

Robert—
—Walters



Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



Introduction

The concept of work has undergone profound re-evaluation in recent years. During the pandemic, companies adapted to lockdowns and social distancing measures with a variety of virtual tools and flexible work arrangements. This has opened up the workforce to alternative work models – such as the 4-day work week.

Known for its rigorous work culture, the Asian region has seen many conversations around productivity and work-life balance as its workforce adjusted to new norms and standards. Flexible and hybrid work initiatives are now a mainstay across many markets in the region, but are shorter work weeks on the horizon for Asia? As businesses navigate rising costs and an ever-changing labour market, can a 4-day work week improve both employee well-being and productivity? For companies in growth sectors, will it help attract and retain talent in a competitive market? With the concept of a 4-day work week now more familiar, we're checking in with talent and organisations to find out how they feel about it.

In this report, dive in deep with us as we speak to professionals and employers across Asia to harness insights into a 4-day work week.

Methodology

Robert Walters surveyed over 5,000 professionals and companies across 11 Asian markets (Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mainland China, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam). Conducted over a period of 6 weeks in March and April 2024, the survey aimed to uncover perceptions about the 4-day work week and its potential impact on talent and organisations in Asia. We sought to understand how respondents perceive the benefits and challenges of adopting a shorter work week in the region.

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Overview - Asia

Is a 4-day work week relevant to Asia?

The answer to that depends on who you're speaking to.

89% of professionals want a trial

66% of employers find the concept feasible, and

25% of them have plans, or are likely to trial or transition to a 4-day work week

Across Asia, the majority of employees are interested in trying out a shorter week, and for the most part, businesses find the idea plausible too.

However, there's a considerable gap between intention and action.

Few employers are taking definitive steps towards implementing or experimenting with this work model.

What's holding them back?

Each subregion in Asia has distinct considerations around a shorter work week.

Across the board, employees say they worry about:

68% More stress as workload remains the same

39% Prefer splitting workload across 5 days

36% Possible pay reduction

Meanwhile, some of the top concerns that came up for businesses were:

57% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays)

56% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

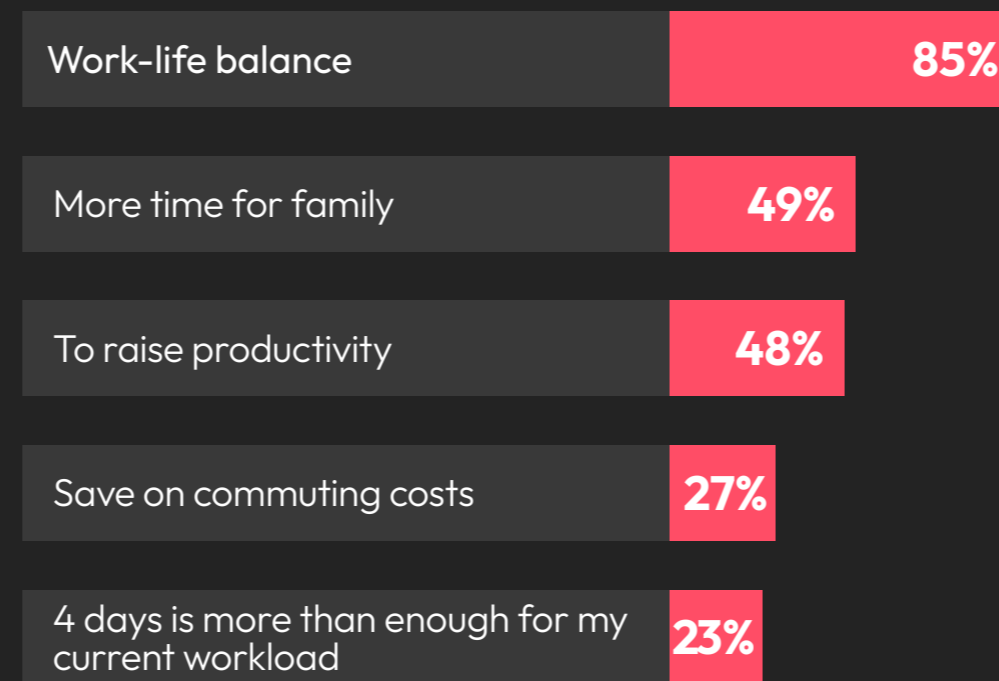
42% Difficulty in implementing across the entire office, resulting in employee unhappiness



Still, talent and organisations are on the same page about the benefits of a 4-day week.

Both businesses and workers believe it could raise productivity levels, though this tends to be secondary to the perceived impact on employee well-being and work-life balance.

Top reasons why professionals want to try a shorter work week

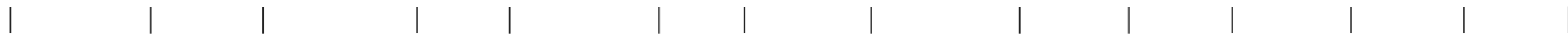


Top reasons why businesses are interested in a shorter work week



The 4-day work week is a significant force in talent attraction and retention

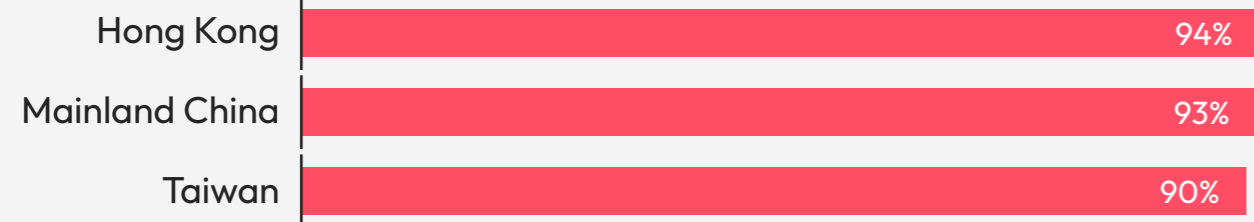
Which non-monetary initiative would businesses look to improve or implement to attract and retain talent?



How does interest in a 4-day work week vary across professionals in Asia?

Would you like your employer to implement a 4-day work week trial?

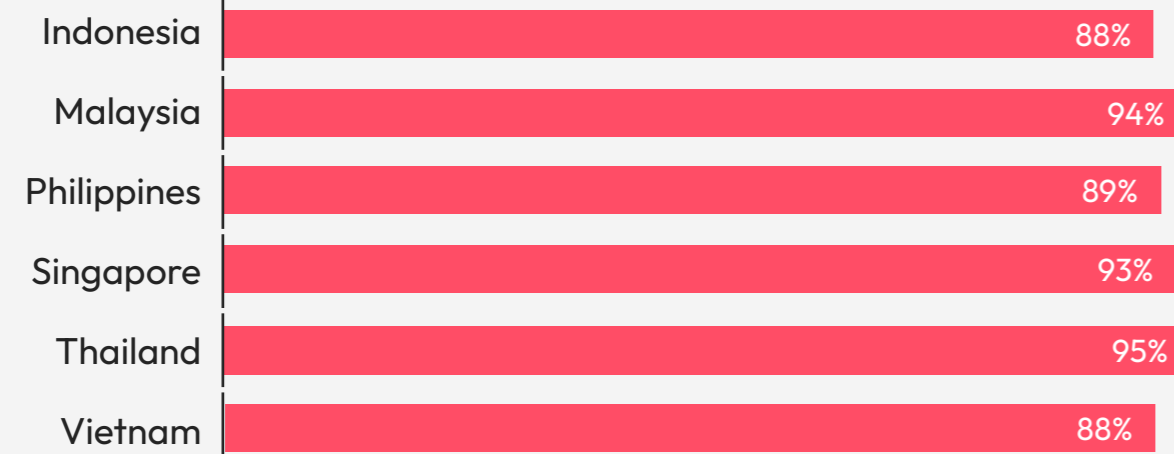
Greater China



North East Asia



South East Asia



Most employers find a 4-day week possible, but it's taking time for the concept to catch on

Do employers think a 4-day work week is a feasible concept?

Greater China



North East Asia



South East Asia



Greater China

Compared to other subregions in Asia, the transition to a 4-day work week is less likely to take place soon for Greater China.

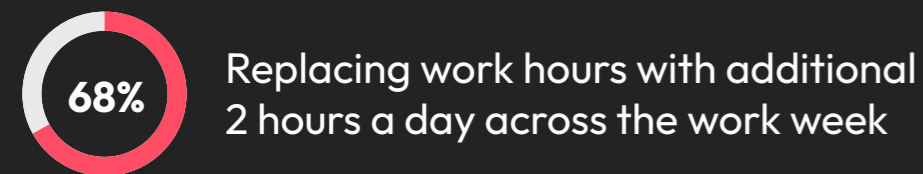
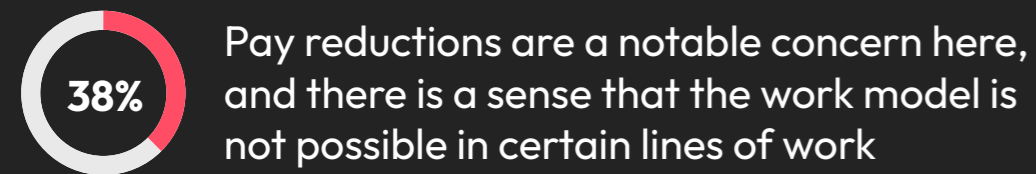
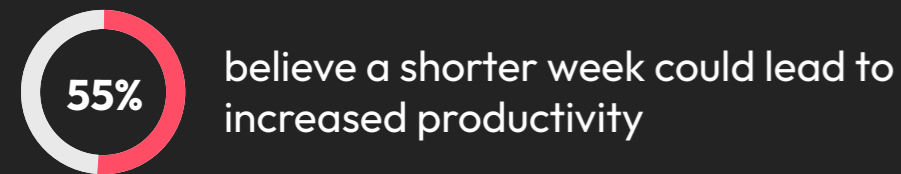
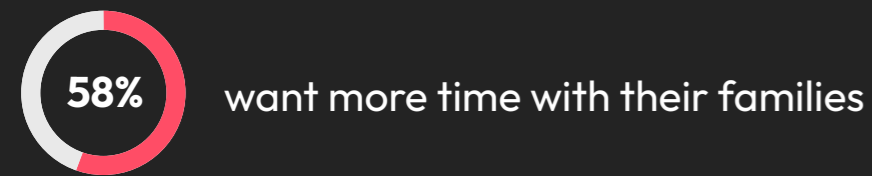
There is a strong appetite for a 4-day work week here, with 92% of professionals eager to adopt such a schedule – a proportion second only to South East Asia by a narrow margin. Most companies also believe in the potential of a compressed week, but are hesitant about making definitive plans to move ahead to this work model.



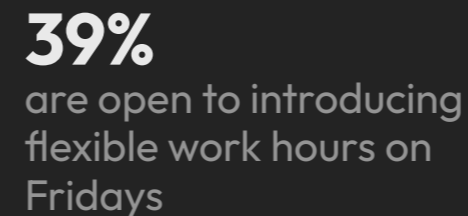
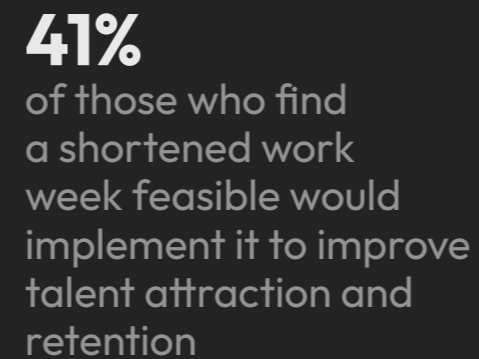
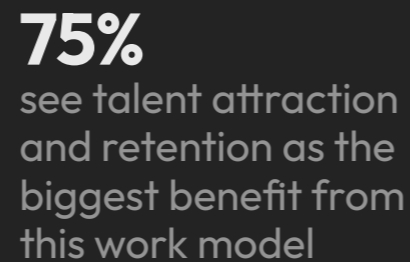
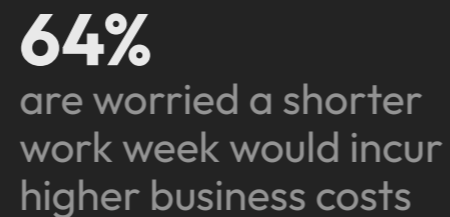
Key factors that influence talent and organisations

The benefits of a 4-day work week are not lost on employers in Greater China, and they are relatively open to exploring a range of flexible work arrangements – though more so for talent attraction and retention than to raise productivity levels. Business costs appear to be the greatest barrier against a shortened work week.

Professionals here aren't after work-life balance just for the sake of it.



Compared to other subregions, Greater China's employers scored the highest on all these metrics:



Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Done thoughtfully, reduced hours and flexible work models can be mutually beneficial for both employees and employers. Businesses can actively involve their employees to design work arrangements that enhance productivity and wellness, while still enabling everyone to stay on track with the organisation's larger business goals.”



Jeremy Sampson
CEO
Robert Walters North East Asia
& Greater China

Hong Kong

Nowhere in Greater China is there more zeal for a shortened work week than in Hong Kong. However, just like the rest of the region, a lower proportion of employers find such a work model feasible. Two-thirds of such employers feel that a shorter work week can boost productivity levels, and even fewer have plans to implement it.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Consistent with the rest of Greater China, Hong Kong professionals want a 4-day work week to improve their work-life balance, have more time with family and to raise productivity. Doubts around the work model center on the stress of managing the same workload across a shortened week, and reduced pay. It is also the only market in Asia that raised increased workloads (due to covering less productive colleagues) as a significant concern.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 89%** Work-life balance
- 61%** More time for family
- 48%** To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

- 59%** More stressful as workload remains the same
- 47%** Workload increases from need to cover colleagues who are less productive
- 41%** Possible pay reduction



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Given that the 4-day work week is such a desirable arrangement for so many professionals, companies in Hong Kong are sold on the benefits that a 4-day work week can have on talent attraction and retention, more so than on employee well-being or productivity. 27% of employers who are keen on the concept report that they are keen to implement it as a way to recruit and maintain a skilled workforce.

Although a reasonable number of employers believe the concept could work, the market is still more unlikely to run a trial or transition soon until they address the financial implications involved in such an arrangement.

They find it viable because of...

