

2016 AARP Sleep and Brain Health Survey

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AARP Research

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Research

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Acknowledgments

GfK conducted this survey for AARP using its nationally representative online panel, Knowledge Panel. This report was prepared by Laura Mehegan, Chuck Rainville & Laura Skufca in AARP Research. For additional information about the survey, contact Laura Mehegan at lemehegan@aarp.org. Media inquiries should be directed to Greg Phillips at gphillips@aarp.org.

Objectives

- To characterize the sleep habits of the 40+ adult population.
- To understand what keeps people awake at night and what disturbs their sleep.
- To examine the relationship between sleep, brain health, and mental well-being.

Methodology

- An online survey fielded August 31 – September 14, 2016 among a nationally representative sample of 2,464 Americans age 40+.
- Additional interviews were conducted to achieve the following samples:
 - 353 Hispanic/Latinos age 40+ (conducted in both English and Spanish)
 - 352 African Americans age 40+
 - 205 Asian Americans age 40+.
- The data was weighted by age, gender, race, ethnicity, employment status and income.
- All estimates are for the general 40+ US population unless otherwise noted.
- The margin of error for the national sample of 2,464 adults age 40+ is +/- 2.4%. The margin of error among subgroups (e.g., age cohorts) is higher.
- Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Key Findings

Brain Health and Mental Well-Being

- Virtually everyone (98%) believes sleep is important for brain health.
- Adults who sleep better rate their brain health better.
- Adults who rate their sleep quality higher, average more hours of sleep and have higher mental well-being scores.
- When stressors and sleep disturbances increase, they adversely impact the amount of sleep people get and their mental well-being.
- Many adults have trouble staying asleep (53%) and/or sleeping through the night (44%). Adults who have these difficulties average less sleep per night and have lower mental well-being scores.

Sleep Quality and Quantity

- A majority of 40+ adults say they are well-rested and satisfied with the amount of sleep they get yet nearly half (48%) say they don't get enough sleep. Only four in 10 (41%) say their sleep quality is excellent or very good and 26% say they sleep worse than they did five years ago.
- Adults think they need between seven and eight hours of sleep a night to function at their best and they indeed average seven hours of sleep per night.
- Older adults age 60+ get more sleep, report better sleep quality, and have better sleep habits. However, they are also more likely to fall asleep somewhere other than their bedroom (e.g., in front of the TV).

