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Money buys an SUV, while time fosters sufficiency? - The influence of working-hours, income and available time on high-impact unsustainable behaviour and pro-environmental behaviour

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Introduction. Recent studies have shown that psychological motivational constructs (like environmental awareness) only predict overconsumption unsustainable behaviour with particular high environmental impact (like mobility behaviour) to a small extent, whereas income is the most relevant predictor. It has been considered that working time reduction might be a promising strategy to counter this harmful income effect. The less people work, the less money they have to spend on unsustainable behaviour. Additionally, reduced working time might increase discretionary time, and might thus allow individuals to better align their actions on their (pro-environmental) values, leading to an increase in sufficiency-oriented behaviour. However, intra-individual empirical evidence of these assumed effects is sparse.

Methods. To better understand these effects, we run an ongoing study with working Swiss residents (N > 800) on working time, income, unsustainable overconsumption behaviour and sufficiency-oriented behaviour. Individuals reducing their working time are assessed three times over a 10-month period (1-month-pre-, 3-months-post- and 9-months-follow-up assessment) and compared to control groups of full-time and part-time workers.

Results and discussion. At ICEP, we will present and discuss cross-sectional analyses of the first questionnaire with a particular focus on the interplay of income, discretionary time, values and both high-impact overconsumption and sufficiency-oriented behaviour.