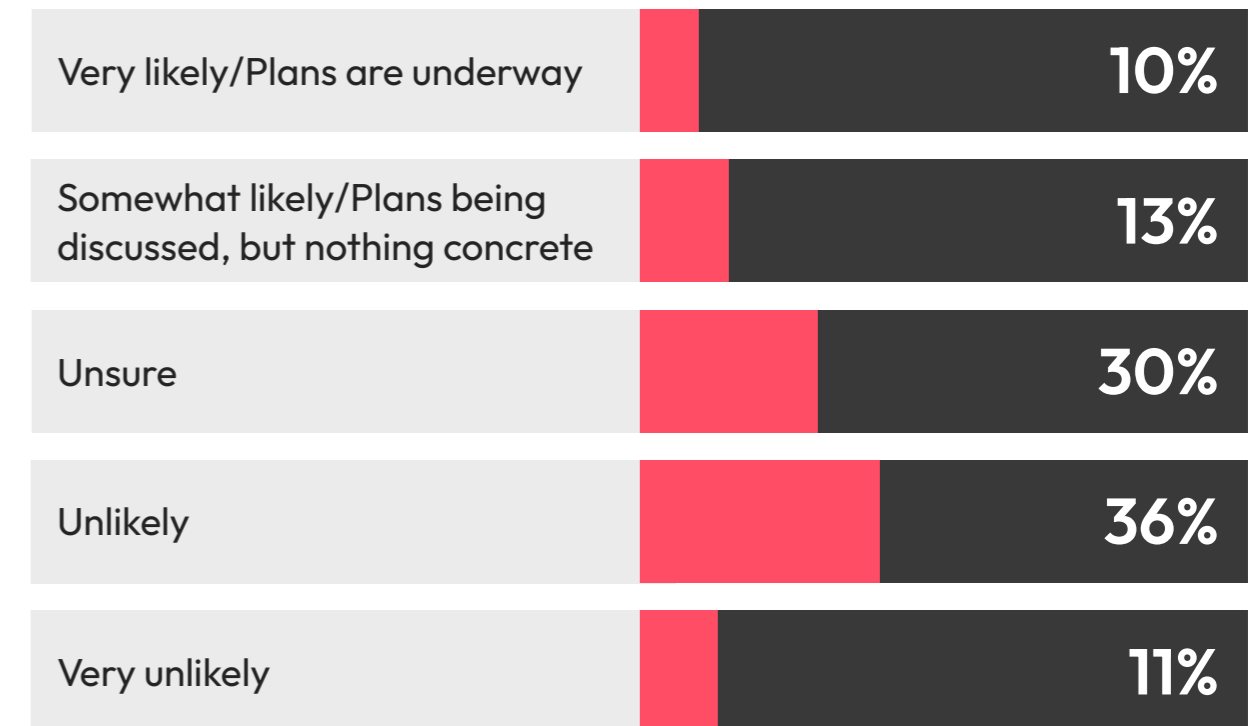
94% Enhanced talent attraction and retention

They are most worried about...

65% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

Given the enthusiasm for a 4-day work week, it's no surprise that Hong Kong professionals are very likely to apply to companies that offer it - and they are even willing to give up work interactions, hybrid work and training opportunities for it. Where they are less likely to budge is with their overall compensation package and allotted vacation time.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
58%

Training opportunities
42%

Hybrid work
48%

Least willing to accept:

Reduction in vacation leaves
22%

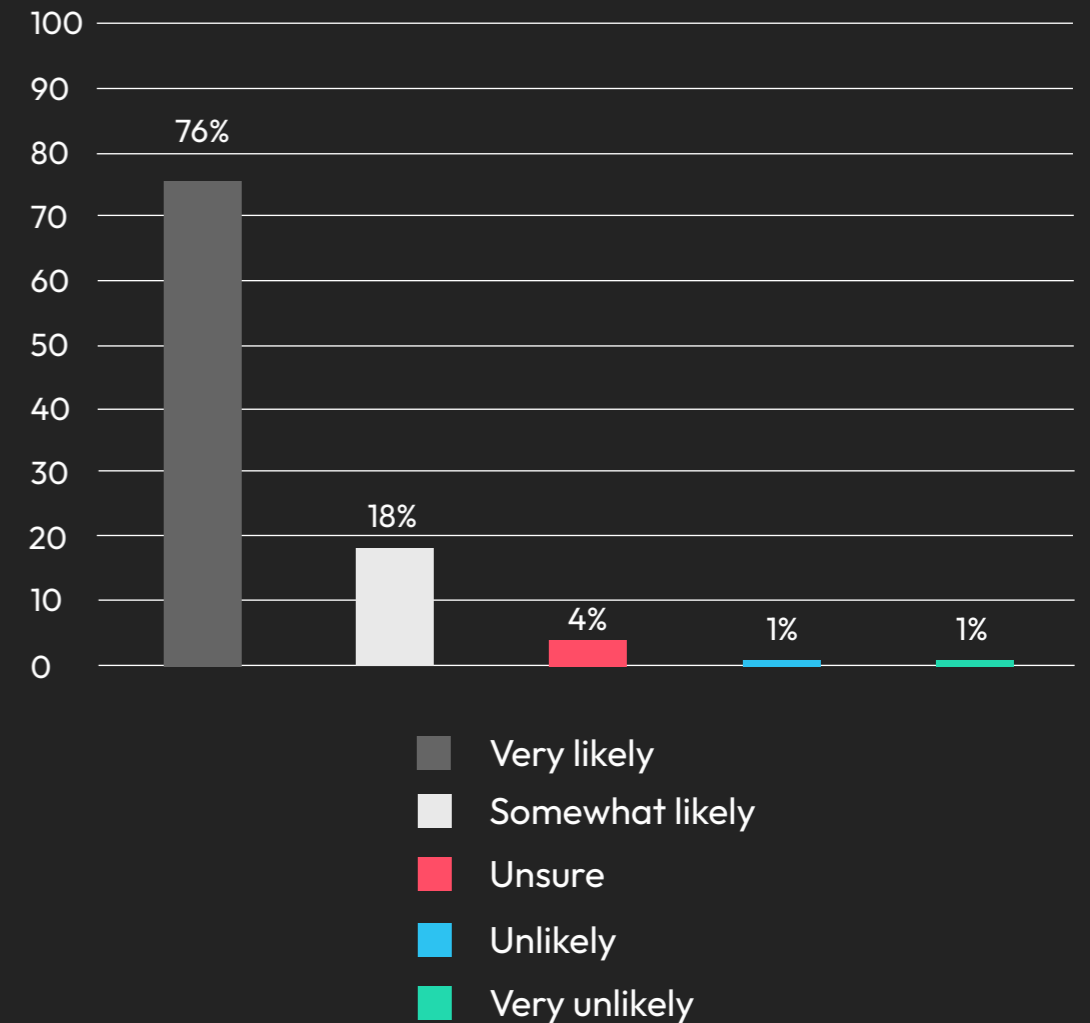
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

41% 4-day work week with full pay

37% Pay increment

20% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Instead of a fixed 4-day work week, 37% of employers would consider implementing more flexible work hours on Fridays. At present, companies are less prepared to introduce initiatives related to work schedules, preferring to attract and retain talent through well-being initiatives instead.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 37%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 28%** None at the moment
- 13%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 8%** 4.5-day work week
- 8%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 6%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week

Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

37%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

22%

Learning and development programmes

8%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

6%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“The shift towards flexible work arrangements doesn’t always entail ramping up hiring volumes. Instead, it calls for a smarter approach to workforce planning. Collaborate with trusted talent experts to refine your hiring strategy and work out how you can create a lean, yet productive workforce to meet the needs of your business.”



John Mullally
Managing Director
Robert Walters Hong Kong



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Above all, Mainland Chinese professionals believe that a 4-day work week trial could give them better work-life balance. Other popular reasons for wanting the trial include boosting productivity and carving out more time with family.

Notably, 52% of talent – the highest proportion in Asia – feel that such a work model is not possible in their line of work. In contrast with the rest of the region, talents here are also most worried about pay cuts from a reduced work week, and a sizable 38% of employees reported wanting to spend more time at work to advance their careers.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

93% Work-life balance

59% To raise productivity

51% More time for family

Top concerns against a trial

62% More stressful as workload remains the same

52% Not possible in line of work

48% Possible pay reduction



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Employers in Mainland China recognise the benefits of a 4-day work week – with 43% of those who find the concept feasible saying it’s a model they would tap on to appeal to their prospective and existing talent. But ultimately, the market is still wrestling with the business costs that could be incurred to make this work arrangement a reality.

They find it viable because of...

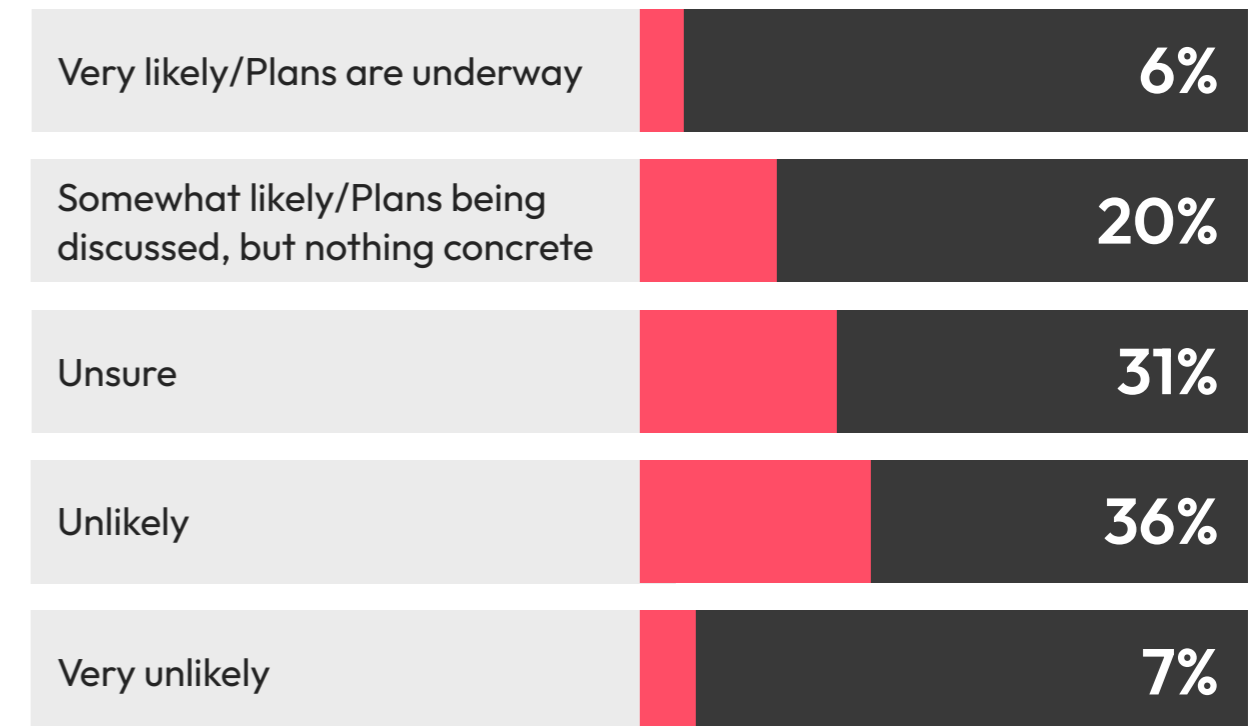
65% Enhanced talent attraction and retention

They are most worried about...

71% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays)

Is a 4-day work week Asia’s next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

Against other markets in Asia, Mainland Chinese professionals are among the most certain to apply to companies that offer a shortened work week, but salaries also play a critical role in their career decisions. Location independence and work interactions are less of a priority.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
56%

Hybrid work
40%

Standard work hours,
and instead extend each
day in the shortened
week by 2 hours
46%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
21%

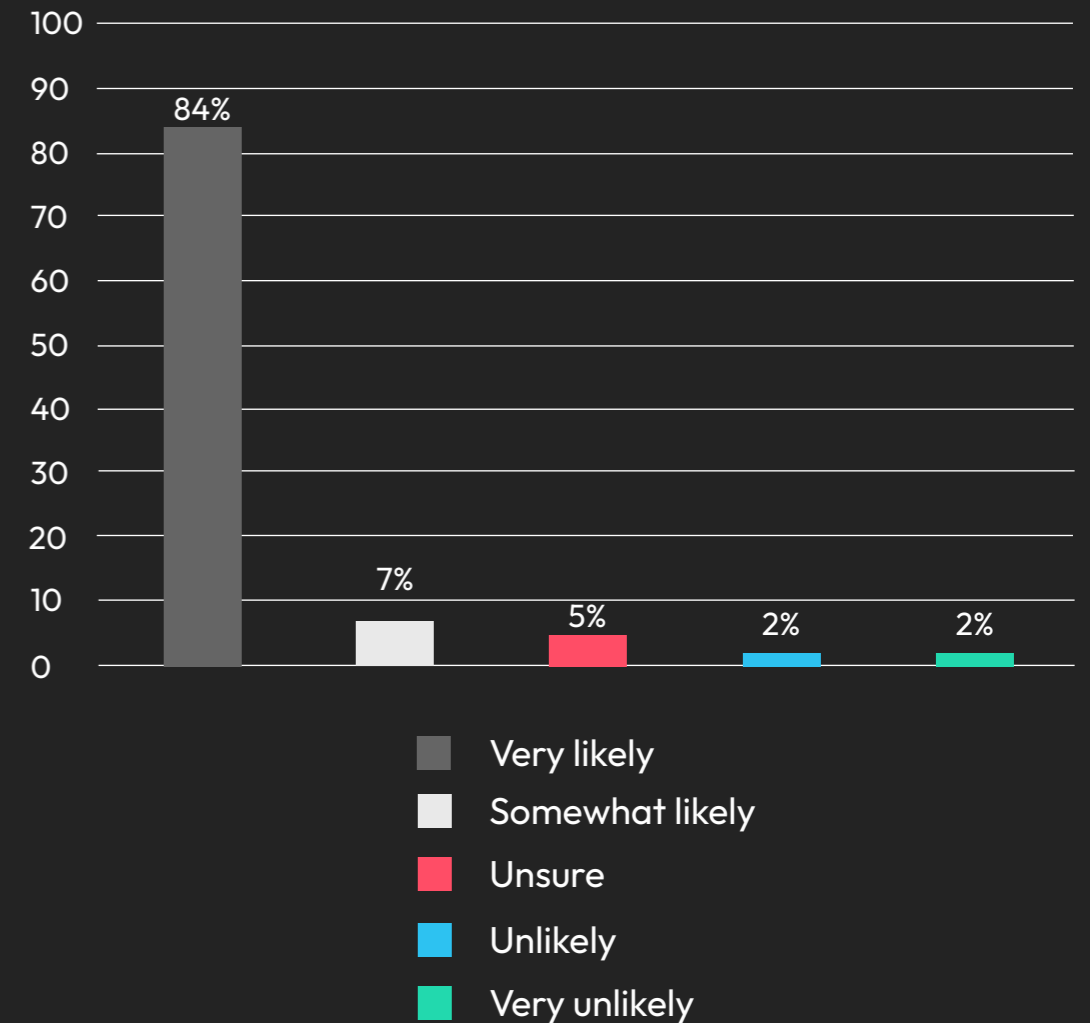
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

45% 4-day work week with full pay

41% Pay increment

11% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

While Mainland China is less likely to trial or transition to a 4-day work week anytime soon, within Asia, employers here are most receptive to implementing flexible work hours on Fridays. Those interested in this work model may require more time to deliberate a potential rollout, working through considerations around the associated business costs and operations.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 48%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 19%** 4.5-day work week
- 12%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 9%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 7%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 5%** None at the moment



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

35%

Learning and development programmes

18%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

3%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

1%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Creating a workplace with high productivity, competitive compensation, and flexibility integrated into employees’ schedules may not be an easy feat, but the benefits are well worth the effort. By helping employees strike a harmonious balance between their personal and professional aspirations, businesses cultivate a loyal team committed to long-term success.”