Key Findings

Sleep Habits

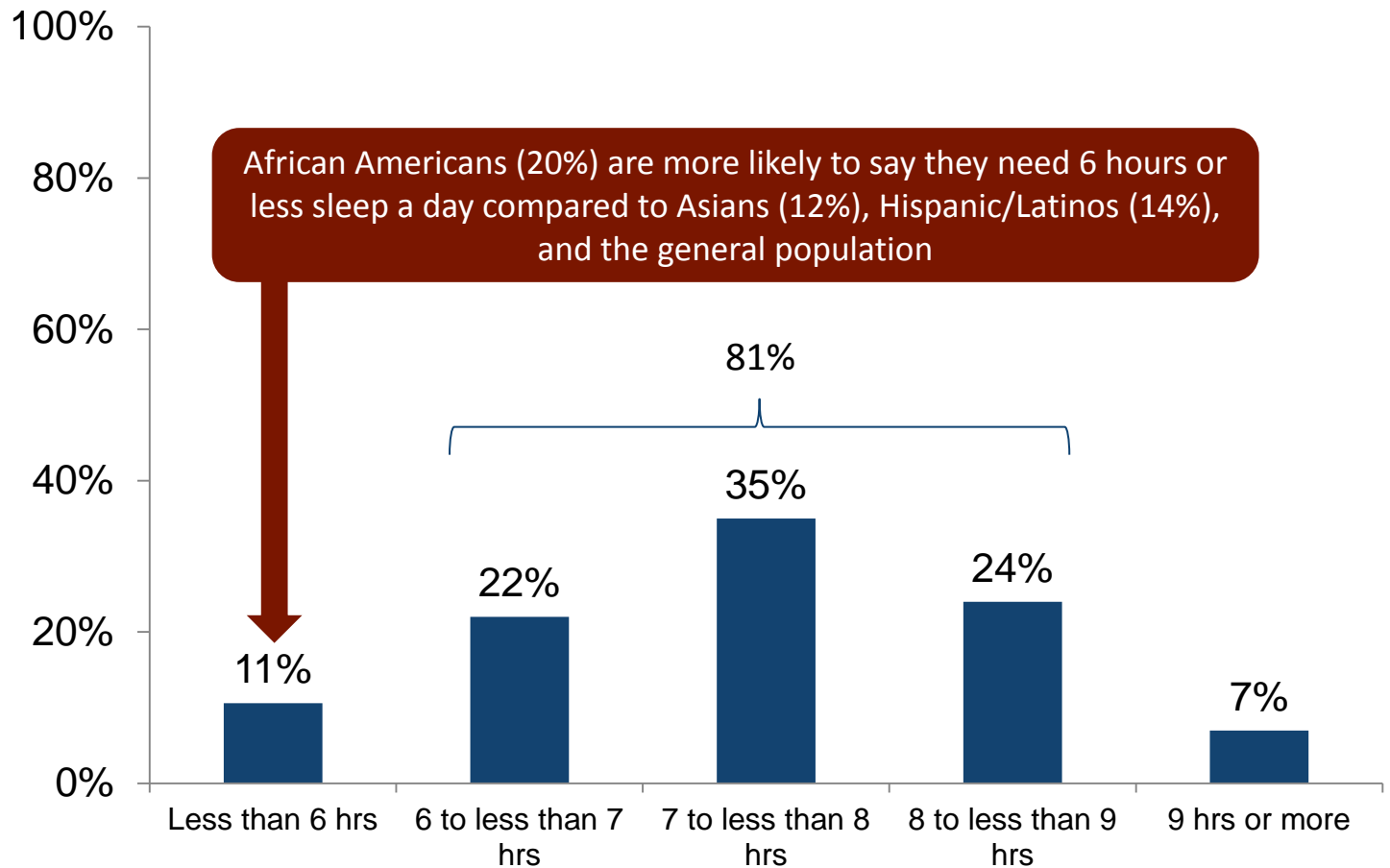
- The most frequently cited activities that adults engage in within an hour of bedtime are watching television and browsing the web.
- One-third (34%) of adults keep a phone or electronic device by their bed,
- Few adults use medications or supplements to help them sleep. Among those who do, many say they have been taking it for one year or longer.
- A significant gap exists in what 40+ adults say is effective in helping people sleep and what they actually do.
- Nearly nine in 10 (88%) adults think a cool bedroom temperature is effective in helping people sleep. Yet only two in five (41%) adults keep their room between 60 and 67 degrees.
- The most common reason people wake up during the night is to use the bathroom.

Sleep Quantity and Quality

Most adults are getting the amount of sleep they think they need.

