

4 heures – Sujet type Centrale

L'usage de tout système électronique ou informatique est interdit dans cette épreuve.

Rédiger en anglais et en 500 mots une synthèse des documents proposés, qui devra obligatoirement comporter un titre. Indiquer avec précision, à la fin du travail, le nombre de mots utilisés (titre inclus), un écart de 10% en plus ou en moins sera accepté.

Ce sujet comporte les 4 documents suivants :

- L'illustration d'un article publié dans le mensuel américain *The Nation* en novembre 2022
- Un article de Roger Bootle paru dans *The Daily Telegraph* en août 2021
- Un article de Christine Emba publié dans *The Washington Post* le 7 juillet 2021
- Un extrait d'un article de Derek Thompson paru dans l'hebdomadaire *The Atlantic* le 31 janvier 2023

L'ordre dans lequel se présentent les documents est arbitraire et ne revêt aucune signification particulière.

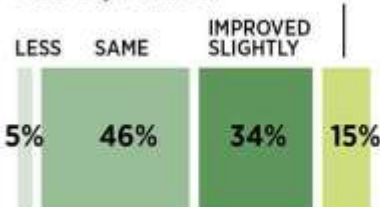
A Four-Day Workweek Pays Off



Nearly one-third of US workers put in 45 or more hours a week.

Companies that implement a four-day workweek see improved well-being...

Effects on productivity at British companies with a four-day workweek:



...without a drop in productivity.



43%

sleep-deprived

Workers at companies in the US, the UK, and Australia:

14%

sleep-deprived



BEFORE SWITCH TO FOUR DAYS

AFTER SWITCH TO FOUR DAYS

Nation.

Sources: 4 Day Week Global mid-pilot results; economist Juliet Schor

The Nation, November 14 2022

A four-day working week isn't the crackpot idea that some think

ROGER BOOTLE, *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*, 22 August 2021

Every so often someone proposes that the economy should move to a four-day working week, with the weekend extending across three days. On the whole, when such suggestions are made, they are widely condemned as the imaginings of crackpots. Although there is an awful lot of crackpottery around on this subject, in general the recent proponents of a shorter working week have been eminently sane. But there is a key debate to be had about the effects and the costs.

In the past, proponents of a shorter working week have often focused on the supposed shortage of jobs. They have argued that it would be fairer to spread the limited amount of work more equally over the population. This idea is known by economists as “the lump of labour fallacy”. As anyone who has the flimsiest knowledge of economic history will readily acknowledge, the number of jobs has risen dramatically over time roughly to match the number of people willing and able to do them. This is not accidental. It goes to the essence of how the economic system works.

There are still some people who argue for a shorter working week on these grounds, often associated with the supposed disappearance of jobs because of robots and AI. Yet, as I argued in my recent book *The AI Economy*, in this respect there is nothing different about this economic revolution from the economic revolutions that have gone before. Yes, some jobs will disappear but others will spring up to take their place. Contrary to what you may have heard elsewhere, we are not about to experience “The Death of Work”.

In essence, as the economy becomes more productive we face a choice. At one extreme, we could work just as much as before and take the whole benefit of our increased productivity in the form of higher incomes and consumption. At the other extreme, we could decide against any increase in income and consumption and take the benefit of our increased productivity wholly in the form of reduced working hours and an associated increase in leisure time. And, of course, we could make any choice between these two extremes.

When I have suggested at conferences and other gatherings that we might be on the brink of moving

towards a shorter working week, the general reaction has been one of incredulity. Most people seem to think that there is something inevitable or God-given about working for five days. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. If any length of working week is God-given then it is six days and not five, with the Sabbath acting as a day of rest, mirroring the day that God took off during Creation. And six days was indeed the normal working week until comparatively recently.

Moreover, if you look at history over long periods you see remarkable evidence on the variability of work patterns. Average working hours in the UK peaked at the time of the Industrial Revolution and have been trending down since. (...)

The idea of a shorter working week has recently received eloquent endorsement from a new book called *Friday Is The New Saturday* by the economist Pedro Gomes. One of the striking things about this book is that Gomes argues that working as hard as people currently do has such a deleterious effect on their productivity that when working hours are reduced, total output may not fall. In some sectors it could actually rise. If he is right about this, then there is no trade-off between working hours and incomes. We are faced with the prospect of having more leisure without losing any income.

