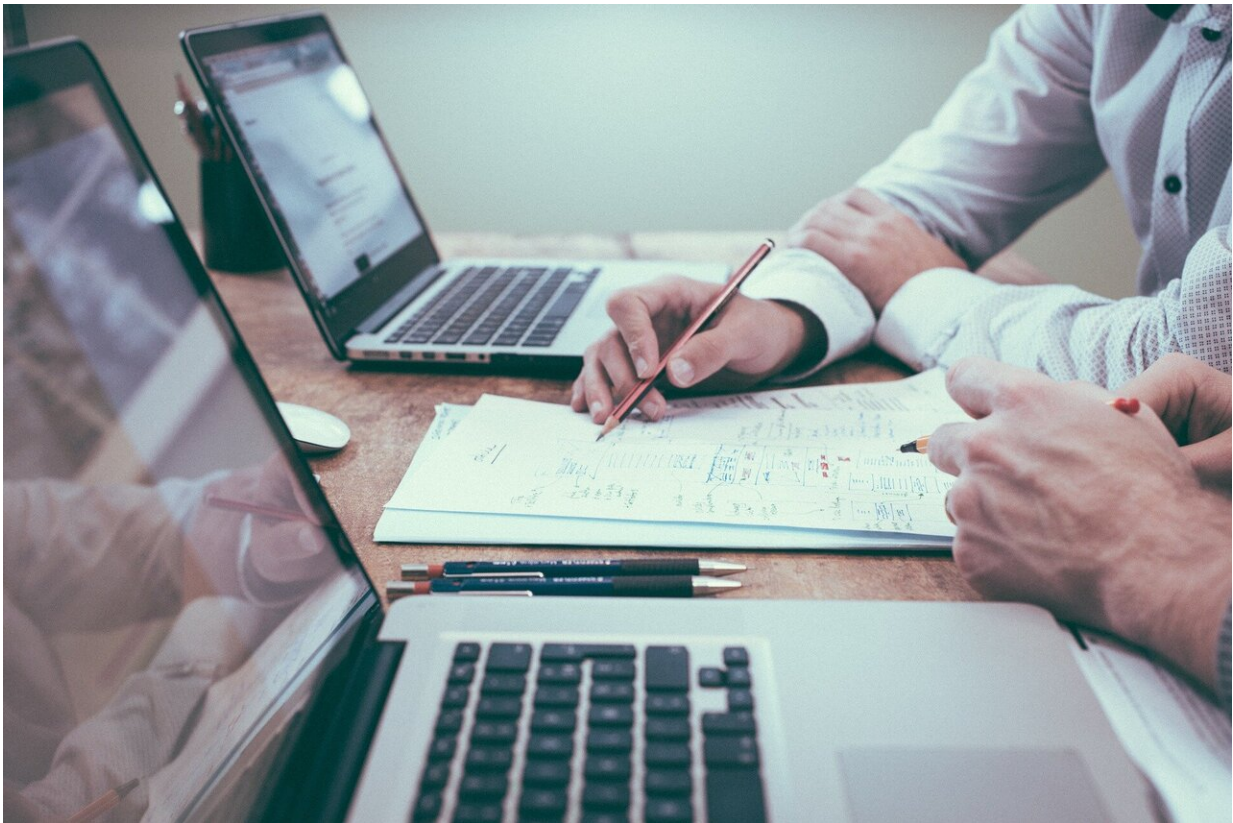


Four-day working week movement gathers momentum

October 14 2019, by Tia Zealley



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A four-day working week continues to gain favor, says Head of Work and Pay at the New Economics Foundation think tank in the UK, Alice Martin, speaking ahead of her appearance at Swinburne's Society 4.0

Conference.

Arguments around reducing working time are highly relevant and increased automation in the workforce has injected the debate with a new urgency, says Ms Martin.

"Obtaining shorter working hours without a loss in pay offers a way to tackle symptoms of overwork—providing people with more time to relax, spend time with friends and family, to participate in democratic processes and to fulfill caring responsibilities," she says.

The New Economics Foundation aims to transform the [economy](#) so it works for people and the planet. As part of her role, Ms Martin leads projects on the future of work and trade unions. She is also an advisor to Autonomy—a new think tank dedicated to preparing for the future of work.

The campaign for a shorter working week

The New Economics Foundation has been advocating for a reduced working week for over a decade. In 2015, the '4 Day Week Campaign' was set up by a group arguing that a four-day working week "will benefit our society, our economy, our environment and our democracy."

Ms Martin says a four-day working week without a loss of income could create a "virtuous circle of productivity."

"By working less, people are more likely to stimulate the economy, spending more money outside of work and more time their local communities," she says.

The New Economics Foundation has [published a paper](#) highlighting a potential productivity boost for the economy that comes from decreasing

working hours while improving low pay.

In a forthcoming report, researchers will argue there is a "backlog of productivity growth" that workers haven't benefited from and which could be put towards implementing a shorter working week.

Easing the pressure

According to statistics from the [British Safety Council](#), in 2017 to 2018, 57 percent of all sick days were due to [work-related stress](#), anxiety or depression, and 44 percent of which was caused by workload pressure alone.

Because of numbers like these, Ms Martin is most passionate about "putting work in its place" – ensuring that work is an aspect of our lives that brings meaning and passion without dominating workers' lives.

"Burnout, exhaustion and stress are costly for both workers' health and the economy," she says.

"Winning shorter working hours without a loss in pay offers a way to tackle symptoms of overwork, providing people with more time to rest and balance other responsibilities."

More information: Time For Demand: Boosting Productivity With Public Investment, Minimum Wages And Paid Holiday, New Economics Foundation, 2019. [neweconomics.org/uploads/files ... RODUCTIVITY-2019.pdf](#)

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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