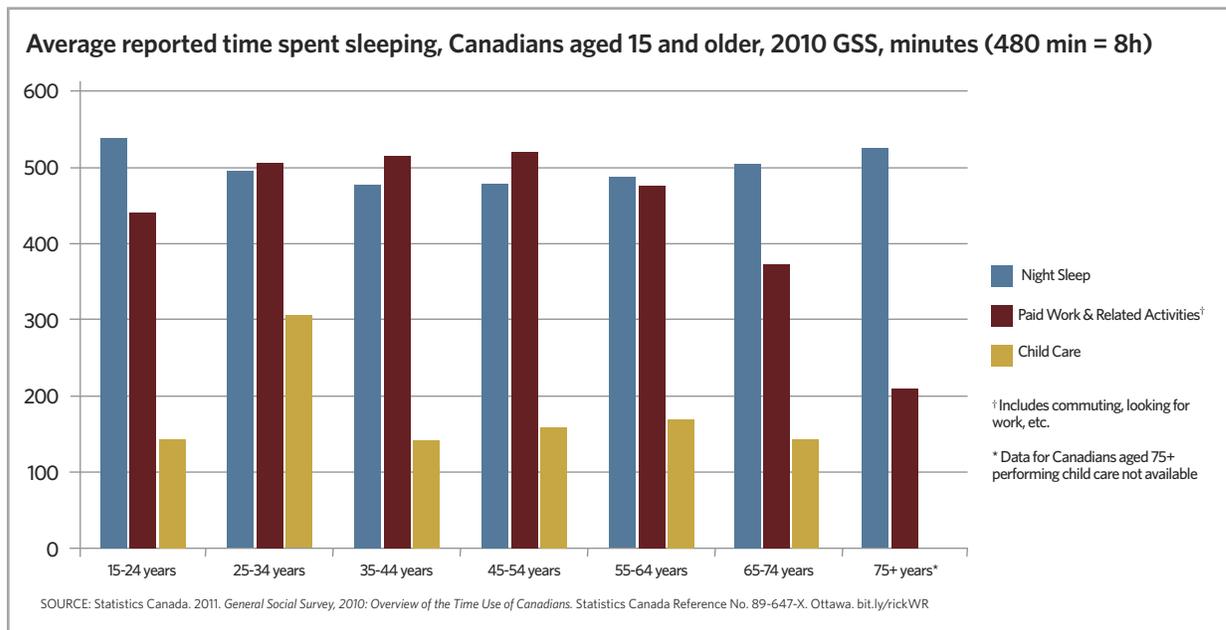


# FASCINATING FAMILIES

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APRIL 2013 | ISSUE 52

## Counting Sheep – Sleep Patterns in Canada



Sleep is a major part of our living experience, occupying approximately a third of our lives. Though we often sacrifice it to meet life's demands, research has shown that sleep is a crucial resource for our well-being: numerous studies have associated sleep deprivation with a range of issues, including obesity,<sup>1,2</sup> immune system functioning<sup>3</sup> and academic performance.<sup>4</sup> With 6 in 10 surveyed Canadians reporting that they "feel tired most of the time,"<sup>5</sup> it is perhaps not surprising that we often find ourselves preoccupied with our daily slumber (or a lack thereof).

According to the *2010 General Social Survey*, Canadians spent an average of 8 h 18 min per day sleeping, but rates of sleep vary according to age.<sup>6</sup> Among Canadians aged 15 and older, 15-24 year olds reported the most amount of daily sleep (8h 59 min), whereas the 35-44 age group reported the least

(7h 57 min).<sup>7</sup> The sleep rates of senior age groups return close to those reported by younger Canadians: 8h 25 min among 65-74 year olds, and an additional 20 minutes for those 75 and older.<sup>8</sup>

The lower levels of sleep reported by middle-aged Canadians can be explained partly by the "time stress" experienced by many people balancing family and work roles. In a previous GSS study, women and men with high levels of time stress reported getting 25 and 35 minutes less sleep (respectively) than those with low time stress.<sup>9</sup>

Parenting can be costly to our "sleep hygiene": survey respondents with children under the age of 15 at home slept an average of 17 minutes less than their childless counterparts, and those with two children slept 25 minutes less<sup>10</sup> – echoing the results of similar U.S. studies.<sup>11, 12</sup>

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Work also comes with a significant sleep-time cost: Canadians who work full-time report sleeping an average 24 minute less per day than those not in the labour force.<sup>13</sup>

## Family Lens

Sleep is a vital household resource, and while the effects of our sleeping patterns are felt most acutely at the individual level, sleep is also a family issue.

Different family members often have different sleep requirements – needs shaped by biological imperatives and lifestyle demands – and the interplay between these diverse needs and our family and work responsibilities can have a profound impact on household life. While we often consciously sacrifice sleep in an effort to balance different role demands, this can be a costly practice in terms of our health and well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> Must A, Parisi SM. Sedentary behaviour and sleep: paradoxical effects in association with childhood obesity. *International Journal of Obesity* 2009; 33(Suppl 1): S82-6.

<sup>2</sup> Patel SR, Hu FB. "Short sleep duration and weight gain: A systematic review," in *Obesity* (2008); 16(3): p.643.

<sup>3</sup> Imeri L, Opp M. How (and why) the immune system makes us sleep. *Nature Rev Neurosci*.2009;10: p.199.

<sup>4</sup> <http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.3109/07420528.2011.606518>

<sup>5</sup> Leger Marketing. "The Health of Canadians," (Leger survey, conducted November 10-17, 2010). Accessed February 8, 2013. [www.cbc.ca/news/pdf/CBCFinalReport.pdf](http://www.cbc.ca/news/pdf/CBCFinalReport.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. 2011. *General Social Survey, 2010: Overview of the Time Use of Canadians*. Statistics Canada Reference No. 89-647-X. Ottawa. Accessed February 13, 2013. [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-647-x/89-647-x2011001-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-647-x/89-647-x2011001-eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Hurst, Matt. (2008). "Who gets any sleep these days? Sleep patterns of Canadians," in *Canadian Social Trends* (No. 85). Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-XWE. Accessed February 2, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2008001/article/10553-eng.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Hagen, Erika, Mirer, Anna G., Palta, Mari and Peppard, Paul E. "The Sleep-Time Cost of Parenting: Sleep Duration and Sleepiness Among Employed Parents in the Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study," in *The American Journal of Epidemiology* (January 2013). Accessed February 12, 2013. <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/01/31/aje.kws246.short>

<sup>12</sup> National Sleep Foundation. 2004 *Sleep in America Poll: Summary of Findings* (March 2004). Accessed February 10, 2013. <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20SOF%202004.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada.

