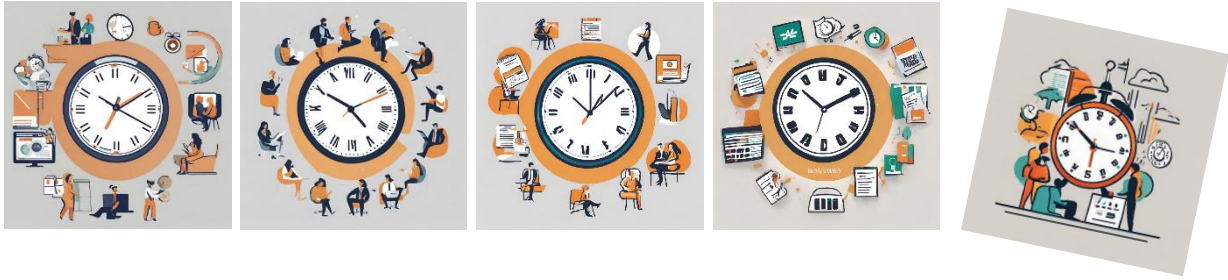




Portugal

A 4 Day Week Pilot Program
Report of Results

December 2023



Four-Day Week Portuguese Pilot

Intermediate Report

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December 2023

In this document we describe and assess the second phase of the four-day pilot project in Portugal, presenting preliminary data on the effects on workers. For a contextualisation of the project and a description and assessment of the first phase, you can read the [Initial Report from April 2023](#).



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1. Key Figures

- 41 companies are trialling the four-day week in Portugal, including more than 1000 workers.
- 21 companies have coordinated the start of the trial in June 2023.
- On average, the four-day week involved a reduction in weekly hours of 13.7 per cent (from 39.3 to 34 hours, as reported by companies).
- In 58.5 per cent of companies, workers have one day off per week. 41.5% of companies opted for a nine-day fortnight, alternating a four-day week with a five-day week.
- In 20 per cent of companies the day off is coordinated on Fridays.
- 75% of companies have made organisational changes, such as reducing the number and duration of meetings, creating blocks of work or adopting new software.
- 95 per cent of companies evaluate the trial positively so far.
- 20 of the 24 companies that did start a trial in June, expect to do so in the future. One company hopes to start as early as the end of the 2023, six companies in 2024 and five companies are planning it for 2025.
- Of the 332 employees of the companies taking part in the pilot experiment, 200 responded to both the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.
- Workers report a reduction in the number of hours per week actually worked by 11.3 per cent (from 41.1 to 36.5 hours).
- The frequency of negative mental health symptoms decreased significantly (the anxiety level fell by 21 per cent, fatigue by 23 per cent, insomnia or sleep problems by 19 per cent, depressive states by 21 per cent, tension by 21 per cent and loneliness by 14 per cent.).
- Levels of work exhaustion were reduced by 19 per cent.
- The percentage of workers who find it difficult or very difficult to reconcile work and family responsibilities fell from 46 per cent to 8 per cent.
- 65 per cent of workers spent more time with their families after the reduction in working hours.
- 85 per cent of workers would only agree to move to another company with a 5-day week if they received a pay rise of at least 20 per cent.

2. Progress of the Portuguese Pilot

In September 2023, there were at least **41 companies** testing the four-day week in Portugal: 21 companies coordinated the start of the test in June 2023, and 20 other companies have adopted it earlier. In total, **more than 1000 workers** are covered.

From the company’s perspective, our study will be based on three questionnaires, supplemented by information gathered during our regular contact with them. Although these companies have adopted different formats of a shorter working week, they share the fundamental principles that characterise this project - it did not involve any wage cuts and it implied an effective reduction in weekly hours worked. The average working week had to be reduced, to at least 36 hours, with several companies implementing a four-day week every fortnight. The study does not include companies that have reduced weekly working hours without increasing workers’ days off. Therefore, companies that implemented Friday afternoon off were not included in the study. The experiment is voluntary and reversible at any time, and the companies did not receive any financial compensation. Our study also covers 55 companies that expressed interest in the pilot project but decided not to go ahead with the preparation of trial, as well as 24 companies that attended the preparation sessions but chose not to start the test in June. The aim is to understand what forces are blocking them from testing a four-day week.

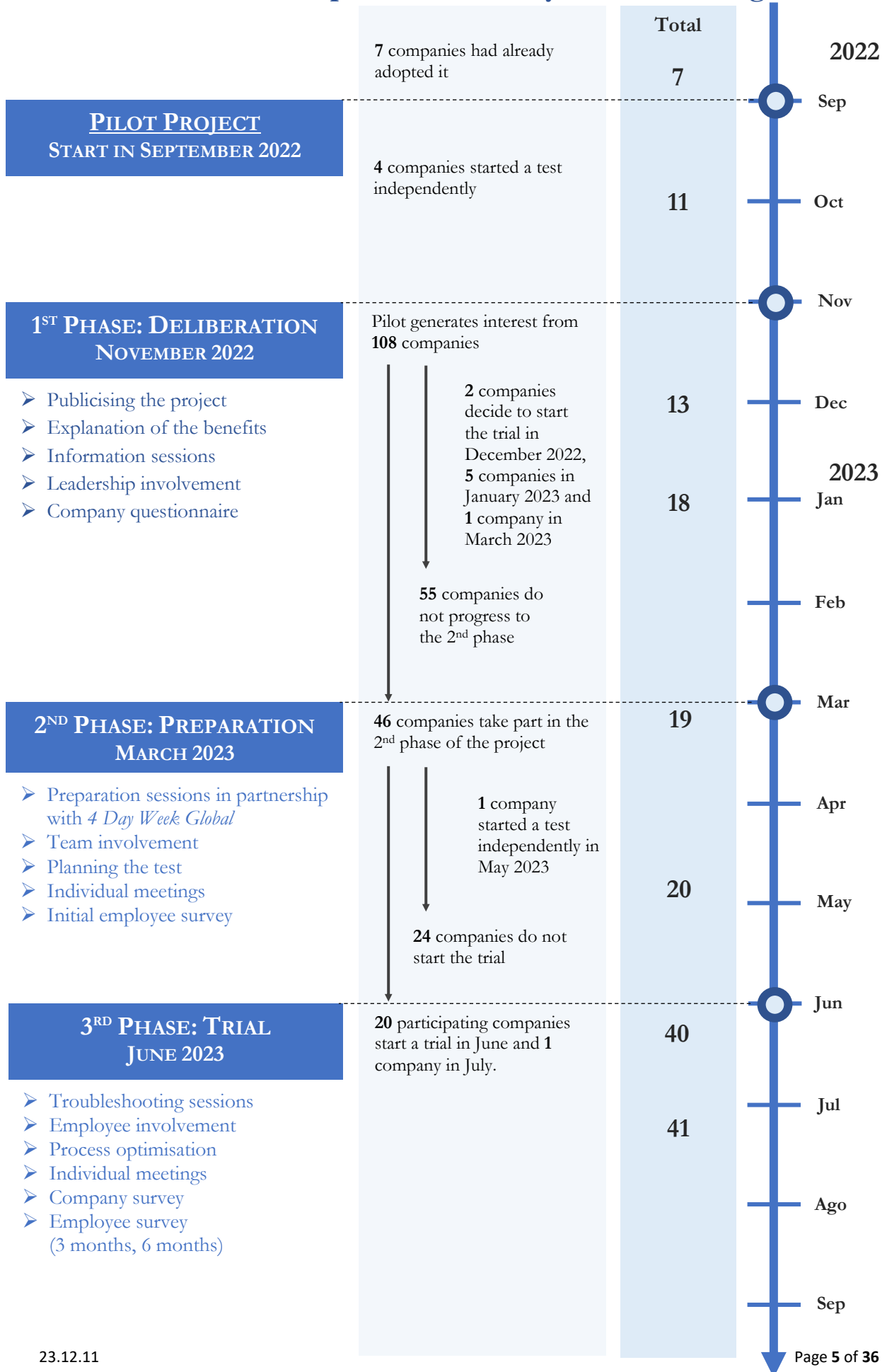
The impacts of the four-day week on workers will be assessed differently for the two groups of companies. In the companies taking part in the pilot project, the evaluation will compare pre-pilot surveys with surveys carried out 3, 6 and 12 months after the start of the experiment. The questionnaires were developed by a research team at Boston College for use in pilot projects run by *4 Day Week Global*, and were translated, adapted and validated for the Portuguese reality by the project’s coordinating team. To strengthen the methodology of the study, we will compare the effects obtained in the experimental group of 21 companies with the results of a control group, made up of workers from 14 companies that decided not to test the four-day week. For workers of the companies that started testing the four-day week before June, the evaluation will be done through a retrospective survey.

Four-Day Week Study Summary Table

| | Companies | | | | Workers | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | No. | Questionnaires | | | No. | Questionnaires | | | | |
| Companies included | | Initial | Intermediate | Final | | Pre-Pilot | 3 Months | 6 Months | 1 Year | Retrospect. |
| Adopted before June | 20 | 13 | 18 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 733 | | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Participants in the pilot | 21 | 21 | 21 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 332 | 283 | 203 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Control group | 14 | | | | | 172 | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Did not move forward | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 nd Phase | 24 | 23 | 22 | | | | | | | |
| 1 st Phase | 55 | 50 | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 120 | | | | | | | | | |

Note: indicates questionnaires to be carried out. In questionnaires that have already been carried out, we report the number of finalised responses.

3. Timeline of the adoption of the 4 Day Week in Portugal



5. Characterization of companies testing a 4 Day Week

The 41 companies currently trialling the four-day week in Portugal are geographically, sector-wise and size-wise representative. Most of the companies are in the districts of Lisbon (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 are representative of the business structure in Portugal, with a preponderance of smaller companies - 22 companies have fewer than 10 employees (Figure 2). Nevertheless, 15 medium-sized companies (between 11 and 80 employees) and four companies with more than 80 employees are taking part. Of these four companies, two opted for partial implementation with around 30 employees. More important than the number of participants is their diversity: a kindergarten, a social centre, a research centre, a stem cell bank, entities from the social sector, manufacturing, and many training and management consulting companies. (Figure 3).

The vast majority of companies are experimenting with the four-day week out of concern for human resources. The most frequently cited reason for starting the trial is the need to reduce stress levels among employees. However, we can see that the measure is trying to solve concrete problems, such as increasing the ability to recruit and retain staff. Companies see it as an alternative to salary increases (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Location of companies (by municipality)

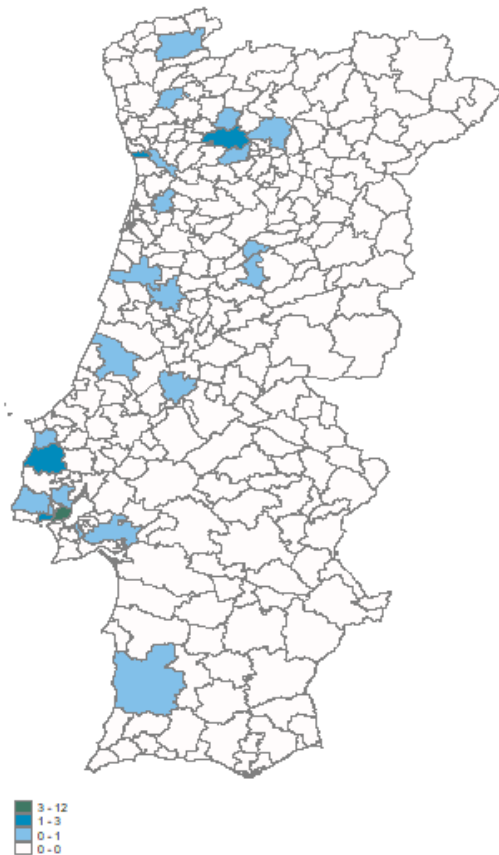
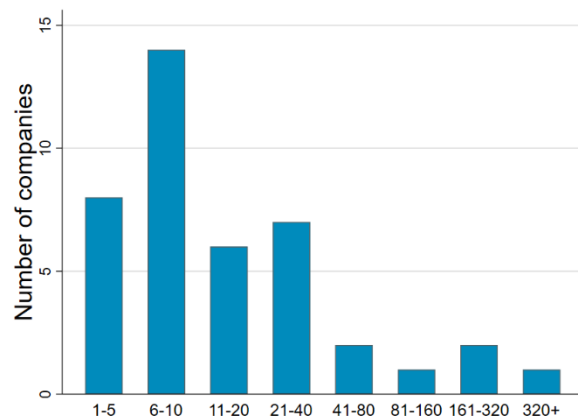
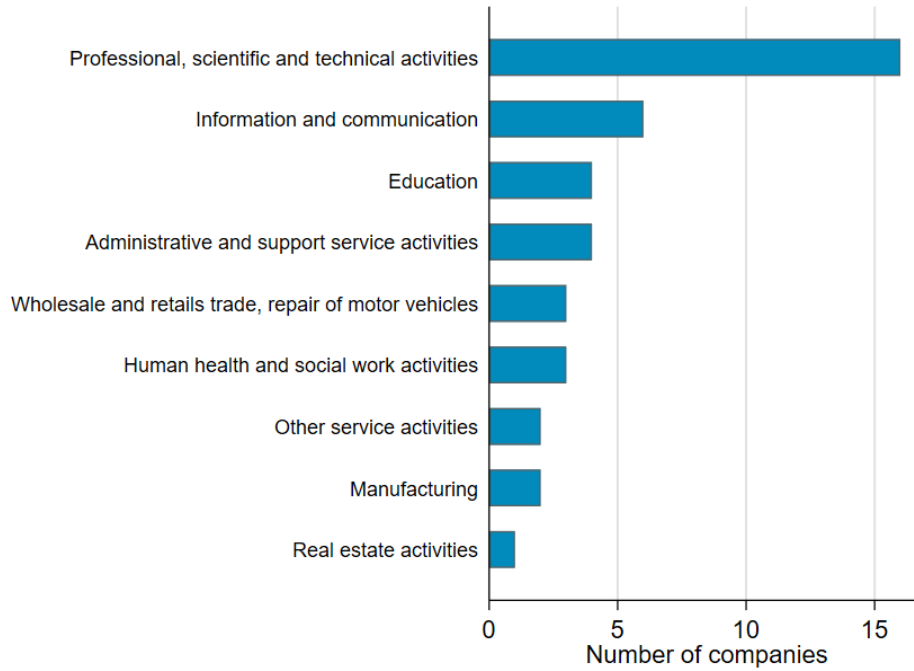


