2.13) [p=0.034]	7.611 (t=2.05) [p=0.042]
Less than a university degree	7.679 (t=2.13) [p=0.068]	3.648 (t=0.83) [p=0.410]
Wage level below 1100€	8.612 (t=2.44) [p=0.016]	9.192 (t=2.25) [p=0.026]
Company fixed effects	No	Yes
Observation	215	215
R²	0.108	0.209

Note: Data from the 225 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who answered the pre-pilot survey and the survey at six months.

In their own words

Testimonials from workers after 3 months

“Having one day off per week means an opportunity to engage in recreational, sports, and self-care activities, sometimes constrained by weekend schedules. Resolving bureaucratic matters and scheduling appointments becomes much more efficient and simpler, alleviating a great deal of stress caused by travel and time differences.”

“The four-day week has been great for using this free day to handle personal matters.”

“I really enjoyed having the opportunity to participate in this project. When you have young children, you don’t have much time for yourself, and this project allowed that... a day just for me. To rest, to exercise, to go to the beach, to do the crafts I like, to get a massage, to go to an appointment, to watch a movie, to drop off and pick up the kids without rushing... I noticed I had more patience, calmer, and more creativity at work and at home. The children at the daycare adapted wonderfully to the new routine, as did the entire team. There was a general sense of well-being, good mood, and optimism. I would love for the four-day week to continue because of the positive changes it brought to my personal and professional life and the atmosphere it created at the daycare.”

“Undoubtedly, the four-day work model has been very positive, allowing me to more easily balance my personal and professional life. Since I only had an increase of one hour of work per day (from 7 hours Monday to Friday, to 8 hours Monday to Thursday), it has allowed me to have one free day a week to dedicate to what I like most, also bringing me more motivation for the other workdays.”

“The implementation of the four-day week allowed me to rest my mind from the mental effort required daily by my duties. It gave me the chance to focus on my chores (doctor appointments, shopping, house cleaning), my English course, and even travel and spend more time with my family and friends. It encouraged me to pursue further education and new courses. With the four-day week, I feel I start the week with more enthusiasm and commitment, as well as making plans for the weekend and socializing with people. I don’t feel as mentally overloaded and wanting to give up.”

“I feel more motivated, less tired, and in a better mood. The free days are used to handle personal matters, rest, and support my children, allowing us to have activities together outside of the weekend.”

“With young children, this project is fantastic because they know that on my day off, I can pick them up from school, and when it happens during vacation time, having an extra day every other week for a picnic is amazing.”

“My participation in this project was very rewarding both personally and professionally. For me, having a break on Wednesday is great because it breaks up the week, making it feel shorter, and allows me to handle personal matters without having to miss work or change my schedule. When I’m off, I also like to simply enjoy.”

“It was undoubtedly a great benefit for my life, both professionally and personally. I feel calmer and have better balance with the various dynamics of personal and family life. Better management of everything.”

“I feel that this project comes to allow us to truly live!”

“I am happy to be participating in this project, hoping that it continues and extends to all workers. Having free days makes me happier.”

“I am happy to be in a company that cares about the well-being of its employees. The four-day week has improved my quality of life and allowed me to have more days for myself, to do activities that interest me.”

“Participating in this project makes me feel good to see that Portugal is evolving in its approach to work. For me, having more free days is very beneficial for spending time with my family and doing things I can't do on workdays, like going to the doctor, shopping...”

“Participating in this project has been a very positive experience. It has been important to have more time to dedicate to hobbies and leisure activities, which help disconnect from the workday and week.”

“On a personal level, I have had more time to spend with my children and wife, and this has had very positive effects on my happiness and well-being, which consequently contributes to better personal performance. Honestly, I am convinced that, at least in my specific case, the benefits would be even greater if the four-day workweek was adopted continuously (instead of the alternating model of four and five days every two weeks). From my perspective, the psychological component combined with personal and team well-being (who are also participating in this pilot test) has allowed for significantly improved performance since adopting the four-day workweek. Participating in this pilot project has been genuinely enriching from both personal and professional standpoints.”

“I have time for myself, to rest, and to do what truly makes me happy.”

“I am very satisfied. I have been managing family life much better and I expect to make better use of my time in the period we are entering (post-holidays), namely with more time for myself (physical exercise or academic activities and time for friends), improving anxiety levels.”

“The four-day week has been a breath of fresh air, allowing for better organization of the workweek with personal life.”

“I feel good, having more time to dedicate to my hobbies.”

“More time to spend with family, take care of myself, practice physical activities, and attend training sessions.”

“The project has been a great help for my rest, handling bureaucratic matters, and most importantly, it has helped me focus on additional sources of income.”

“I have more time for my personal life and to organize domestic tasks for a more peaceful week and a weekend free of chores.”

“I am loving testing this new way of working, which respects personal life and involves everyone, showing an incredible vote of confidence in the employees. Initially, I thought it would be harder to manage than it actually is in practice. It's amazing to have a free day to lighten my evenings during the week. On that day, I can plan to take care of the house, take care of myself, schedule services that operate during working hours, and have a long weekend that allows me to disconnect a bit more.”

In their own words

Testimonials from workers after 6 months

“In the beginning of this project, I used the days only to handle bureaucratic matters such as banking and organizing and cleaning the house. As the project progressed, my organization at work and at home started to fall into place, and I began to enjoy my weekdays more for myself, going out with my husband who works shifts, talking with more time, having lunch out, trying a new café. For me, it was a complete success!”

“In this final phase of the project, I had more free days than in the initial phase, and only now was I able to see the great advantages of reducing the number of working days per week. I think it was important and positive to participate in this project, and I believe it would be very beneficial if it were implemented in my company.”

“I really love having a day JUST FOR MYSELF. It’s the only time I get to be alone (without children) to go to appointments, get a haircut, have a massage...without rushing or managing time. Sometimes it’s nice just to be alone, enjoy the silence, not move, and watch movies.”

“It was a very good experience. I became more motivated, with more time to take care of my house and my family’s needs. Appointments for my daughters, organizing the house, visiting my sick father, handling difficult matters without the kids around, even strolling through Lisbon, window shopping, and buying things I wouldn’t if I didn’t go to physical stores.”

“This project had a big impact on my family life, but especially on my mental sanity.”

“I really needed time for myself, and this project provided that.”

“I am very happy to have participated in this project since it is a great advantage to have a free day to handle personal matters, appointments, while also having an extra day of rest without having to miss work. By working only 4 days a week, I feel more energetic. I hope to continue in this project forever.”

“Transitioning to a 4-day work week has been very beneficial. We live in times where work often takes precedence over family, and we spend more time working than with our family. The reduction in workdays is very advantageous because it allows me to have more time with my child, as well as more time for myself and my hobbies and self-care, reflecting in my well-being from a personal and professional standpoint, which results in improved performance of my professional tasks.”

