Objective

- Insufficient time for recovery after a workday may cause disturbed sleep, fatigue and stress.
- The aim of the present study was to evaluate an intervention referring to a 25% reduction of weekly work hours with respect to sleep, sleepiness and stress for employees within the public sector in Sweden.

Data and Methods

- Participating work places (N=33) were randomized into an intervention group and a control group.
- Participants (N=580; 71.6% women) worked full time at baseline.
- Work time was reduced to 75% for the intervention group (N=354) with preserved salary.
- Data was collected at baseline, 9-month follow-up and 18-month follow-up.
- Subjective sleep quality, sleep duration, sleepiness, stress and worries at bedtime were measured with diary during one week per data collection.

Results

- A multilevel mixed-model showed that compared with the control group, the intervention group improved over 18 months on sleep quality and sleep duration (+24 minutes) and reduced sleepiness, stress and worries at bedtime (p<.002) on workdays.
- During days off, the intervention group showed improved sleep quality, reduced sleepiness and stress (p<.006), but no effects on sleep duration or worries at bedtime were found.
- Adding gender as an additional factor indicated no differences between women and men in response to the intervention.

Conclusion

- A 25% reduction of weekly working hours with retained salary resulted in beneficial effects on sleep, sleepiness and stress both on work days and on days off.
- This controlled intervention thus indicates that reduced work time over a period of 18 months may improve recovery and reduce stress.