



Name:

Date:

Working for the Future

Most people in the United States, in theory, work on average eight hours a day, five days a week. In truth, though, many people work much longer than this. Indeed, according to one survey, 86 percent of men and 67 percent of women work more than this each week. Although the five-day workweek is standard, some experts say it makes more sense for people to only work four days and enjoy a three-day weekend each week.

According to supporters of the four-day workweek, reducing the number of days people work has many advantages. Employees have three days in which they can rest, they tend to be healthier and more hardworking when they are at work. Moreover, they take fewer holidays from work to do things like visiting the doctor or the bank. Another advantage is that employers can close buildings for the day and save money on lighting and heating. This is also better for the environment. In addition, people do not need to travel to work as much, and this reduces car use.

The biggest experiment with a four-day workweek started in the state of Utah in 2008. The economy was doing poorly, and the state needed to cut its spending. Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. surprised everyone when he announced that most Utah public employees would only work from Monday to Thursday. Each Friday, about 900 state buildings were closed and state vehicles were left in their garages. As a result, Utah saved millions of dollars. Employees preferred the new system, even though they had to work for 10 hours on the days they worked. Additionally, carbon emissions were cut by 14 percent.

However, in 2011, a law was made that brought back to the old system. This was done because some Utah residents thought it was inconvenient that government offices were only open four days a week. Although the experiment came to an end, some local cities continued with the new system. According to experts, in the future there will be a strong need to reduce energy use to help fight global warming. Also, many economists say there is likely to be low economic growth. For these reasons, the four-day workweek seems likely to become more common in many countries, even in private companies.



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1. What is true about many people in the United States?
 - a. They want to work over eight hours per day but are not allowed to.
 - b. They work much longer than what is thought to be average.
 - c. They are able to take at least three days off every week.
 - d. They are being asked to take more days off during the week.

2. What is one thing that happens when people have a four-day workweek?
 - a. They take fewer days off for things like medical appointments.
 - b. They have trouble getting back on schedule after the long weekend.
 - c. Companies cannot get their employees to work hard at the office.
 - d. Companies are able to sell buildings that are not being used.

3. In 2008, Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr.,
 - a. announced that it would be illegal to drive downtown on Fridays.
 - b. created a law that required companies to cut carbon emissions.
 - c. shut down government buildings on Mondays and Thursdays.
 - d. introduced a new idea for saving money in the state of Utah.

4. Why did Utah decide to end its experiment in 2011?
 - a. Cities decided to stop using the state's system and create a new one.
 - b. The experiment caused economic growth in the state to slow down.
 - c. Some residents wanted government offices to be open five days a week.
 - d. People were more worried about global warming than working conditions.

5. Which of the following statements is true?
 - a. There are fewer public holidays in the U.S. than there are in other countries.
 - b. Governments are less likely than private companies to adopt shorter workweeks.
 - c. Working longer hours for fewer days has been shown to help the environment.
 - d. Women in the U.S. have been working 67 percent more hours than men have.