“My life has improved significantly. Since I have more time to do what I love and rest, my concentration, physical well-being, and satisfaction with managing my day-to-day life have greatly improved, making my personal and professional life much more fulfilling.”

“I was very pleased that my company adopted the 4-day week. The experience has made me make better use of my free days and weekends. I started to have time to dedicate to my own things, my projects, to relax my mind, sleep, travel, go out for lunch and dinner more often, and be with those who are closest to me.”

“I am happy to have had this opportunity. The 4-day week brought more quality of life to be with my family and be more present in their lives.”

“Participating in the pilot project was very positive, allowing me to use the free day to do tasks I previously reserved for vacation days (e.g., going to the bank, medical appointments, spa, among others).”

“I am very satisfied. I was able to spend more time with family and friends and dedicate more time to my hobbies.”

“By participating in this project, I felt more relaxed and had more time to dedicate to seeking additional sources of income.”

“I feel that this project will enrich my culture and broaden my horizons.”

“I started learning painting and breeding dogs, two activities that had long been on my list of things to do...one day.”

“The 4-day week has brought me more quality of life! It gives me more time to rest, take care of myself, and even dedicate myself to training in my professional area!”

“I think the project is very interesting. I have felt less stressed because I can better fulfil family responsibilities and consequently feel more satisfied and focused at work, although I think it can still improve. I expect to be able to take some training courses on the 5th day.”

“The extra free days gave me the opportunity to start a programming course, which had been an area of interest for some time. It would have been possible to take the course under the normal work regime, but the extra day every two weeks is a big help in expanding my knowledge in other areas.”

“The 4-day week has brought me more quality of life! It gives me more time to rest, take care of myself, and even dedicate myself to training in my professional area!”

“I was very happy with my company's initiative to participate in this project. The free days allowed me to dedicate more time to myself and my family, especially my children.”

“I would love for this project to continue within the company. On the days I don't work, I can rest, take time to do what I like, or simply do nothing. I really need this time for my emotional and psychological well-being.”

“Excellent project. I think participation was beneficial for everyone, both for the company and for the employees.”

“There was more time for rest, leisure, and family. Motivation increased, allowing us to work at a higher pace. There was a slight reduction in transportation costs to work.”

“I enjoyed participating in this project, which allowed me to spend more time with family and feel happier.”

“Above all, the free time allowed me to spend more time with the people I love.”

“It didn't bring me any problems. I feel more relieved during the 4-day weeks, even knowing that I have work to do, it gave me the motivation to overcome difficulties. Overall, it only brought benefits.”

“I am happy to have had the opportunity to participate in this project. Having this free time means quality time with my family and dedicating time to myself.”

"I found the free days great for carrying out tasks and/or leisure activities, which would not have been possible without the support of *4 Day Week Global*. I think people are now more aware of what is truly a priority and what can wait."

"Having an extra day off means exactly that: more time for myself and my things."

"I enjoyed participating in this project."

"Having more time to take care of myself, dedicate more time to my family... thus a better quality of life."

"This project meant a better balance between my personal and work life. I was able to better separate work time from personal time. For example, I used the free Friday to take care of myself and my personal tasks—appointments, haircuts, shopping, sports, etc.—instead of having to take time off work. In the weeks when I had Friday off, I also felt more motivated to work the 4 days and complete as many tasks as possible. Essentially, I felt more efficient in those weeks."

"Participating in this project was positive from a personal standpoint, as it allowed me to reserve the 16 hours/2 free days to dedicate to some personal aspects that I would otherwise have to address on weekends or during/off work hours. However, it also forced me to work outside normal hours sometimes to ensure that responses and support did not delay the rest of the team/client despite my absence or to make an exception on the day off if unforeseen support was needed (never more than 1 or 2 hours)."

"Congratulations on the 4-day week project. In my view, it has clearly improved personal and team performance, and this has had very positive family repercussions. I feel it generates a very tangible/practical positive feedback effect. I hope to continue being part of the 4-day week in the future."

"This project allowed me to have one day off every 2 weeks for rest and to handle personal matters without having to be absent from work. It also reduced commuting and food costs and provided more support for my children."

"It is very important to have an extra day off to enjoy our family and our individual time as well."

"Gratifying and satisfying. I can pick up my daughter from school and spend more time with her; on days she doesn't have classes, I can stay with her; I can accomplish tasks that are impossible to do during weekends."

"I enjoyed participating in the project. Having more free days reduced my anxiety when I had to go to an appointment (for example)."

"Positive experience. It would be more positive if more people worked the same way."

"First of all, I commend human intelligence for realizing that less can be more; it's all about self-discipline, setting rules and goals, which translate into greater efficiency in our work, as we have the guarantee of an extra day to do whatever we want."

"My heartfelt thanks for this bold initiative and for looking at a group of people and thinking: we can do this."

"It is a great freedom."

"I felt very good; this project was spectacular. An experience that should continue forever!"



Part 4: Future

In this last part we summarize the broader conclusions of this project and draw up a plan, with concrete proposals, to achieve the four-day week within a decade.

- 4.1 What can we conclude from this project?
- 4.2 What is the path for the four-day week in Portugal?



4.1 What can we conclude from this project?

Before we consider possible scenarios for the future of the four-day week, it is important to clarify the conclusions we can draw from this study, as well as those we cannot. This project was timely and relevant. It was timely because it coincided with isolated experiments in companies, which were already occurring without on-ground support. This study allowed for the collection and aggregation of useful information that would otherwise be restricted and not accessible to other companies and the general public. It is relevant because it helps clarify concepts and dispel prejudices and misunderstandings. Specifically, we want to highlight eight conclusions from this study associated with the pilot project.

1. The four-day week is not a utopia; it is a legitimate management practice.

The first conclusion is that the four-day week, radical as it may seem, is a legitimate management practice that can solve real problems for Portuguese companies. Although the initial interest from companies suggests they see it as a policy to improve worker well-being, they quickly realise that to reduce the implementation costs, it is necessary to develop a demanding productivity improvement plan, involving managers and workers collaborating on the reorganisation of work, both individually and as a team. This is the key to the success of the four-day week and the reason why most companies that try it do not return to the traditional five-day week. Companies observe significant operational benefits, such as a better work environment, better team work, less stress among workers, reduced absenteeism, and improved attractiveness in the job market, with relatively low financial implementation costs in most sectors.

The fact that the four-day week requires a reorganisation of the way of working also means that this process is not initially within the reach of all companies. To be implemented, it requires a good corporate culture, an innovative spirit, and solid labour relations with a high level of mutual trust. The companies analysed in this report should be seen as examples of excellence, and all other national companies should learn from them.