7
The average hours of sleep per night for 40+ adults

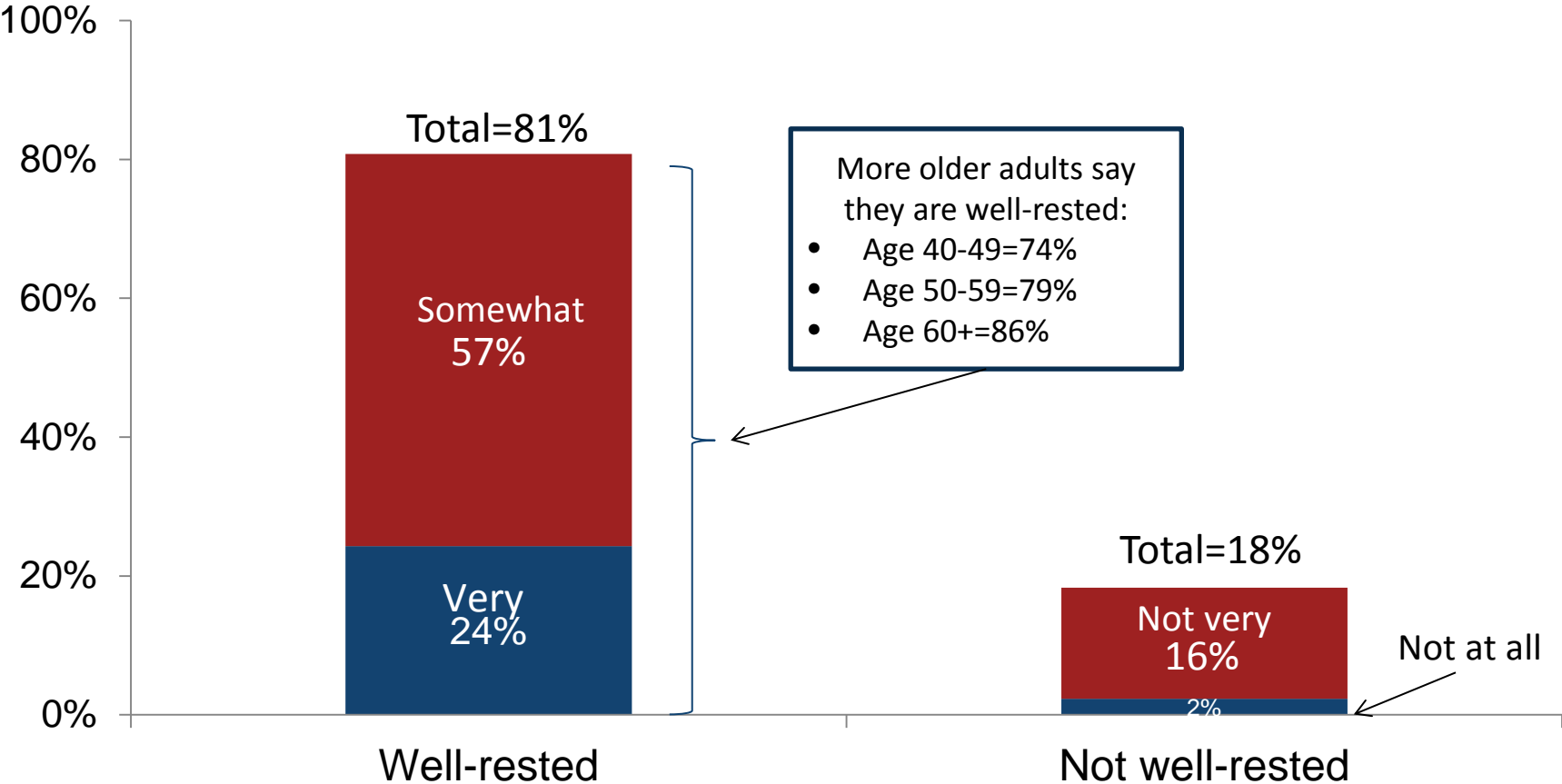
Adults 60+ get slightly more than 7 hrs, adults under 60 get slightly less



Q11: Without counting naps, how many hours of sleep do you get per day?

Q12: How many hours of sleep do you need to function at your best during the day?

Four in five (81%) 40+ adults feel well-rested with adults age 60+ feeling the most well-rested.