Figure 2: Size (number of workers)



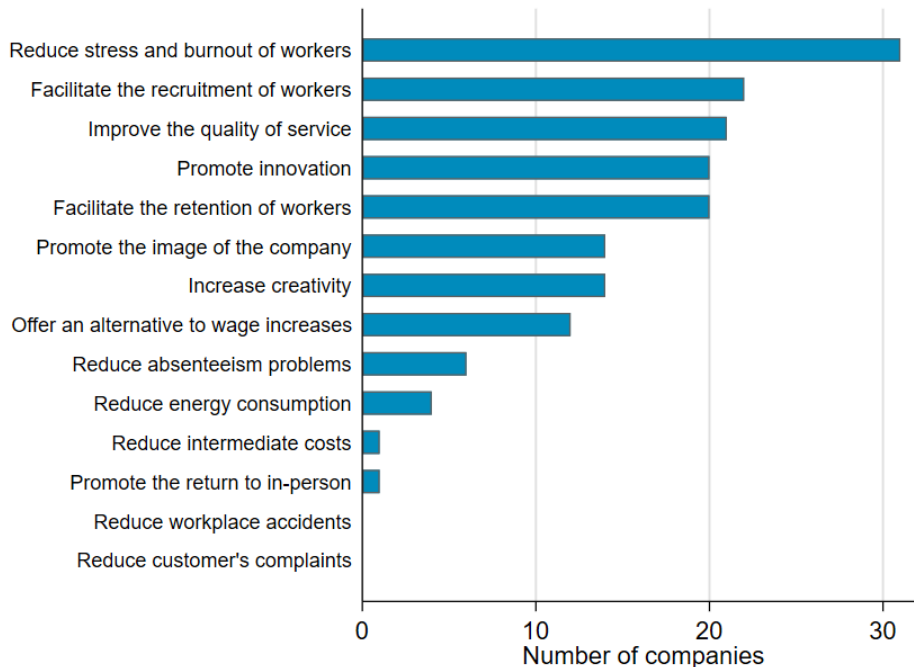
Note: Based on 41 companies that reduced their working week.

Figure 3: Sectors where firms mainly operate



Note: Based on the NACE classification of 41 companies.

Figure 4: Main motives for testing the four-day week



Note: Based on responses from 34 companies to the initial survey between November 2022 and April 2023.

6. How did companies implement a 4 Day Week?

Several companies in Portugal already have different formats of organizing work, and it is not always easy to categorise them. We include in the study companies that have effectively reduced weekly working hours, given workers more days off, and (preferably) coordinated these changes at company level. We left out of the study several companies that offer a 36-hour week by freeing up Friday afternoon. We believe that this option, although having important merits, is not transformative for the company (it doesn't force organisational changes and the hours on Friday mornings are often not very productive), nor for the workers (they have to commute and don't 'switch off' entirely). On the other hand, we included a company that, while offering the same 36 hours, allows them to be accumulated in other week days and makes it easier for workers to take Friday off (for example, by not scheduling meetings for that day). We left out companies that give workers a lot of flexibility to organise their work, accumulating 40 hours on other days to free up Friday (this model is also known as a compressed working week). However, we have included one company that adopted the four-day week with a reduction to 38 hours per week (increase in daily hours to 9h.30m) in 2021, as we believe that, given the nature of the work prone to unpaid extra-hours, the actual reduction in working hours was significant. Finally, we left out some companies that were reported in the media as having a four-day week, but which we were unable to verify by filling in the questionnaire or by contacting them directly.

One of the principles of the project is the need to reduce the number of hours worked per week. The majority of companies started with 40 contracted weekly hours. Of these 36 companies, 20 took an intermediate step by reducing their weekly hours by 10 per cent to 36, while 14 companies reduced to 32 hours and one to 34 hours. Only 5 companies started from 35 hours, usually with 7-hour days. In these companies, the reduction was smaller, to 34, 32, 30 or 28 hours a week (Figure 5). On average, the 'official' weekly hours fell by 13.3 per cent (12 per cent in the companies taking part in the pilot).

Figure 5: Reduction in weekly hours

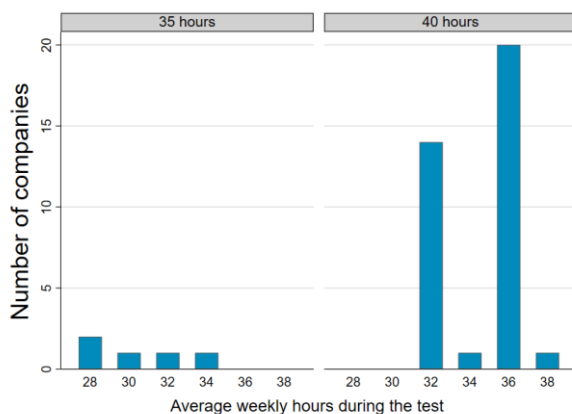
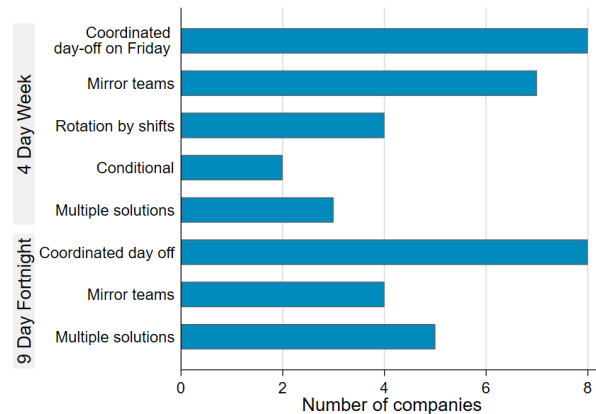


Figure 6: What format was adopted?



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

The most important decision companies have to make is what format the four-day week should implement (Figure 6). This decision depends on several factors: customer requirements, the flow of work in the sector, the workers' need for recuperation, and how much they value the day off attached to the weekend. Of the 23 companies that opted for a uniform model in which they worked four days a week, 8 companies coordinated the day off on Fridays, the 'slowest day' with fewer requests from clients, and the most accumulated tiredness for workers. However, several companies must stay open or have customer requests during the five days of the traditional working week, opting for either a rotation of the day off by shifts, or the creation of mirror teams, which take different days off (often Monday and Friday). In two companies, the day off (Friday) is 'conditional' in the sense that when weekly targets are not met by Thursday or when key customers have urgent requests, the workers must be available to work.

Several companies, especially the larger ones, have opted for multiple solutions, depending on the type of function and the pace of work in each area. The aim is to keep all the employees on the days when work peaks, and free up the day that least interferes with the functioning of each department or function. The challenge is that the different formats must coexist in a way that does not create internal coordination or communication problems. This effort to design multiple formats usually falls to human resources managers together with the team leaders and generates an additional workload for them.

Among the 20 companies that opted for a reduction to 36 hours, three increased the length of the working day to 9 hours. The other 17 companies thought that an increase of one hour a day was too onerous for workers, and opted for a four-day week alternated with a five-day week: a nine-day fortnight. Some companies coordinated the day off, others set up mirror teams to maintain a continuous operation. The biggest difficulty with the nine-day fortnight is the greater complexity involved in organising the scheduling of the day off, and the more difficult predictability of the day off for workers.

The vast majority of companies reduced the working week for all employees, but nine companies decided to do a partial test (Figure 7). We encouraged a company-wide implementation because it forces the reorganisation of work and involves all workers in the change. Leaving some workers out puts obstacles in the way of organisational change and can create tensions between workers, requiring a skilful management of expectations.

Figure 7: Full or partial implementation?

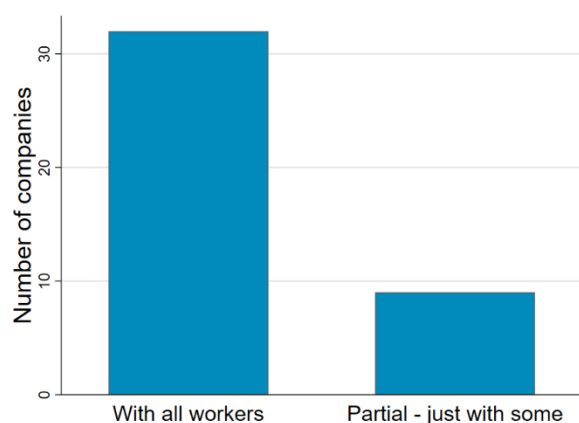
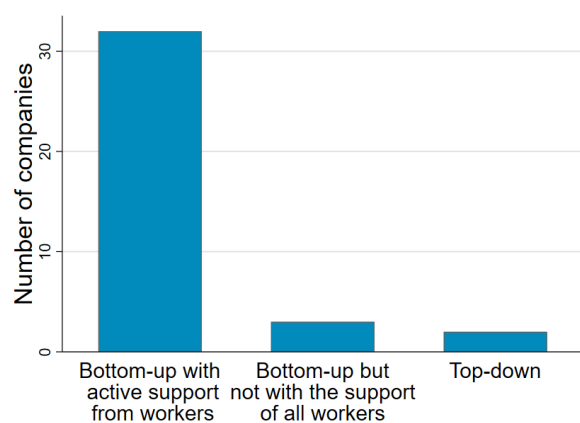


Figure 8: Was there active worker participation in the reorganisation?

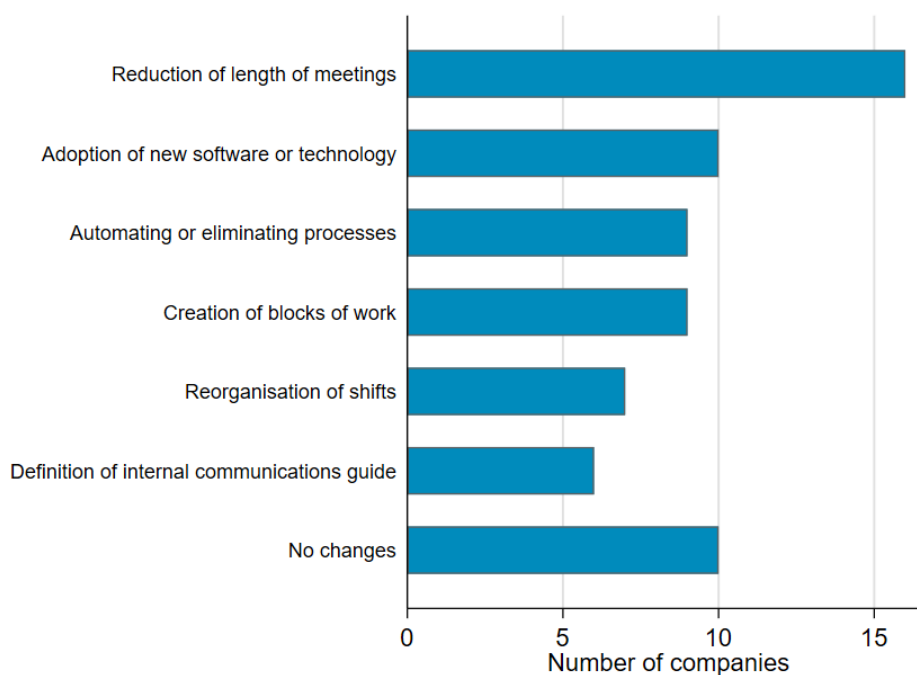


Note: The data in Figure 7 is based on 41 companies and the data in Figure 8 is based on 39 companies that answered an intermediate questionnaire.

