

Less work, more play

4 August 2020, by David Bradley



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In the current global situation many people have been forced to rethink what we previously referred to as a work-life balance. There was much pressure from good mental health advocates for us to opt for more leisure time if that were a possibility. Now, in the time of the global coronavirus pandemic, we can see new ways to look at leisure time with a perspective on life satisfaction. However, in research carried out before COVID-19, Yen-Lien Kuo and Tzu-Hsiu Huang of the Department of Economics at National Cheng Kung University in Tainan City, Taiwan, investigated the relationships between working hours and changes in time spent on leisure and sports activities, as well as perceived health status, and individual life satisfaction.

Fundamentally, they analysed data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey and were able to show that longer working hours almost inevitably led to significantly lower life satisfaction whereas more [leisure time](#) improved subjective health measures and enhanced life satisfaction markedly. There was a caveat in terms of health. In that those in [full-time work](#) tended to be healthier than those were not. However, there was still the potential to improve mental health by boosting [life satisfaction](#) when employees were able to have more leisure time at the expense of working hours.

For Taiwan in particular, it is as a nation third in the [league tables](#) for longest working hours among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. It had been

suggested in much earlier work that people with long working hours and inadequate recovery time see various problems accumulate over time and become chronic reactions. Work and leisure time may have been upturned in recent months because of pandemic lockdown and other factors. However, part of the new-normal may well see an increased need to balance work and leisure without trying to cram more hours into the day by reducing working hours. We already know that many more people can work from home and avoid the daily commute. This research suggests that government-led initiatives, particularly in Taiwan could drive this forward to the benefit of employees and perhaps even for employers.

More information: Yen Lien Kuo et al. The impacts of increasing leisure time on subjective health and life satisfaction, *International Journal of Happiness and Development* (2020). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHD.2020.108751](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJHD.2020.108751)

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