

# Most Americans struggle to get good sleep

November 9 2022, by Cara Murez

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Nearly half of American adults are not getting the sleep they need, a new study shows.

That sleep debt is being compounded for many by what researchers call social jet lag, which is the difference between a person's preferred sleep/wake times and those that society expects.

"This is a well-done study examining a very large and representative sample," [Dr. Bhanu Prakash Kolla](#), a sleep medicine specialist in the Center for Sleep Medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., told *CNN*.

In the [study](#), researchers from universities in the United States and China used data collected between 2017 and March 2020 from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Information the researchers analyzed included differences in [sleep duration](#) on workdays and free days.

Among the 9,000 study participants, about 27% reported being very sleepy during the day.

Meanwhile, more than 30% said they were getting an hour less sleep than what they needed. Adults need at least seven [hours of sleep](#) nightly for [good health](#), according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 10% of respondents said they were getting about two hours less sleep than they needed each night.

Then there was the difference between a person's biological clock and societal expectations.

A large number of study participants reported having this problem, including 46% who experienced at least one hour of [social jet lag](#) and 19.3% who experienced two hours.

"The timing of your sleep on workdays is the societal and work constraints, but the timing of your sleep on free days is what your body clock really wants you to do," [Dr. Elizabeth Klerman](#), a professor of neurology in the division of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School, told *CNN*.

With a large gap between the two, "it's like you're living in a state of jet lag during the workweek," added Klerman.

Sleep issues can cause major health problems, from obesity to heart disease. Sleep debt is also linked to dementia, anxiety and depression. Social jet lag risks include insomnia, daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, bowel issues and increased cortisol levels.

"With strict work schedules and jam-packed weekend activities, it's not surprising that many individuals report that their sleep needs are not being met during the week," sleep specialist [Dr. Raj Dasgupta](#), a clinical associate professor of medicine at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine.

Those who like to stay up late struggle the most, Kolla said.

One fix for these problems is to figure out when you need to get up and count backward to the bedtime you need to get the correct amount of sleep, experts suggested.

Use a variety of relaxation techniques to fall asleep, including meditation, deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. Exercise, avoid naps, skip coffee in the afternoons and avoid alcohol at night. Keep smartphones out of your sleeping space, experts added.

Most importantly, try to stay on the same sleep schedule for both weekdays and weekends.

"You should try and have the same sleep and wake times on weekdays and non-work days," Klerman said. "But if you aren't getting enough sleep during the workweek, you should try and get more on your free days."

A variety of evidence suggests that catching up on [sleep](#) on days off may help, including a 2020 study that found that adults who slept more on their free days were less likely to have higher inflammation levels, *CNN* reported.

Dasgupta also suggests not hitting the snooze button.

"Try your best to get out of bed when your alarm goes off and try to get outside; especially if the weather is good and there is a lot of sunshine in the morning. This will allow suppression of melatonin and reset that circadian rhythm," Dasgupta said.

The study, which was led by Dr. Hongkun Di, of Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, China, was published Nov. 8 in the journal *JAMA Network Open*.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [sleep and sleep disorders](#).

Hongkun Di et al, Evaluation of Sleep Habits and Disturbances Among US Adults, 2017-2020, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.40788](#)

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