



WHAT RESEARCH EXISTS ON THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK IN THE UNITED STATES?



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

HEDCO Institute

Living Review
2025

STUDY GOAL

This is a living review; findings were last updated June 2025.

Our scoping review aimed to identify all empirical studies on the four-day school week in the United States and explore the types of research in the literature.

Our review included 133 studies. As part of our review process, we also completed interviews with three superintendents with experience in decision-making around the four-day school week.

Visit our interactive database of all studies at hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/4DSW

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Two-thirds of studies have examined the four-day school week in rural communities (89 studies) and in the states of Missouri (37 studies), Colorado (27 studies), Oklahoma (18 studies), and Oregon (17 studies).
- Researchers have focused on the outcomes of students' educational achievement (53 studies) and attendance (23 studies).
 - Studies assessing differences in outcomes by student and school characteristics have mostly examined differences by student age or grade level (28 studies).
- Researchers often did not report key contextual considerations for decision-makers assessing the applicability of findings to their own districts.
 - Over half of the studies (n = 75) did not report students' race/ethnicity.
 - Half of studies (n = 66) did not report what schools in their sample did on the fifth day, which was mentioned as a critical factor by superintendents.

Note: Given the nature of a scoping review, we did not summarize or explore differences in findings across studies.



Four-day school weeks are gaining popularity throughout the USA

- Nearly 900 districts across 26 states are on a four-day school week schedule.
- 90% of four-day school weeks are in rural districts.¹

No comprehensive review of the overall literature base on four-day school weeks exists. Our goal was to take the first step in filling this gap with a scoping review of the literature.

What can this review tell me?

A scoping review looks at the research base on a topic to explore what has been studied and what work still needs to be done. We identified all empirical studies - reported in peer-reviewed articles and reports, student manuscripts, and grey literature - on the four-day school week at K-12 schools in the United States (n = 133).

Our review can answer questions about what research has been done and gaps that remain.

Our review can't yet answer the impact of a four-day school week on student and school outcomes.

As part of our review process, we also interviewed three superintendents from schools considering or implementing the four-day school week. The superintendents provided insights on key concerns decisionmakers may have when debating the switch from a five-day to a four-day school week.

Note: Studies were not assessed for quality or risk of bias.

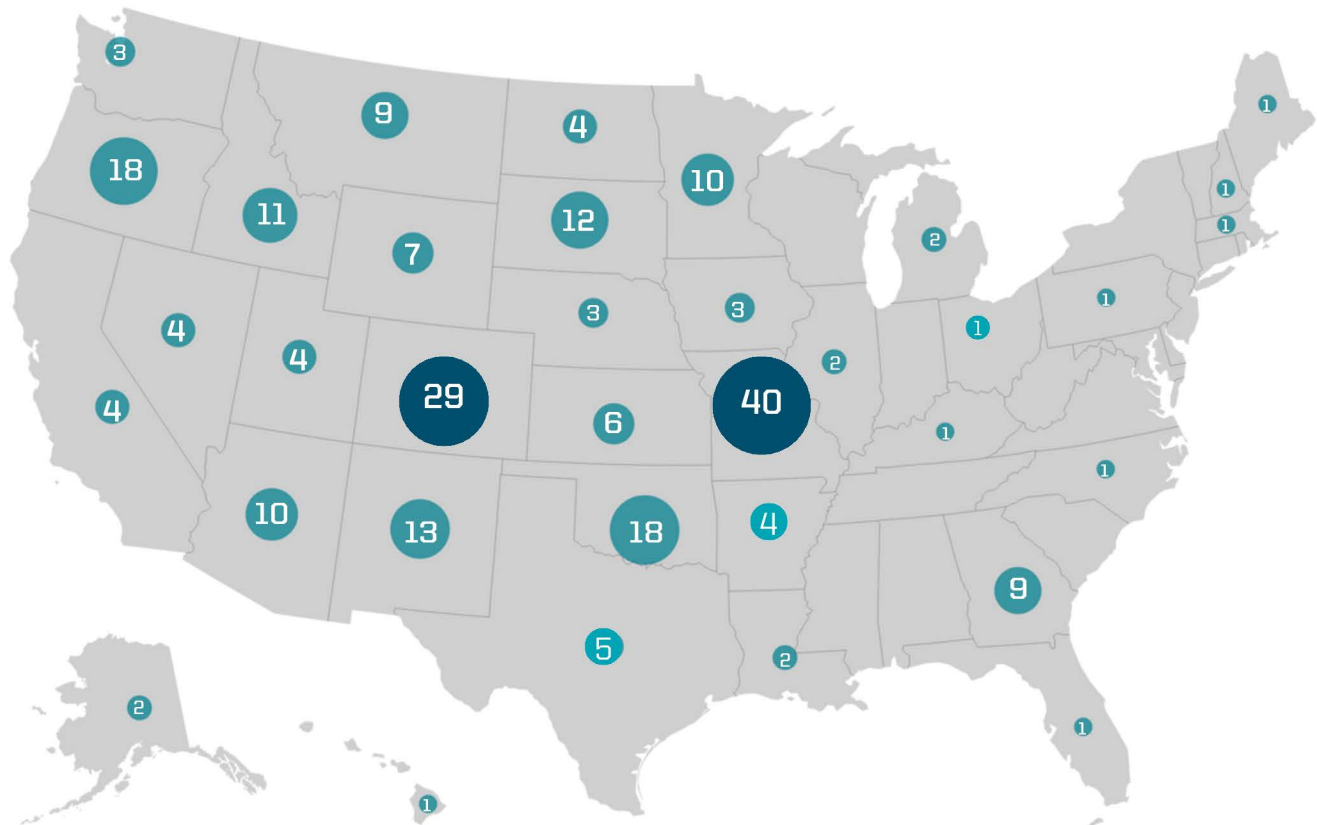
We did not assess the quality or risk of bias for studies included in the review. Given the nature of a scoping review, we also did not summarize or explore differences in findings across studies.

