

Shorter Working Time: A Study of the Utilization and Consumption of Time

Rahul Vishnoi

Faculty of Engineering, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: *European workers work less hours per year than their American counterparts and consume fewer resources per worker. This article compares the labor efficiency, supply, and energy use models of the European and U.S. It finds that jobs in the EU-15 would use at least 15 percent more electricity if they worked as many hours as those in the United States. This part of the European economic model controversy has reached a global dimension. Developing countries will determine over the coming decades how to make use of their rising competitiveness. If the environment operates as Americans do by 2050, overall energy demand could be 15 to 30 percent higher than if a more European approach were to be adopted. Translated literally into higher carbon levels, this could mean further global warming of 1 to 2 degrees Celsius.*

KEYWORDS: *Working time, socializing, shortened week, Economics Potential, Industrial Transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

Strategies for raising the ecological productivity of the economy dominate the latest mainstream debate on the transition of civilization towards long-term climate goals. This mostly entails technical developments, such as fuel replacement, energy conservation upgrades, and the development of technology for the capturing and storing of carbon. In comparison to these optimization methods, the need for adequacy has been indicated by others, which often entails debating the amount of production and use in prosperous communities. The argument that a cut in working hours would be favorable to the environment was put forward mainly by the environmental community, though in some policy-oriented ways it has also been adopted [1].

A UNEP study noted that "channeling productivity gains to more leisure time rather than higher wages that can lead to ever-increasing consumption is also increasingly ecologically meaningful." One of the twelve policy measures towards a balanced economy, as pointed out by the UK Sustainable Growth Committee, was also to spread the available work and strengthen the work-life balance [2]. This principle is extremely powerful since there is the ability to enhance well-being with a reduced working period. Well-being research has found that it is important to benefit from a career, but also that a short work week is more effective for well-being than a long work week [3]. The vast majority of French staff who finished the 35-hour work week said their overall quality of life had improved. Cross-sectional findings have also found that a shorter work

week is positively associated with lower time burden levels, which in turn is closely related to higher overall subjective well-being[4]. Shorter working hours often allow more flexibility for behaviors that have been found to be more important for subjective well-being than a high degree of material intake, such as socializing, exercise, and voluntary work. A Swedish trial in which 400 workers shortened their working time to 6 hours per day for 18 months not only found positive impacts on life satisfaction, but also resulted in increased self-reported wellbeing and more gender-equal time-use trends in household work and childcare [5].

THE CASE FOR A SHORTENED WEEK OF WORK

Working time is now a significant political topic once again. The debate is all motivated by the looming challenge of technological unemployment, low incomes, stalled UK productivity growth, an ageing population and rising demands for treatment. For a long time, the Modern Economics Foundation has told the shortened workweek agenda, leading studies underpinning recent Trades Union Congress¹ endorsement, and a number of policymakers and media outlets [6]. This briefing summarizes the argument for shortening the working hours of people without a reduction in pay and provides an initial policy proposal to get there. It also signals the beginning of a new work stream helping those in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe who aim to pursue this cause in labor unions, industry and government. Jobs, as well as money, can be paid for in time. Winning demands for reduced income-protected working hours provides a way to resolve both employee and social symptoms of overwork and underpayment, allowing people more time to heal, engage in the political process, and meet careful obligations. For some of the big economic and cultural problems faced today, such as an ageing society, ailing social services and pension provision, minimizing the amount of time we all spend on jobs provides possible benefits [7]. We claim that businesses will still benefit from higher levels of efficiency per employee and, while a decrease in work time is not a magic bullet, the possible advantages are important. We're drawing out five here:

1. Economics Potential Proof

By the early 2030s, 30 percent of the UK current workers would have an effect on automation by replacing clerical and administrative tasks, for example, by the use of emerging AI technology, and finally by replacing manual labor with computers. In the former manufacturing hub regions of Britain in Northern England and the Midlands and industrial sites in Scotland, the maximum rate of potential automation are expected – thus facing a worsening North-South split in terms of jobs in societies as a whole or (more likely) a future of precarious, low-paid labor [8]. Instead of encouraging automation to result in increased precocity and disrespect of areas, it would benefit from a reduction of working hours in the United Kingdom without any lack of pay, enabling people to benefit more from efficiency gains that robotics can deliver and the production of machinery.

