

Sleep Quality

West Virginia Social Survey Report

WVSS-20-09

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Background

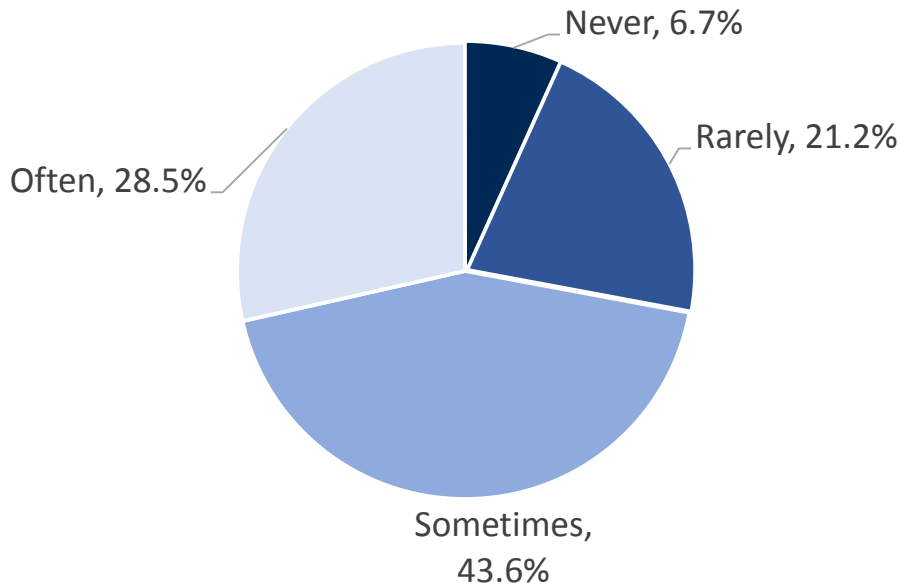
Medical research has increasingly shown the importance of sleep quality to individuals' health, while social science has highlighted that sleep quality is often associated with a variety of economic and demographic characteristics.

This WVSS report explores the self-reported sleep quality of West Virginians and highlights some key social patterns of sleep quality in the state.

Highlights

- 28.5% of West Virginians say they often have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep, while 46.4% say that they receive less than the recommended seven hours of sleep a night.
- Lower income residents and those who have recently experienced stressful life events report more trouble sleeping.
- Sleep quality is strongly associated with West Virginians' evaluation of their health.

Figure 1 - "During the past 12 months, how often have you had trouble going to sleep or staying asleep?"



Overall Sleep Quality

The West Virginia Social Survey (WVSS) asked residents, "During the past 12 months, how often have you had trouble going to sleep or staying asleep?"

As seen in Figure 1, 28.5% of West Virginians say that they often have trouble falling or staying asleep. Another 43.6% of state residents say that they sometimes have trouble sleeping. Only 6.7% of West Virginians say that they never have trouble falling or staying asleep.

The WVSS also asked individuals, "During the past 30 days, on average, how many hours did you sleep per night?"

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend](#) that adults should generally get at least seven hours of sleep per night.

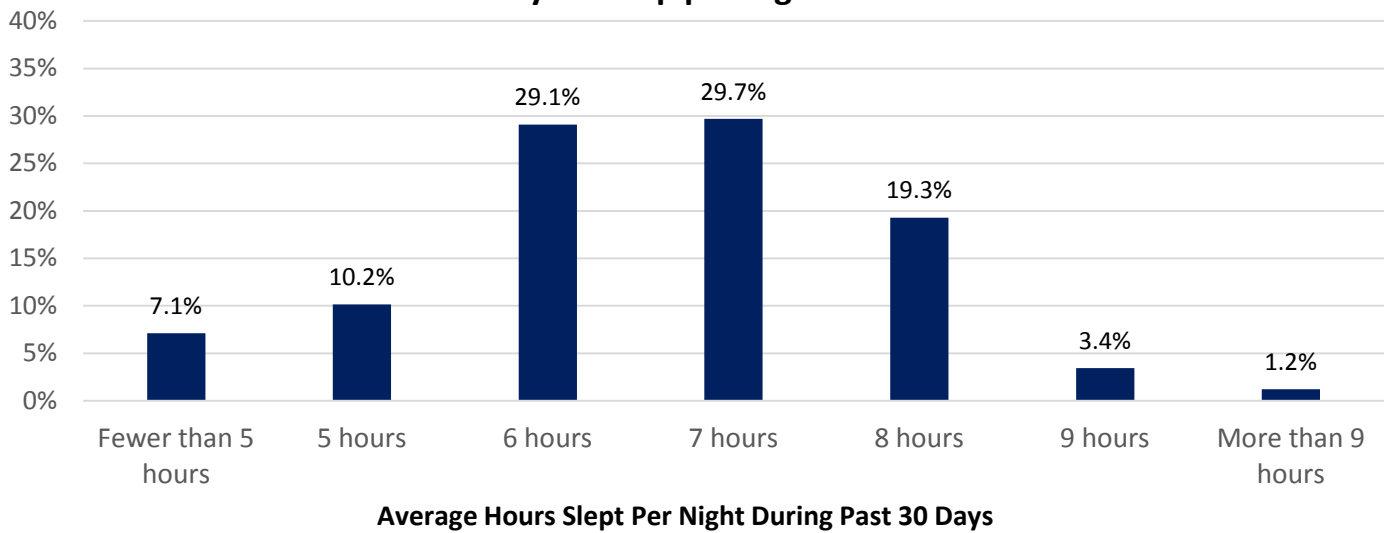
As seen in Figure 2, a substantial proportion of West Virginians report sleeping less than this recommendation. Just over 29% of state residents say that they get an average of 6 hours of sleep per night, while 10.2% report receiving only 5 hours of sleep a night. Another