The companies opted for a partial test for one of four reasons. In the case of large companies, a test on all employees would not be feasible given the significant organizational changes it implies. From the beginning, it was decided that it should be a partial test, in a particular department or function. In some companies, like a physiotherapy clinic and a social centre, shortening the working week was more difficult in some roles and would require an initial financial investment in hiring more workers, so they decided to start with roles that would allow the work to be reorganised without the need to hire additional staff. One of the companies subcontracts some of its workers to other companies. Given that the contracts were previously defined, this company did not include these workers in the initial test. Finally, some companies decided to exclude from the test newly hired workers who often have days dedicated to training, or workers on special schemes, for example for breastfeeding mothers or student internship schemes.

The crucial aspect for the success of the four-day week as a management practice is the set of organisational changes within the company that will increase the efficiency and performance of the workers on the other days, enhance communication, and improve teamwork. This was one of the main aspects covered in the preparation sessions. In the most successful international examples, companies have capitalised on the enthusiasm generated by the four-day week test to involve employees in the discussion and design of process changes. The principle is that it is they who are most aware of the inefficiencies in processes and who can contribute most to improving them. In Portugal, 87 per cent of companies actively involved workers in the design of process changes. Of the remaining companies, three tried to involve employees, but they didn't feel that everyone was committed, and two decided to implement top-down changes, without the involvement of employees (Figure 8).

Figure 9: Which organisational changes were done?



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

In Portugal, 75 per cent of companies have made at least one organisational change. The most popular was reducing the number and duration of meetings, and defining and enforcing a set of rules. Ten companies have adopted or deepened their knowledge of some organisational software, and nine have automated or eliminated processes. To improve concentration and deep work, several companies have created 'blocks of work' throughout the day for individual work, teamwork, or for responding to emails. Many of today's business problems are related to multiple communication channels in the firm: emails, meetings, phone calls, *WhatsApp*, or management software, which overlap, creating frictions in the transmission of information. Some companies have created a communication guide, striving to organise and document information so that any worker can access it asynchronously without having to interrupt or involve colleagues. Other changes include: adjusting the timing of meetings with clients or suppliers, or offering time-management training to workers.

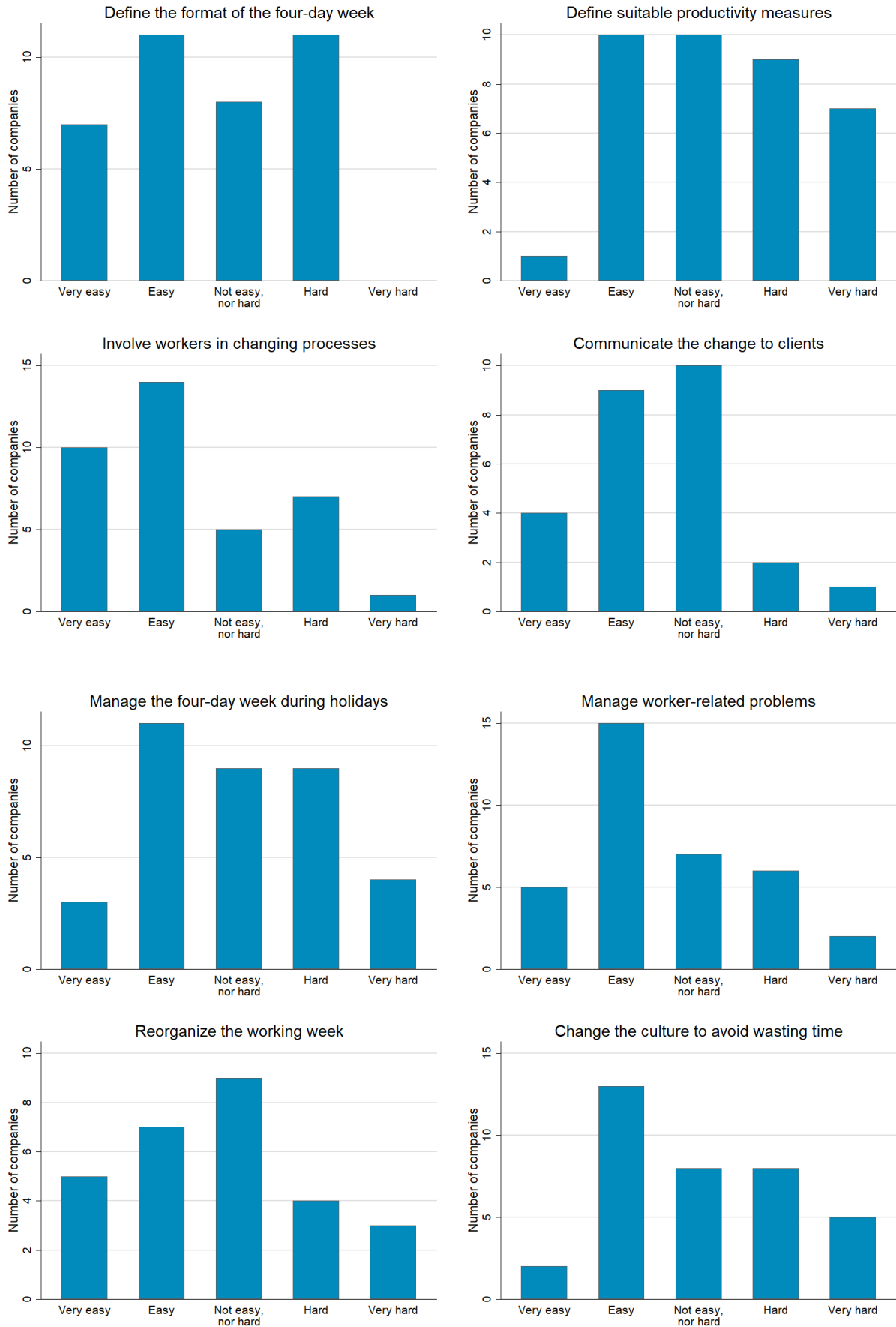
Preparing the test involved a lot of effort on the part of the team responsible and they faced some difficulties. There was no unanimous difficulty, but we identified three aspects that the companies pointed out as the most problematic (Figure 10).

Nearly half of the companies identified the definition of productivity metrics as difficult or very difficult. In official (statistical) terms, productivity per hour is the company's value added (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. We have found that most companies find it difficult to measure and quantify *output*, hence the natural predisposition of managers to associate hours worked with productivity. In the end, companies will use a mix of indicators to evaluate the success of the trial, from financial indicators (revenue, profits, personnel costs or other expenditures), operational indicators (meeting deadlines, customer satisfaction, absenteeism, the number of voluntary resignations), as well as indicators of workers' work-life balance that will be calculated by the coordinating team, based on employee surveys (Figure 11).

A second difficulty was managing the four-day week during holidays. The first half of the test took place in July and August, coinciding with previously scheduled holiday periods, which created difficulties managing teams. We believe that this problem will not be relevant if companies continue with this model, and that one solution could be to create better-defined rules for scheduling holidays. Finally, one third of the companies emphasised 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 be more respectful of their own time and that of their colleagues - and several existing habits need to be changed, such as long coffee or lunch breaks, arriving late for meetings, or interrupting colleagues to talk about football.

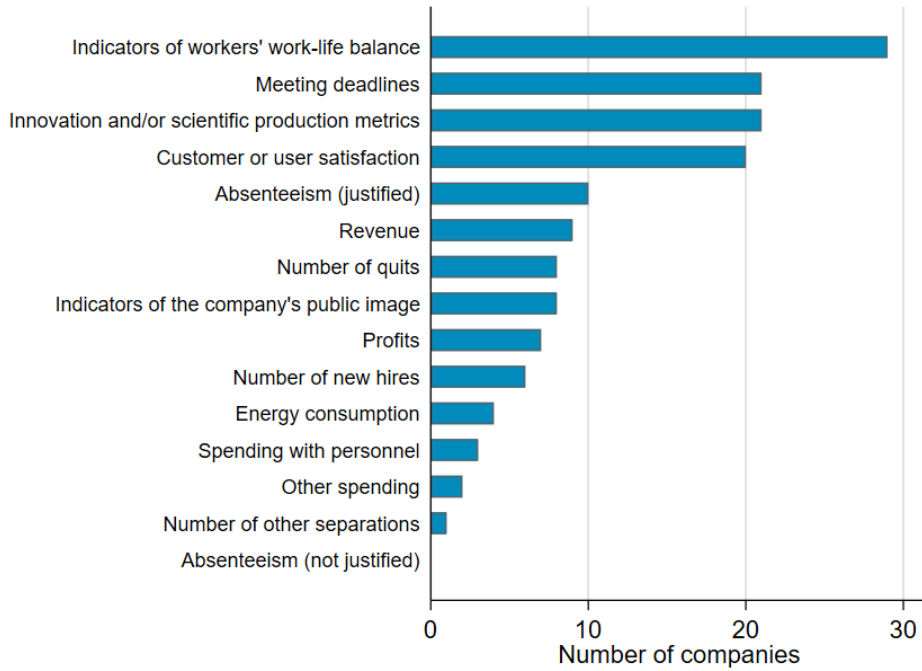
At the other end of the spectrum, most companies found it easy or very easy to involve workers in the changes of processes, manage problems raised by workers and communicate the participation on the trial to clients or customers. Some companies described occasional problems with workers, for example minor perceptions of inequality about some having Friday off, while others had another day during the week, or some having one more day off than others due to the alignment of public holidays. In most cases, the explanation that fairness is not equality and that the format of the four-day week would have to be different for the various teams in order to make it work for the company was enough to manage the situation.

Figure 10: How difficult it was...



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

Figure 11: What indicators will you use to evaluate the test?



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

Figure 11: Have you communicated with customers?

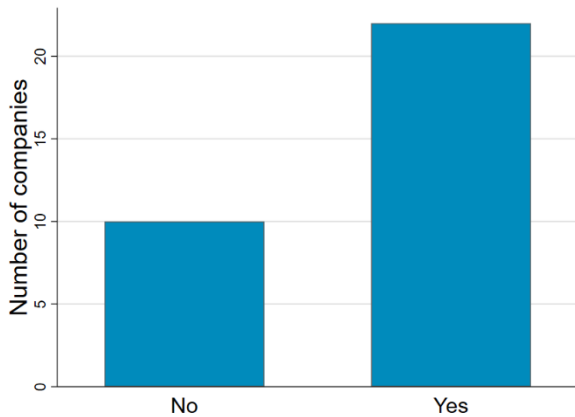
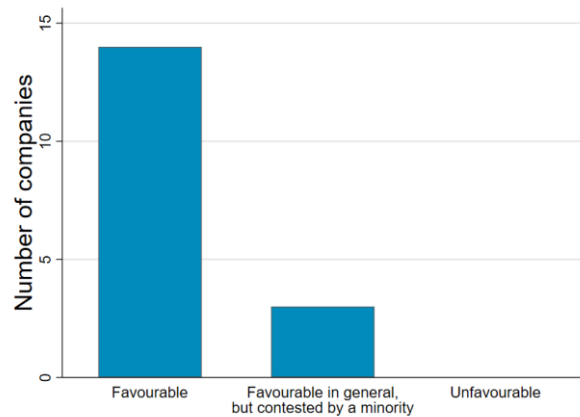


Figure 12: What was the reaction like?



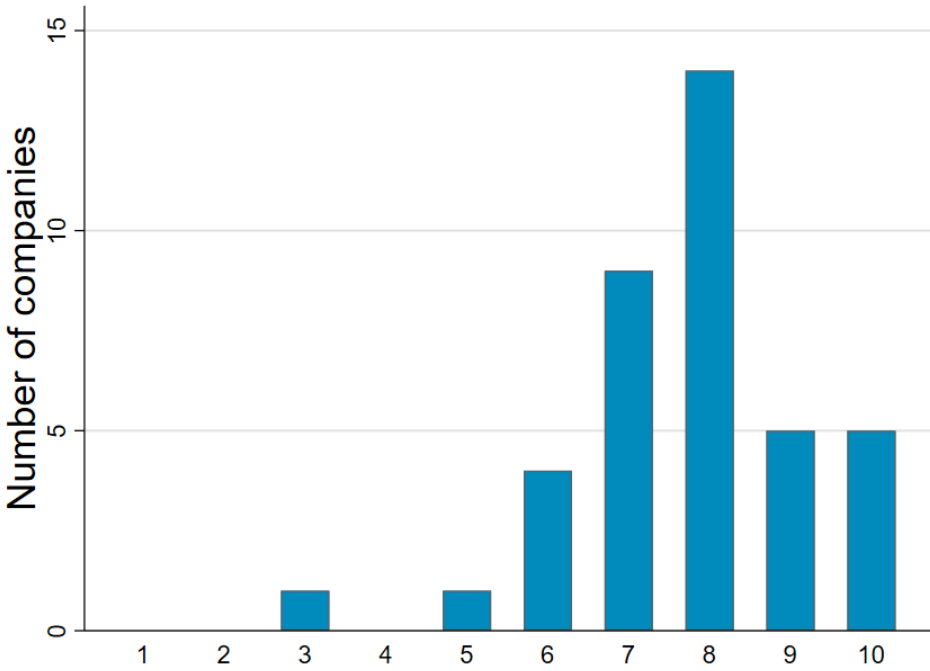
Note: Data from the 39 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire.