Relevance to Local Context

What communities, schools, and students have been studied?

Schools in Missouri were studied the most.

Number of studies done with populations in each state:*



Missouri: 40	Idaho: 11	Wyoming: 7	Arkansas: 4	Louisiana: 2	Massachusetts: 1
Colorado: 29	Arizona: 10	Texas: 5	Iowa: 3	Michigan: 2	New Hampshire: 1
Oklahoma: 18	Minnesota: 10	California: 4	Nebraska: 3	Florida: 1	North Carolina: 1
Oregon: 18	Georgia: 9	Nevada: 4	Washington: 3	Hawaii: 1	Ohio: 1
New Mexico: 13	Montana: 9	North Dakota: 4	Alaska: 2	Kentucky: 1	Pennsylvania: 1
South Dakota: 12	Kansas: 6	Utah: 4	Illinois: 2	Maine: 1	

*Some studies included multiple states. States are listed by number of studies conducted.



“But I think that's a lot of what you really have to factor in: have data that you can present to your community, to your board, to your staff... Needs to be very local. It's really about fit. Does it fit for our school and our community and our families?”

- Superintendent, District A



Most studies included schools in rural areas.

Setting

Rural	Urban	Suburban
97	39	36
studies	studies	studies

Grade Level

Elementary	Middle School	High School
96	90	95
studies	studies	studies

Note: Totals are greater than 133 studies because some studies included multiple locations and grade levels.



“I think you have to consider location, region, the industry and the workers, the safety perspective, the health care perspective - all of that needs to be considered because you're making a community decision... It's the entire community helping make the decision.”

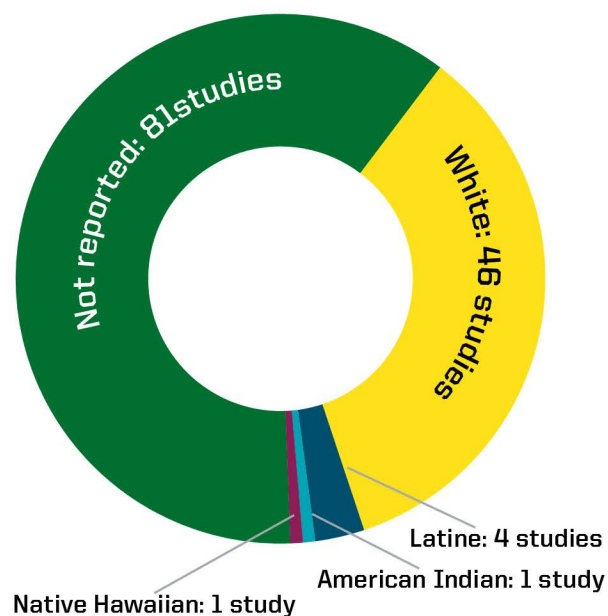
- Superintendent , District B



Over half of studies did not report race/ethnicity for the students in their sample.