An important aspect is that this qualitative leap in the way of working, with the adoption of technology, optimisation of meeting times, process improvement, or creation of time blocks, is much more difficult, or even impossible to achieve if done independently of the reduction in working time. In established companies with stable turnover, productivity increases while maintaining the five-day week would result in less need for workers and possibly layoffs, which explains the difficulty in getting them to engage in the process if they are in a traditional work format. The implementation of the four-day week is perceived as a benefit, and workers tend to reciprocate this benefit, which is manifested in their commitment to improving work practices and routines, both individually and especially as a team.

2. The four-day week can work in all sectors.

The second conclusion is that the four-day week can work in all sectors. Naturally, there are sectors where doing it is easier or less costly, but that does not mean it does not bring advantages in others. The example of a nursery clarifies this point. Instead of the need to recruit 25% more workers that an accounting perspective suggests, in this specific case, it only required hiring 5% more

workers, due to reduced absenteeism and the versatility of some workers. Sectors where the four-day week necessarily involves an initial hiring cost, such as nurseries, restaurants, and industry, are sectors that have significant problems with worker retention and absenteeism and, as such, are perhaps those that would see the greatest operational benefits. The advantage of experimenting is that it allows for an exact quantification of the additional hiring need and the evaluation of these operational benefits.

The format of the four-day week will have to be different in various sectors and occupations. Even in the small universe we studied, several formats were adopted. To choose the most suitable format, that is, the one that boosts productivity increases, it is necessary to think on a case-by-case basis, at a microeconomic level, and that process must be done from within and not from outside, meaning it needs to be embraced by all involved.

3. The results serve to inform but do not justify legislating yet.

Given the methodology we chose for this project, based on self-selection of companies rather than random selection, it was established from the outset that we would not be able to generalise the results. On the one hand, the companies that participated in the project are distinct from the rest of the national companies. As we have seen, this difference does not lie so much in observable characteristics, such as size, location, or even sector, but rather in other unobservable characteristics, namely having good labour relations and a culture of innovation. The fact that they decided to test the four-day week when the vast majority of companies and employer associations did not even make an effort to learn more about this management practice reveals this difference. Since the companies we studied are different from the typical company in Portugal, the effects of implementation through legislation will likely be different (perhaps weaker, perhaps stronger).

On the other hand, we also learned that the increase in productivity per hour, resulting from the changes in the organization of work and adoption of best practices, are not automatic or instantaneous. They require active effort, and it is not clear that this effort can be triggered by legislation. If all companies in the same sector had to adopt the four-day week, the competitive pressure to increase productivity would be much weaker.

This does not mean there are no other strong arguments for advocating the adoption of the four-day week by legislation, but the results of this project do not allow for that defence to be made exclusively using the 'productivity' argument. Moreover, legislating in an informed manner will only be more effective after a longer period of time when several companies have already moved to implement the four-day week as a management practice.

4. We should encourage more organisations to test the four-day week.

Although we cannot justify the implementation of the four-day week through legislation, this study and the respective pilot project are a proof of concept and aggregate a lot of information about the preparation process for a test, information that will be useful for more companies to decide to test it. In a way, we hope this project has demystified a test of the four-day week and eliminated the initial scepticism of most companies, business associations, trade unions, and political parties.

From this moment, we should encourage more organisations to test the four-day week, especially large companies. Although large Portuguese companies have the financial capacity to

experiment with the four-day week without any financial risk, only one participated in the pilot. Throughout the last two years, we have felt great openness and even enthusiasm from directors of departments responsible for human resources, employee well-being, or employer branding, but the scepticism of the administrations always blocks any initiative.

Global business leaders such as Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, and Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan, argue that the five-day week is obsolete and that in the future we will work fewer days. Sander van 't Noordende, CEO of Randstad, goes even further by considering that the four-day week is not just a trend but a business imperative. In Portugal, all large companies register in their reports a concern with work-family balance, as well as the mental health of their employees. Our study has demonstrated that the four-day week is an effective solution to these problems. There are no reasons not to carry out a test, which can be partial, starting with a department or establishment.

5. We recommend it, particularly for *startups* or companies aiming to minimise gender differences.

The transition from organising work from five to four days, without a reduction in salaries or an increase in the number of workers, is a disruptive and difficult process for established companies. For companies that are taking their first steps, this adjustment process can be avoided. Startups, which usually have limited resources for hiring new workers, by offering a four-day week, will be able to recruit more qualified workers and retain them for longer. These companies usually have a younger workforce, which we know has a different perspective on work and values work-life balance more. By defining from their inception that work will be organised into four days, they can avoid all the difficulties associated with the adjustment process.

Throughout this experiment, it became clear that there is a very significant gender dimension to the impact of the four-day week. Women feel more time pressure, benefit more from the four-day week in terms of mental health and life satisfaction, and as such, value it more. Therefore, the four-day week could be a mechanism to promote gender equity in organisations and societies. Any implementation of a four-day week should include all genders, and it should never be implemented in a segregated way (e.g. among women only). In many European countries, there is a significantly higher proportion of women working part-time, which contributes to the gender pay gap. While implementing a four-day week among all staff, we are allowing more free time to all genders, without widening the gender pay gap that is exacerbated by part-time work among women. While we cannot guarantee that men will have a stronger participation in their domestic lives through a four-day week and their added free time, at least they will have an equal amount of free time and none will be penalised in terms of pay for working fewer hours.

6. The enormous positive impact on people's lives should not be ignored.

Introspectively, we all understand the appeal of the four-day week and assume as natural that most workers would like to have it. This effect seems almost certain, which shifts the discussion to its economic viability and, therefore, focuses on companies. However, the fact that it is 'obvious' or 'expected' should not diminish the importance of the significant impacts on the quality of life of workers and their families. Quantitatively, the positive effects, compared to a control group, are enormous. While nearly half of the workers report having difficulties balancing work and family life,

this number drops to nearly 15% among pilot participants. Moreover, indicators of negative mental health symptoms, exhaustion, and positive feelings and satisfaction all improved, on average, for more than 200 workers, by 40% to 60% of the sample's average deviation. We do not know of any other company-level intervention with such large impacts on worker well-being.

Sociodemographic and technological changes in recent decades have led to a chronic problem of lack of time. This problem is contributing to the increase in mental health issues among workers and negatively affecting the family, a core institution of our society. Does anyone doubt that the lack of time in the household, is contributing to declining birth rates and increasing divorces? The problem is real, and according to our results, the four-day week is an effective solution. This solution should be compared with other proposals to address this problem, whether in terms of effectiveness, economic costs, or social desirability.

7. The most benefited are workers with lower salaries and qualifications.

Besides women, the workers who value the four-day week the most have salaries below €1100 and without a college degree. These workers generally have less flexibility than those with higher academic qualifications, who have access to remote work and greater autonomy in managing their hours. Therefore, they appreciate the day off much more, which allows them to carry out various activities that were previously more difficult to find time for. On the other hand, workers earning more than €1100 have more resources to buy free time, whether by hiring domestic help or ordering prepared meals. Lower-income workers face similar time pressure to other workers but have less financial capacity to relieve that pressure by purchasing services.