I think Gomes is onto something for some parts of the economy – but not all. In major parts of the economy, fewer hours worked is going to mean less output. And that means lower real incomes. (...)

Whether Gomes is right or not about productivity, if we are to work fewer hours then there are major social and economic questions about what we are going to do with the time thereby released. At the very least, the leisure industries would have to expand still further and this would offer many opportunities for increased employment – albeit, presumably, not for five days a week. The shape of our lives, including the shape of the normal week, would change dramatically. If Friday is the new Saturday then Thursday is the new Friday. (733 words)

Bootle is chairman of Capital Economics

Roger

We're making the wrong argument for a four-day workweek

By Christine Emba, Columnist and member of the Editorial Board, *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2021

"We mean to make things over, / We are tired of toil for naught, / With but bare enough to live upon / And ne'er an hour for thought."

Workers sang that song in the 1880s, protesting for an eight-hour workday at a time when the average was more like 12. They achieved that goal. But more than 100 years later, we're still singing the same song. Today, it's the four-day workweek that's gone from fringe idea to pragmatic policy consideration. Japan is recommending it in its economic policy guidelines. Iceland instituted a trial program that went swimmingly. And Spain is working on its own plan.

The push for a shorter workweek was already gaining traction before the pandemic. But covid-19's upending of office life has made it seem more plausible than ever — perhaps even necessary. Companies have realized that their hastily adopted flexible work policies can help attract and retain employees, and workers have proved they can adjust to radical shifts in their working lives.

Yet we keep thinking about work in a disappointingly narrow way.

Even as companies, activists and individual workers champion the idea of a shorter workweek, they're framing it in old terms. We can get all our work done in four days, we promise. In fact, we'll be more productive. (Look at Microsoft Japan, which famously increased productivity by 40 percent!) No more unnecessary meetings. No more interruptions from our nonwork lives. After a three-day weekend we'll be rested and recharged — the better to hit the ground running on Monday morning!

It's not that we want "an hour for thought" — it's that working fewer hours will make us better workers. But this isn't radical change. It's the same old *profit über alles* dogma packaged in a more tightly compressed box.

When we focus on how a shorter workweek will make us better employees, we're making the wrong argument to our bosses and ourselves. The four-day workweek shouldn't just be about becoming more productive — the real benefit is that it would allow us to be fuller people.

So why not discuss the four-day workweek in those terms?

In an admittedly unscientific survey, I asked Twitter followers whether they would prefer a regular four-day workweek or a month's vacation —

and why. Over 500 people responded. And nearly 85 percent wanted the shorter week.

Some clearly wanted the convenience of an extra weekend day, the ability to run those pesky errands that are constantly pushed out of reach by the ever-expanding workday. (Truly, whose idea was it to have the DMV close at 4 p.m.?)

But most said the four-day week would give them more time to do the things that make them ... themselves. Some wanted to pursue a skilled pastime that would enrich their lives, such as playing an instrument or making art. Others thought they would spend the extra day with their friends and families — describing it not as drudgery or "child care," the exhausting task that has pulled mothers especially from the workforce, but quality time. There was mention of various hobbies and associations, of going to museums, taking walks, spending time at church.

These sorts of activities are unlikely to be recognized as creating economic value. But they're obviously rich in human value: the mastery of a craft, a connection created with others, an embeddedness in a particular community or place. These are the things that make us whole. Yet without enough free time, one can't develop the relationships and commitments we need to truly thrive.

The United States has for decades been locked into an economic mind-set in which growth, or at least its potential, is seen as the main barometer of success, and individuals are judged mainly on what we produce. In the elite classes in particular, work has become central to our lives, a source of meaning and status. We're proud of our ability to work hard and efficiently, even though our gains in productivity haven't accrued to us personally.

But the push for a four-day workweek suggests we do have other things we value — as we should. The trick will be learning to advocate for them on their own terms, with the same clarity and fervor with which we celebrate material and economic gains.