For studies that did report race/ethnicity, most (n = 46) had a majority of students who identified as white.

In four studies, the majority of students were Hispanic, Latine, or Spanish; in one study, the majority of students were American Indian and/or Alaska Native; and in one study, the majority of students were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.



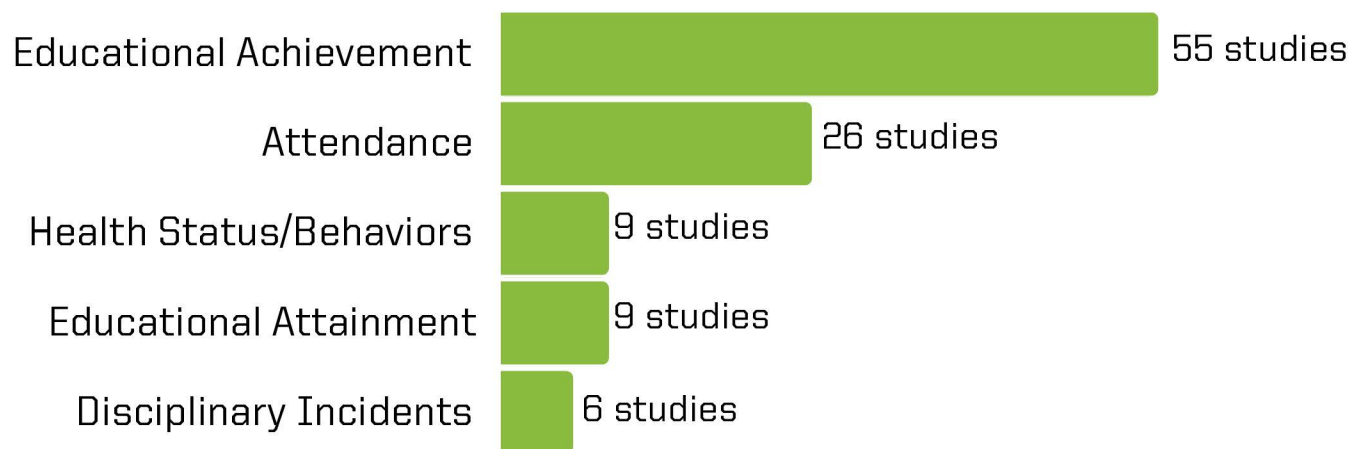
Outcomes and Implementation

What factors have researchers studied?

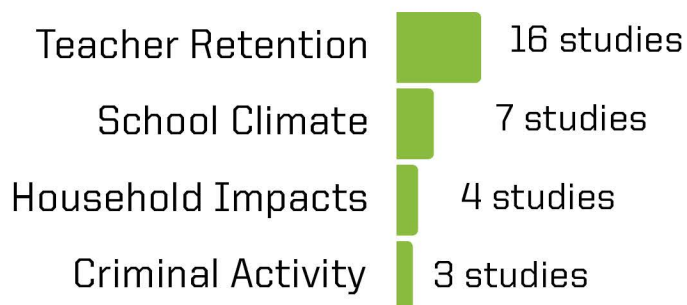
Student achievement was the outcome studied most.

Eighty-six studies assessed the effectiveness of four-day school weeks. Some studies included multiple outcomes.