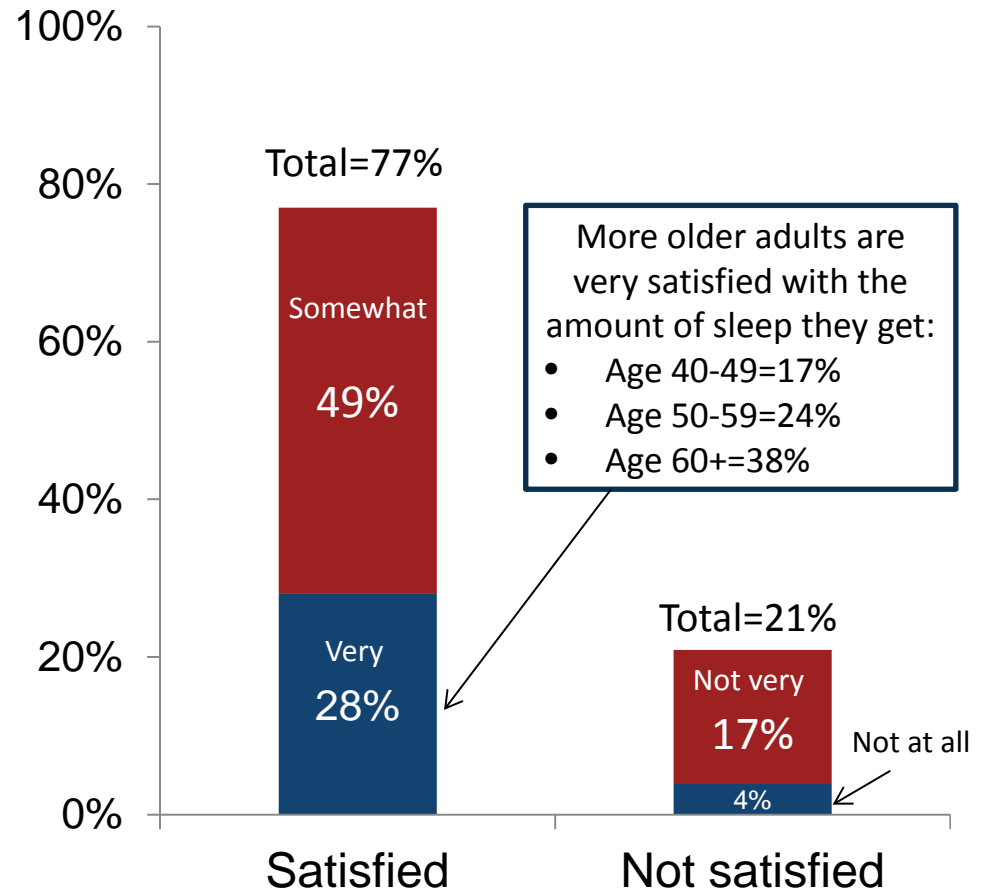
Q20: In general and on most days, how well -rested do you feel when you wake up?

Adults are able to accurately assess their sleep; those who say they are very well-rested get significantly more sleep.

How well-rested do you feel when you wake up?	Average hours of sleep, by race/ethnicity			
	General Population	African American	Asian	Hispanic/Latino
Very well-rested	7.5	7.2	7.0	7.1
Somewhat well-rested	6.9	6.3	6.5	6.7
Not very well-rested	6.4	5.7	6.1	6.0
Not at all well-rested	5.8	5.8	6.0	6.0

Over three-quarters (77%) of 40+ adults say they are satisfied with the amount of sleep they get but nearly half (48%) say they do not get enough sleep. Fewer Asians (21%) say they are very satisfied.