Sean Li
General Manager
Robert Walters Mainland China



Taiwan

Professionals in Taiwan showed great interest in a 4-day work week. However, the proportion of respondents who were keen for their employers to trial such a work model fell slightly short of counterparts in other Greater China markets.

Despite this, employers in Taiwan seem ready to meet the workforce's eagerness head-on. Its percentage of employers who find the 4-day work week feasible is among the highest in Asia, and this market also has the highest proportion of such employers who believe a shorter work week can improve productivity. This indicates a broader receptiveness towards exploring this new work model.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Taiwan's professionals see the 4-day work week as a pathway to improved work-life balance and heightened productivity. The prospect of spending more quality time with family also serves as an important motivator for many. Still, concerns linger regarding workload management, potential pay reductions, and the overall feasibility of implementing such a schedule.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 85%** Work-life balance
- 59%** More time for family
- 58%** To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

- 78%** More stressful as workload remains the same
- 46%** Prefer splitting workload across 5 days
- 33%** Not possible in line of work/Possible pay reduction

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Compared to businesses in Greater China, a higher percentage of companies in Taiwan consider the 4-day work week a feasible concept. 47% of these businesses would also consider introducing the 4-day work week to better attract and retain talent. Yet the transition to such a work model is unlikely to happen for most businesses in the near future, with the impact on customer experience being the primary reason.

They find it viable because of...

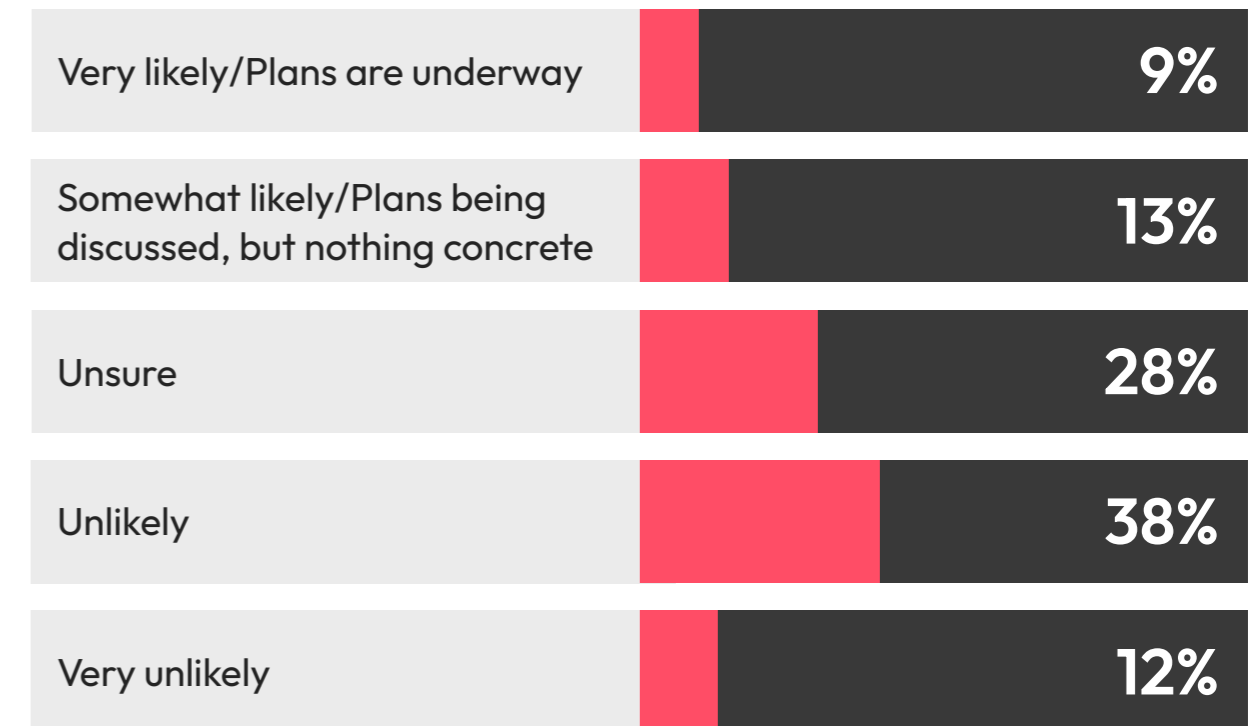
76% Improved employee productivity levels

They are most worried about...

69% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

While most Taiwan's professionals are likely to apply to companies that offer a 4-day work week, 57% of them said they were 'very likely' to – the lowest in Asia. They may hold a broader perspective when assessing job opportunities, considering a variety of factors besides work schedule.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
79%

Hybrid work
48%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
37%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
8%

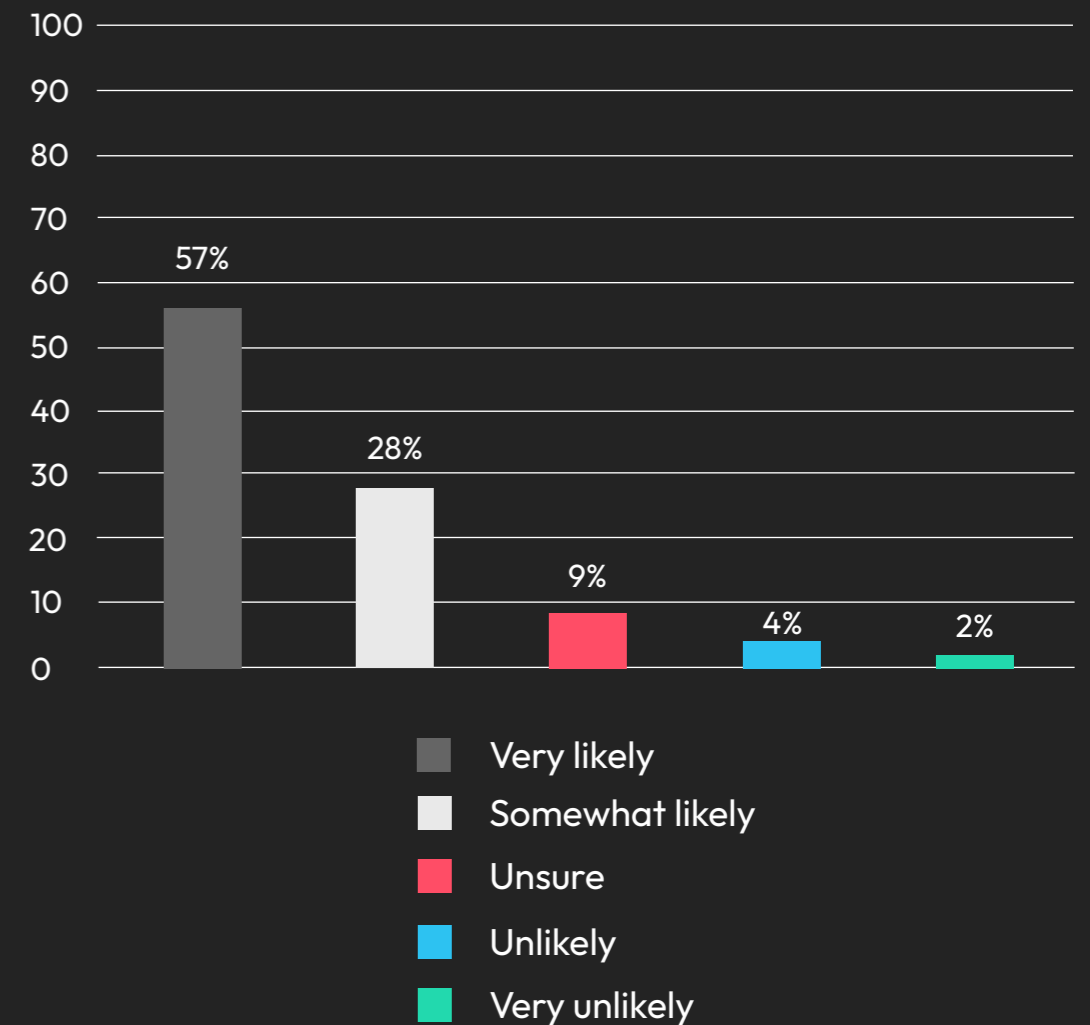
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

48% 4-day work week with full pay

28% Pay increment

18% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Fewer employers in Taiwan have immediate plans to pilot a 4-day work week, but many still see it as a valuable tool for talent attraction and retention. Keeping in mind the broader view employees take, employers may aim to balance time-based and monetary benefits.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 35%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 25%** 4.5-day work week
- 12%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 10%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 9%** None at the moment
- 9%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week

Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

28%

Learning and development programmes

23%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

3%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Staying attuned to the talent pool’s motivations helps you attract the people you need for your business, and it also fosters an empowering work environment that keeps employees engaged. Find the right balance among flexible work schedules, well-being, and career development opportunities to accommodate your teams’ diverse working styles and career objectives.”



John Winter
General Manager
Robert Walters Taiwan

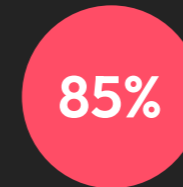


North East Asia

Cultural norms around work ethic and dedication have a deep influence on professionals and businesses' perceptions towards a 4-day work week in North East Asia.

Although professionals here want to improve their work-life balance – more than any other region in Asia – this enthusiasm is tempered by both talent and organisations, who are reluctant to give the work model a go.

Workers here are less convinced that a shorter work week could bring about bigger gains in productivity. Employers here are also less likely to find this work model feasible, so it's unsurprising that the region has the lowest proportion of businesses with intentions to cut the work week down by a day.



of professionals want a trial , and...



of them feel it can increase productivity levels



of employers find the concept feasible, and...



of them feel it can increase productivity levels



have plans, or are likely to trial or transition to a 4-day work week



Key factors that influence talent and organisations

Where there is more openness towards alternative work arrangements in other parts of Asia, North East Asia will likely continue to prioritise traditional work practices. There is more of a stated preference to distribute workloads across 5 days, which could point to why many feel a shorter work week is unlikely to have a positive impact on productivity levels.

For professionals here, pay reductions and workload management stand out as some of their biggest concerns.



Employers are less inclined to re-imagine the structure of the work week due to concerns around costs and customer experience.



“The gap between employee aspirations for work-life balance and organisational objectives offers a prime opportunity to recalibrate talent attraction and retention strategies. Even with cost considerations, businesses can devise their own solutions to maintain operational efficiency while accommodating what employees need.”



Jeremy Sampson
CEO
Robert Walters
North East Asia
& Greater China

Japan

Despite Japan's national government announcing guidelines for a 4-day work week and strong support from professionals, it ranks the second lowest in Asia for employers who find the model achievable. Furthermore, it leads the region with the highest number of employers with no immediate plans to pilot such a work week. Compared to other markets, Japan also has the fewest proportion of workers who believe a compressed week can benefit productivity levels. These factors suggest that the Japan market isn't as primed for this work model.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Professionals in Japan are after a 4-day work week for better work-life balance, which would also give them more time to spend with their families. However, they also cite concerns regarding increased stress from compressing workload into fewer days, prompting some to prefer spreading out their work across more days. Notably, Japan also records one of the highest proportions of employees wary of pay reductions resulting from a shortened work week.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

86% Work-life balance

43% More time for family

38% To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

71% More stressful as workload remains the same

43% Prefer splitting workload across 5 days

41% Possible pay reduction

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



57%
of employees would prefer a fixed 4-day work week for all employees over a selective one

What employers think of a 4-day work week

Most employers aren't sure, or don't intend to move forward with a 4-day work week, even as many of them see how it could benefit their employees' well-being and talent attraction and retention. 27% of employers who find the model feasible are open to exploring it to stand out as an employer of choice. The primary concerns are around business continuity: spikes in business costs or weakened customer experience.

They find it viable because of...

80% Improved employee well-being

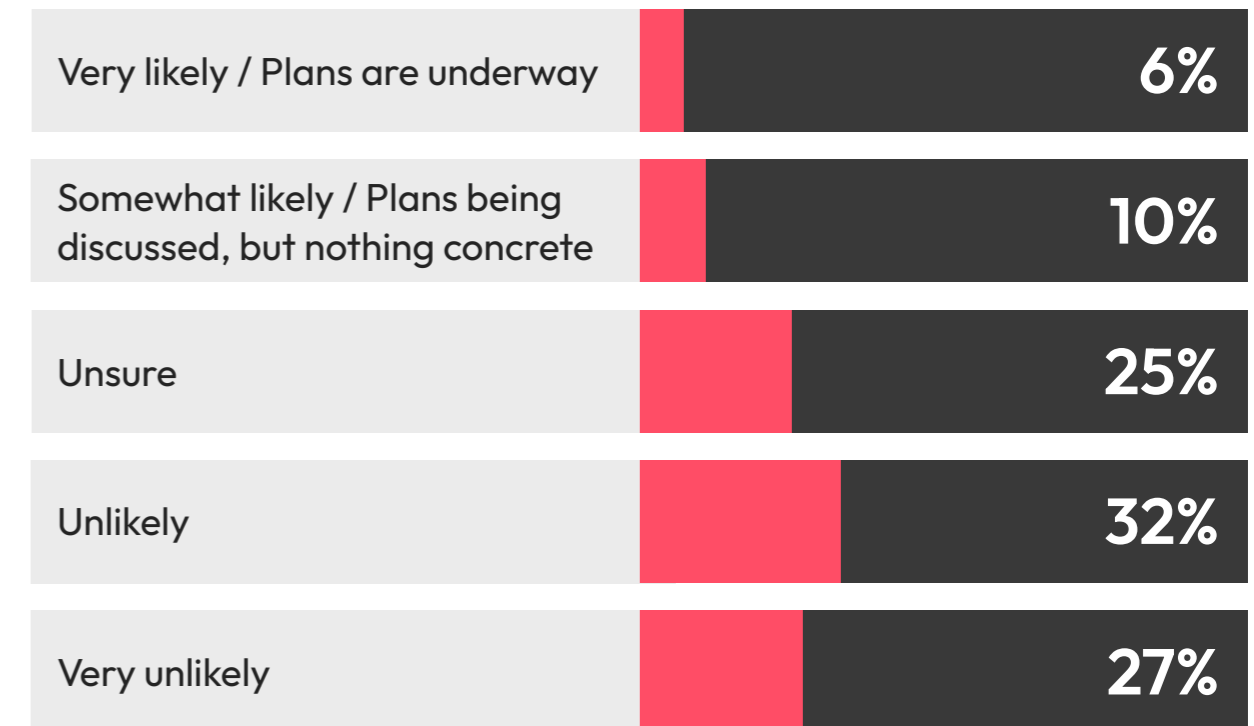
They are most worried about...

59% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays)

58% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

While the overall sentiment is still positive, 61% of employees indicated they are 'very likely' to apply to companies with a 4-day work week – one of the lowest scores in Asia. Ultimately, Japan's professionals prioritise a good balance between salary and the autonomy to choose where they'd like to work from, with more expressing interest in 'work from anywhere' options over pay raises.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
65%

Training opportunities
34%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
46%

Least willing to accept:

Reduction in vacation leaves
15%

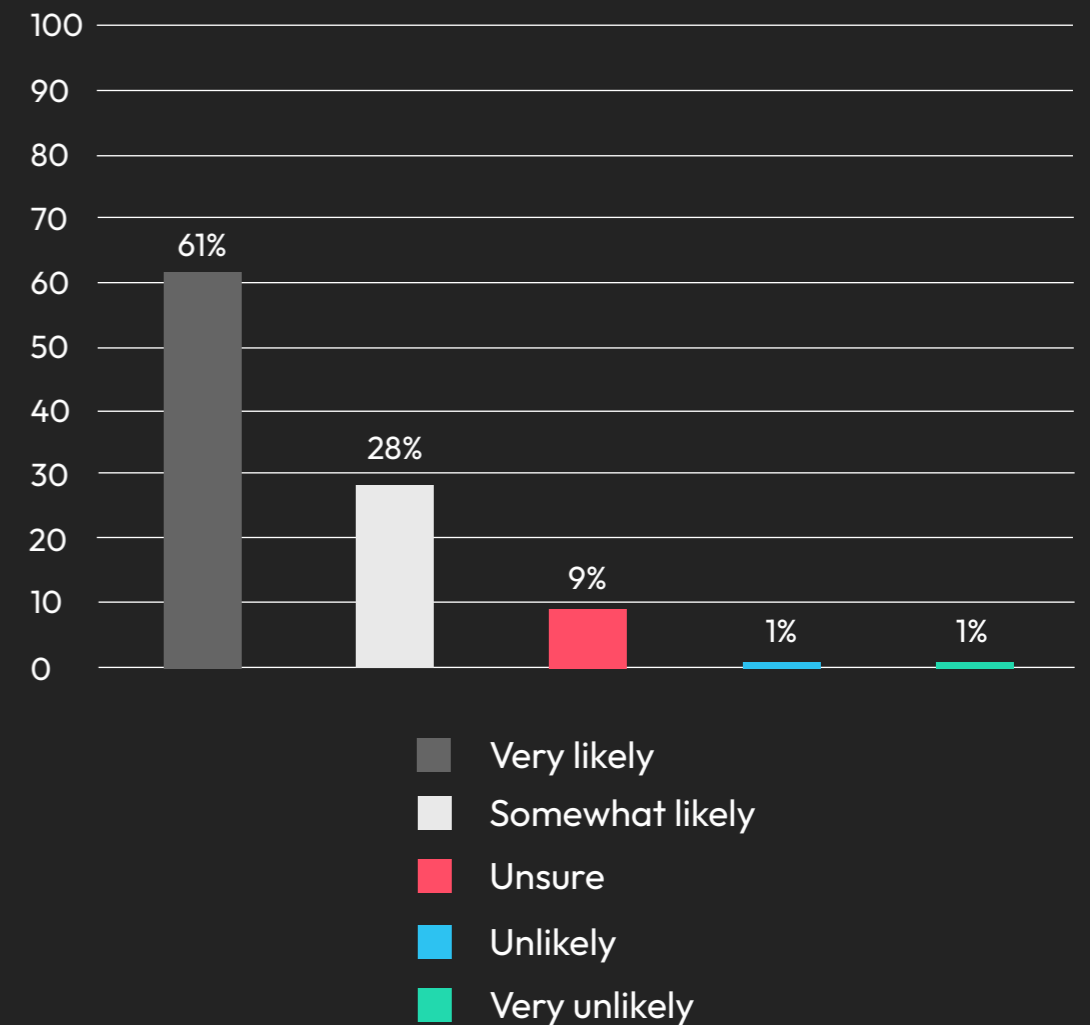
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

44% 4-day work week with full pay

34% Work from anywhere

19% Pay increment

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?



Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

In contrast to other markets, Japan's employers are less enthused over flexible work options. Most companies show no inclination to reshape the conventional work schedule. There is still a slightly heavier emphasis placed on initiatives aimed at employee well-being.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 49%** None at the moment
- 20%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 10%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 9%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 6%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 6%** 4.5-day work week

Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:



Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Besides alternative work models, consider implementing other strategies to streamline workload management and maintain business continuity. Employees can show up energised and do their best work when they have ample time and space for their families and personal pursuits.”



Rachna Ratra
Managing Director
Robert Walters Japan



South Korea

Within North East Asia, employers in South Korea present more open attitudes towards the prospect of a 4-day work week. However, although a majority of employers feel that a condensed schedule could pan out and many also believe in its impact on productivity, the majority of employers with these sentiments have no plans, or are undecided about making the shift in the coming years. More attention is placed on other forms of benefits; less so on restructuring work schedules.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Professionals in Japan are after a 4-day work week for better work-life balance, which would also give them more time to spend with their families. However, they also cite concerns regarding increased stress from compressing workload into fewer days, prompting some to prefer spreading out their work across more days. Notably, Japan also records one of the highest proportions of employees wary of pay reductions resulting from a shortened work week.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

89% Work-life balance

52% More time for family

51% To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

65% More stressful as workload remains the same

41% Possible pay reduction

29% Not possible in line of work/Increased expenditure due to more time spent outside of work



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Employers have a favourable view of the 4-day work week, and they are aligned with professionals' sentiments that it could uplift productivity. But they aren't quite ready to make it a reality yet. Those who find a compressed week feasible would go with other initiatives to attract and retain talent, with just 17% opting for the 4-day work week as their top pick. Most acknowledge the gains on employee productivity from such a model, but also feel it might entail a rise in business expenditures.

They find it viable because of...

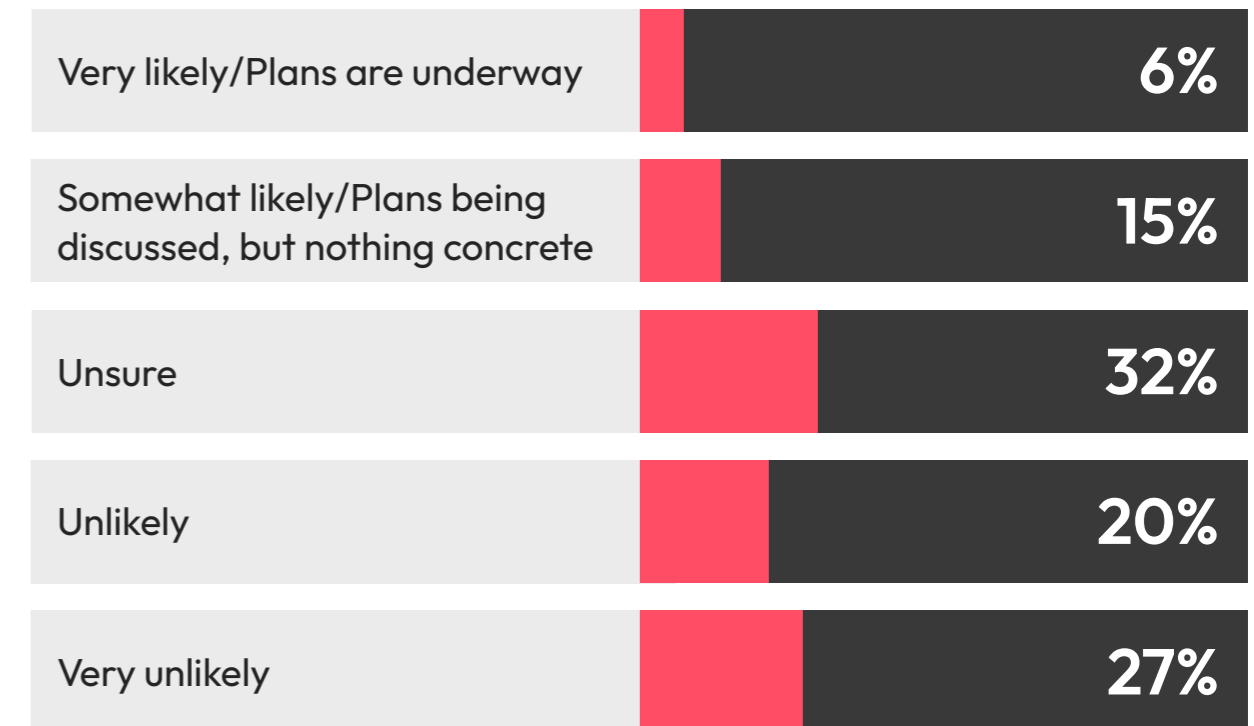
71% Improved employee productivity levels

They are most worried about...

65% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

Professionals in South Korea are generally keen to apply to companies offering a shorter work week, though consistent with the larger trend in North East Asia, a smaller proportion of employees said they were 'very likely' to do so than in other regions. Salaries play a significant role for talent here, more so than hybrid work, location independence and work socials.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Hybrid work
52%

Work social events
45%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
48%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
21%

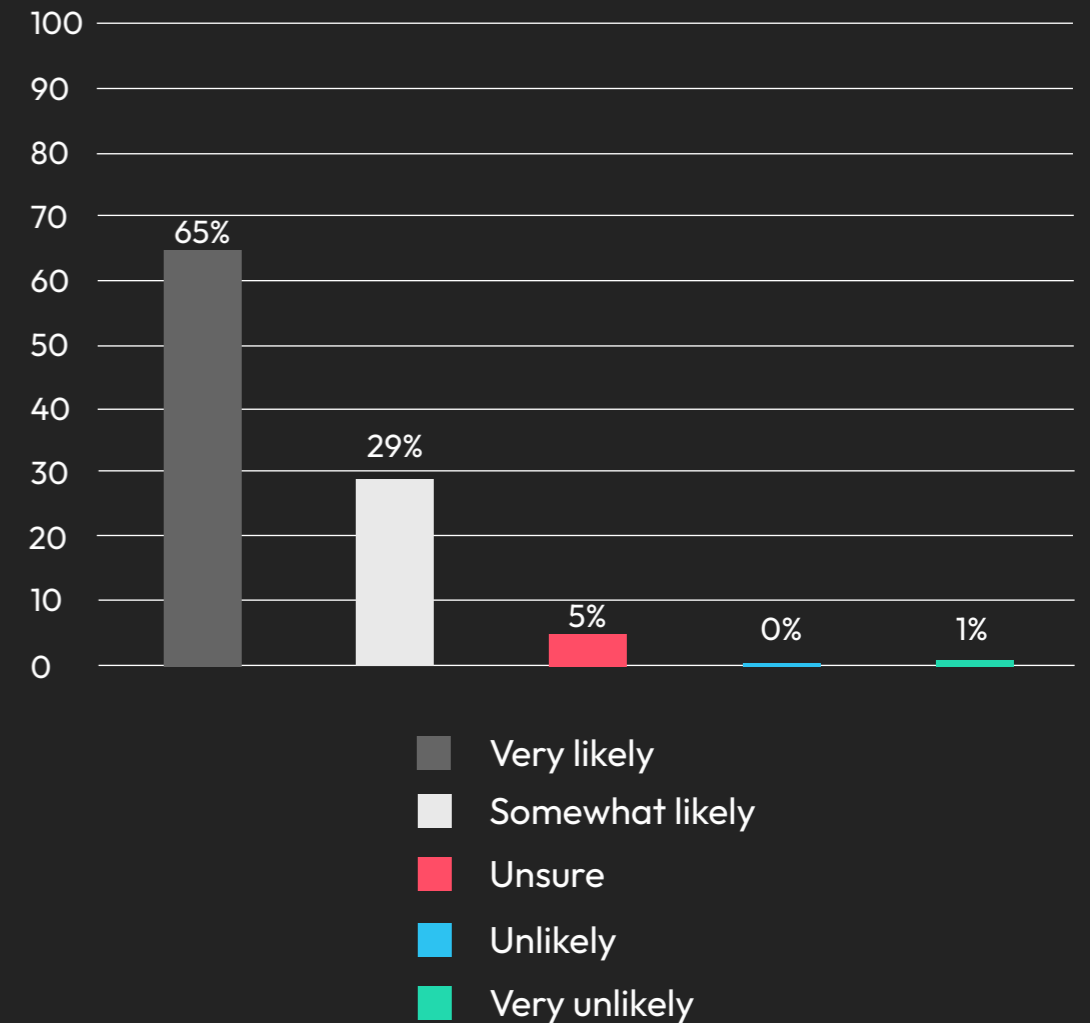
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

48% 4-day work week with full pay

32% Pay increment

16% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Over half of South Korea's employers say they aren't thinking of altering their work model at the moment, and the 4-day work week is also not top of mind for them when it comes to talent attraction and retention. Instead, their focus lies predominantly on initiatives that support employees' development and well-being.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 53%** None at the moment
- 21%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 8%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 8%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 8%** 4.5-day work week
- 2%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

33%

Learning and development programmes

32%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

17%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

1%

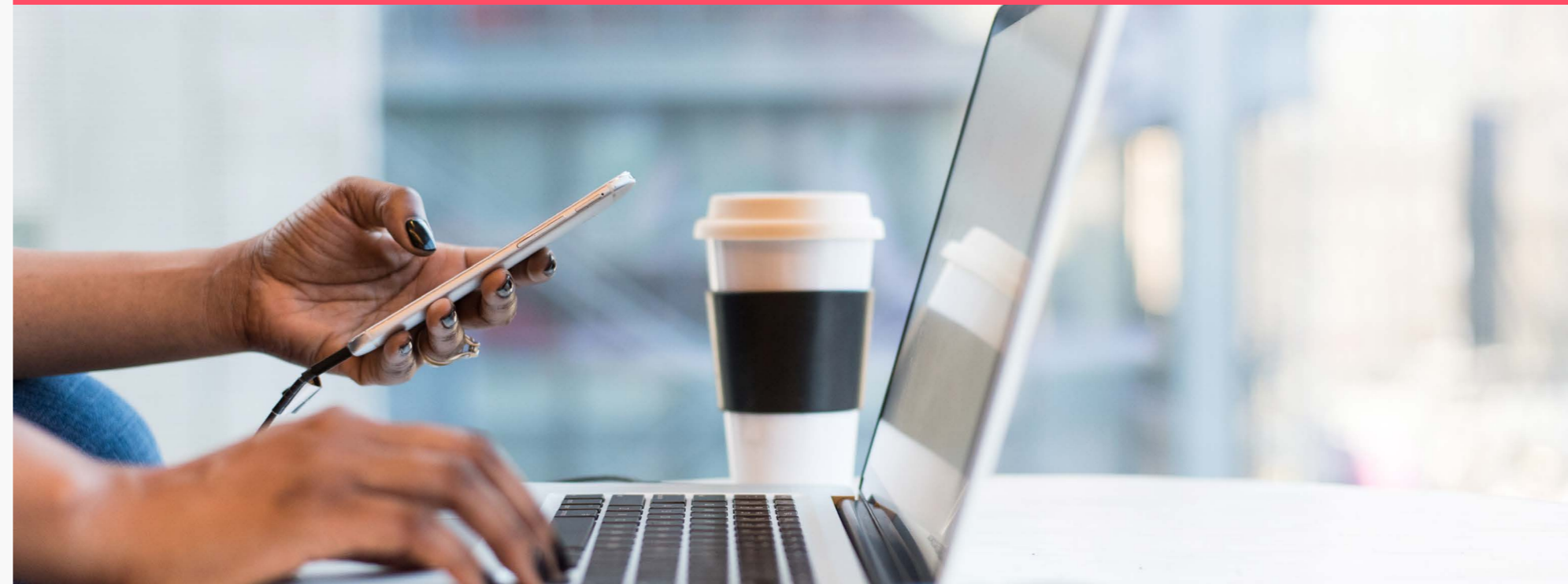
Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“The workforce’s needs and desires are constantly evolving. Competitive compensation is important, but companies that can help their teams stay productive and achieve a healthy work-life balance will have a winning advantage.”