7.1% say that they receive less than 5 hours of sleep a night.

As might be expected, responses to these two questions are related. For instance, only 21.6% of West Virginians who say they often have trouble falling or staying asleep report receiving an average of at least 7 hours of sleep. This compares to 74.7% of state residents who say they never have trouble getting to or staying asleep.

Responses to these questions in the WVSS differ across several demographic and social variables.

Figure 2 - "During the past 30 days, on average, how many hours did you sleep per night?"



Differences by Gender

The WVSS finds that female West Virginians report somewhat worse sleep quality than male residents.

For instance, as seen in Table 1, 31.1% of females say they often

have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep. This compares to 25.6% of males.

Looking at the other end of the responses, 9.3% of males say they never have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep, but only 4.3% of females report

never having trouble.

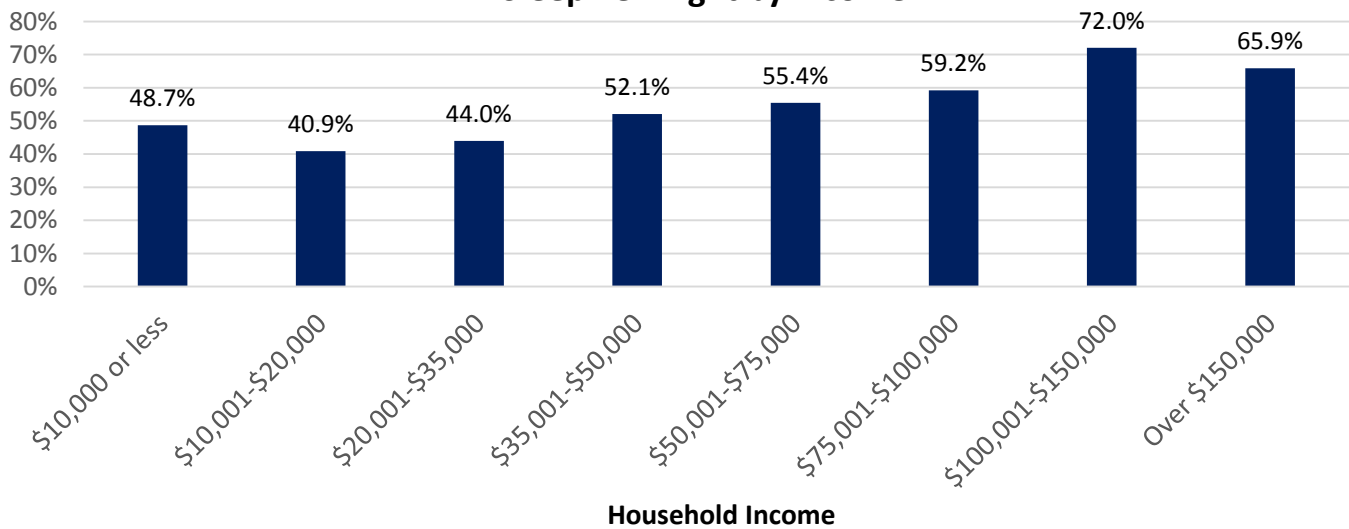
There are likely multiple factors underlying this gender pattern. One such factor is the greater role of females in childrearing and caregiving in general.

Table 1- Sleeping Difficulty by Gender

During the past 12 months, how often have you had trouble going to sleep or staying asleep?		
	Male	Female
Never	9.3%	4.3%
Rarely	23.5%	18.9%
Sometimes	41.6%	45.8%
Often	25.6%	31.1%
	100%	100%

Data: 2020 West Virginia Social Survey (WVSS)

Figure 3 - Percentage Reporting An Average of at Least Seven Hours of Sleep Per Night by Income



Differences by Income

The WVSS also reveals differences in sleep quality by the household income of the individual.