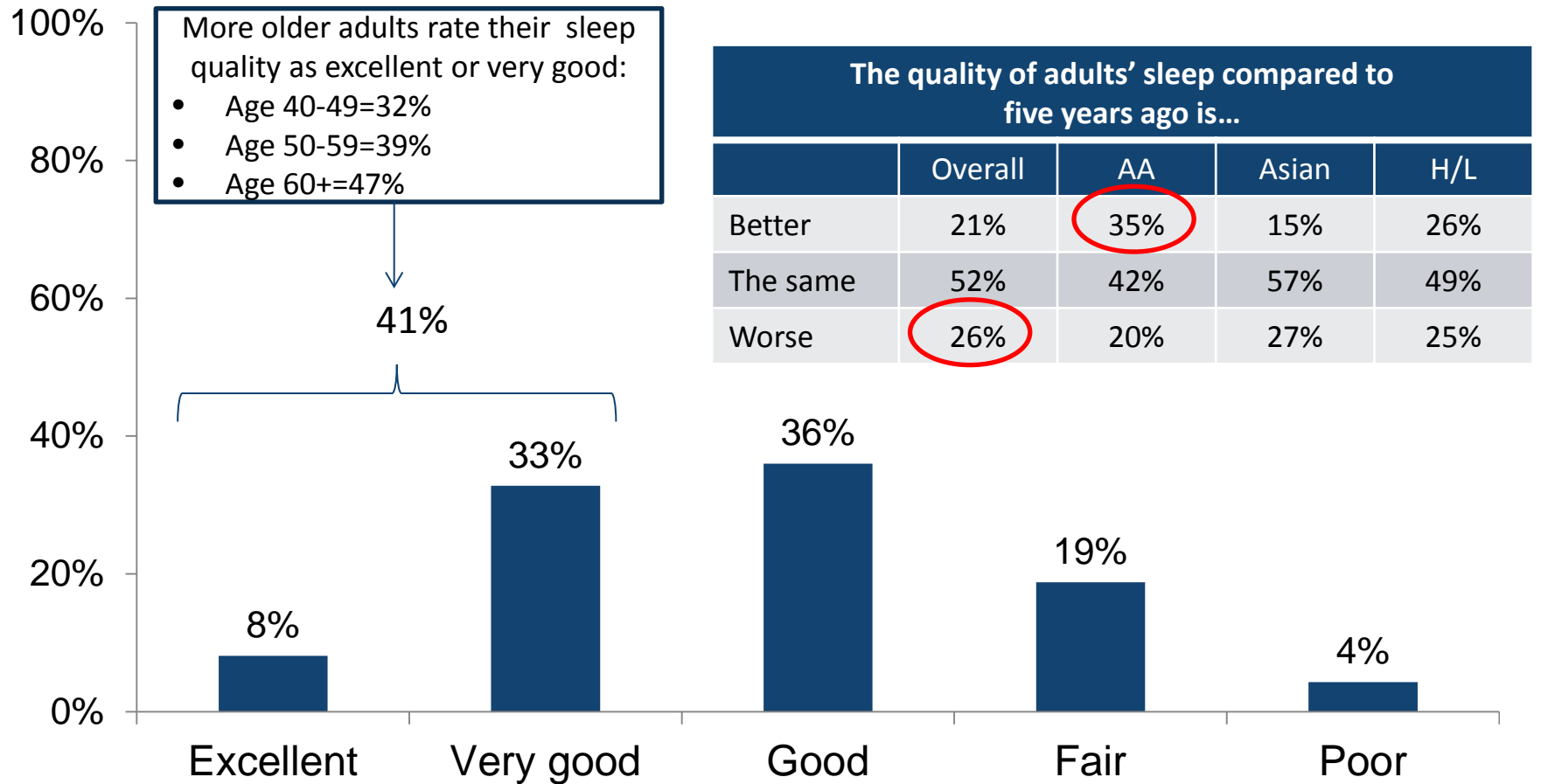
40+ adults who say they get...		Avg hrs of sleep
Too much sleep	2%	8.3
Right amount of sleep	49%	7.4
Not enough sleep	48%	6.4



Q21: How satisfied are you with the amount of sleep you get on most nights?

Q23: In general, do you think you get too much sleep, not enough sleep, or just the right amount of sleep?

Only four in 10 (41%) 40+ adults report that the quality of their sleep is excellent or very good. While most say it hasn't changed, one-quarter (26%) say the quality of their sleep has gotten worse. More African Americans report that their sleep quality has improved in the last five years.