This result was not initially expected and is of great importance. One of the reasons why trade unions maintain a cautious position on this idea is because they believe that the four-day week is intended only for a highly qualified elite and does not apply to the real working world. However, this result, along with the Portuguese example of a nursery and international examples in industry, catering, hospitals, or police forces, demonstrate that it is viable and desirable in various sectors with higher union presence.

8. Side gigs are not an argument against it.

Another concern expressed by trade unions and companies is the possibility of workers using their free time to accumulate temporary work or a second job, a common practice in Portugal. If free time is used this way, the goal of reducing worker fatigue and exhaustion and improving their mental health will not be achieved.

Before the pilot project, 15.5% of workers already dedicated hours of their free time to a second source of income, a significant number. However, the most important thing is to know how much it increased with a four-day week. After six months of the test, the number of workers dedicating hours to a second source of income increased by only 1.5 percentage points, reaching 17%, representing a marginal increase. Furthermore, the average number of hours worked increased by 2 hours and 30 minutes, but this increase was smaller than in the control group (3 hours and 30 minutes). Therefore, we conclude that while this concern is legitimate, it does not seem to be supported by the data from this project.

4.2 What is the path for the four-day week in Portugal?

We wrote this report to serve as the starting point for a broad discussion in Portuguese society, involving various stakeholders, about the reduction and organization of working time, based on concrete data and free from prejudices.

If this discussion is centred around the four-day week, then it should be approached with the awareness that such a profound transformation in the organization of work will require several years. If we take the right measures at the right time, we can accelerate this process. However, if we try to move forward without respecting the necessary steps, we risk regression. More specifically, imposing it on the entire economy through legislation before properly testing it or convincing a significant part of the business community could generate such strong rejection that it would likely be reversed by a future government.

On the other hand, there is a group of people that believes this process will naturally occur in companies, without the need for any intervention or public policy. This idea does not adhere to reality. Although the technology that enables remote working existed before the pandemic, as well as academic research proving its advantages, most companies did not even try it. It took a global, pandemic-induced experimentation for companies to recognize these advantages. The truth is that, in a context of fierce competition and constant challenges, few companies dedicate resources and seek to innovate in the organization of work. This view seeks to absolve public decision-makers of any responsibility. However, just as there are good and bad workers, there are also good and bad companies, and it is legitimate for policymakers to assess the social benefits of different management practices and promote good practices over bad ones.

Assuming that the process will take many years, the question to ask ceases to be:

⊗ ‘should we or should we not implement the four-day week?’

and becomes:

➤ ‘is the four-day week a promising and mobilizing objective, and what are the steps to advance it?’

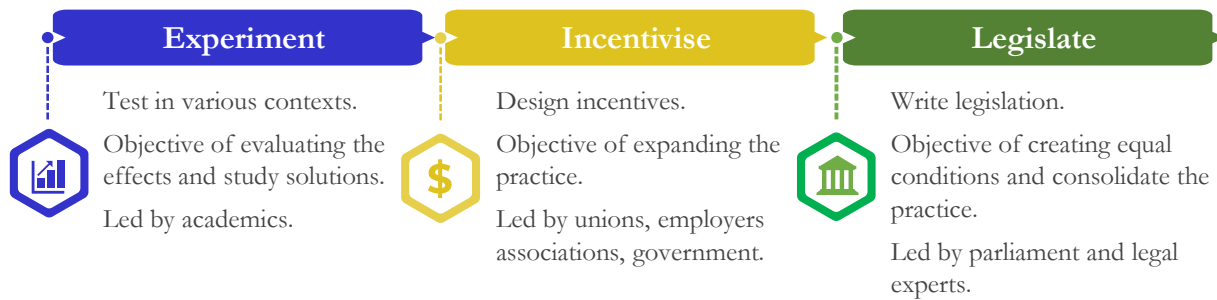
In this way, it will be necessary to:

- (1) develop public policies that can take the right steps in a transition that maximizes the benefits of the four-day week and minimizes the disruption of such a profound change in the way society is organized,
- (2) the participation and active involvement of various stakeholders: academics, civil society, social partners, government, local authorities, public institutions, and political parties.

In generic terms, we can identify three stages in the mission to achieve the four-day week: experimenting, incentivizing, and legislating.

Within the realm of experimentation, we should test the four-day week in different contexts. The objective should not be to reach the largest number of companies and workers, but, as in this project, to test different solutions and evaluate their effects. Since the goal is to acquire knowledge, the various projects in this stage should be led by academics, who are more attuned to the importance of rigor in evaluation and capable of designing a good research methodology. This condition is essential to lend credibility to the conclusions. The government may have a role in initiating or financing some experiments, but the primary responsibility for their organization will

Figure 4.1: The stages to follow to achieve the four-day week



lie with companies and workers' committees. This stage should be conducted mainly with existing resources, avoiding significant expenses that should be limited to research needs.

As evidence accumulates around the four-day week, its benefits in various contexts are proven, and the most common solutions have been established, an incentive system can be designed to try to extend it to more workers, companies, or sectors. In this stage, social partners - unions, employers' associations, and the government - will be important through collective bargaining.

When society's openness to the four-day week becomes evident and it is necessary to consolidate and expand management practices, then it is appropriate to move to the third domain and consider legislative design, with the central role of parliament and legal experts.

We now illustrate the concrete steps that can be taken in each of these stages and provide an example of a possible plan to achieve the four-day week in 10 years.

Stage I: Experimentation

- Maintain or expand the pilot project in the private sector.** As a direct result of this project, the coordinating team prepared a *Starter Pack* for companies, which includes recordings of sessions with our partners from *4 Day Week Global*, as well as all written material to support companies willing to test the four-day week. We can provide this material and evaluation instruments to companies in exchange for using the data collected for research purposes. This support may be sufficient while few companies are testing the four-day week, but at some point, if the practice becomes widespread, professional support for companies will be necessary. This professionalization could be done by the public sector, for example, through IEFP, or by outsourcing to a consultancy or university. In the case of professionalizing support for companies, it is essential to continue prioritizing evaluation and study.
- Tests in large companies.** Persuading large Portuguese companies to test the four-day week over the next few years will be one of the major challenges. In addition to government influence, the decisive role will be with workers' committees in collective bargaining, to pressure management to accept testing. This test should not be defined at the worker level (selecting workers in certain roles) but rather in an independent production unit, at some points of sale, or in an entire department representative of the service in the company, whose performance is easy to evaluate. In addition to workers' committees, there may also be a role for civil society. In the UK, the *Autonomy Institute*, in collaboration with the *4 Day Week Campaign*, launched the '4ugust' campaign. The plan is to encourage companies to offer their employees a four-day week during the month of August, while keeping salaries the same. Microsoft Japan conducted a test in 2019 throughout August. Several companies such as PWC or Kellogg's have reduced

working hours during the summer months. In Portugal, July and August tend to be months with less work. Perhaps large companies can start there.