JunWon Choi
Country Manager
Robert Walters Korea



South East Asia

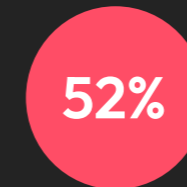
The outlook for the 4-day work week appears the most optimistic in South East Asia.

A sweeping majority of professionals here want to try out a shorter week, and compared to other subregions, the largest slice of businesses here also feel that the work model is viable. Most who are keen on the concept also see its benefits on employee well-being and productivity.

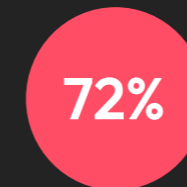
There are also more concrete plans in place among these businesses. Over a third of employers with these sentiments state they are unsure about moving towards this new work arrangement in the near term, though a similar proportion say intend to, or are likely to explore a pilot or transition.



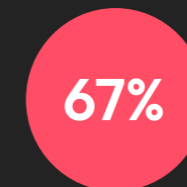
of professionals want a trial , and...



of them feel it can increase productivity levels



of employers find the concept feasible , and...



of them feel it can increase productivity levels



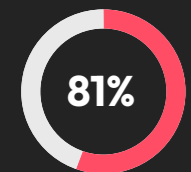
of them have plans, or are likely to trial or transition to a 4-day work week



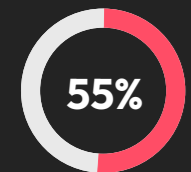
Key factors that influence talent and organisations

Overall, there is a clearer trend towards adjusting compensation, flexible scheduling, remote work and vacation allowances to suit the needs and preferences of both employers and employees.

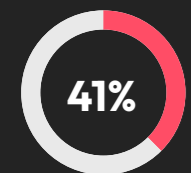
Commuting considerations are more prominent for talent here. In contrast to other subregions where relinquishing work social events is the top preference, professionals here are more open to negotiating different trade-offs for a 4-day work week.



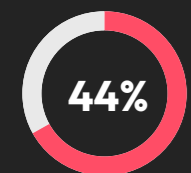
of employees say they are 'very likely' to apply to a company with a 4-day work week



would work an additional 2 hours a day to make up for the shortfall from cutting out the fifth day of the week



When evaluating the benefits in a new position, after a 4-day work week full pay (41%), talent here give fairly close weightage to pay increments (30%) and location independence (26%)



see savings on commuting costs as a merit of the 4-day work week – substantially higher than other subregions

Employers are wary about the complexities of implementing a 4-day week and the backlash from employees if mishandled. This signals a shift towards more pragmatic considerations and growing confidence in the concept's viability.

86%

see improved employee well-being as the biggest benefit from this work model

53%

reported concerns around difficulties of implementing a 4-day week across the entire office, resulting in employee unhappiness

37%

of employers who find the shorter work week feasible state they intend to, or are likely to consider a trial or transition to the 4-day work week in the next 1 – 2 years

37%

is top on the list of initiatives they would consider to improve talent attraction and retention, with employee well-being (29%) and learning and development (28%) following in close measures

“In a region rich with cultural and societal diversity, South East Asia’s employers have the opportunity to develop unique work models that are productive and meaningful for them. By tuning in to the nuanced needs of their business and employees, they can establish dynamic workplaces that serve as global role models.”



Kimberlyn Lu
CEO
Robert Walters
South East Asia

Indonesia

Indonesia may not rank as the country most fervently advocating for a 4-day work week trial, but it stands out for having professionals who are the most certain about applying to companies offering a shortened work week. Even as companies juggle a range of concerns and hold mixed sentiments on whether it's viable, there is openness towards exploring this work model given the potential gains on employee well-being and productivity.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

88%

of professionals want their employers to implement a 4-day work week trial, and...

55%

of them feel it can increase productivity levels

64%

of employers consider the 4-day work week a feasible concept, and...

71%

of them feel it can increase productivity levels. However...

59%

of them are unlikely to trial or transition to a 4-day work week in the next 1 – 2 years

What professionals think of a 4-day work week

The key motivations that spur professionals to seek out a 4-day work week are for work-life balance, increased productivity, and to save on commuting costs. However, talent in Indonesia are the most likely within South East Asia to feel that this work model is not possible in their line of work.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 70%** Work-life balance
- 55%** To raise productivity
- 50%** Save on commuting costs

Top concerns against a trial

- 61%** More stressful as workload remains the same
- 44%** Not possible in line of work
- 28%** Prefer to split work across 5 days/Possible pay reduction



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Most companies are worried about increased business costs and difficulties with implementation, though a similar proportion of employers are also concerned about the impact on customer experience and workers' productivity after a long weekend. Despite these concerns weighing on their minds, companies see the potential benefits for their talent attraction and retention – though just 25% say they would lean on the work model to appeal to talent, with most preferring other initiatives instead.

They find it viable because of...

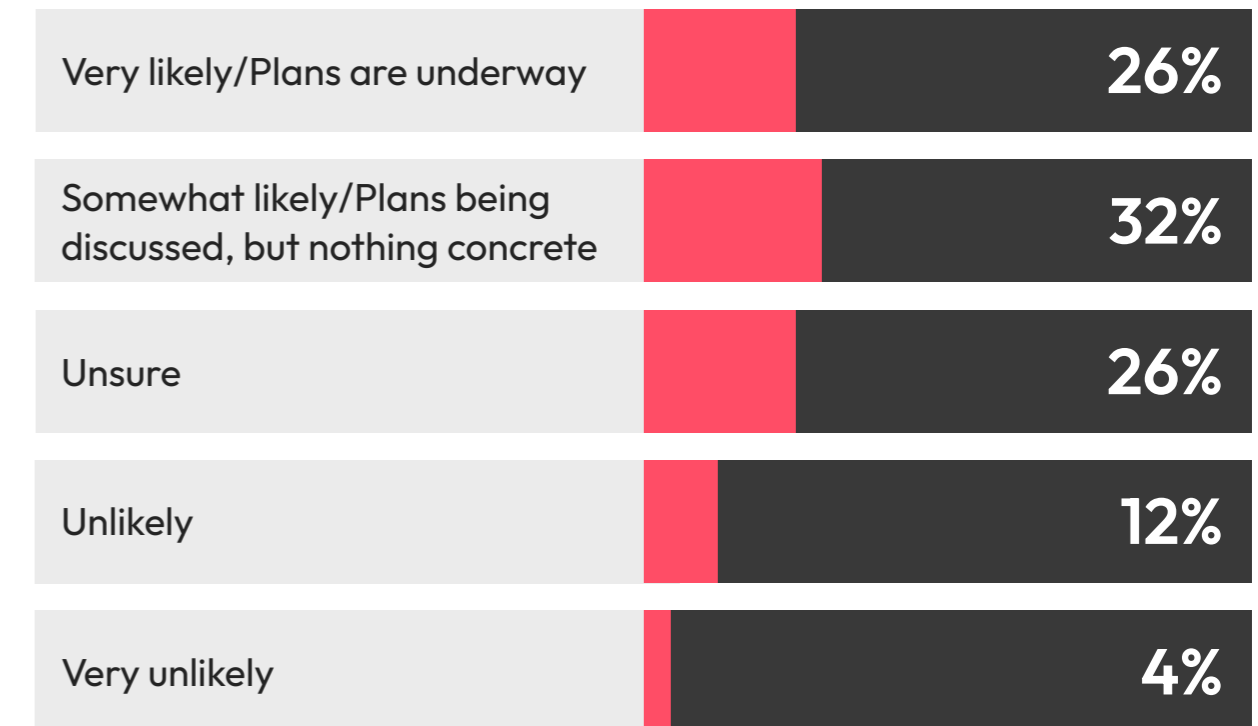
80% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

55% Incurring higher business costs (due to increased hiring or project delays) and difficulty in implementing across the entire office, resulting in employee unhappiness.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

More so than any other market, Indonesian talent are likely to apply to companies that offer a compressed work week, with 98% responding in the affirmative. They hold a balanced perspective when sizing up new job opportunities, prioritising a mix of flexible work arrangements, competitive compensation and location independence. They would most prefer a 4-day work week with full pay, though pay increment and remote work trail closely behind as other enticing benefits.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Training opportunities
53%

Hybrid work
37%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
59%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
5%

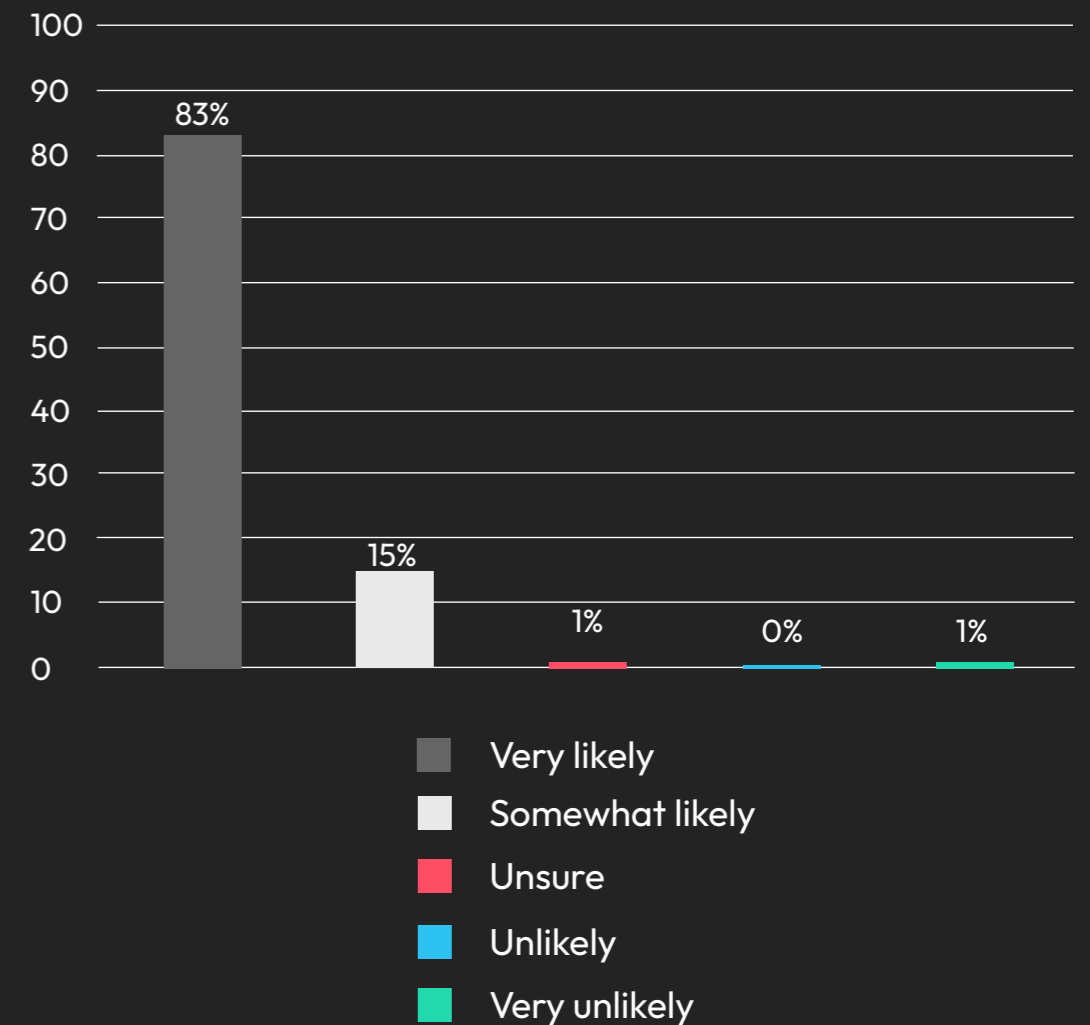
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

34% 4-day work week with full pay

34% Pay increment

28% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Instead of diving right into a 4-day work week, Indonesia's employers are more prepared to invest in employee well-being initiatives or more flexible hours on Fridays to attract talent and keep turnover low.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 31%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 22%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 16%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 16%** None at the moment
- 9%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 6%** 4.5-day work week



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

38%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

31%

Learning and development programmes

3%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

3%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“As Indonesia explores new approaches to structuring the work week, alongside initiatives in well-being and L&D, they move forward in a path of experimentation and adaptation. The insights they gain will inform their hiring and employer branding strategies, and help set new standards for workplace excellence.”



Eric Mary
Country Head
Robert Walters Indonesia & Vietnam



Malaysia

Professionals in Malaysia are very keen to give the 4-day work week a go, and similarly, a big proportion of employers in the country agree it is feasible. Talent and businesses are largely aligned on what they stand to gain from introducing a reduced week – like better employee well-being and productivity – but employees may have to wait a little longer still before such a model falls into place.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

On top of work-life balance, Malaysian talent value the increased productivity and costs saved on commuting that can come through a 4-day work week. The foremost concern about the model relates to workload management, and to a lesser degree, some feel it is simply not possible to structure the week into 4 days in their line of work.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 83%** Work-life balance
- 50%** To raise productivity
- 48%** Save on commuting costs

Top concerns against a trial

- 70%** More stressful as workload remains the same
- 37%** Not possible in line of work
- 33%** Prefer to split work across 5 days/Workload increases from need to cover colleagues who are less productive



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Standing at 79%, Malaysia ranks highest in terms of employers who believe that the 4-day work week is feasible. 46% of these employers would also look at improving or introducing this work model so they can attract and retain talent. Companies recognise the potential benefits on employee well-being, but ultimately, most are unsure whether they would try out this arrangement in the coming years, suggesting that they currently hold a wait-and-see approach.

They find it viable because of...

