

# Is a 4-day work week feasible in South Africa?

A recent trend indicates that several countries worldwide are considering adopting a four-day workweek. As such, the question arose whether this would be feasible in South Africa.

At first glance, it seems apparent that our country's labour laws would have to be amended to accommodate such a change.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) regulates the working hours of employees who earn less than the ministerial threshold of R 224,080.30 annually. Certain sectors are also bound by sectoral determination. In addition to the BCEA, it should also be kept in mind that some companies are bound to collective agreements with trade unions, in terms whereof employees' working hours are regulated.

It is therefore clear that working hours, among many other conditions, are strictly regulated by labour legislation, and there is no shortcut. Therefore, South Africa would need to amend the aforementioned legislation to start implementing a four-day workweek.

The situation becomes less complicated for employees who earn more than the R224,000.00 threshold, as these employees are not regulated by the BCEA and are, more often than not, office workers with more flexible schedules.

Considering the feedback received from countries that recently took the leap and implemented this four four-day workweek, mixed results were received.

On the one hand, employees welcomed the idea of fewer working hours and more free time. Employers, on the other hand, felt the crunch of incurring extra business costs by hiring more employees to account for the hours lost because of the shortened workweek.

It should also be kept in mind that employers, and likely the economy, would require the amount of work output to remain the same. This could ultimately result in employees experiencing increased pressure to get the required work

done in less time.

Will we see a four day-work week soon?

The fact of the matter remains that it is still too early to speculate. One thing is, however, certain, and that is that legislation and regulations would need to be amended to accommodate such a shift in South Africa.

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