Student outcomes:



Teacher, school, and family outcomes:

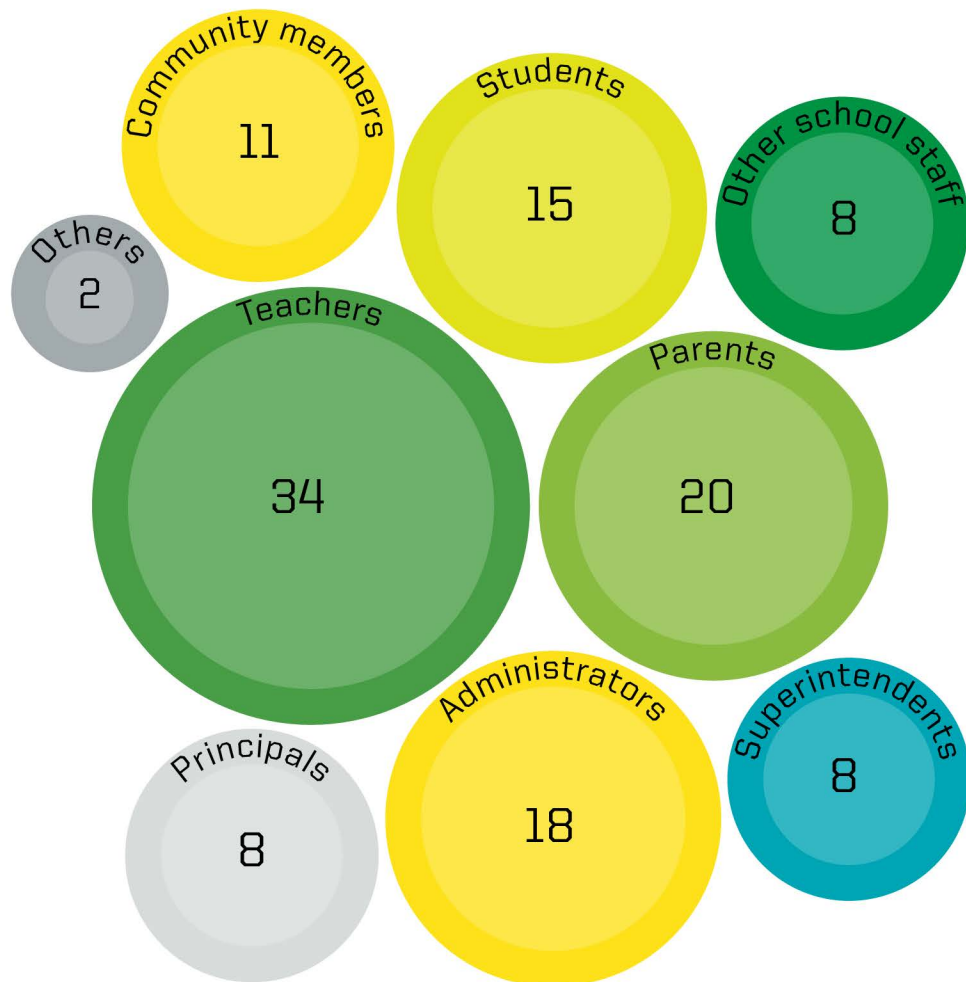


Studies assessing differences in outcomes have mostly examined differences by student age or grade level (28 studies).

Acceptability was the implementation factor studied most.

Fifty studies assessed student, staff, family, and community acceptability. These studies measured the extent to which various groups of people thought the four-day school week schedule was a good option.

Number of studies that measured acceptability with each group:



Feasibility (40 studies)

Studies that examined how the four-day school week was implemented, including:

- barriers and facilitators to implementation
- degree to which the four-day school week was implemented as designed within the intended context.

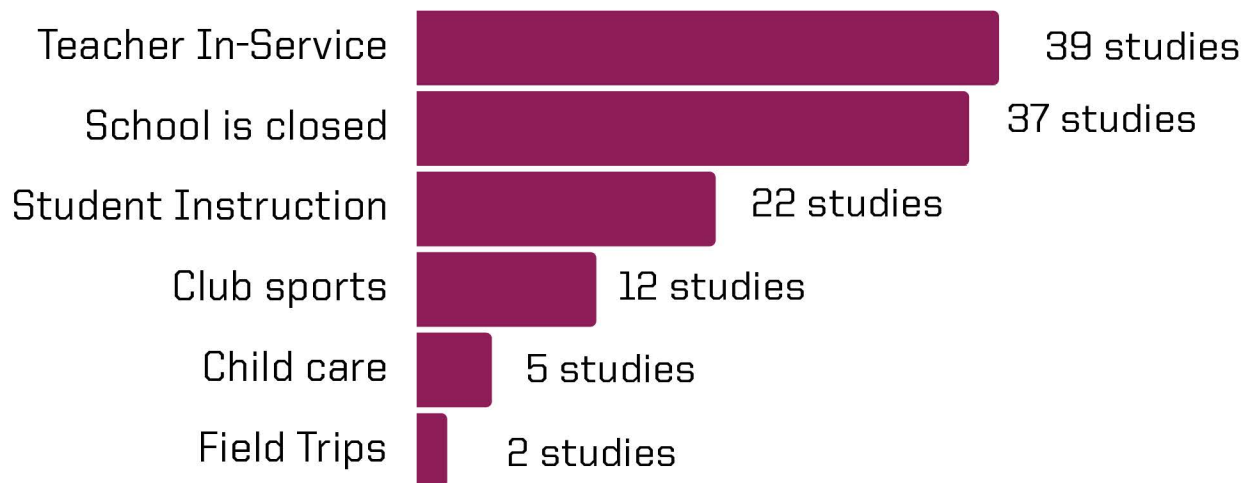
Resource use (30 studies)

