

2016 Sleep Health Survey of Australian Adults

In short

The study finds that that inadequate sleep, of either duration or quality, and its daytime consequences are very common in Australian adults, affecting 33-45% of adults. These problems occur across all age groups.

- Medical sleep conditions are also very common, with diagnosed sleep apnea affecting 8%, significant insomnia 20% and restless legs 18% of adults.
- Average reported sleep time is 7 hours, although 12% sleep less than 5 ½ hours and 8% over 9 hours. Three-quarters (76%) who sleep less than 5 ½ hours report frequent daytime impairment or sleep-related symptoms.
- Frequent, loud snoring is reported by 24% of men and 17% of women. Frequent, loud snoring and breathing pauses in sleep are more often seen in middle age. Among those with frequent, loud snoring, 70% report daytime impairment or other sleep-related symptoms.
- Among the 19% of people with frequent loud snoring and/or witnessed breathing pauses but no prior diagnosis of OSA on a sleep study, 63% report awakening unrefreshed, and 65% report one or more daytime sleep-related symptoms, suggesting undiagnosed sleep apnea is relatively common in the community.

The effect of the ‘24/7 society’ is profound.

A quarter of all adults (26%), both use the internet most or every night of the week just before bed and have frequent sleep difficulties or daytime impairments. Similarly, 16% of all working adults do work just before bed and also have frequent sleep difficulties or daytime sleep-related symptoms.

- Nearly a quarter (23%) report their typical weekday routine of work or home duties does not allow them to get enough sleep.
- Younger adults (18-34y) sleep around 1 hour longer before non-work days than working days, compared to 18 minutes in older age groups.
- Sleep problems have a major effect on work performance.
- In the past month 17% have missed work because they were sleepy and 17% have also fallen asleep on the job. In the past three months 29% of adults report making errors at work due to sleepiness or sleep problems.
- People with sleep problems are significantly more likely to report decreased work productivity (as assessed on the Stanford Presenteeism Scale).

Driving while drowsy at least every month is reported by 29% of people, 20% have nodded off while driving and 5% have had an accident in the past year because they dozed off.

The prevalence of sleep difficulties and daytime consequences appears to have increased since 2010, with various sleep problems reported by more adults than in 2010.