- **Pilot project in the public sector.** Over the past year, the Competence Center for Planning, Policies, and Prospects of Public Administration (PlanApp) and the Directorate-General for Public Administration and Employment have developed a study on working time organization in the Public Administration. In the second phase of this study, under the responsibility of the renowned and independent economist from the University of Porto, Pedro Gil, the implementation of a pilot experiment of the four-day week in public bodies is planned. Tests in the public administration can be based initially on the example of one of the organizations participating in our pilot project that reduced working hours from 35 to 32 hours (the fourth case study in Section 2.6). The advantage of testing in the public administration is that it allows more flexibility in the methodological design, namely in the definition of the treatment group and control groups, and in the formats tested. In the case of public administration, the implementation must be accompanied by an explicit deregulation process, which would limit the need for additional hiring and would also benefit citizens. In the context of tests in the public sector, it would also be valuable to conduct a one-year experiment in a hospital. To test the four-day week in a hospital, an initial investment in additional hiring would be necessary (as in the case of daycare, it would never be an increase of 25% in the number of workers), but it would allow evaluating savings in overtime hours, as well as the impacts on hospital management, occurrence of negligence or medical errors, exhaustion levels among doctors, and the retention capacity of healthcare professionals.
- **Sectoral experiments:** The four-day week is likely to unfold at different speeds and in different formats across various sectors. In sectors where there are recognized advantages to adopting the four-day week or greater capacity to do so, sectoral tests should be promoted. Here, the role falls again to the unions in promoting tests through collective bargaining, with possible financial support from the government for the study.
- **Municipal or regional experiments:** Economically, experiments related to the four-day week focus on the effects on company productivity, specifically the ability to maintain production while reducing working hours. However, the additional free time for workers can, in itself, boost economic activity, stimulating sectors such as leisure, culture, restaurant industry, or hospitality, and even encouraging the creation of new companies through hybrid entrepreneurship. It can also have effects on birth rates, which can impact the economy in the long term. These broader economic effects, known as externalities, are not considered by companies and workers. To evaluate them, it would be necessary to conduct an experiment with a significant number of companies in a specific municipality or region. Such an experiment would need to be led by a local authority capable of mobilizing the region's economic fabric, but could also receive financial support from the national government. Recently, the regional government of the Azores has shown interest in conducting a pilot test. Why not conduct a test on one of the islands?
- **National experiment over a full quarter:** The implementation and effects of the four-day week are naturally different when applied as a management practice within a company compared to being applied by legislation to all companies. When testing the four-day week at the company level, the major difficulty lies in how to reconcile the organization of work in four days when the rest of the economy is operating in five. This difficulty diminishes as more companies adopt it. In addition to weekends where we coordinate rest breaks, we also do so on

public holidays. Although they represent the traditions and historical memory of a people, there is no economic rationale for stopping on those specific 15 days throughout the year, and not on others. For example, in the United Kingdom, where all national holidays coincide on Mondays (Monday bank holidays). In 2023, the city of Valencia changed the dates of regional holidays so that over five weeks in April, all had only four days, which allowed for measuring the overall impacts in the city, for example in terms of the environment, restaurant spending, or emergency visits in hospitals. A bolder proposal for experimentation in Portugal would be, for only one specific year, to concentrate all national and regional holidays (except New Year's and Christmas) on Fridays in the months of April, May, and June. This would imply the absence of other holidays throughout the year. Although it might generate some discomfort due to the historical and cultural weight of the holidays, this change would allow for large-scale experimentation, with a minimal reduction in the number of working days throughout the year and without significant financial costs. Such an experiment would require all companies and organizations to develop a plan, whether good or bad, for operation during that quarter, essentially planning for a four-day week. Most importantly, it would allow for evaluation, on a relevant statistical unit, of the effects of a coordinated reduction in working time on companies (e.g., quarterly profits), the economy (e.g., GDP, industrial production, sectoral indicators for instance in hospitality or restaurants), society (well-being indicators, physical and mental health, work-life balance, births on the following year), and the environment (CO2 emissions). This coordinated effect is something that cannot be measured in local experiments but is the closest approximation to implementation by legislation. Finally, this experiment would allow all Portuguese citizens to feel the impact it would have on their lives and work, understanding the difficulties and costs associated. Obviously, changing holidays is not common (although some holidays were eliminated during the Euro Area Crisis), and it would be necessary to obtain broad political and social consensus to make such a change, including negotiations with unions, religious organizations, trade associations, and other interested groups, but it would be for only one year. The historical memory of the holidays that were transferred would be maintained with celebrations on the following weekend. This plan should have broad support and should be decided on several years in advance (at least two years), allowing Portuguese academics to develop research projects, possibly involving the Foundation for Science and Technology.

Stage II: Incentivize

There are several ways to incentivize the reduction of working time: at the worker, company, or sector level. There are three important elements to consider. First, we should only advance to this stage after a long period of experimentation, where sufficient evidence of benefits and successful examples have been collected. Second, incentives will naturally involve significant budgetary expenditure, requiring therefore much prudence and rigorous cost-benefit analysis, and should be temporary. Third, as we see the four-day week as a management practice that should be implemented at the company level, we understand that promoting it at the worker level can end up creating more problems for companies, which would have to adjust to the reduction of working time for some employees but not for others. In other words, it would create internal coordination problems without harnessing the potential for reorganization. Therefore, we consider incentives at the company or sector level preferable, except in the case of worker incentives fitting into other types of policies, such as promoting birth rates or transitioning to retirement.

