

Workers welcome shortened work week, research study finds

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Credit: fauxels (Pexels)

Municipal staff in Zorra Township are so satisfied with a four-day work week that almost three-quarters of them would like to extend the innovative experiment.

Seventy-three percent of employees say they would like to continue working a compressed schedule, Western University's Joseph Lyons and York University's Zachary Spicer told Zorra Township council in a

presentation this week.

In the [pilot project](#), staff were on the job for 10-hour days, four days a week. Some worked Monday to Thursday and others worked Tuesday to Friday, which also meant municipal offices were open longer hours, at no extra cost to taxpayers.

A post-pilot survey showed employees most appreciated how a compressed work week offered them flexibility in managing work/life balance.

Staff in the Oxford County township, population 8,138, were satisfied with their employment with Zorra before the pilot, and this satisfaction remained consistent throughout and after the pilot.

"A potential lesson here is that organizations with good culture and strong leadership are more likely to be innovative," said Lyons, director of Western's local government program and a political science professor.

"If Zorra were a bad place to work to start with, leadership would have been busy dealing with more managerial issues and wouldn't have had the support or confidence to try out something so ambitious."

The researchers noted the positive responses shouldn't be interpreted as universally translatable to every organization or circumstance: it took place entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a relatively small employee cohort of 30.

"With a pool of respondents that small, results are susceptible to small variations in responses," said Spicer, a professor at York's School of Public Policy and Administration.

The biggest concerns of the compressed work week among survey

respondents revolved around working longer hours each day, which affected their ability to find childcare or manage responsibilities at home.

Fifty-two percent of respondents cited working longer hours each day while 19 percent said the compressed work week interrupted workflow.

An inability to complete work and fewer indirect interactions with supervisors and subordinates were also listed as difficulties.

Nearly half of the employees (43%) indicated they had no concerns at all with the [four-day work week](#).

"Those working in the [public sector](#) are eager for more flexibility in their working lives as much as those in the private sector," said Spicer. "Zorra has given us a great indication that this flexibility is possible and can be managed well."

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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