

## **Reading**

A. Useful vocabulary for working or non-working days. Match each expression with its definition:

1. Time off: **sick leave – maternity leave — day off – paid holiday- public holiday**

A legal holiday limiting work or business: **public holiday**

Time off when you are expecting and just after having a baby: **maternity leave**

Time off when you are unwell: **sick leave**

A working day when you do not go to work: **day off**

Holiday entitlement: **paid holiday**

2. Working hours: **flexi-time - clock in (punch in) — part-time -- office hours — clock out – time clock – take a break – work day – casual Friday - knock off - full-time**

Register arrival at work on automatic time recorder: **clock in (punch in)**

Informal for “to stop working”: **knock off**

Employed for a standard number of hours’ working time: **full-time**

The hours between which the office is open: **office hours**

Flexible working hours at the beginning or the end of the day: **flexi-time**

Employed for less than the standard number of hours’ working time: **part-time**

Register time leaving work on automatic time recorder: **clock out**

An automatic time recorder: **time clock**

Stop working for a rest: **take a break**

A day on which work can be done: **work day**

A day when you do not have to wear a suit: **casual Friday**

3. We are very busy: **unsocial (unsociable) hours - 24/7 (twenty-four seven) — night shift – overtime**

We work 24 hours a day, seven days a week: **24/7 (twenty-four seven)**

Hours worked in addition to the regular quantity of working hours: **overtime**

Working at night (from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. for example): **night shift**

Working outside the socially recognized working day: **unsocial (unsociable) hours**

B. Read:

## **Why working fewer hours would make us more productive**

**A shorter working week could improve our mental and physical health and even mitigate climate change, research shows**

I worked 100-hour plus weeks as a hospital doctor in the early 1990s. Those dangerous rotas left me low and unable to string a sentence together, let alone give sick people what they needed. Doctors’ crazy hours were reduced, but it seems they may be returning with the new junior doctors’ contract.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister will head to the Parliament, planning to insist that UK workers should continue to be able to opt out of the 48-hour maximum working week. Long working hours are on the agenda.

But what about tackling the issue at its roots? What if everyone had a shorter working week? We would be healthier and happier, and society would be less unequal and more sustainable.

A top public health doctor recently said that long working hours was a big cause of mental ill health, and a big 2015 study linked long working hours with an increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

Less time at work would mean more time to care for children and family, be a school governor, look in on elderly neighbours, or organise a game of football. It would mean more time to create the community spiderweb of connections and favours and reciprocation that keeps the world going round.

More than 6 million of us in Britain work more than 45 hours a week, while 1.85 million of us are unemployed. While it would need to happen gradually, alongside some reskilling and training, a shorter working week for all would mean fairer distribution of available work. It would reduce the number of people working far too many hours, and also the number with no work at all.

For people on lower incomes, it would have to go hand-in-hand with a living wage – something that Britain now agrees on, across the political spectrum. For higher earners, it would fulfil pent-up demand – in London, for example, only 3% of jobs with average or higher salary levels are advertised as part-time, according to Timewise Foundation.

It would help with gender equality too, as men would have more time to look after the kids and the house. About 85% of in-work British men work more than 30 hours a week, but only 57% of in-work women.

Shorter hours could also help mitigate climate change. According to a report from the US Center for Economic and Policy Research, reduced greenhouse gas emissions go together with shorter working hours for a variety of factors including lower levels of consumption.

With all these benefits, cutting the working week should be at the top of every politician's agenda. But it bumps up against some big prejudices. Would the economy fall apart? How would our open-all-hours society function? And wouldn't we turn into a nation of couch potatoes?

The quick answer to all this is to look at other countries. People in the Netherlands work five hours a week less than in Britain, according to the OECD, and in Germany six hours less. The Dutch and German economies are doing fine, and the Dutch people are better known for their love of cycling than their inability to part from their sofas.

Productivity – output per working hour – improves with shorter hours. Across the world's richest countries, higher productivity correlates with lower working hours (see also OECD data). Ford's original workers were found less productive working more than 40 hours a week, a situation likely to be even more the case for people who work with knowledge rather than manually – who ever had their best ideas when they were exhausted?

All this means that we may well be able to work a shorter week and get just as much done. The 20th-century British economist John Hicks said: "It has probably never entered the heads of most economists ... that hours could be shortened and output maintained."

It is true that some workplaces, such as restaurants and hospitals for example, would not be able to run nine to five, Monday to Thursday. Tackling this is simply a management issue, and the result would be a better sharing of available work.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle is cultural, rooted in the Lutheran work ethic and our self-valuation according to how hard we strive. It is challenging to tackle such deep-rooted social and personal norms. But given how exhausted many of us are by the end of the week, and how welcome the idea of more time caring for our loved ones, our communities and ourselves (the side of life that cannot be made more "productive") – it seems like a challenge worth taking on.

A shorter working week is being tried in Sweden, where some care homes and hospitals are experimenting with a six-hour day, and in companies such as Serps Invaders, an Edinburgh digital marketing company where all staff work four days a week (and can also work remotely, and take a day's leave without notice).

It's not a new idea – John Maynard Keynes predicted in the 1930s that by about now, we would all be working a mere 15 hours a week. It's about time we got on with it.

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### **Now answer the questions:**

- 1. Find in the text a synonym for "shift": rotas**
- 2. What is the danger for doctors of working long hours?**

being too exhausted to provide any help to patients

**3. The Prime Minister wants British to: (choose the best answer)**

- a. ~~work as many hours as they want~~
- b. work more than 48 hours if they want to.**
- c. ~~work less than 48 hours if they want to.~~
- d. ~~cut the working week~~

**4. Fewer hours at work would mean**

- a. ~~less money.~~
- b. more time to commit to community work.**
- c. ~~more time to train.~~
- d. ~~more unemployment.~~

**5. When people don't work, it is assumed that**

- a. ~~they spend a lot of time doing sports.~~
- b. ~~they spend a lot of time looking for a job.~~
- c. they spend a lot of time watching TV.**
- d. ~~they spend a lot of time sleeping.~~

**6. When data from countries around the world is compared, it is clear that**

- a. people who work less than 40 hours weekly are more efficient.**
- b. ~~the less they work, the less they produce.~~
- c. ~~the more people work, the more they produce.~~
- d. ~~the results depend on whether it is manual or intellectual work.~~

**7. Working less is**

- a. difficult to accept by many because it is not in the British culture.**
- b. ~~a possibility most British would like to be offered.~~
- c. ~~impossible for those who only thrive at work.~~
- d. ~~a means to be more productive with one's family.~~

**Discussion:**

In the text:

Make a list of the cons of working long hours: **exhausting ; not healthy ; questions about economy and becoming lazy ; cultural work ethic**

Make a list of the pros of working fewer hours: **more efficient ; more equality ; more time for family/community ; fairer distribution of available work ; lower consumption (climate) ; taking example on other European countries**

Personal opinion:

What do you think?

I think that working less hours is great for people to have more time for their families or side-projects. For what I know even a 40 hours week can be exhausting but for jobs with responsibilities deadlines and targeted results are often beyond reachable and put a lot of stress on people. Even if this is a known management method for reaching real goals, I think we could increase productivity and happiness at work by adapting those targets and expect more of the employes instead of less results.