- **Worker-Level Incentives:**
 - **Facilitate access to part-time work or compressed workweeks.** These two possibilities are already provided for in our labour code, by mutual agreement. We can follow the example of the Netherlands, where collective bargaining agreements give more power to workers to opt for part-time work, or Belgium, which offers more freedom to workers to adopt a compressed schedule. These changes would be implemented at the level of the labour code. Additionally, the government could compensate for part of the salary reduction in the case of transitioning to part-time work, through a tax benefit, so that the worker's salary reduction would be less than 20%.
 - **Allow parents with children under 1 or 2 years old.** The four-day week can be a tool for family protection policies and promoting birth rates, allowing parents with children up to one or two years old to opt for part-time work (80%), with significant salary compensation for the reduction in hours.
 - **Allow workers over 50 years old.** The four-day week can be employed as a policy for a more gradual transition to retirement, offering workers over 50 years old the option of working part-time (80%), with partial salary compensation for the reduction in hours.
- **Company-Level Incentives:** The government can offer various incentives to individual companies that adopt the four-day week:
 - **Provide a more favourable tax regime** to companies that implement the four-day week, with a 32-hour workweek. This may include tax reductions or the granting of tax credits, as well as the provision of direct subsidies or financial incentives to offset the initial expenses of the transition.
 - **Temporarily exempt companies from certain regulations or bureaucratic obligations** related to working time during an experimental period. This measure aims to provide companies with greater flexibility to test and adjust their new work models without the burden of excessive compliance with existing regulations.
 - **Conduct an awareness campaign about the benefits of the four-day week for companies.** This involves highlighting the gains in productivity, employee satisfaction, and talent retention that may result from adopting this practice. Awareness of the positive aspects of the four-day week can encourage more companies to consider this change in their work structure.
- **Incentives at sectoral level.** The government can adopt various strategies to encourage different sectors to adopt the four-day week:
 - **Facilitate social dialogue** among various stakeholders in the sector, such as representatives from companies, labour unions, sectoral associations, and governmental bodies, to discuss and negotiate the implementation of the four-day week.
 - **Offer fiscal incentives to sectors** agreeing to reduce the working week. On top of potential tax reductions or tax credits, the government can provide direct subsidies. In sectors more dependent on capital, the government can facilitate access to financing or credit lines with favourable conditions for investment in new capital as a counterpart to the implementation of the four-day week.
 - **Simplify labour regulations:** Adjust labour regulations related to working hours to allow greater flexibility in sectors interested in adopting the four-day week. This may include the generalization of time banks or simplification of procedures for collective bargaining.

Stage III: Legislation

As the practice expands, an appropriate legislative framework will be necessary to ensure uniform conditions in all companies, setting a standard. The entire process should follow the usual stages of public consultation, drafting of a bill, presentation, and approval in parliament.

- **Include provisions in the labour code regulating the four-day week** in its different formats. It is crucial that this step precedes the formulation of fiscal incentives. Some companies interested in the project have not progressed due to the absence of adequate legal framework.
- **Labour legislation on maximum weekly hours limits.** When opting for legislation, we suggest that, in an initial phase, protection be provided for small and medium-sized enterprises and that it be applied only to large companies. On the one hand, due to the complexity of their operations, it is more common for these companies to avoid voluntary experimentation. On the other hand, they have greater financial capacity to make the transition. Only after implementation in large companies, over a few years, should it be generalized to small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, legislation should include a period of at least two years before it takes effect to make the adjustment less disruptive. The precise details, such as the number of maximum weekly hours (36, 35, 34, or 32 hours), should be decided based on experiments conducted in previous years. The 35-hour workweek seems more suitable for a five-day week with 7-hour days, which we consider not as transformative as a four-day week, neither for the company nor for the worker. The latter option fits better into periods of 36, 34, or ideally, 32 weekly hours.
- **European legislation.** Simultaneously, throughout the process, Portugal can propose and take initiatives for reducing working time at the European level, especially regarding the EU's Working Time Directive. Implementation at the European Union level would be the best way to overcome existing coordination problems. However, this path is not entirely within our reach, as it depends on broad consensus, in which Portugal plays a more limited role. Nevertheless, it is worth promoting the four-day week within the European Union.

These proposals can be combined into a concrete plan to implement the four-day week over a 10-year period, outlined in Figure 4.2. We believe the plan is feasible, although demanding and requiring immediate actions. We should begin with experimentation in different contexts, notably continuing tests in companies and monitoring their adoption, but above all, we should move forward with the pilot project in the public sector. More than the government, sectoral and large company tests will largely depend on the action of labour unions and workers' committees, and regional tests will depend on governments and local associations.

The boldest proposal is for a national experiment involving adjusting holidays. This experiment could take place in the second quarter of 2028, but it would need to be prepared at least two years in advance, so that an entire evaluation apparatus could be built by the national academy.

In the early years, this experimentation process will have to be sustained by the individual effort of people interested in the idea and who develop it within the context of their company or sector. Conducting a test requires dedicating many hours: reading 200-page reports, searching for the most relevant international examples for their sector, thinking about problems, and discussing solutions in team meetings. This effort, often outside of working hours, must be genuine and cannot be forced.

The second incentive stage, where measures such as facilitating access to part-time work, offering fiscal incentives to companies, and promoting dialogue among sectors are taken, can start

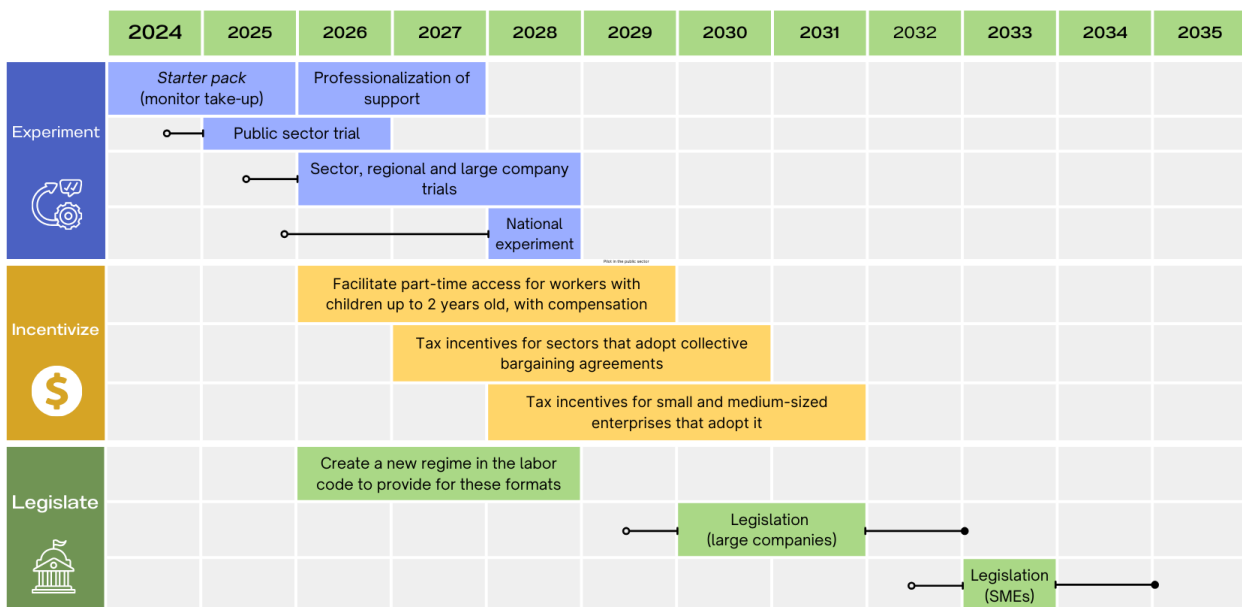
as soon as there are successful sectoral experiments. Finally, the plan includes the legislative stage, not before 2030 with the imposition of the four-day week, initially applied to large companies, and later extended to small and medium-sized enterprises.