Before the start of the second phase of the project, the companies were very concerned about communicating their participation in the pilot test to their customers and fearful of their reaction. When communicating to customers, it is important to convey the message that the four-day week is an attempt to improve the company and that the quality of service and customer care won't be sacrificed, and that they will still be available in the event of an emergency. Most of the companies communicated their participation in the pilot test to their customers and the vast majority had a favourable reaction, with a lot of interest and curiosity. Only three companies said that the decision had been challenged by a minority; no company described the reaction as unfavourable (Figure 12). Some companies decided not to communicate the trial to customers, in some cases to use customer feedback as a form of evaluation.

So far, the assessment of the four-day week by the responsible of the project is very positive. Out of 39 responses to an intermediate survey, 37 companies rate it between 6 and 10 (Figure 13), with an average of 7.7. The evaluation is more positive among the companies that started the test before June (8.1) than among those taking part in the pilot (7.4). This difference is natural given that among the companies that started before June, many have started more than a year ago and some have already made the new format permanent.

Only two companies evaluate the implementation of the four-day week negatively. One company that carried out a year-long test gave it a 5/10, and they are currently restructuring their processes, and decided to test a different format: one Friday morning every two weeks, would be used for a group meeting. Of the companies taking part in the pilot, only one evaluates the first three months negatively. In that company, ‘although the employees were motivated and wanted to present proposals for improvement and metrics to assess performance, the managers never allowed the employees or those responsible for the project to present them’, which in practice meant that few changes were made in the organisation.

Figure 13: How would you rate the experience so far (from 1 to 10)?



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

In their own words

Testimonies from Employers Implementing a Work Time Reduction

‘Even though we’re halfway through the pilot, there’s a strong willingness on the part of all workers to fulfil and maintain this working format. Depending on the department, some are beginning to give me indications that they would be able to reduce their week to four days (beyond the 9-day fortnight) without too much trouble.’

‘At this stage of the process it is difficult to know the impact of 4DW in terms of productivity and the ability to carry out tasks that were previously spread over 5 days, as the assessment is typically based on annual targets, which will only be evaluated in January 2024. On the other hand, it has been possible to gauge the participants’ perceptions of the impact of 4DW on their levels of satisfaction and their ability to reconcile work, family and personal life, and we can already conclude that this model is seen as preferable to the classic work organisation model.’

‘In our case, we still need to work on improving internal processes so that we can continue in 2024 with the reduction in working hours to an average of 36 hours per week or to 32 hours. For now, we’re living the project as if the rest day were a new event in the company’s calendar that we know will be good for its people and, consequently, for the company, and that’s why we’re committed to going ahead with the plan. It’s happened that we’ve had to change the rest day, but we’ve never given it up.’

‘The project has improved the quality of life of workers and, consequently, the relations between co-workers and the organisation.’

‘We don’t feel that there has been an increase in production at the company, but there hasn’t been a drop either. For this reason, and even working 8 hours less per week, the employees have managed to achieve the same objectives as they had with the 40-hour week, which means that individually they have been more productive by doing the same work in less time.’

‘The main difficulty with 34 hours spread over 4 days is related to periods of greater workload, in which there may be a need to work beyond 34 hours on days already filled with 8.5 hours. However, what we have seen is that in order to avoid this extra work on days that are already full, or in order to benefit from our extra day off without jeopardising our work, we have done our best to be more productive during the 34-hour working week. We think that’s where the greatest productivity comes from. The motivation of the 4-day week results in 34 hours of great dedication to work and very little time wasted.’

‘We recommend gradual changes and, in this process, we have noticed that the degree of apparent happiness in the workplace has increased, the capacity/quality of work has also increased with the greater number of days off and productivity and turnover are at least the same or higher. Each of the 4 working days clearly produces more than each of the previous 5.’

‘We think this pilot project has shown that the world of work is changing and our experience has shown us that a good work-life balance is very important. Just because we spend more hours in the workplace doesn’t mean we’re more productive or better professionals.’

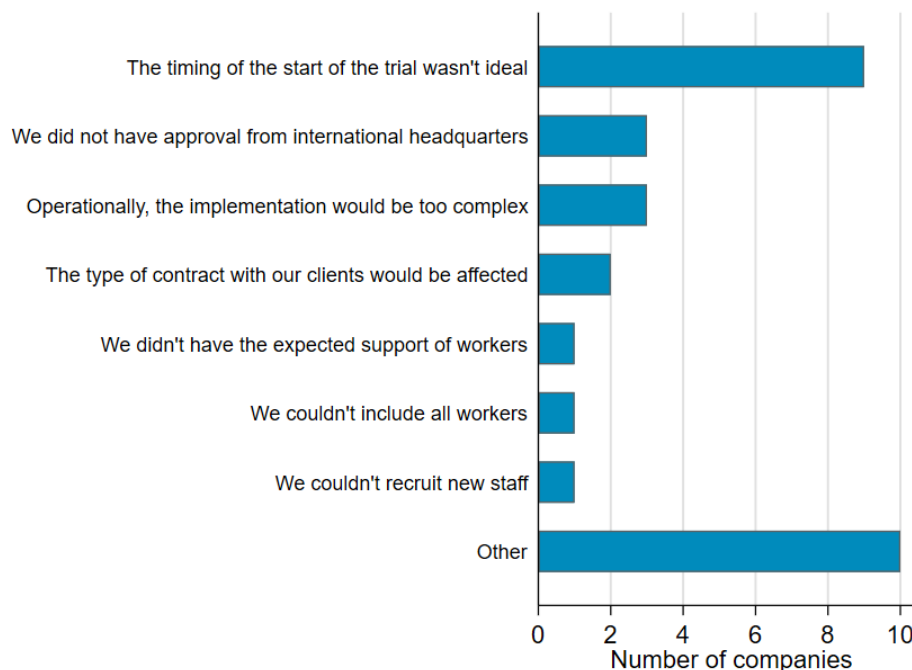
7. Why did some companies not start the trial?

Of the 24 companies that decided not to go ahead, 22 answered an exit questionnaire. The most common reason given for not going ahead was that the timing of the start of the test, in June, did not suit the company. Several companies could not prepare appropriately due to other ongoing projects that required a lot of employee involvement. Some of them mentioned they were moving premises, or they had lost some key employees, so they decided to postpone the start of the test. Since there was no financial compensation, the companies had complete autonomy and flexibility in their choice regarding whether and when to start the trial. As they took part in our sessions, they understood that the four-day week involved changes to the way the company worked and therefore felt it was more prudent to wait, rather than rush into a test without sufficient planning.

Three multinational companies did not get approval to start a test from the international headquarters. Two companies emphasised the difficulty with clients, with whom they have contracts that establish set working hours or expect the company to be available every day. Among the 'other reasons' given, some companies already allowed an afternoon of on Fridays and decided to keep this system for the time being. One company said that the workers' reaction was not particularly positive. Another concern for some companies was the lack of a legal framework for the new working formats.

Of these 22 companies, 20 expect to experiment with the four-day week in the future. One company plans to start as early as 2023, six companies expect to start a trial in 2024 and five companies are planning it for 2025.

Figure 14: Reasons given for not starting the test



Note: Data on 22 companies that answered the intermediate questionnaire.

In their own words

Testimonies from Employers who decided not to implement a Work Time Reduction

‘The previous dynamic of our company, the core business and the habits installed in some of our clients and the services we provide (such as events and teambuilding) made it very difficult to realistically adopt this test to the point of being able to consider it a meaningful.’

‘We’ve already been implementing the reduction in working hours since the beginning of the year, but for 4 hours a week, in this case it’s one afternoon on a day of the week of our choice’

‘We weren’t ready to start at the moment, as we already have a four-and-a-half-day week and we need some more time to prepare ourselves operationally to move to a four-day week, but we’ll look into it again in the near future.’

‘The reason we weren’t able to go ahead with the project to implement the 4-day week was solely because the company was in the process of moving premises. We weren’t organised enough to be able to go ahead 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 go ahead at the beginning of summer next year.’

‘Although the project is very interesting and can clearly bring benefits to organisations and people, it is necessary, even in a pilot project environment, to have a clearer definition of the impacts and necessary adjustments based not only on labour legislation, but also on existing company agreements.’

‘The company is in the process of restructuring and obtaining international certification, so it doesn’t currently have any staff available to dedicate to the implementation.’

‘There are ongoing dialogues with the workers, ongoing changes (constant innovation in the company), changes in facilities, which still don’t allow this leap. At the moment the workers prefer to move from a 40-hour week to a 36-hour week. This is being seen as a priority for us (and is already happening with more flexibility at lunchtime).’

‘We’re in the recruitment phase, which would make it difficult to implement the project.’

‘Because of internal organisational changes, other projects had to go ahead.’

‘We have already implemented a lower weekly load than legally defined, so the benefit would not be very substantial. In addition, numerous issues arose for which we felt the project did not have an answer, namely the articulation of the project with legal issues, working hours, remuneration, lunch allowance, collective agreements, among others.’

‘I think we were expecting a personalised conversation on our premises, to discuss issues more specific to our entities, but that didn’t happen. It seems to me that these processes are complex and acting as a catalyst for them requires more personalised advice.’

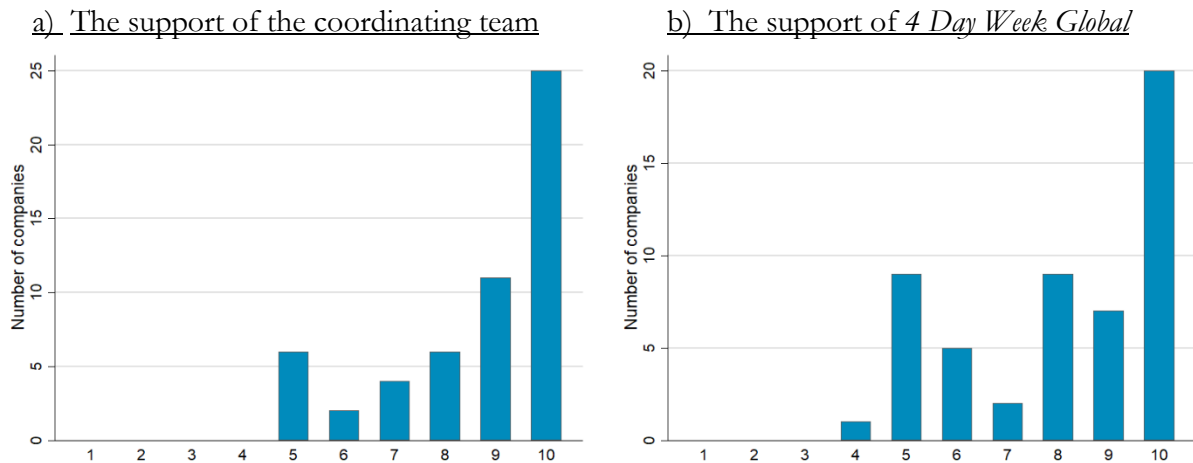
8. Evaluation of the project in the 2nd phase

Finally, we asked all the companies that took part in the second phase of the project to rate the support from the coordinating team and our *4 Day Week Global* partners (Figure 15). The support from the coordinating team was rated with an average of 8.6/10 (8.9 by the companies taking part in the pilot, 8.4 by the companies that did not go ahead with the test). Support from *4 Day Week Global* was rated at 8.0 (8.3 by the companies taking part in the pilot, 8.1 by the other companies that reduced their working week before June and 7.5 by the companies that didn't go ahead with the test).

Preparing for the test was a process that demanded a lot from the company and its employees. On top of all the day-to-day pressure, it added an extra layer of work, namely attending weekly sessions, various internal meetings and meetings with the coordinating team, as well as a great deal of individual work by the project manager (65 per cent of the companies created a formal document about the project).

Around 30 companies regularly followed the preparation sessions, 20 synchronously and 10 watched the recordings afterwards. These included 13 companies taking part in the pilot, 4 companies that started the test before June, and another 13 companies that ended up not going ahead. Between 15 and 20 of these companies registered on the *4 Day Week Global* platforms and used its support materials. The other companies attended less than half of the sessions.