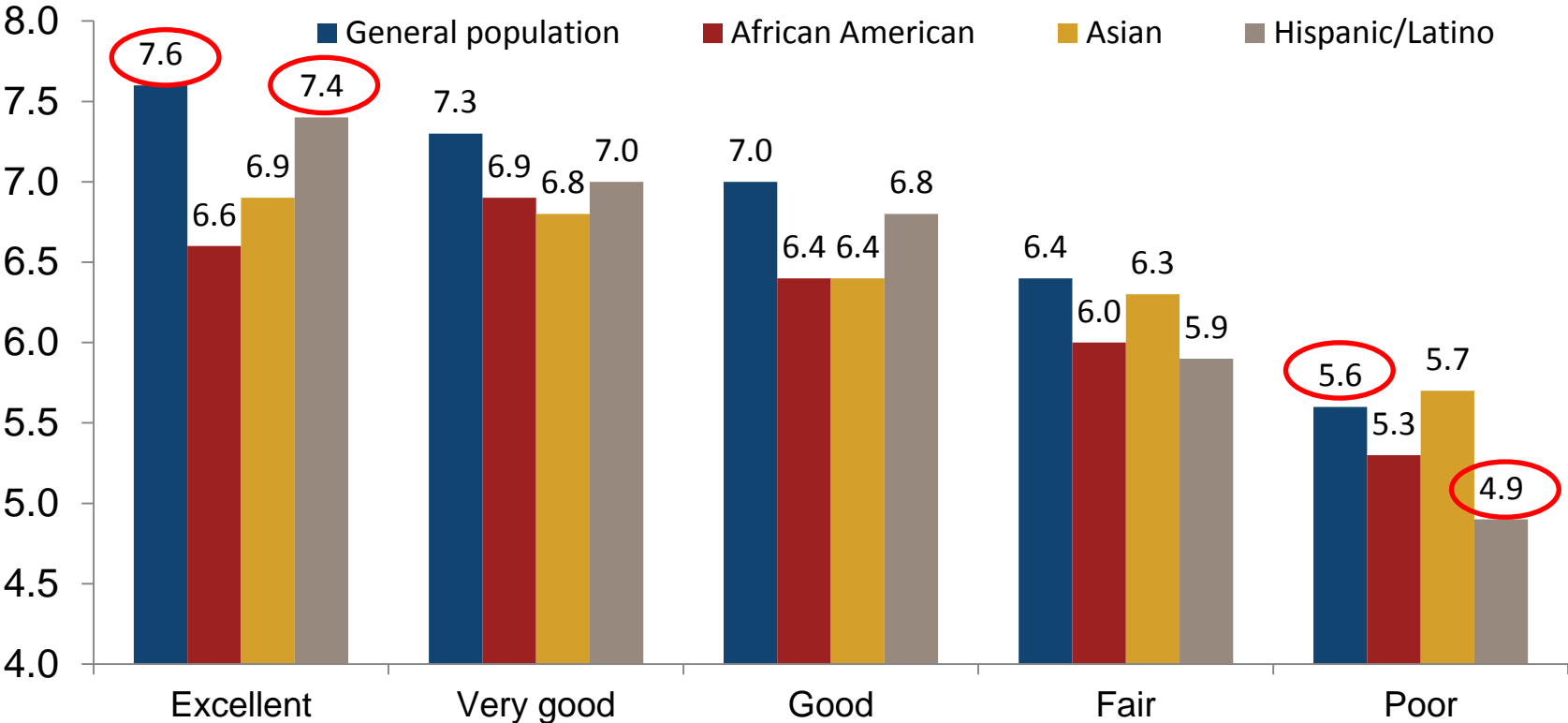


Q22: Overall, how would you rate the quality of sleep you get?

Q24: How would you compare the quality of your sleep now compared to five years ago?

Adults who rate their overall sleep quality as excellent get an average of two more hours of sleep per night than those who rate their sleep quality as poor. Minority populations rate their sleep quality similar to the general population but get less sleep on average.