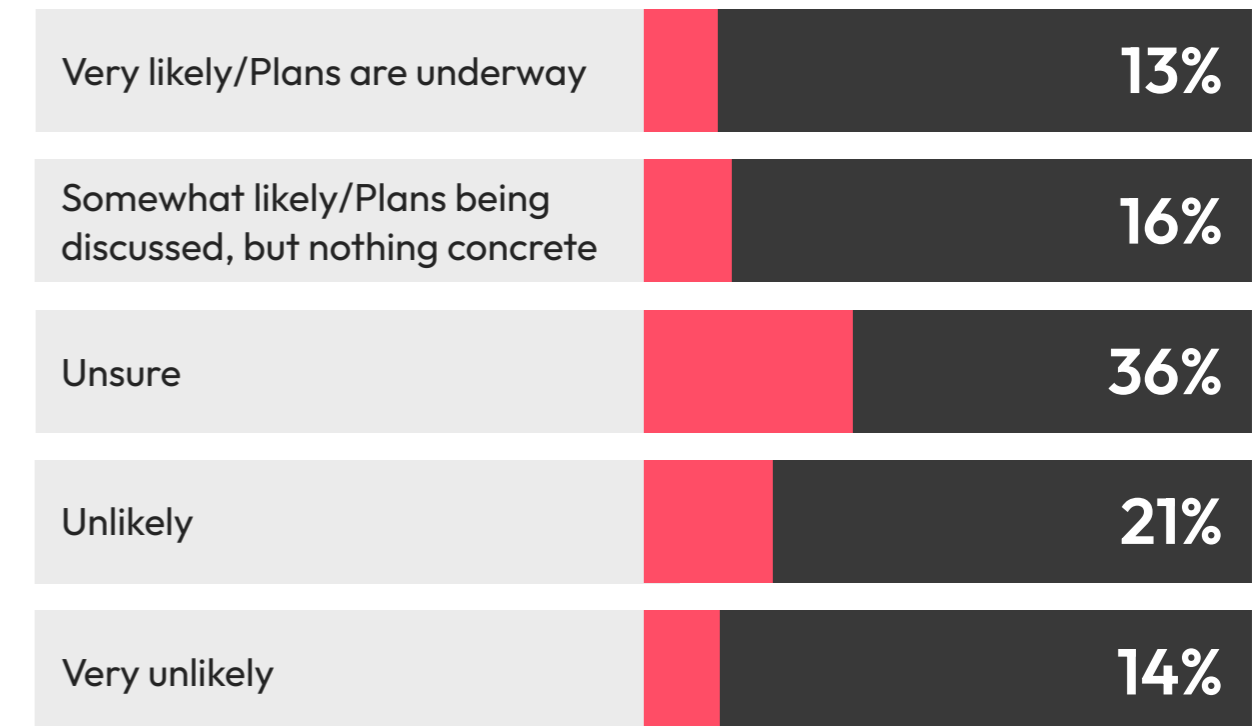
86% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

54% Difficulty in implementing across the entire office, resulting in employee unhappiness

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

A sizable 98% of employees in Malaysia are likely to consider applying to companies with a compressed work week – coming in second behind Indonesia. While they are most drawn to a 4-day work week with full pay when evaluating new job opportunities, they still prioritise salary increments over remote work options. To make a 4-day work week happen, they would also rather work longer hours in a day than to give up any pay increments or annual bonuses.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
53%

Hybrid work
42%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
58%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
7%

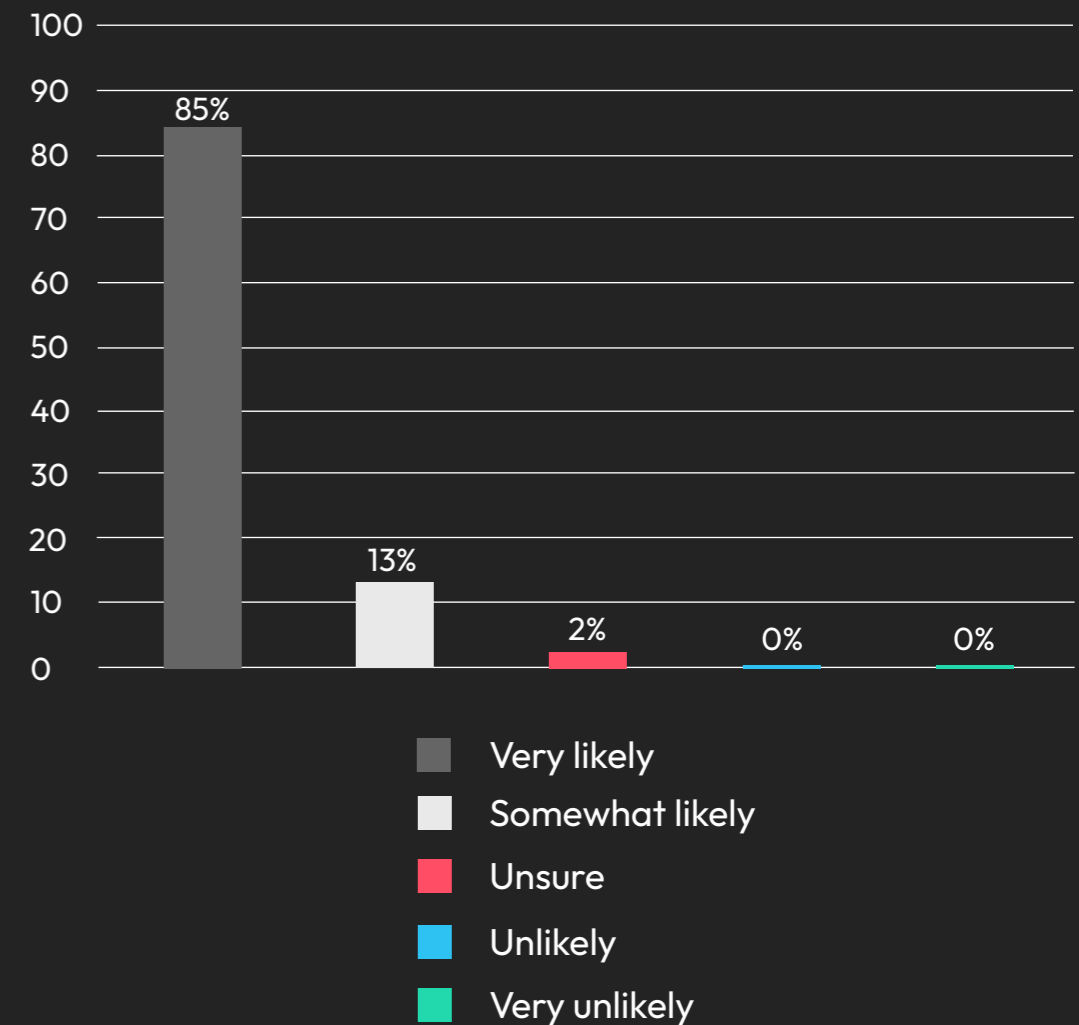
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

42% 4-day work week with full pay

32% Pay increment

22% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Instead of diving right into a 4-day work week, Malaysia's employers are more prepared to invest in employee well-being initiatives or more flexible hours on Fridays to attract talent and keep turnover low.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 36%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 18%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 15%** 4.5-day work week
- 15%** None at the moment
- 10%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 6%** 4-day work week on last week of the month



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

25%

Learning and development programmes

24%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

2%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

1%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Every change journey comes with its own set of challenges. Engage your employees in the process and foster open conversations with them. Work collectively to find a model that works best for everybody involved.”



Ai Rene Tan
Country Manager
Robert Walters Malaysia



Philippines

Talent and organisations in the Philippines appear to share similar sentiments about a 4-day work week. Across South East Asia and Asia, the Philippines presents the smallest gap between employees' eagerness for a 4-day work week and whether employers believe it is practical. This alignment could be influenced by previous national discussions about implementing the work model and how it could uplift employee well-being, even as these discussions have now been put on hold.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Work-life balance is the primary motivation behind the interest in exploring a 4-day work week, but work performance and money-related matters are also a priority for Philippines' professionals.

Although they want to raise productivity levels through a 4-day work week, others prefer keeping to a longer schedule so they can advance their careers. Some workers are attracted to the cost savings from commuting less, but others raise worries about pay reductions or spending more now that they have more time outside of work.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 88%** Work-life balance
- 43%** Save on commuting costs
- 41%** To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

- 67%** More stressful as workload remains the same
- 50%** Increased expenditure due to more time spent outside of work
- 33%** Possible pay reduction/Want to spend more time at work for career progression



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Many employers who find the work model feasible report having intentions to move towards a 4-day work week sometime soon, but a substantial majority of 44% remain undecided, even as 39% of those keen on the concept say they are interested in implementing it to attract and retain talent. Despite an apparent willingness, operational concerns, such as potential disruptions to customer experience, may be hindering decisive action.

They find it viable because of...

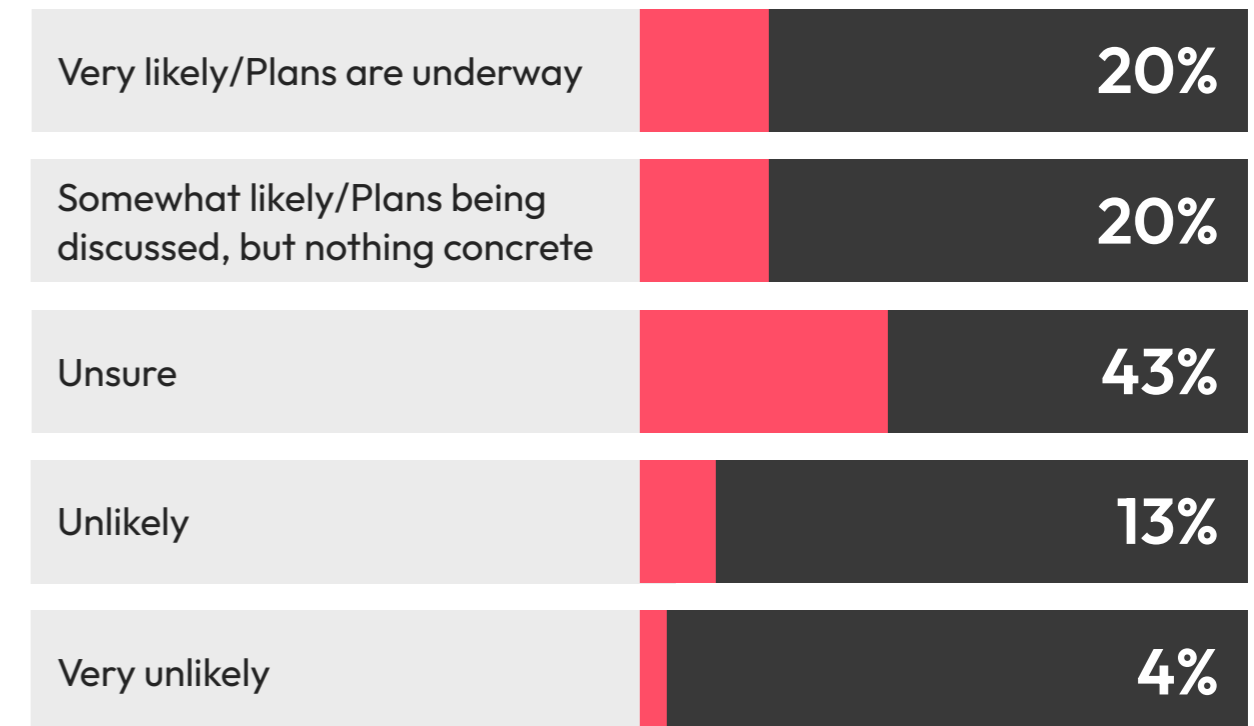
85% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

73% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

Majority of talent in the Philippines are likely to go for job opportunities with a 4-day work week, though it tracks 6% of employees who are unsure – the highest proportion for this response in South East Asia.

When assessing new job opportunities, they adopt a balanced, holistic outlook across work schedule, pay and location independence. While professionals prioritise competitive salaries and will not forego bonuses or pay raises, they demonstrate a willingness to extend work hours per day in exchange for a shorter work week.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events

57%

Hybrid work

27%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours

61%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises

0%

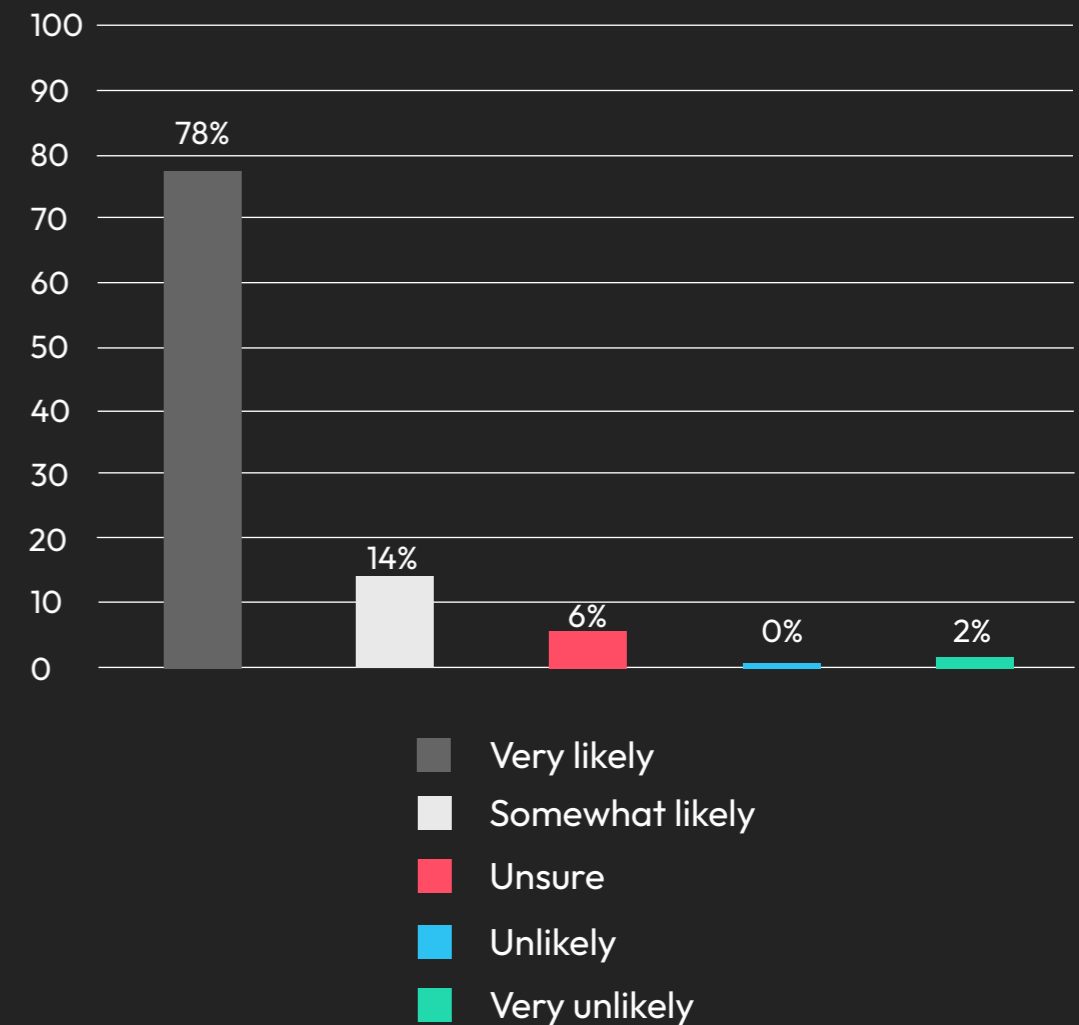
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

34% 4-day work week with full pay

32% Pay increment

30% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

In line with professionals' readiness to extend their daily work hours, companies in the Philippines are most inclined to put longer work hours in place for a condensed work week. The 4-day work week also leads as the top non-monetary initiative they would tap on to enhance talent attraction and retention.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 36%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 29%** None at the moment
- 15%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 9%** 4.5-day work week
- 7%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 4%** 4-day work week on last week of the month



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

29%

Learning and development programmes

25%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

5%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

2%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Businesses moving to a different work model will need to work out how they can ensure business continuity and sustained productivity. This could look like staggering employees’ days off, enforcing fixed ‘focus time’ for productive work, and looking deeply into the needs of your stakeholders.”