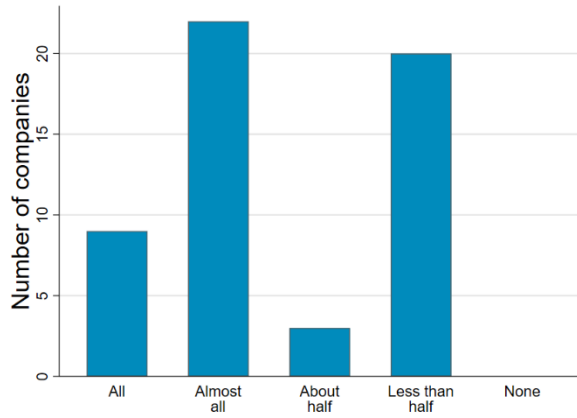
Figure 15: How would you rate (from 1 to 10)?



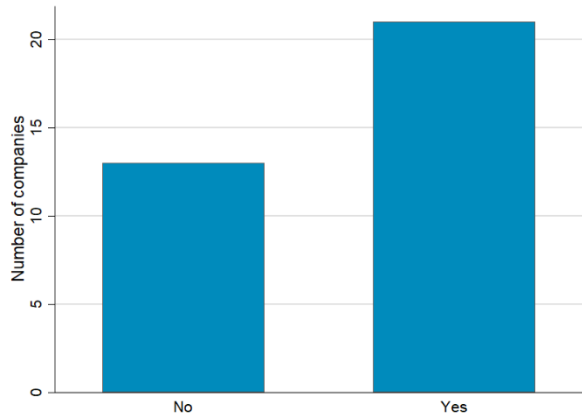
Note: 51 companies: 21 participating in the pilot, 11 companies that started the test before June but were associated with the pilot and 22 companies that took part in the 2nd phase and did not progress.

Figure 16: Involvement of companies in test preparation

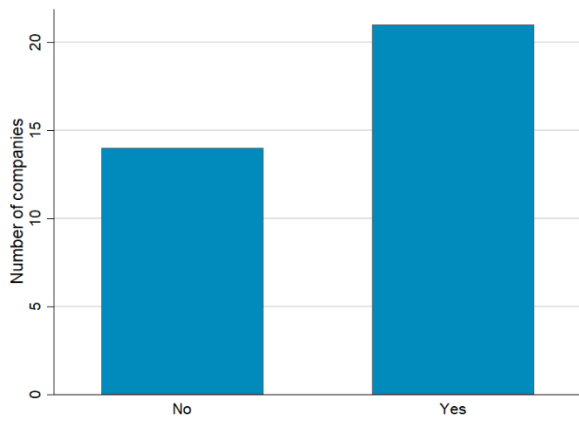
a) How many sessions did you attend?



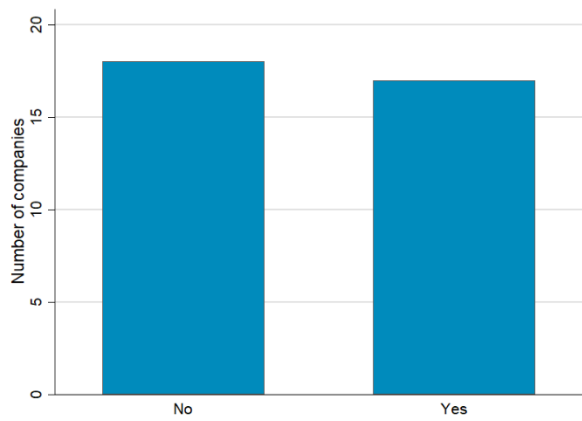
b) Have you created an internal document?



c) Have you accessed the 4DWG platforms?



d) Have you used other 4DWG documents?



Note: 35 companies: 21 participating in the pilot, 14 companies that started the test before June but were associated with the project.

9. Characterisation of the workers involved in the pilot project ¹

In this section, we present data collected through surveys applied to employees of the participating companies. The pre-pilot survey, carried out in May, had 283 responses and the survey carried out three months after the start of the pilot study (beginning of September) had 178 responses. We only considered responses from employees who took part in both surveys, giving us a sample of 200 employees.

First, we describe the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by a presentation of the participants' job characteristics, and then we move on to a comparison of work-life balance indicators before and after the reduction in working hours. These initial results illustrate the type of indicators that are monitored. In the project's Final Report, scheduled for April next year, we will analyse the variables in more detail, also comparing them with the results of the control group.

Figure 17 characterizes the demographics of the 200 workers from the companies participating in the four-day week pilot. Compared to the national average, these workers are younger, with higher levels of schooling, and with a greater representation of women.

In our sample there is a higher proportion of female workers (71.5 per cent), while in the country there is a majority (albeit marginal) of male workers. This over-representation corroborates the perception we have had since the beginning of the project: that the four-day week sparks more interest in women than in men. In terms of age, the workers in our sample are younger than the national average. In Portugal, workers under the age of 44 represent 49 per cent of all workers, but in our sample, they represent 74 per cent. The most frequent category is the 25-29 age group, although there is a balanced distribution across the following age groups, with the average category being the 35-39 age group.

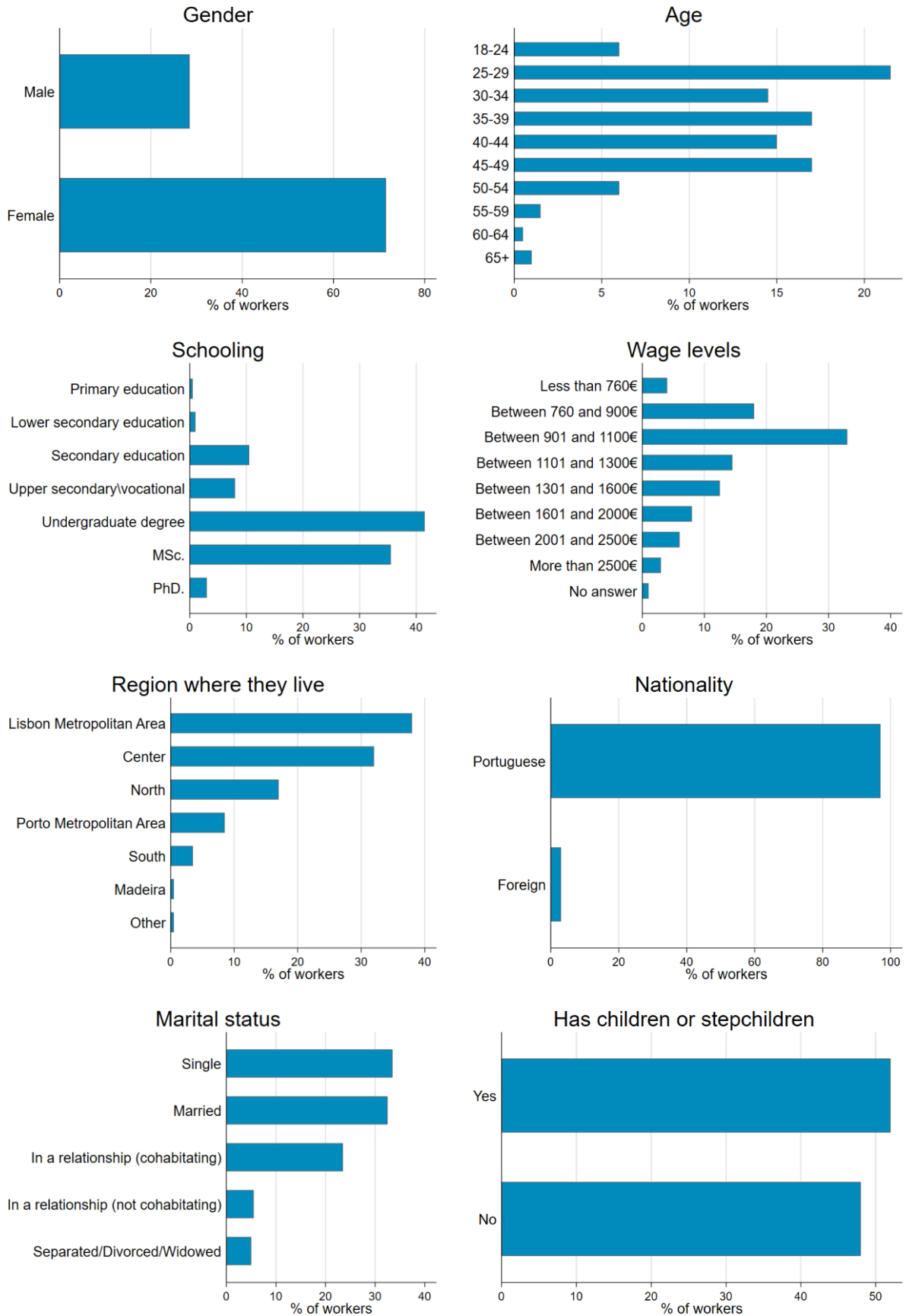
Another dimension that stands out from the average in Portugal is schooling. Around 80 per cent of those surveyed had attended higher education at bachelor's, master's or doctoral level. Only 35 per cent of workers in Portugal have higher education. The salary levels of the workers who responded to the survey are consistent with the distribution of salaries in Portugal. More than 50 per cent of workers earn less than 1100 euros per month, with the most frequent category being between 901 and 1100 euros.

Regarding the region where the workers live, 72 per cent live in the Lisbon metropolitan area or in the centre of the country, although the pilot project has quite a few companies in the Porto metropolitan area and in the north (25 per cent of the workers). More than 55 per cent of workers are married or in a relationship where they live with their partner and 52 per cent have children or stepchildren. The vast majority of respondents are Portuguese (97 per cent).

Figure 18 shows the distribution of workers by job characteristics. The majority of workers have 40-hour work week contracts (80 per cent), while 14 per cent have a 35-hour contract. These figures are consistent with the data provided by the companies.

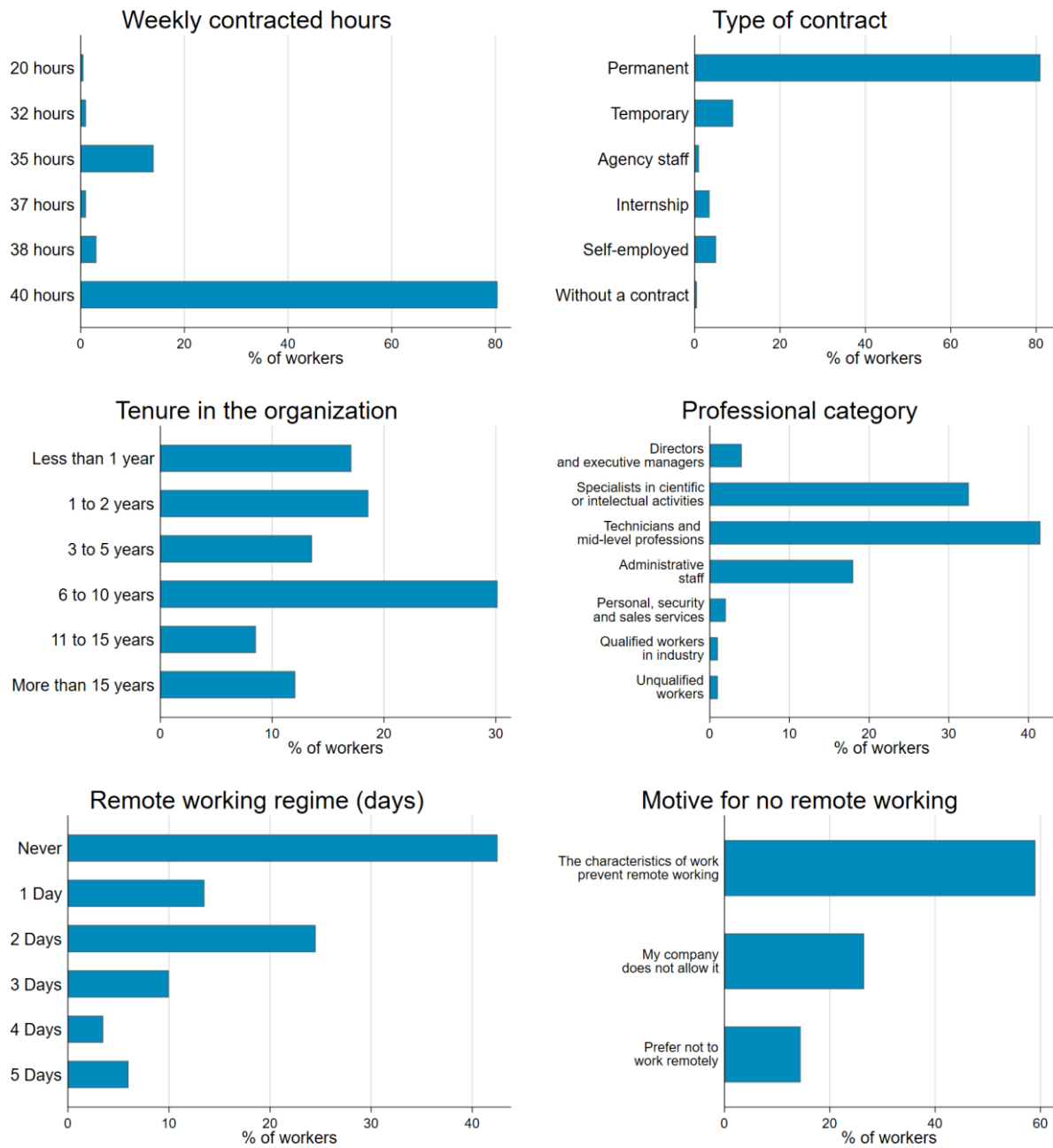
¹ The following sections are based on surveys developed by a research team located at Boston College, which included Wen Fan, Guolin Gu, Orla Kelly, and Prof. Juliet Schor, for use in pilot projects run by *4 Day Week Global* and translated and adapted to Portuguese by the coordinating team.

