

# When it comes to sleep, few of us are getting enough

March 19 2010, By Alexia Elejalde-Ruiz

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Sleep deprivation, it turns out, is colorblind.

The National Sleep Foundation, a Washington-based nonprofit that promotes [sleep health](#), released its annual "Sleep in America" poll this month and for the first time examined how ethnic groups differ in their sleep habits. The poll of 1,000 Americans ages 25 to 60, who were asked to identify as white, black, Hispanic or Asian, was meant to examine how cultural differences push the physiological boundaries of how much sleep we need.

NSF Board Chairman Thomas Balkin cited one overarching similarity among the ethnic groups: A fifth to a quarter of the respondents across the board said they missed work or family functions, or went without sex, because they were too sleepy.

"This reflects the power and influence of the larger U.S. culture," said Balkin, chief of the department of behavioral biology at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. "Regardless of ethnic backgrounds, we're not getting enough sleep."

Despite that common experience, some differences emerged from the survey. Here are some of the poll's findings showing how ethnic groups differ at [bedtime](#):

**HAVE SEX EVERY NIGHT OR ALMOST EVERY NIGHT**

Blacks: 10%

Hispanics: 10%

Whites: 4%

Asians: 1%

PRAY EVERY NIGHT OR ALMOST EVERY NIGHT

Blacks: 71%

Hispanics: 45%

Whites: 32%

Asians: 18%

KEPT AWAKE BY FINANCIAL, EMPLOYMENT, PERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIP OR HEALTH-RELATED CONCERNS

Blacks: 33%

Hispanics: 38%

Whites: 28%

Asians: 25%

USUALLY SLEEP WITH A PET

Blacks: 2%

Hispanics: 2%

Whites: 14%

Asians: 2%

### SLEEP ALONE

Blacks: 41%

Hispanics: 31%

Whites: 21%

Asians: 37%

### RARELY OR NEVER HAVE A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP:

Blacks: 15%

Hispanics: 14%

Whites: 20%

Asians: 9%

### USE SLEEP MEDICATION AT LEAST A FEW NIGHTS A WEEK

Blacks: 9%

Hispanics: 8%

Whites: 13%

Asians: 5%

**DO JOB-RELATED WORK IN THE HOUR BEFORE GOING TO  
BED EVERY NIGHT OR ALMOST EVERY NIGHT**

Blacks: 17%

Hispanics: 13%

Whites: 9%

Asians: 16%

**USE THE INTERNET IN THE HOUR BEFORE BED EVERY NIGHT  
OR ALMOST EVERY NIGHT**

Blacks: 20%

Hispanics: 20%

Whites: 22%

Asians: 51%

**WATCH TV IN THE HOUR BEFORE BED EVERY NIGHT OR  
ALMOST EVERY NIGHT**

Blacks: 74%

Hispanics: 72%

Whites: 64%

Asians: 52%

AVERAGE AMOUNT OF SLEEP ON A WORK NIGHT

Blacks: 6 hours 14 minutes

Hispanics: 6 hours 34 minutes

Whites: 6 hours 52 minutes

Asians: 6 hours 48 minutes

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