This plan will require at least three political cycles to be implemented. While we can say that we are already at the beginning of the experimentation stage, the transition to the following ones should coincide with election periods, where it should be put to vote to confer democratic legitimacy to the process. The decision we collectively make about how many hours we want to work is a choice we must make as a society, well-informed about the costs and benefits. The four-day week will progress at the speed that the Portuguese people desire.

Having a plan does not mean that all measures must be implemented. It is natural that, depending on the successes or failures of experiments, the adherence of different stakeholders, and the challenges facing our economy in the coming years, this plan will undergo changes, accelerating or delaying depending on pandemics, changes of government, wars, or international crises that may arise. The value of having a plan is that it sets expectations for economic agents. The existence of a credible and feasible plan, which ends with implementation through legislation, will lead them to incorporate into their decisions the likelihood of having to adopt a four-day week, a probability that increases as experiments progress. These expectations will encourage the private sector to voluntarily move faster.

Any attentive observer is aware that the path to the four-day week is being pursued internationally. The country would benefit if, instead of waiting to see what happens abroad, we charted our own course, trying to leverage the potential of the four-day week to engage and motivate people. Just as business leaders have advanced to define the form of the four-day week that best suits their company, using it as a social contract that compels everyone to work towards the same goal, we believe we can also do it at the country level. This would be the advantage of being pioneers: being able to define the form that best suits our country and using it to leverage society with joint work - a social contract to make other reforms that the country needs but are otherwise difficult to achieve.

Figure 4.2: A concrete plan to achieve the four-day week in 10 years



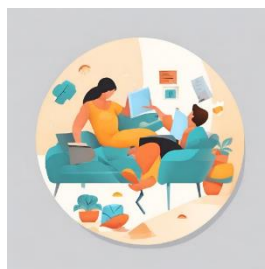


Annexes

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Annex I: Acknowledgments

Our involvement arose from the invitation of the Minister of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security of the XXIII Government of Portugal, Ana Mendes Godinho. We would like to express our sincere gratitude. By inviting two unknown academics without any party affiliation for such a sensitive and bold project, simply because she believed we were the most suitable to ensure its success, she demonstrated commendable vision and courage.

We want to thank the Secretary of State for Labour of the XXIII Government of Portugal, Miguel Fontes, and all the members of his office with whom we collaborated for over a year, who demonstrated enormous patience with us: Sara Ramos, Rita Dantas Ferreira, Rita Resendes, Ana Silva, Diogo Torres, and Patrícia Halm, as well as the communication advisor Marisa Ferreira. We felt we had all the necessary support to carry out this project.

The Institute of Employment and Vocational Training was involved in the logistical part of the process, especially in the initial phase, performing extraordinary work, particularly Director of the Employment Department, Adélia Costa. We also thank Elsa Mano, Filipa Ferreira, Paulo Leite Ribeiro, and Henrique Silva. Additionally, the project involved, to a lesser extent, employees from other departments, such as José Luís Lemos Sousa Albuquerque from the Strategy and Planning Office, Sónia Bartolomeu from the Directorate-General for Employment and Labour Relations, and Susana Luz from the Authority for Working Conditions. We also appreciate the openness of the National Institute of Statistics, especially its president Francisco Lima, as well as Margarida Rosa and Ana Dulce Pinto.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary of State for Labour of the XXI Government of Portugal, Adriano Rafael Moreira, and his advisor, Catarina Sousa, for their openness regarding a project started in the previous government and their support in disseminating the results to ensure a broad debate on the topic in Portuguese society.

During this period, we learned a lot about the four-day week from our partners at *4 Day Week Global*: Andrew Barnes, Charlotte Lockhart, Dale Whelehan, Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, Karen Lowe, Gabriela Brasil, and Úna Harty, as well as Professor Juliet Schor from Boston College, who developed the research methodology for the other international pilots and shared it with us.

In the initial months, we held several advisory meetings with different experts. Among the economists, we collaborated with: Isabel Horta Correia (Catholic University of Lisbon), Ana Rute Cardoso (Institute of Social Sciences), João Cerejeira (University of Minho), Pedro Martins (Nova SBE), Ricardo Reis (London School of Economics), and Pedro Raposo (Catholic University of Lisbon). We also consulted individuals from the business and union sectors, such as Ricardo Costa (CEO of Bernardo da Costa and President of the Business Association of Minho), Jorge Gaspar (Director of the Consulting Unit of the Portuguese Industrial Association), and Henrique Sousa (Coordinator of PRAXIS Association). Finally, we sought the opinion of the main organisers of international pilot studies, namely: Hector Tejero (Spain), Joan Sanchis (Valencia Community), Gudmundur Haraldsson (Iceland), Naomi Magnus (Scotland), and Will Stronge (England).

We want to thank Sofia Cruz, Ana Isabel Couto, Rita Madeira, and all the professors and master's students from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Porto involved in the qualitative interviews with company administrators and who wrote the case studies in section 2.7,

namely: Celso Pais, José Soeiro, Martha Hoth, Beatriz Freitas, Carla Juliana Torres, Diana Tavares, and Sara Rodrigues.

We also want to express our gratitude to the journalists who regularly followed this project and played a crucial role in explaining its development to society: Raquel Paulino Martins from Público, Beatriz Ferreira from Observador, Catarina Pereira from Jornal de Negócios, and Isabel Patrício from ECO.

Our deepest thanks go to the leaders and some workers of the more than 100 companies that were with us in various phases of the project, with whom we shared many hours of work. The companies that started testing the four-day week independently before the project began were very important because they assured us that there was already interest in this management practice in the Portuguese business community. In particular, we would like to thank some people who were committed to supporting the project: Andreia Baltazar, Laura Falésia, and Joana Brígido from *Toyno*, Rui Cortes from *Lean Health Portugal*, Mafalda Soeiro from *Visma Nmbros*, Luís Cordeiro from *Listor*, Sofia Barbosa from Loka, José Mateus from *ARX Portugal*, Rui Teixeira from *RandTech Computing*, Ana Martins from the *Amarante Catarina Martins Notary Office*, Eurico Assunção and Rute Ferraz from *EWf*, and Sofia Alves from *360 Imprimir*.

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All the companies participating in this project share a passion for what they do and a constant desire for innovation, which should make us proud. Regardless of the decisions made after the pilot, it was a privilege to have worked together.