Kimberlyn Lu
CEO
Robert Walters South East Asia



Singapore

Living and working in one of the region's most competitive economies, professionals in Singapore are the most keen among all South East Asia countries to adopt a 4-day work week – though more for work-life balance and time with family than other reasons. Employers are mostly convinced of the viability of this arrangement, but are undecided on taking steps to shorten the work week in the foreseeable future.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Being part of a culture that values family and efficiency, talent here also hope a 4-day work week trial would give them more time with their loved ones and help boost productivity. What also stands out are considerations around workload management – a sizable proportion of talent reported a preference for spreading their workload across 5 days.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

91% Work-life balance

60% More time for family

48% To raise productivity

Top concerns against a trial

67% More stressful as workload remains the same

50% Prefer to split work across 5 days

33% Possible pay reduction



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Companies in Singapore acknowledge the potential benefits of a 4-day work week in uplifting employee well-being. Still, many remain hesitant or unlikely to implement such a work model in the near future. Their primary concern revolves around navigating the transition without incurring employee unhappiness. In addition, 35% of those who find the concept feasible would implement it, or refine existing initiatives, as part of their talent attraction and retention strategy.

They find it viable because of...

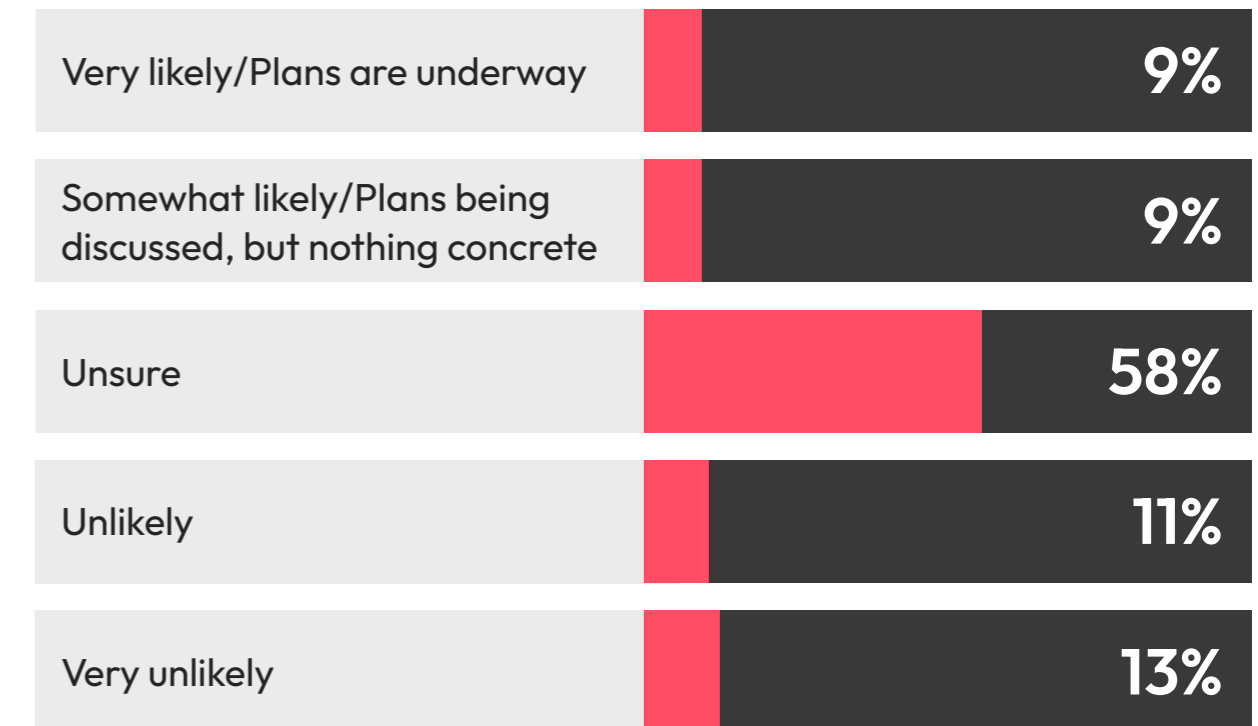
90% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

73% Difficulty in implementing across the entire office, resulting in employee unhappiness

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

An impressive 96% of professionals in Singapore are inclined to apply for jobs at companies offering a 4-day work week.

Salary is a vital component for talent here. When looking at new job prospects, a 4-day work week with full pay emerges as the most enticing benefit, likely as it provides professionals with an optimal balance. Pay increments ranks second, edging out remote work by a narrow margin in terms of appeal. Few professionals are willing to sacrifice their annual bonuses or accept reduced pay increments for a reduced work week.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events

64%

Hybrid work

42%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours

46%

Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises

13%

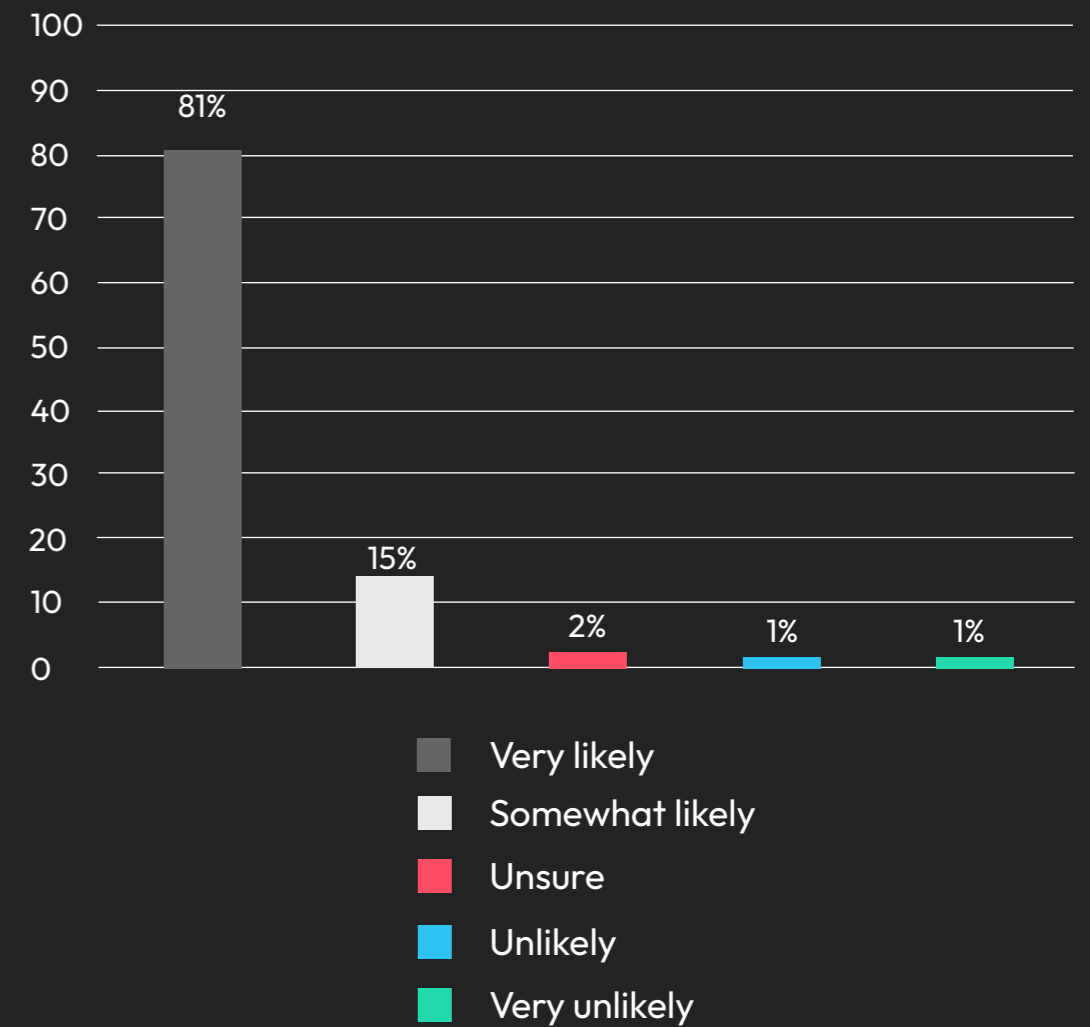
Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:

42% 4-day work week with full pay

28% Pay increment

27% Work from anywhere

Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

27% of employers do not have any plans to introduce any new work arrangements. However, similar proportions of employers are looking to offer more flexible work hours on Fridays and a 4.5 days work week.

The 4-day work week is still seen as the top initiative for talent attraction and retention, though there are also similar levels of interest in employee well-being initiatives and learning and development programmes.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 27%** None at the moment
- 22%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 20%** 4.5-day work week
- 14%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 10%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 7%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

32%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

30%

Learning and development programmes

3%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

0%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Embracing flexibility and innovative work arrangements can help attract top talent, while also driving productivity and employee satisfaction. For many businesses, it can be a critical piece of the puzzle that sets them apart as an employer of choice.”



Monty Sujanani
Country Manager
Robert Walters Singapore



Thailand

While there is much interest for a 4-day work week in Thailand, there are mixed sentiments around the implementation of such a work model. Interest in the work model among Thai professionals is the highest in Asia, and the majority of employers in the country also regard the concept as a feasible and strong approach for uplifting employee well-being. However, half of the companies surveyed are either unsure of, or do not have plans for a compressed work week. There is also less of a perception that the model could have a great impact on employee productivity.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

Besides work-life balance, talent in Thailand perceive a reduced work week as a way for them to further enhance their productivity. However, they flagged many concerns about various nuances associated with a 4-day work week – workload management, an inclination to distribute work across more days, whether such a schedule is possible in certain industries, and more.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 73%** Work-life balance
- 58%** To raise productivity
- 42%** More time for family/Save on commuting costs

Top concerns against a trial

- 36%** More stressful as workload remains the same/Prefer to split work across 5 days/Not possible in line of work
- 27%** Possible pay reduction
- 18%** Increased expenditure due to more time spent outside of work/Want to spend more time at work for career progression

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What employers think of a 4-day work week

Motivated by the prospect of improving their employees' well-being, 24% of these employers would also consider incorporating it into their talent retention and attraction strategy. Yet under this work model, chief among all concerns is the potential impact on customer experience, so employers will likely make operational adjustments to mitigate any negative effects.

They find it viable because of...

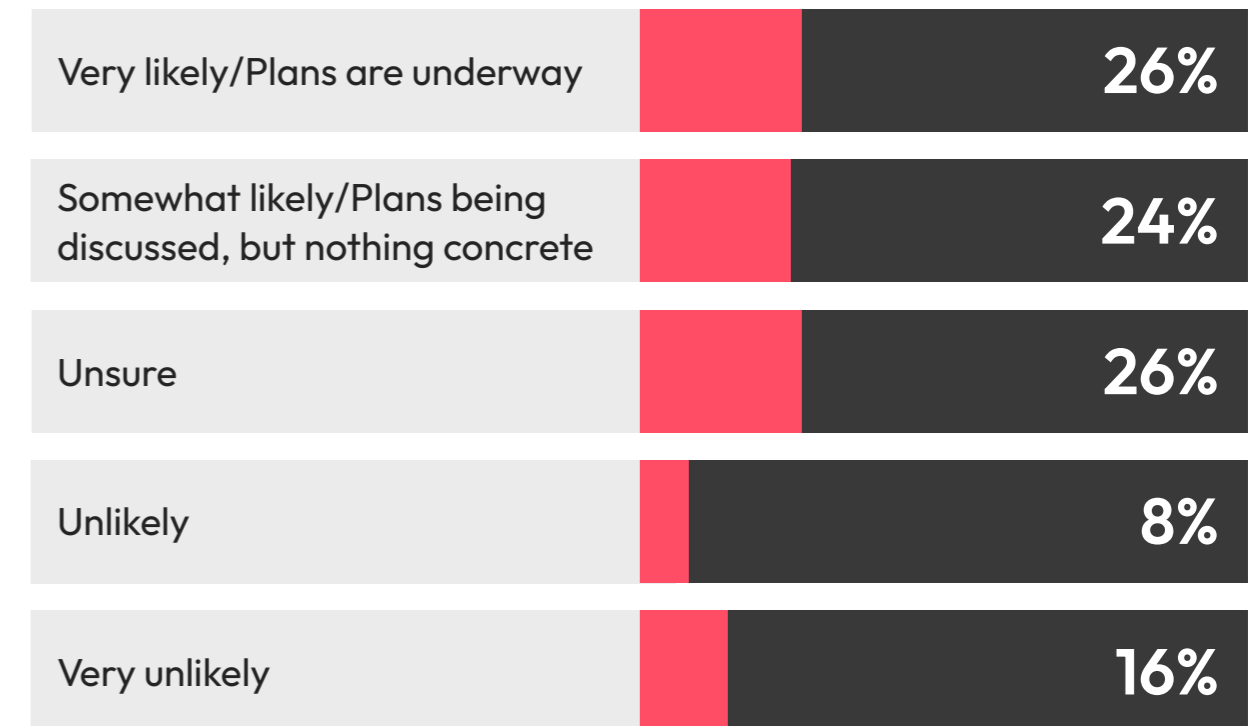
90% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

67% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

At 96%, an overwhelming majority of professionals in Thailand would consider applying for jobs that come with a shorter work week.