Figure 17: Distribution of workers by demographic characteristics



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

Figure 17: Distribution of workers by job characteristics



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

81 per cent of workers have a permanent contract, a percentage almost identical to the national average (83.5 per cent). The high percentage of workers with a permanent contract is consistent with a longer tenure in the company. More than 30 per cent of workers have been with the company for between 6 and 10 years and more than 20 per cent for more than 10 years. The vast majority of participants in the pilot project are specialists in intellectual and scientific activities or technicians with intermediate-level professions.

With regard to working arrangements, 58 per cent of workers work remotely at least one day a week. In the case of the 42 per cent of workers who do not work remotely or hybrid, the main reason for this is that the characteristics of the job do not allow it.

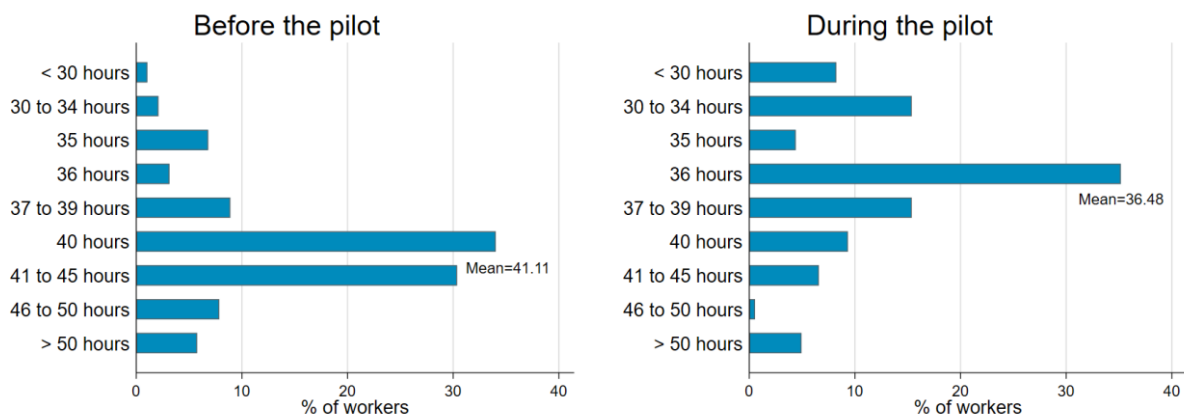
10. Effects of the four-day week on workers

One of the main reasons given by companies for reducing working hours was to improve workers' work-life balance. We therefore want to check whether: (i) there has been an effective reduction in working hours and (ii) there were improvements in mental health and work-life balance indicators. According to data from the survey prior to the pilot project, corroborated by information from the companies, 77 per cent of workers have 40-hour work week contracts. However, there can be a big difference between the contracted working hours and the hours actually worked, especially in some sectors such as consultancy or information technology. In fact, before starting the test, 42 per cent of workers reported working more hours per week than the contracted 40 hours.

As we can see when comparing the two graphs in Figure 19, there has been an effective reduction in hours. Before the pilot, workers reported an average number of hours, actually worked, per week of 41.1 hours. Three months after the start of the test, the average number of hours actually worked per week was 36.5 hours, a reduction of 11.5 per week, marginally below the reduction of 12 per cent declared by the companies. The percentage of people working 40 or more hours fell from 78 per cent to 21 per cent, a very significant reduction. This result may be indicative of the implementation of prioritization and time organization strategies learned during the training sessions with *4 Day Week Global* and the project's coordinating team. Even so, 15 per cent of workers said they worked between 37 and 39 hours and 5 per cent still work more than 50 hours.

According to Figure 20, the majority of workers were able to reduce their working time immediately, but this experience was not unanimous. Still, after three months, around one quarter of the workers were not able to always take advantage of the planned day off. In several comments, some workers confide that they end up finishing pending tasks on their day off. It is often difficult to adjust in the first few months and it's natural that some habits take time to change. Even so, the workers' data is consistent with the data declared by the companies, and confirms that there has been an effective reduction in working time.

Figure 19: Hours actually worked before and during the pilot



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey. We didn't consider 30 workers who reported having worked less than 10 hours on average in the previous weeks (probably because it coincided with vacations). The difference of means is statistically significant ($t=-7.48$, $p<.001$).

Figure 20: How do you describe the adjustment to a new schedule?

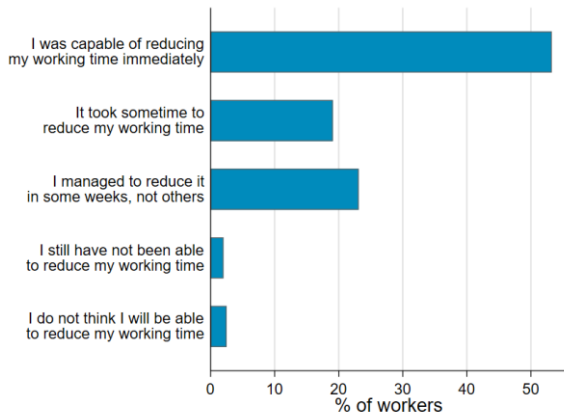
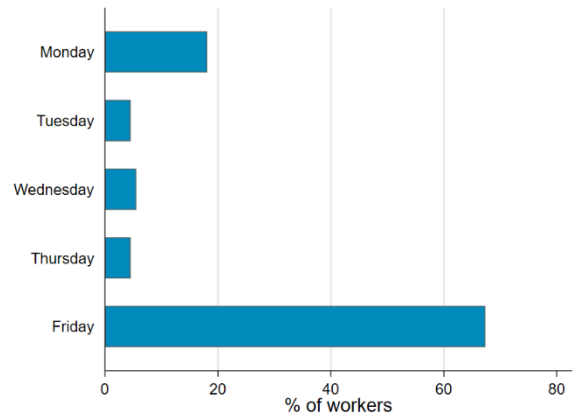


Figure 21: What was your last free day?



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

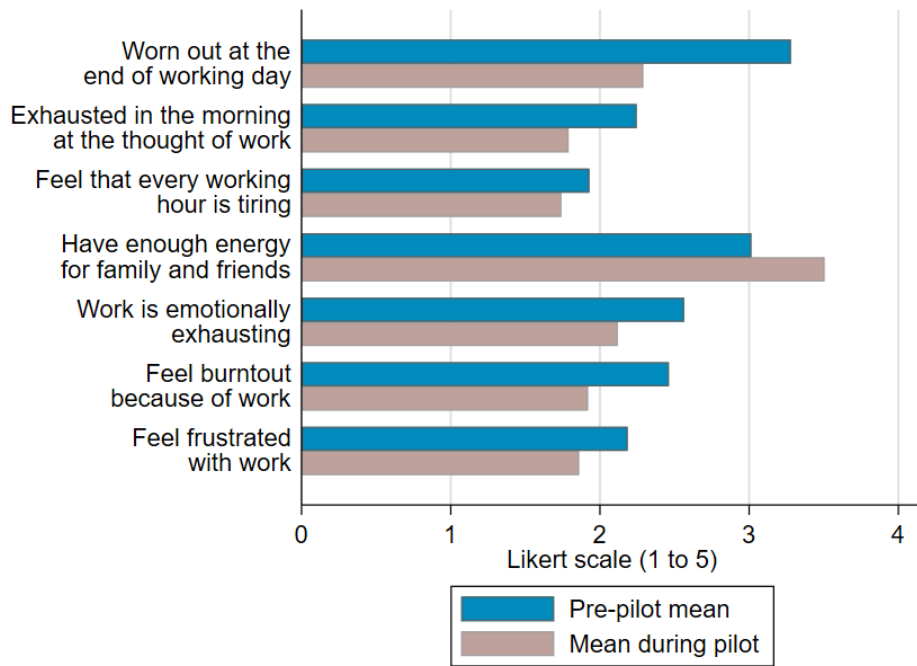
Figure 21 shows the distribution by weekday of the last day off under the pilot project. Although only two participating companies coordinate the day off on Friday, 67 per cent of workers have Friday off. Among the other days, Monday is the most popular day off, for 18 per cent of workers. The remaining 15 per cent of workers have days off which are distributed among the other days midweek.

The second aspect we want to check is whether the increase in days off has an impact on workers’ mental health. Figure 22 shows the average responses to seven questions to assess work-related burnout and exhaustion, rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). We can see that the levels of exhaustion due to work and weariness at the end of the day decreased after the implementation of the reduction in working hours in all seven indicators (one indicator about energy increased). The differences are statistically significant in all indicators. On average, the seven indicators of exhaustion improved by 19% relative to the pre-pilot period.

The results are stronger when it comes to reducing the frequency of symptoms related to their mental health (Figure 23). We asked workers to rate the frequency, over the previous month, of anxiety, fatigue, depression, 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. In this sense, in this graph, lower values represent more positive aspects of mental health. We can see that levels decreased significantly in the 3 months after the trial began. The anxiety index fell by 21 per cent, fatigue by 23 per cent, insomnia or sleep problems by 19 per cent, depressive states by 21 per cent, tension by 21 per cent and loneliness by 14 per cent. More than 85 per cent of workers report a decline in, at least, one indicator.

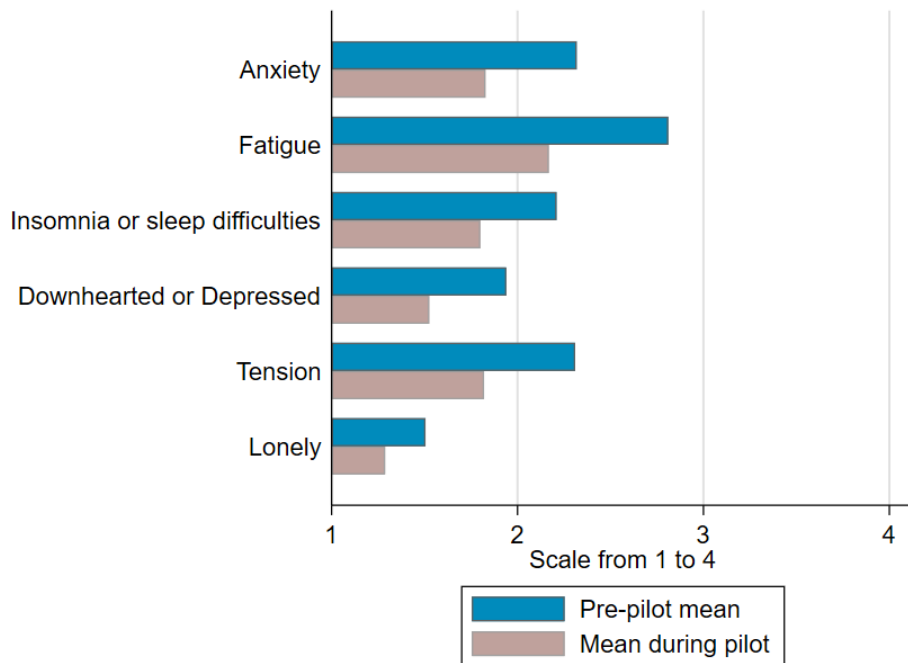
The improvement in mental health was accompanied by a clear improvement in the work-life balance (Figures 24 and 25). The percentage of workers who said it was difficult or very difficult to reconcile work and family fell from 46 per cent to 8 per cent. The percentage of workers who say it is difficult or very difficult to reconcile work and life fell from 50.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent.

Figure 22: Effects on exhaustion and tiredness



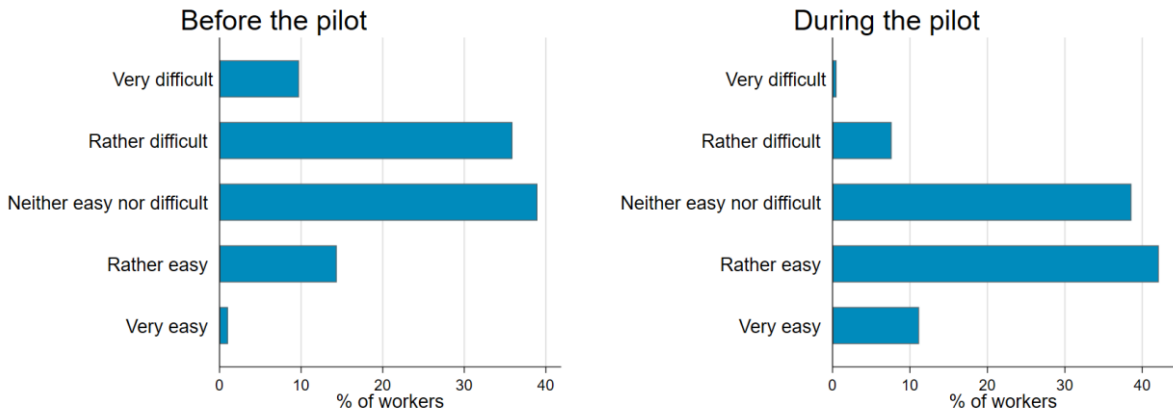
Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey. Average Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The differences between the pre-pilot and 3 months into the pilot periods are statistically significant ($p < .001$) in all seven items ($t = -13.37, t = -6.12, t = -3.53, t = 6.15, t = -6.25, t = -7.98, t = -5.48$).