2. Help Industrial Transformation Support

This technique may also be seen as a transformation tactic for businesses, whether due to technology transitions, the collapse in high-carbon industries or the shift in foreign markets. Working hours reductions, followed by the provision of skills retraining and substantial levels of funding for local, regional and national industrial policies, may be a core component of a negotiated 'fair change' arrangement between government, business and trade unions to support jobs in the diminishing high-carbon industry [9].

3. Boost Productivity

Although reduced working weeks for employees should come with the guarantee of no lack of wage, there could also be a productivity benefit for their employers. According to the OECD, productivity is higher in countries where individuals work less hours on average. Any business or sectorial reports have also found that if workers work fewer hours, then productivity improves or, more likely, that working long hours decreases productivity. There is also rising anecdotal data from individual businesses that shortening the working week while retaining wage rates improves efficiency, retention of workers, and decreases time lost by sick leave.

4. Increases Gender Equality

Women are actually doing 60% more unpaid work on average than men. Switching to a shorter work week as the 'norm' will help shift views regarding gender roles, facilitate more equitable proportions in paying and unpaid work, and help revalue employment historically associated with women's work [10]. It would provide men with more time to be engaged parents and guardians beyond paid employment; it will also shift standards as 'part-time' became the new 'full-time,' encouraging more women to take up stable and well-paid work.

5. Autonomous Engagement

While not the state's business of deciding what people will do with extra free time, one potential gain might be a boost to the involvement of people, either in their office, neighborhood or society, in civic engagement and participation. NEF also found that a shortage of money and time is an obstacle to concerted action and decision-making by people of their local region. We also know that boosting levels of economic engagement, including levels of citizen engagement and democracy in the workplace, will lead to reducing overall economic disparity.

CONCLUSION

The chance to cut the working week has been debated by academics and journalists alike. Among the reasons for a shortened working week is that working long hours impedes efficiency, that shorter working hours boost the work-life balance of people, and also that for future

generations it increases environmental and economic resilience. Our study aimed to gain insight into the understanding of managers of a shortened working week as, from that point of view; we found little literature on the topic. To this end, we consulted administrators at three local level public agencies, two in Iceland (Organizations A and B) and one in Sweden (Organization C), all of whom were experimenting with a shortened workweek. In Organization A (36 hours working week) four hours were split off from the normal working week on Fridays, in Organization B each working day was shortened to seven hours (35 hours working week) and in Organization C all shifts were reduced to 6 hours (30 hour working week). We searched for solutions to how administrators meet the demands and advantages of a shortened working week by answering four key study issues. In general, it can be a positive-sum game to minimize working hours; i.e., overall benefits are likely to outweigh possible efficiency losses, particularly where effective countermeasures are practiced. Our results, however, indicate that a decrease in working hours may have a greater effect on the well-being of workers for organizations that offer services around the clock (e.g. elderly homes) and need shift work, since employees are not required to improve their work rate. Our results suggest that cutting working hours by one hour per day effects the work-life balance of workers rather than piling the whole cut on a day by contrasting the three organizations.

Many of our respondents thought that an added staff might have helped A and B organizations deal with the drop in working hours. In Entity C, unlike A and B, extra financing came from the experiment. As a result, the managers were willing to recruit new workers and hence did not ask their employees to accelerate their job rate. According to our respondents, the experiment appeared to lower the tension level of workers in Company C. None of the managers we consulted in Organizations A and B, respectively, registered a lower degree of tension, neither for themselves nor for their workers. While the scope of this analysis is limited and lacks generalization, it offers an insight into the minds of managers facing a decline in working hours. The lesson we have discovered is that great work can simply be less work.

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