Annex II: Involvement of the academic community

Master's theses

Completed

- ['Beyond the five-day paradigm: Assessing the four-day week revolution'](#), Lourenço Rodrigues Loureiro e Boléo de Freitas, Tese de Mestrado em Gestão, ISCTE, 2024.
- ['Can four be greater than five? Qualitative research on the four-day week'](#), Sónia Poço Pai, Tese de Mestrado em Gestão, Universidade do Porto, 2023.
- ['A organização do tempo de trabalho e os impactos das novas formas de flexibilidade, nomeadamente a semana de quatro dias "versus" trabalho concentrado'](#), Mónica Lino Lopes Relvas Calado, Tese de Mestrado em Direito das Empresas e do Trabalho, ISCTE, 2023.
- ['Mais um passo para a sustentabilidade: a semana dos quatro dias de trabalho'](#), Ana Patrícia Aires Araújo, Tese de Mestrado em Gestão das Organizações, Instituto Politécnico do Porto, 2023.
- ['A implementação da semana de trabalho de quatro dias: o caso da empresa Listor'](#), Sara Gomes Rodrigues, Tese de Mestrado em Economia e Gestão de Recursos Humanos, Universidade do Porto, 2023.
- ['The relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements availability, desirability, and usage on the Gen Z workers' Turnover Intention through the mediation effect of Job Satisfaction'](#), João Francisco Queirós de Sousa, Master's Degree in International Management, ISCTE, 2023.

In progress

- 'How is the 3rd free day used in the 4-Day Workweek?', Maria Neves, MSc. in Management, ISCTE.
- 'Novas formas de organização dos tempos de trabalho: experiências, desafios e limitações da semana laboral de quatro dias', Beatriz Batista, MSc. in Management and Human Resources, Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto, Politécnico do Porto.
- 'A semana de trabalho de quatro dias e os usos do tempo', Beatriz Freitas, MSc. in Economics and Human Resources Management, Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto.
- 'A implementação organizacional da semana de trabalho de quatro dias: estudo de caso', Diana Tavares, MSc. in Economics and Human Resources Management, Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto.
- 'A semana de quatro dias de trabalho: recrutamento e retenção de funcionários', Francisco Vale, MSc. in Economics and Human Resources Management, Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto.

- ‘A semana de quatro dias e as estratégias adaptativas no trabalho’, Carla Juliana Torres, MSc. in Economics and Human Resources Management, Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto.
- ‘A semana de trabalho de quatro dias: estudo de caso’, Marta Costa, MSc. in Sociology, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto.
- ‘The 4-day week in the Portuguese educational sector’, Marha Hoth, Research Master in Management, École Normale Supérieure Paris-Saclay (ENS) & Université Paris-Saclay (internship in Universidade do Porto).
- ‘As perceções da implementação da semana de trabalho de quatro dias em Portugal’, Sofia Belém Santiago, MSc. in Human Resources Management, Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão da Universidade de Lisboa.
- ‘O impacto da implementação da semana de trabalho reduzida nas empresas e nos seus colaboradores’, Mariana Batalha, MSc. in Management, ISCTE Business School.
- ‘Semana de quatro dias de trabalho: cenários normativos no contexto português’, Rosa Margarida Conde Costa, MSc. in Management, Universidade de Aveiro.
- ‘A semana de trabalho de 4 dias e o empreendedorismo híbrido em Portugal’, Marta Rodrigues, MSc. in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Politécnico de Leiria.
- ‘Semana de 4 dias nos serviços de saúde: perceções dos profissionais do setor’, Manuel António Ferreira Veloso, MSc. in Economics and Management of Health Services, Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto
- ‘Entre a precarização e modernização do mundo do trabalho: um estudo comparativo do Projeto Semana de Quatro Dias’, Leonardo de Oliveira Baroni, Universidade Estadual Paulista (research concluded in Universidade de Coimbra, with financing from Programa de Bolsas Santander Mobilidade CPLP 2023).

Doctoral theses

In progress

- ‘Four Day Work Week: Exploring the Role of Ideas, Interests and Institutions in Public Policy Adoption. A Comparative Analysis of Spain, Portugal and the UK’ Joan Sanchis i Muñoz, PhD in Social Sciences, Universitat de València, Spain.

Annex III: International presentations

Rita Fontinha, University Forum for Human Resource Development Conference, Lisbon, 14/06/24
Pedro Gomes, Affinity Health at Work Masterclass, Kings College, UK, 20/06/24
Pedro Gomes, European Commission, Belgium, 18/06/24
Pedro Gomes, 4-day week live: Behind the scenes of the German pilot project, Germany, 17/06/24
Pedro Gomes, Lecture for MSc. Public Policy, London School of Economics, UK, 05/06/24
Pedro Gomes, [5 Minutes Podcast](#), UK, 14/05/2024
Rita Fontinha, Keynote Speaker at the 9th Reading Conference - International Business, UK, 13/04/2024
Pedro Gomes, Colorado Boulder University, US, 22/03/24
Pedro Gomes, Birkbeck Research Away Day, UK, 14/03/24
Pedro Gomes, Table ronde pour le lancement du livre “Happy Workplace”, France, 12/03/24
Pedro Gomes, [Bienestar Hub](#), Spain, 12/01/24
Pedro Gomes, [Launch of the Belgium Pilot](#), Belgium, 07/12/23
Rita Fontinha, Henley Wide Seminar na Henley Business School, University of Reading, UK, 01/11/2023
Rita Fontinha, Micro-talk on Flexible Working and the Four Day Week, CERN, Switzerland, 27/10/2023
Pedro Gomes, [European Work-Time Network Annual Meeting](#), UK, 23/10/23
Pedro Gomes, [Festival del Pensare Contemporaneo](#), Italy, 24/09/23
Pedro Gomes, [Birkbeck Summer Seminar](#), UK, 12/07/23
Pedro Gomes, [Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers 2](#), France, 31/05/23
Pedro Gomes, [Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers 1](#), France, 31/05/23
Pedro Gomes, [European Work-Time Network Webinar](#), UK, 26/04/23
Pedro Gomes, 37^o Congresso EFPSA (European Federation of Psychology Students’ Assoc.), 01/04/23
Rita Fontinha, Microsoft Envision Europe: Flexibility as a Norm for Growth, 20/03/23
Pedro Gomes, IG Metall Diskussionsforum, Germany, 15/03/23
Pedro Gomes, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain, 03/03/23
Rita Fontinha, Professional Managers Annual Conference 2023 da Chartered Association of Business Schools, UK, 21/02/23
Pedro Gomes, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, UK, 07/02/23
Pedro Gomes, London School of Economics Sen Club, UK, 07/02/23,
Pedro Gomes, [Financial Service Club Webinar](#), UK, 23/01/23
Pedro Gomes, [Conferência Future Works](#), Portugal, 08/10/22
Pedro Gomes, European Network for the Fair Sharing of Working Time’s conference, Belgium, 21/10/22
Rita Fontinha, [The Conference, Malmö](#), Sweden, 23/08/22

[Playlist accompanying the report](#)