Figure 23: Effects in frequency of mental health symptoms



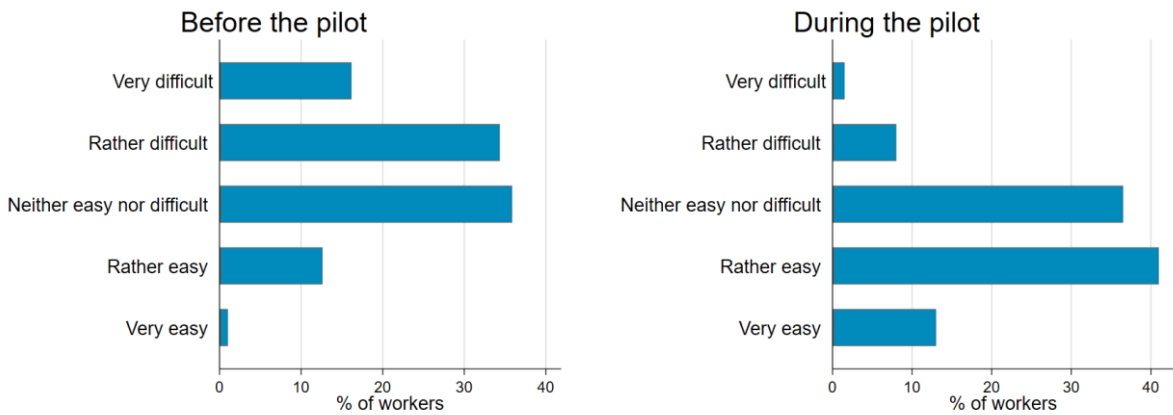
Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey. Average of a scale from 1 to 4 where: (1) never, (2) once or twice a month; (3) once or twice a week, and (4) daily, over the previous month. The differences between the pre-pilot and 3 months into the pilot periods are statistically significant ($p < .001$) in all these mental health indicators ($t = -7.92, t = -9.90, t = -6.09, t = -6.93, t = -7.37, t = -3.48$).

Figure 24: How difficult has it been to reconcile work with family responsibilities?



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

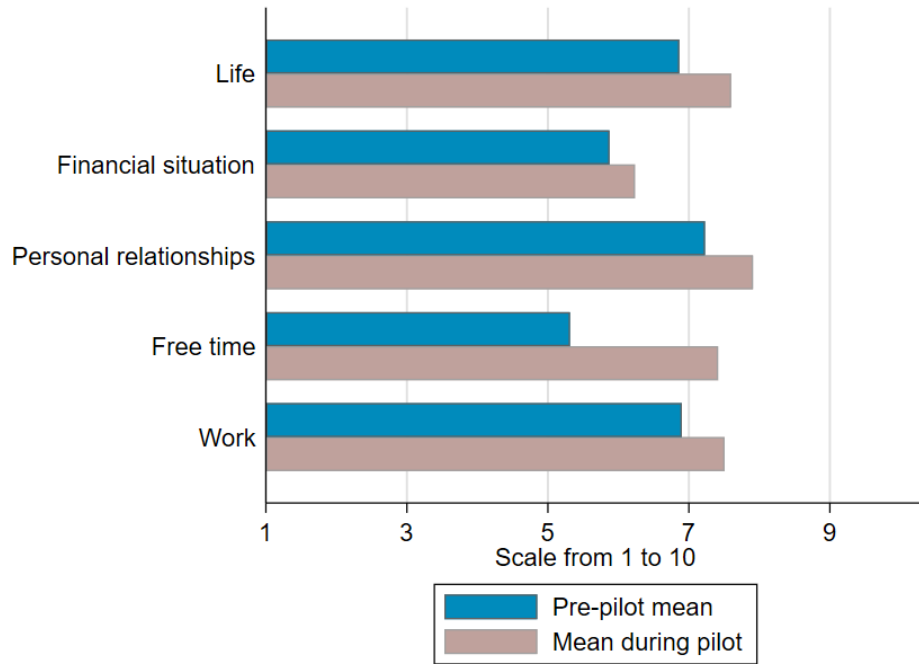
Figure 25: How difficult has it been to reconcile work with your personal and social life?



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

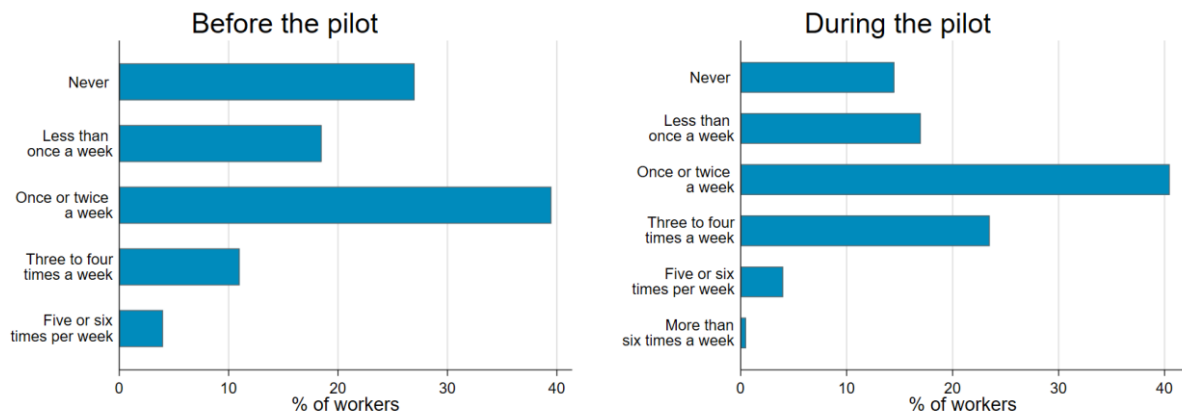
The benefits of reducing the working week were also reflected in the improvement in workers’ general satisfaction with life, their financial situation, their personal relationships, the use of free time and the work itself (Figure 26). Certainly, contributing to better physical and mental health, in the fact that people are doing more physical exercise. The number of workers who didn’t exercise at all fell from 27 per cent to 14.5 per cent (Figure 27).

Figure 26 Effects on degree of satisfaction with:



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey. Average of a numerical scale from 1 to 10, over the previous month. The differences between the pre-pilot and 3 months into the pilot periods are statistically significant ($p < .001$) in all these indicators of life satisfaction ($t=5.45$, $t=2.86$, $t=5.56$, $t=12.84$, $t=5.40$).

Figure 27: Frequency of Physical Exercise



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

In their own words

A testimony from one worker per company

‘Having one day a week free means an opportunity to carry out recreational, sporting and self-care activities, sometimes conditioned to schedules that are not possible at the weekend. Resolving bureaucratic issues and scheduling appointments becomes much more efficient and simpler. It removes a lot of the stress caused by traveling and time differences.’

‘The 4-day week has been good. I take advantage of this free day to deal with personal matters. With my team it was easy to adapt to the 4-day week.’

‘I really enjoyed having the opportunity to take part in this project. When we have young children, we don’t have much time for ourselves and this project has allowed us that... a day to myself. To rest, to play sports, to go to the beach, to do crafts, to have a massage, to go to an appointment, to watch a movie, to drop the kids off and pick them up without having to run.... I noticed that I was more patient, calmer and more creative at work and at home. At work, the children in the nursery adapted beautifully to the new dynamic, as did the whole team. There was a general feeling of well-being, good mood and optimism. I’d love to see it continue (the 4-day week) for the good things it’s brought to my personal and professional life and for the atmosphere felt/lived in the nursery.’

‘There’s no doubt that the 4-day working model has been very positive, because I’ve been able to reconcile my personal and professional life more easily. As I’ve only had to work an extra hour a day (from 7 hours Monday to Friday, to 8 hours Monday to Thursday), it allowed me to have one free day a week to devote to what I enjoy most, which also gives me more motivation for the other working days. Adaptation in the company has been easy, with a better distribution of tasks among the team. So far, I have nothing to report in terms of difficulties, because I manage my working time and the tasks I have to perform well.’

‘Implementing the 4-day week has allowed me to rest my mind from the mental effort I put in every day when carrying out my duties. It gave me the chance to devote myself to my chores (going to the doctor, shopping, cleaning the house), to my English course and even to traveling and spending more time with my family and friends. It encouraged me to want to invest more in my training and to look for new courses. With the 4-day week, I feel that I start the working week with more desire and commitment, as well as making plans for the weekend and socializing with people. I don’t feel so mentally overwhelmed and like giving up.

The adaptation in the company went well. I was asked to reduce the break time in the morning and afternoon to 5 minutes, which I thought was understandable. At first, I thought I would find it difficult to fulfil my tasks because I didn’t think I would have time to do what I had set myself for the week, but I always finished everything before the end of the day.’

‘I feel more motivated, less tired and in a better mood. The days off are used to deal with personal matters, rest and support the children by being able to have activities with them other than at the weekend. As for the way I work, it has improved because we’ve had to impose discipline in order to meet the objectives set (because my role depends on others)’

‘With young daughters, this project is spectacular because they know that on my day off I can pick them up from school and when it’s vacation time, having an extra day every fortnight to have a picnic is spectacular.’

‘The 4-day week allowed us to get to know a new reality of adaptation and optimization of the time dedicated to work. The focus time innovated the new working day and proved to be very important for greater and better productivity. My effort to ensure that everything is on schedule so that I can rest one day a week was easy to achieve. Having more days off puts us under the responsibility of making the most of our 8-hour working days. I feel that this project has come about to allow us to live!’

‘I’m happy to be taking part in this project and I hope it continues and is extended to all workers. Having days off makes me happier, so I have more time, especially for myself. At work, there’s more control over working hours, making it fairer for all employees. In terms of methodologies, I felt that the alignment of team tasks has improved. We already used methodologies and work tools that allowed this alignment, but I think there is more motivation, collaboration and responsibility among peers. The individual work methodology remains, as I consider myself to be very organized, methodical and responsible. Personally, I haven’t experienced any difficulties, but I have felt some distrust on the part of some colleagues, as they feared that by having days off on different days, this could mean more working hours for some and fewer working hours for others.’

‘I’m happy to be with a company that cares about the well-being of its employees. The 4-day week has improved my quality of life and allowed me to have more days to myself, to do activities that interest me. The adaptation at the company has gone well, we’ve had to restructure the way we do some tasks and become more efficient. The biggest difficulties have been the increase in the number of clients and carrying out multiple projects simultaneously, and reconciling the schedule with existing work without increasing the weekly workload.’

‘Taking part in this project makes me feel good, realizing that Portugal is evolving the way it works. For me, having more days off is very good to be able to spend time with my family and do other things that I can’t do on work days, like going to the doctor, shopping.. Adapting to the company was very positive, it was very easy to manage the days and adapt the best way to each employee.’

‘Taking part in this project has been a very positive experience. It’s been important to have more time to devote to hobbies and leisure activities, which help to disconnect from the working day and week. I think the adaptation at the company has gone quite well, with clear effects on productivity and creative processes. There have been changes in the way we work, especially as a team; I feel that these changes have contributed to an increase in the company’s efficiency. The biggest difficulties were adjusting to these changes and getting into the new working dynamic.’

‘The 4-day working week has been beneficial both professionally and personally. On a professional level, I feel more motivated and I’m certainly more focused during working hours, which has allowed me to carry out the projects I’m involved in more effectively. On a personal level, I’ve had more time to spend with my children and wife, and this has had very positive repercussions on my happiness and well-being, which consequently contributes to better personal performance. In all honesty, I’m convinced that, at least in my specific case, the benefits would be even greater if the 4-day working week were adopted continuously (instead of the model of alternating between 4 and 5 days every two weeks). From my point of view, the psychological component combined with personal well-being and that of the team (which is also taking part in this pilot test) has led to greatly improved performance since adopting the 4-day working week. Taking part in this pilot project has been very enriching from a personal and professional point of view.’

11. Time use

A third aspect we are interested in evaluating is the use of workers' free time. Figure 28 shows the patterns of time use after the implementation of the reduction in working hours as part of the pilot project. We see that 65 per cent of workers spend more time with their family and 45 per cent with friends, while also devoting more time to self-care and hobbies and interests. These figures suggest that the implementation of reduced working hours, in the first 3 months has mainly a positive impact on family and social relationships, as well as on time dedicated to individual-centred activities, which are certainly associated with better mental health indicators and work-family balance.