Studies that examined the resource requirements and implications of implementing the four-day school week, including:

- inputs/costs
- cost-effectiveness/benefit.

Most studies did not report fifth-day activities for the schools in their sample.

In 79 studies, authors did not report what schools did on the fifth day for any districts in their sample. Across the 54 studies that did report this information, some of the more commonly reported activities included the school being closed and offering teacher in-service opportunities.



“Tell you what though, it's all about those Fridays... It's basically what can the community do on those Fridays where students aren't in school?... If you don't have a good system on bringing those kids in for extra help on Fridays, if you're in a bigger town where there's more kids, sometimes they kind of fall through the cracks.”

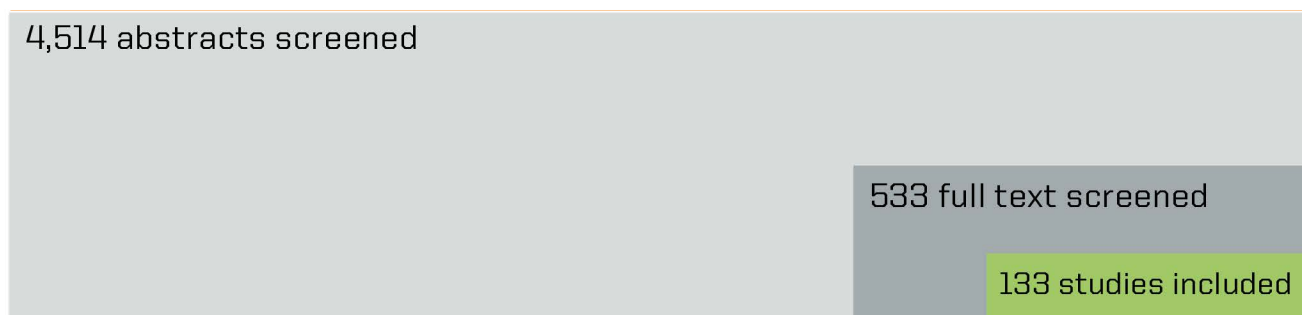
- Superintendent, District C

Methods

The design and process for this review followed JBI guidance on scoping reviews. Studies were included if they explored four-day school weeks in primary or secondary schools in the United States. Studies could be of any empirical design (we excluded conceptual and opinion articles).

Numbers of studies screened and included in the review:

We screened 4,514 abstracts and 533 full-text articles. Our final review consisted of 133 studies.



A full technical report can be found at <https://osf.io/kqyc6/>

Recommended citation:

Day, E., Golfen, J., Shimmel, L., Trevino, S., Grant, S., Steinka-Fry, K., Cabrera, B., Hamilton, S., Martinez, S., & Tanner-Smith, E. (2025). What research exists on four-day weeks in K-12 schools? HEDCO Institute for Evidence-Based Educational Practice. Retrieved from hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/reports/four-day-school-week-scoping-review

<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/M8HYX>

Reference

1. Thompson, P. (2023). National four-day school week adoption trends. Presentation for the National Conference on the Four-day School Week, Oregon State University. Retrieved from: <https://oregonstate.app.box.com/s/e14m8gms4etgcc93t35698k00ik3i94q/file/1339129274220>