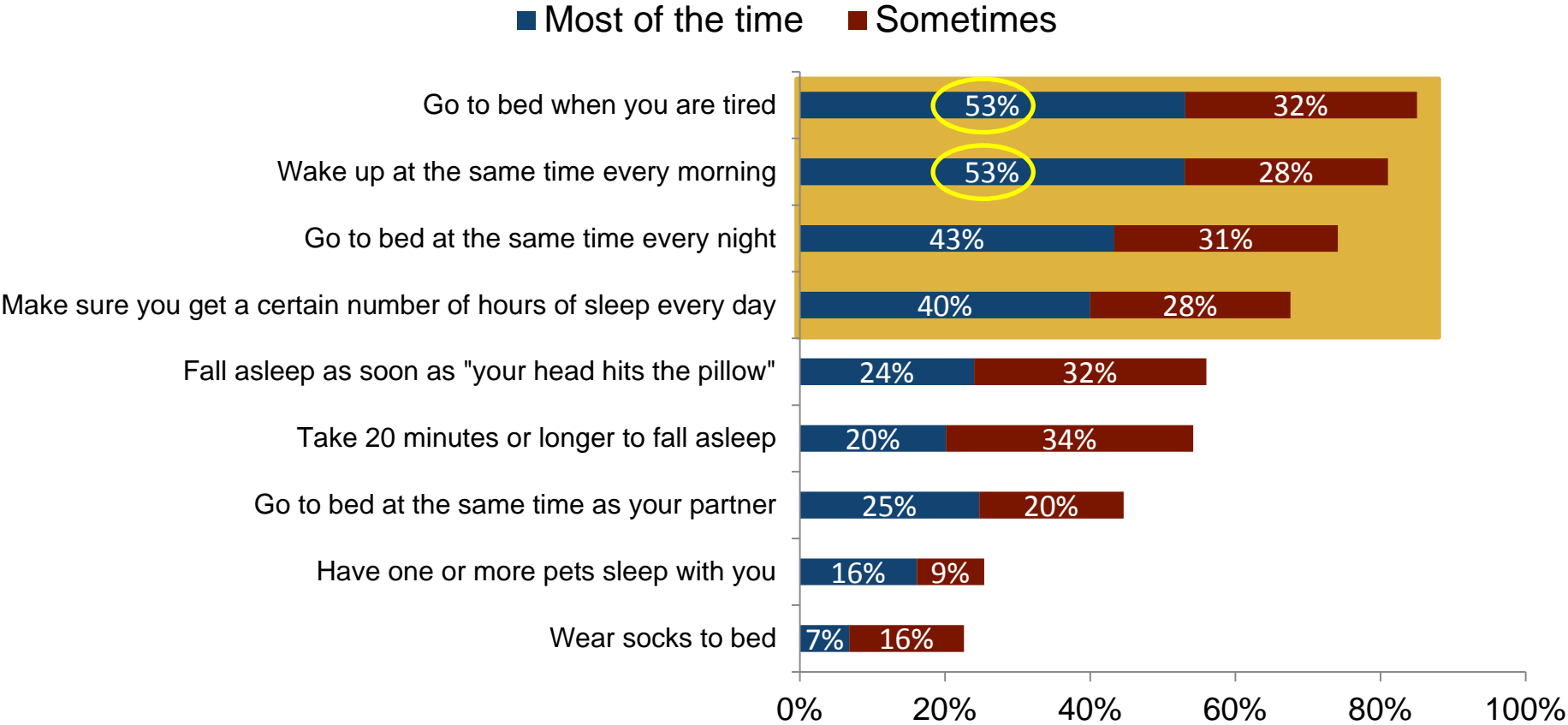
Average number of hours of sleep by perceived quality of sleep, by race/ethnicity



Q22: Overall, how would you rate the quality of sleep you get?

General Sleep Habits

A majority of 40+ adults have good sleep habits, but not all the time. Over half (53%) say they go to bed when they are tired and wake up at the same time every morning.



Q16: How often do you...?

Older adults tend to have better sleep habits.

40+ adults who engage in these sleep habits most of the time

Go to bed at the same time each night

Overall: 43%
Age 40-49: 36%
Age 50-59: 40%
Age 60+: 50%

Go to bed when tired

Overall: 53%
Age 40-49: 46%
Age 50-59: 53%
Age 60+: 57%

Make sure you get a certain number of hours of sleep

Overall: 40%
Age 40-49: 35%
Age 50-59: 40%
Age 60+: 44%

Women tend to spend 20+ minutes falling asleep;
men fall asleep when their head hits the pillow

Q16: How often do you...?

On most nights, many 40+ adults sleep with a partner but very few sleep with a child (2%) or an infant (1%).