About 11 per cent of workers spend more time in restaurants. However, this figure may be misleading, as 7.5 per cent of workers say they spend less time in restaurants. These are probably related to the 8.5 per cent of workers who spend more time preparing meals at home. There seems to be a high heterogeneity among people regarding using their time off for cooking or eating at restaurants, but overall the effect of eating in restaurants is positive. Other sectors seem to also benefit from increased free time, as 9 per cent of workers spend more time shopping and 20 per cent on cultural activities (theatre, cinema, concerts, exhibitions).

In the initial questionnaire, 15 per cent of workers said they had a second source of income, for example a second irregular job or freelance work. During the pilot, 7.5 per cent of workers spend more time working on these sources of income. It is also interesting that 14.5 per cent on academic study or training activities, and 4 per cent on volunteering.

Figure 28: Percentage of workers spending more time doing



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey. Graph shows the percentage of workers who said spent more time in each activity.

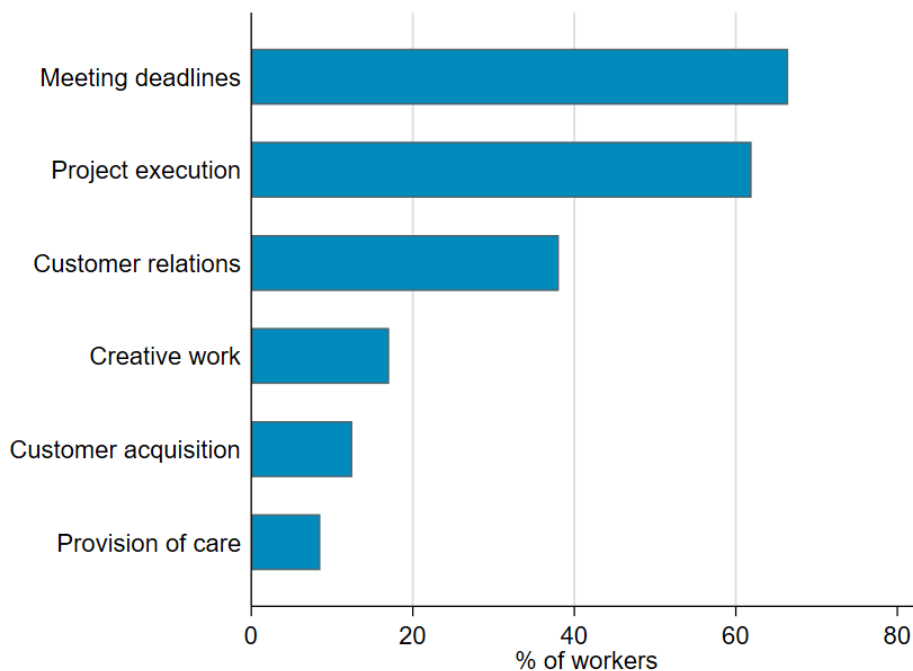
12. Workers' perspective on their job and employer

Finally, we want to understand how the four-day week influences the workers' view of the company. This dimension is crucial in the context of industrial relations. We started by asking workers about the impact of the four-day week on their work performance. As we have seen, the companies had difficulties defining productivity metrics for evaluating the trial. The reason is that productivity is an aggregate concept at company level, which depends on the individual performance of workers, but also depends on interactions between workers and teams, and other factors external to the company, such as overall economic conditions.

Employees have a more precise view of the definition of their performance, often related to: meeting deadlines, carrying out projects, creative work, attracting clients, dealing directly with clients or users, or providing care. Figure 29 shows that among these, more than 60 per cent of workers define meeting deadlines and carrying out projects as the most appropriate performance indicators.

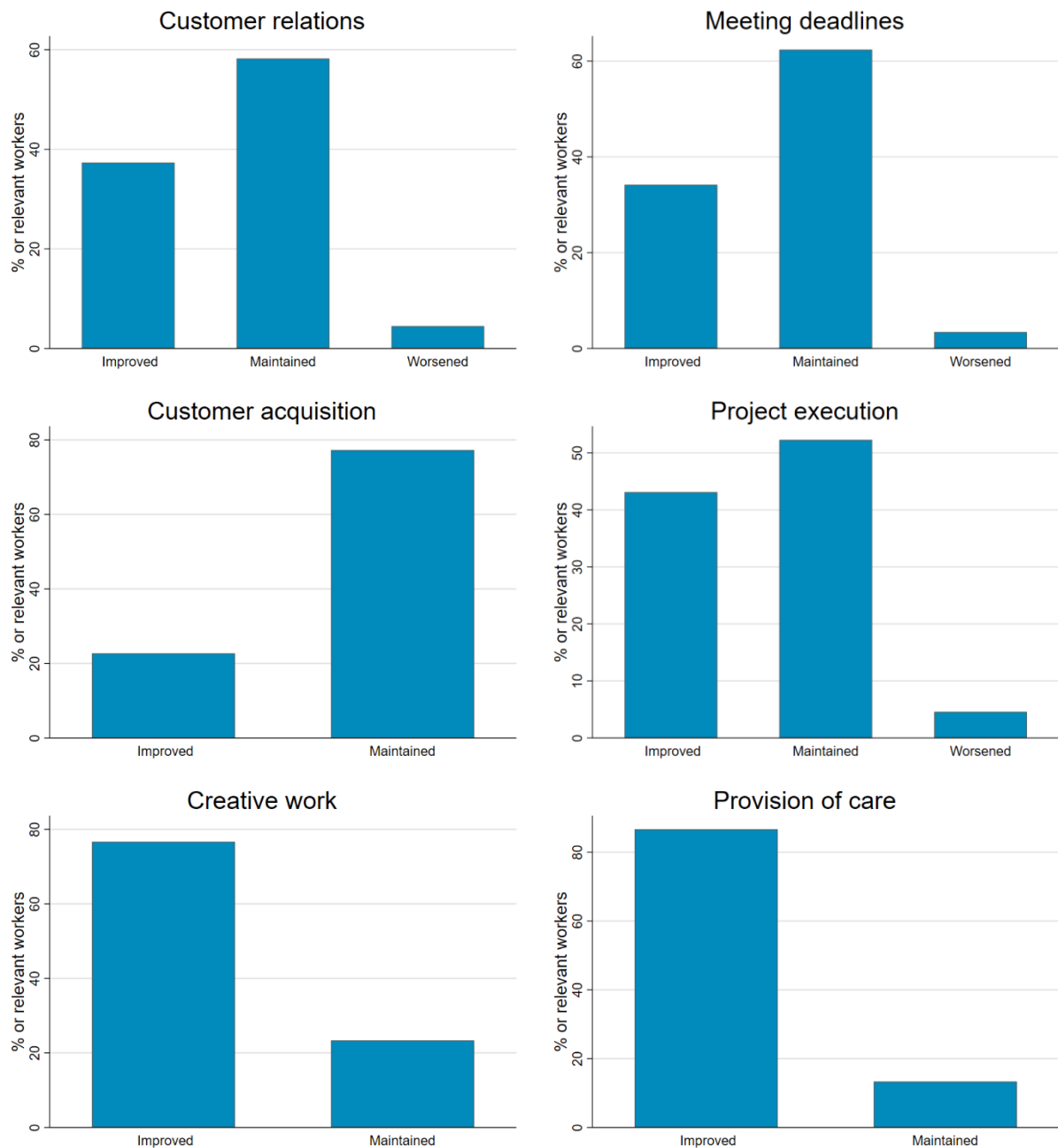
We asked workers to self-access the impact of the four-day week on each performance indicator they considered relevant in the context of their job. Workers clearly think that the four-day week has had a positive impact on their performance. Around 40 per cent say that it has improved meeting deadlines, executing projects, relationships and attracting clients. Creative work has improved for more than 70 per cent of relevant workers, and more than 85 per cent of care workers say their performance has improved. Only a minority of workers say that their ability to meet deadlines, carry out projects or relate to clients has worsened as a result of the change (Figure 30).

Figure 29: What dimensions better characterize how your performance can be measured?



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

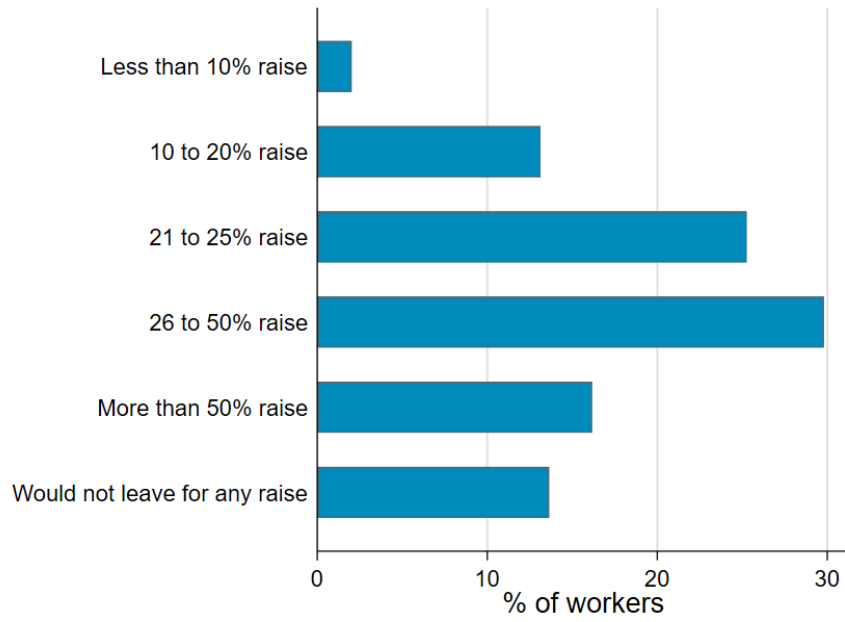
Figure 30: In what way do you think the reduction of the working week had an impact in your capacity to...



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

The final aspect we want to quantify is how much to workers value the new job format. We asked workers to imagine the hypothetical case where they were looking for alternative employment, in relation to their current job, how much they would need to be paid more (in relation to their current salary) to move to another organization where they worked five days (Figure 31). It should be noted that around 85 per cent of workers would only move to a new job where they worked five days a week if they were paid more than 20 per cent of their current salary, and 14 per cent of workers would not leave for any amount. Almost 30 per cent would demand increases of between 25 and 50 per cent. These results are important indicators of the monetary value that workers attach to the four-day week.

Figure 31: Wage increase necessary to leave the company for a five-day week job



Note: Data from the 200 employees of the companies participating in the pilot who responded to the pre-pilot survey and the 3-month survey.

All these dimensions will be analysed in more detail in the Final Report, which will incorporate the results of the 6-month surveys and take stock of the pilot project.

In their own words

Employee testimonies regarding difficulties in adjustment

‘Program with a lot of potential, despite the current implementation in the company where I am. The inability to predefine 4-day weeks in advance prevents good personal organization of the day off. Due to the company’s lack of internal organization, there is sometimes unnecessary stress when faced with the uncertainty of whether the week will be 4 or 5 days.’

‘The introduction of the four-day week coincided with an unusually intense period of work, which in turn was accompanied by the absence of the second member of my team. This prevented me from experimenting with this system in a non-typical scenario, so my opinion and responses should be taken with caution. In any case, an extra day’s rest made all the difference in dealing with the peak of stress I went through, and I consider it to have numerous benefits for my quality of life. It certainly poses many challenges for work management, especially when it depends on other departments/colleagues whose schedules are different from mine (different rest day). I would also like to point out that my company’s previous working hours were 35 hours a week, 7 hours a day. This meant that we had to adapt to a system of 8 hours a day, which although the norm in most companies, was not our case. This was undoubtedly the most difficult adaptation, although in my case, together with one less working day, it contributed to better organization/task planning. The introduction of this system in companies like mine, however, should perhaps be analyzed independently, as ‘tiredness’ or increased exhaustion may be related above all to the increase in daily working hours and not to the change in model.’

‘I still have some difficulties managing my schedule with service providers.’

‘When you work very close to the limit, having a 4-day week doesn’t help, it complicates things. There’s increased stress. And it can’t be said that there is effective experience when, over a long period of time, the 4-day week is cancelled due to overwork and lack of resources.’

‘Point to improve: many companies work on a break day, so it becomes complicated if there is an unforeseen event with the client on that day. This is still the biggest difficulty.’

‘Although some adaptation is necessary, it allows me to organize my professional and personal life in a different way. However, I think that psychologically receiving emails on the day we’re away creates some anxiety about not being able to respond or carry out the necessary activity.’

‘It would be a beneficial project if the company didn’t have a huge load of new projects, which doesn’t allow us to take advantage of the free time initially planned, but the days off allow us to be more flexible with our schedules.’

13. What is there to be done until the end of the project?