Remote work and salary increments are other factors that hold almost equal weight during the job search, with the option to 'work from anywhere' edging slightly ahead by a small margin. Very few professionals are willing to pare down their bonuses or pay increments to achieve a 4-day work week.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours

59%

Work social events/
Hybrid work

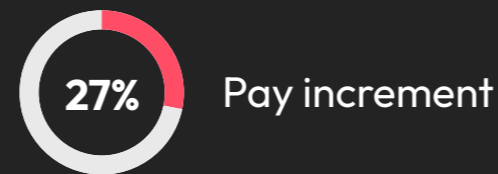
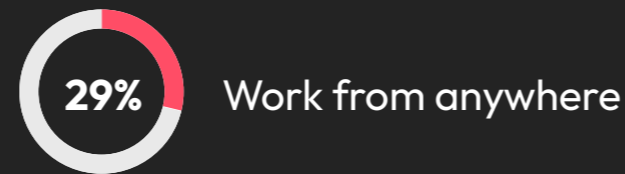
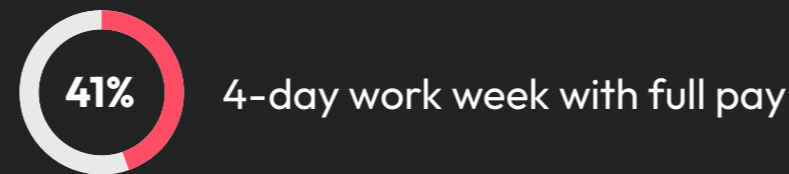
45%

Least willing to accept:

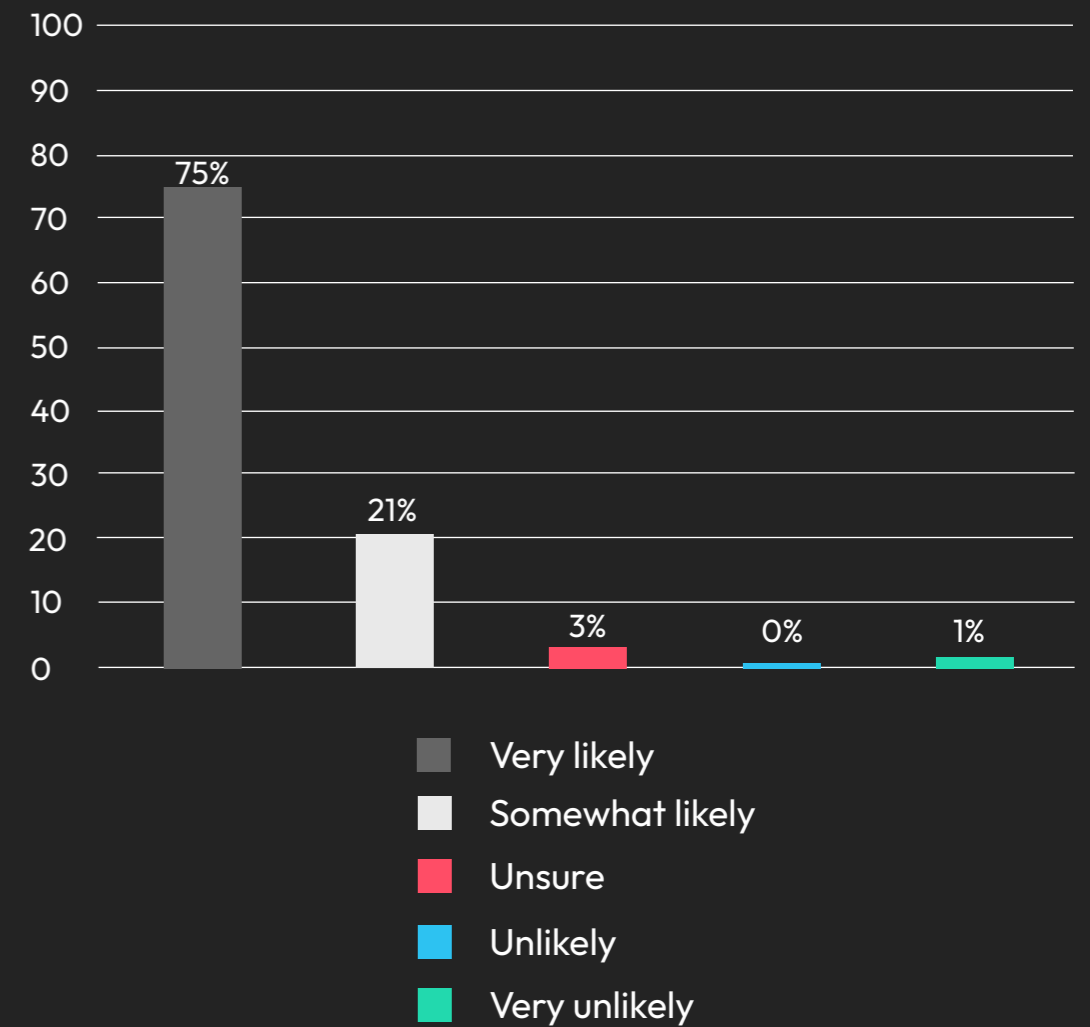
No annual bonus or smaller pay raises

8%

Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:



Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Despite a general readiness and openness towards the 4-day work week, it may not be the model of choice for employers in Thailand. More employers picked well-being initiatives and learning and development programmes as their preferred pathways for talent attraction and retention.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 43%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 24%** None at the moment
- 19%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 5%** 4.5-day work week
- 5%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 3%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week

Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

41%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

27%

Learning and development programmes

5%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

3%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Embracing the 4-day work week can be a game-changer for businesses, offering benefits such as improved employee well-being and increased productivity. However, employers must also be mindful of the potential consequences and risks it may pose to the organisation’s operations and customer experience. Striking the right balance between flexibility and meeting business needs is crucial for successful implementation.”



Punyanuch Sirisawadwattana
Country Manager
Robert Walters Thailand



Vietnam

Even as fewer employers are sold on the 4-day work week, talent in Vietnam are eager to trial such a model, especially as many of them believe it will push them to be more productive at work. However, only 54% of employers consider the model viable, the lowest across all of Asia.

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?



What professionals think of a 4-day work week

After work-life balance, the prospect of raising productivity is what motivates professionals the most to seek out a reduced work week. This comes along with having more time for family and cutting down on commute costs.

Top reasons for wanting a trial

- 76%** Work-life balance
- 62%** To raise productivity
- 35%** More time for family/Save on commuting costs

Top concerns against a trial

- 40%** More stressful as workload remains the same/Prefer to split work across 5 days
- 27%** Increased expenditure due to more time spent outside of work

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What employers think of a 4-day work week

Nevertheless, 66% of businesses in Vietnam state they are open to giving the 4-day work week a go, where they will be able to assess the impact on key considerations like employee well-being and customer experience. 35% of employers who find the concept feasible would also introduce a condensed week to better attract and retain talent.

They find it viable because of...

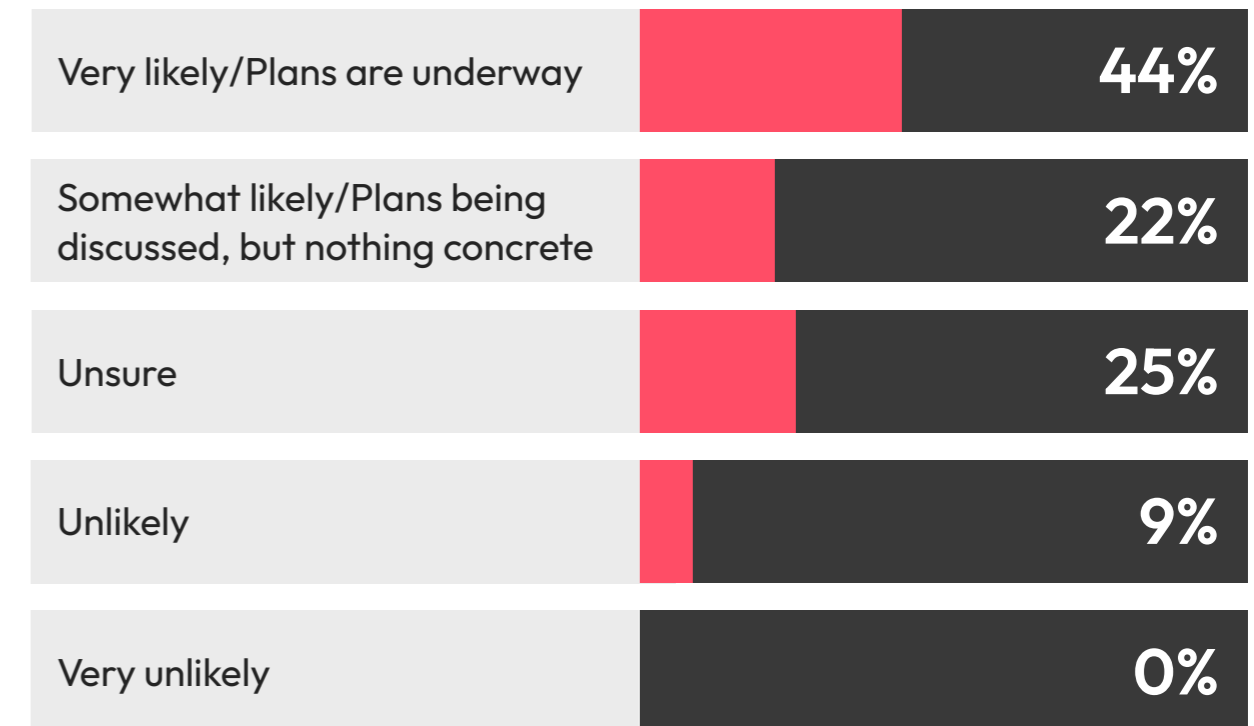
88% Improved employee well-being

They are most worried about...

67% Bad customer experience (as customers might not be able to reach staff)

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

Among employers who find the concept feasible, how likely are they to run a pilot or transition to a 4-day work week within the next 1 – 2 years?



When professionals apply for a new job

94% of professionals feel positively about applying to companies that offer a compressed work week. Among job seekers, a 4-day work week with full pay remains the most attractive benefit, followed by remote work and salary increments.

Compared to other South East Asian countries, Vietnam's professionals have less qualms in-office work and interacting with colleagues. Many would be willing to forego hybrid work arrangements for a 4-day work week, but only a minority of professionals would compromise on bonuses or pay increments for this schedule. Additionally, it is also among the least likely in South East Asia to give up social events at work.

In exchange for a 4-day work week with full pay, professionals are:

Most willing to give up:

Work social events
35%

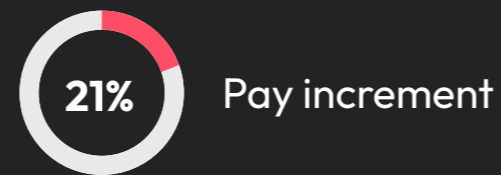
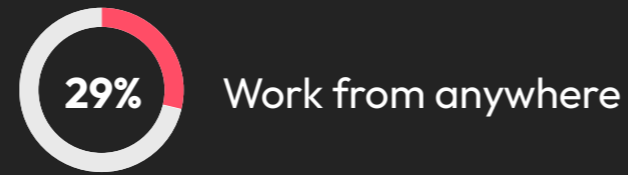
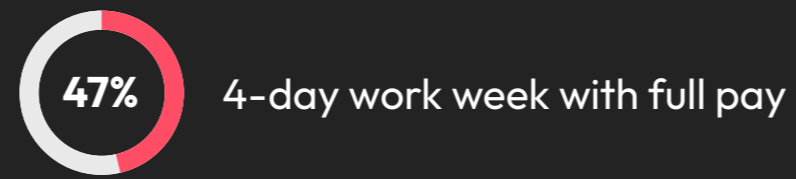
Hybrid work
60%

Standard work hours, and instead extend each day in the shortened week by 2 hours
50%

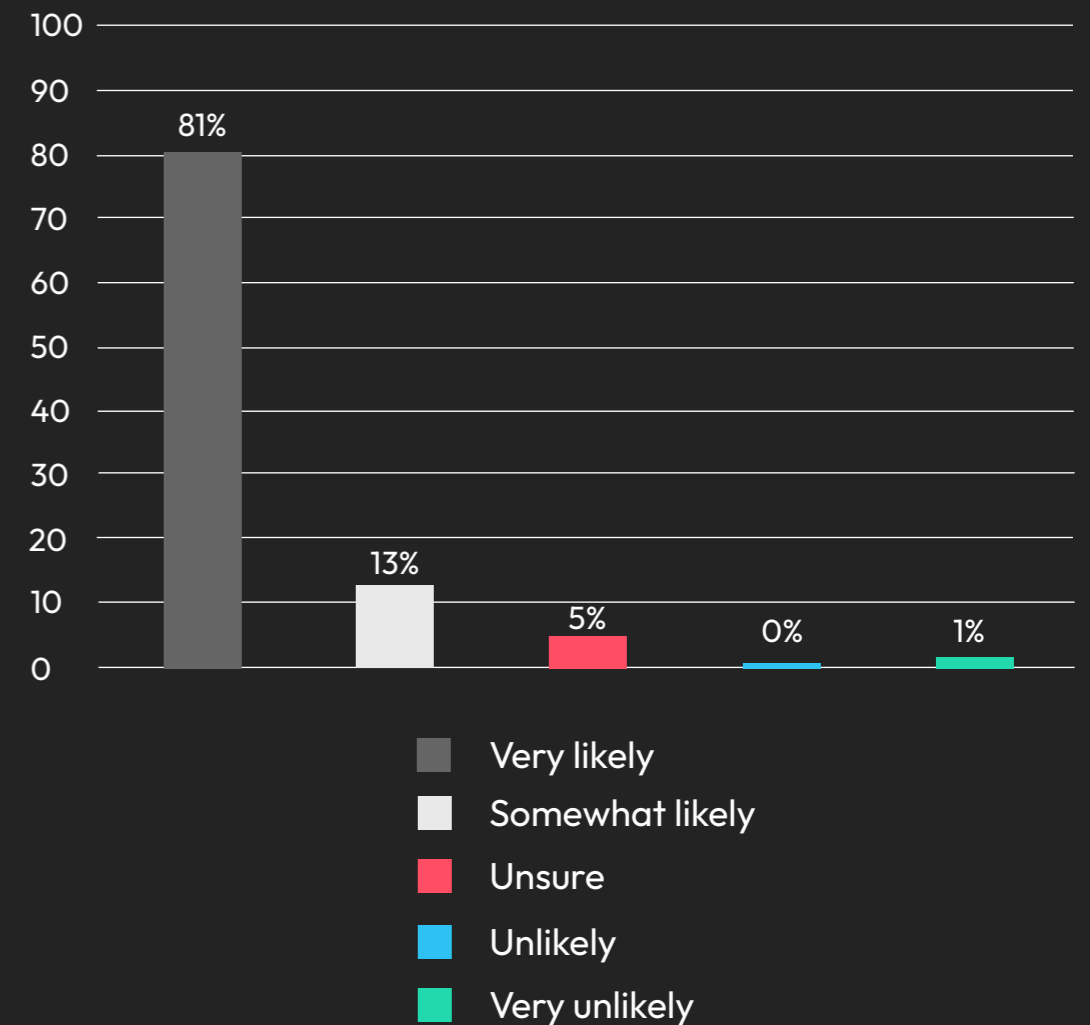
Least willing to accept:

No annual bonus or smaller pay raises
18%

Most appealing benefits in a new job opportunity:



Likelihood of applying to a company with a 4-day work week?





Other flexible strategies for talent attraction and retention

Organisations in Vietnam are willing to work on initiatives that are huge draws for their talent pool – not only the 4-day work week, but a range of different work arrangements that could give employees more personal time in a week or month.

Other work models employers are open to:

- 26%** More flexible working hours on Fridays
- 22%** 4-day work week on last week of the month
- 13%** Work additional 2 hours a day across a 4-day work week
- 13%** Offering shorter working hours over a 5-day work week
- 13%** 4.5-day work week
- 13%** None at the moment



Non-monetary initiatives employers would improve or implement to attract and retain talent:

31%

Well-being initiatives like mental health support

26%

Learning and development programmes

4%

Equity, diversity and inclusion

4%

Environmental, social and governance/Corporate social responsibility

Is a 4-day work week Asia's next bet for productivity and talent retention?

“Those looking to try out a shorter work week should note there isn't a one size fits all approach. Rather, the key lies in adjusting to the specific needs of your organisation, employees and customer base.”



Phuc Pham
Country Manager
Robert Walters Vietnam



Robert—
—Walters

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