"We mean to make things over," those 19th-century workers sang. In the 21st century, making over our conversations — the ways we measure worth and the value we place on our own well-being — will be a big part of getting the job done. (747 words)

America's Fever of Workaholism Is Finally Breaking

By Derek Thompson, *The Atlantic*, JANUARY 31, 2023

One of the weirdest economic stories of the past half century is what happened to rich Americans—and especially rich American men—at work.

In general, poor people work more than wealthy people. This story is consistent across countries (for example, people in Cambodia work much more than people in Switzerland) and across time (for example, Germans in the 1950s worked almost twice as much as they do today). But starting in the 1980s in the United States, this saga reversed itself. The highest-earning Americans worked longer and longer hours, in defiance of expectations or common sense. The members of this group, who could have bought anything they wanted with their wealth, bought more work. Specifically, from 1980 to 2005, the richest 10 percent of married men increased their work hours by more than any other group of married men: about five hours a week, or 250 hours a year.

In 2019, I called this phenomenon “workism.” In a time of declining religiosity, rich Americans seemed to turn to their career to fill the spiritual vacuum at the center of their life. For better or (very often) for worse, their desk had become their altar.

Since then, the concept of workism has been attached to a range of cultural and political phenomena, including declining fertility trends in the West. I’ve blamed workism for U.S. policies that resist national parental and sick leave because of an elite preference for maximizing the public’s attachment to the labor force.

Then the pandemic happened. I didn’t know how the forcible end of white-collar commutes and the demise of the default office would change affluent American attitudes. I assumed that remote work would make certain aspects of workism even more insidious. Researchers at Microsoft found that the boomlet in online meetings was pushing work into odd hours of the week, leading to more “just finishing up on email!” late nights, and Saturday mornings that felt like mini-Mondays. Working on our computer was always a “leaky” affair; with working from home and COVID, I feared the leak would become a flood. But I was wrong. This year, Washington University researchers concluded that, since 2019, rich Americans have worked less. And less, and less. In a full reversal of the past 50 years, the highest-educated, highest-earning, and longest-working men reduced their working hours the most during the pandemic. According to the paper, the highest-earning 10 percent of men worked 77 fewer hours

in 2022 than that top decile did in 2019—or 1.5 hours less each week. The top-earning women cut back by 29 hours. Notably, despite this reduction, rich people still work longer hours overall.

This analysis may have been thrown off by untrustworthy survey responses received during the chaos of the pandemic. But according to *The Wall Street Journal*, separate data from the Census Bureau back up that conclusion. From 2019 to 2021, married men reduced their workweek by a little more than an hour. Unmarried men had no similar decline.

So why are rich married men suddenly—and finally—reducing their working hours, by an unusual degree? Yongseok Shin, an economist at Washington University and a co-author of the paper, told me that he had “no doubt that this was a voluntary choice.” When I asked him if perhaps rich married men had worked less in dual-earner households to help with kids during the early pandemic period, he told me that their working hours continued falling in 2022, “long after the worst periods of school closures and issues with child-care centers.” (...)

[Sometimes], I think I wasn’t hard enough on workism, given how deeply it has insinuated itself into American values. The *New York Times* and *Atlantic* writer David Brooks has distinguished between what he calls “résumé virtues” and “eulogy virtues.” Résumé virtues are what people bring to the marketplace: Are they clever, devoted, and ambitious employees? Eulogy virtues are what they bring to relationships not governed by the market: Are they kind, honest, and faithful partners and friends?

Americans *should* prioritize eulogy virtues. But by our own testimony, we strongly prefer résumé virtues for ourselves and especially for our children. This year, Pew Research Center asked American parents: What accomplishments or values are most important for your children as they become adults? Nearly nine in 10 parents named financial security or “jobs or careers [our children] enjoy” as their top value. (...) These surveys suggest that everything society ought to consider bigger than work—family, faith, love, relationships, ethics, kindness—turns out to be secondary. (...)

I don’t know what will happen to workism in the next decade, but if rich American men are beginning to ease up on the idea that careerism is the tentpole of identity, the benefits could be immense—for their generation and the ones to come. (798 words)