For instance, as seen in Figure 2, over 65% of individuals in household with incomes over \$100,000 report receiving at least 7 hours of sleep a night. This compares to less than 50% of individuals with household incomes under \$35,000.

This could be a function of individuals with higher incomes having more consistent work schedules that are more conducive to high quality sleep.

Stressful Events and Sleep

We might expect that individuals who have recently

experienced a stressful or traumatic event might have more difficulty obtaining quality sleep.

The WVSS asked respondents if they have experienced any of ten stressful events in the past six years. These events include having a family member die, going through a marital separation, losing a job, or having legal problems.

Responses show that West Virginians who have experienced more of these events have more difficulty falling and staying asleep.

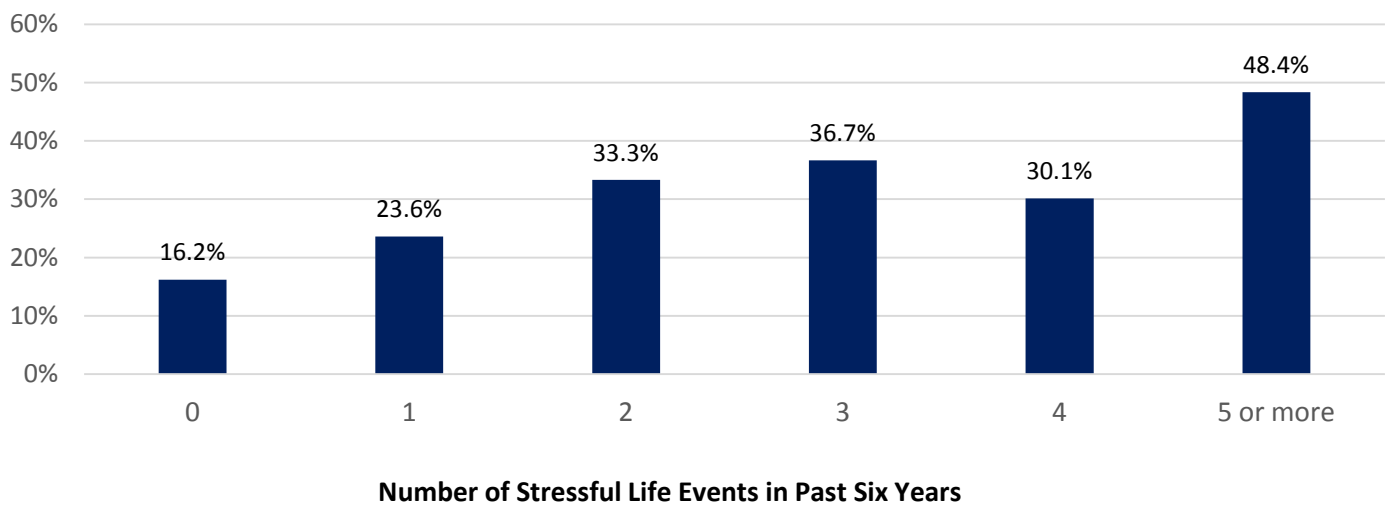
As seen in Figure 4, 16.2% of state residents who have not experienced any of these stressful life events in the past six years say that they “often” have trouble sleeping. This

increases to 23.6% among those experiencing one stressful life event, 36.6% among those experiencing three stressful life events, and 48.4% among those individuals who have experienced five or more such events.

Relationship with Health

The WVSS also highlights the relationship between a person’s sleep and their general health. Individuals were asked, “In general, would you say that your own health is excellent, good, fair, or poor?”

Figure 4 - Percentage Saying "Often" to "During the past 12 months, how often have you had trouble going to sleep or staying asleep?"



Among West Virginians who say that they never have trouble sleeping, 18.4% say that their health is excellent. However, among those who say they often have trouble sleeping this percentage drops to 3.5%.

Of course, the relationship between sleep and general health likely goes in both directions. That is, poor health can harm one’s sleep and poor sleep can harm one’s health.

Summary

The WVSS shows that substantial proportions of West Virginians have trouble getting the amount or quality of sleep that is recommended by health organizations.

Trouble with sleeping, though, is not evenly distributed among state residents. Female West Virginians, those with lower incomes, and those experiencing stressful life events are all more likely to say that they are having problems with their sleep.

The WVSS also shows that sleep quality is closely connected to the general health of the state’s population.

Data Source

The WVSS is produced by the Survey Research Center at West Virginia University. The purpose of the WVSS is to gather information on the

attitudes, concerns, and challenges facing WV residents.

The WVSS is a mail survey utilizing an address-based sample of nearly 5,000 households across the state.

The 2020 WVSS received nearly 1,900 responses for a response rate of 38.1% (American Association of Public Opinion Research Definition #3). Data are weighted to be representative of the West Virginia adult population.

Suggested Citation

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