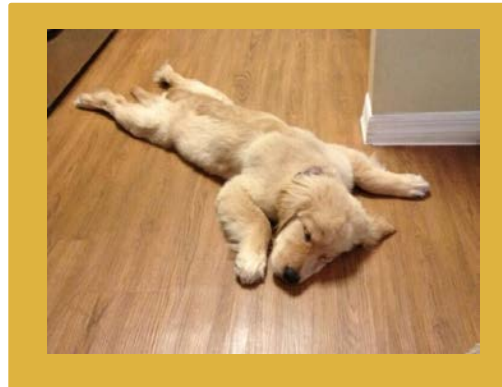
Most nights, do you....?*

Sleep with a partner



58%

Sleep by yourself



36%

Sleep with a pet



19%

Two-thirds (66%) of adults wake up on their own without an alarm clock



Three-quarters (74%) of African Americans and six in ten (58%) Asians wake up without an alarm

* Multiple answers possible.

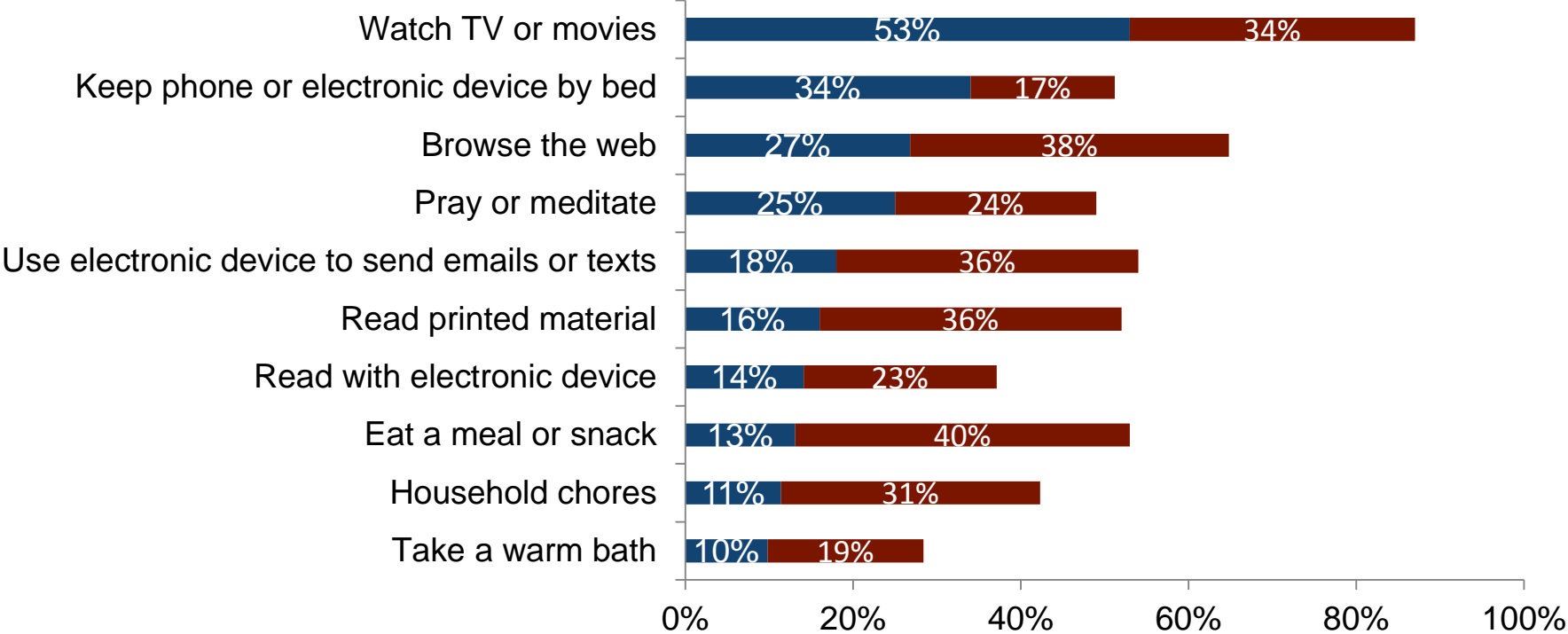
Q17: Most nights, do you sleep....?

Q18: Would you say you generally wake up on your own in the morning or would you say you generally wake up due to other people or an alarm?

Habits Right Before Bed

The top activities that 40+ adults engage in within an hour of going to bed are watching television and browsing the web. One-third (34%) keep an electronic device beside their bed.

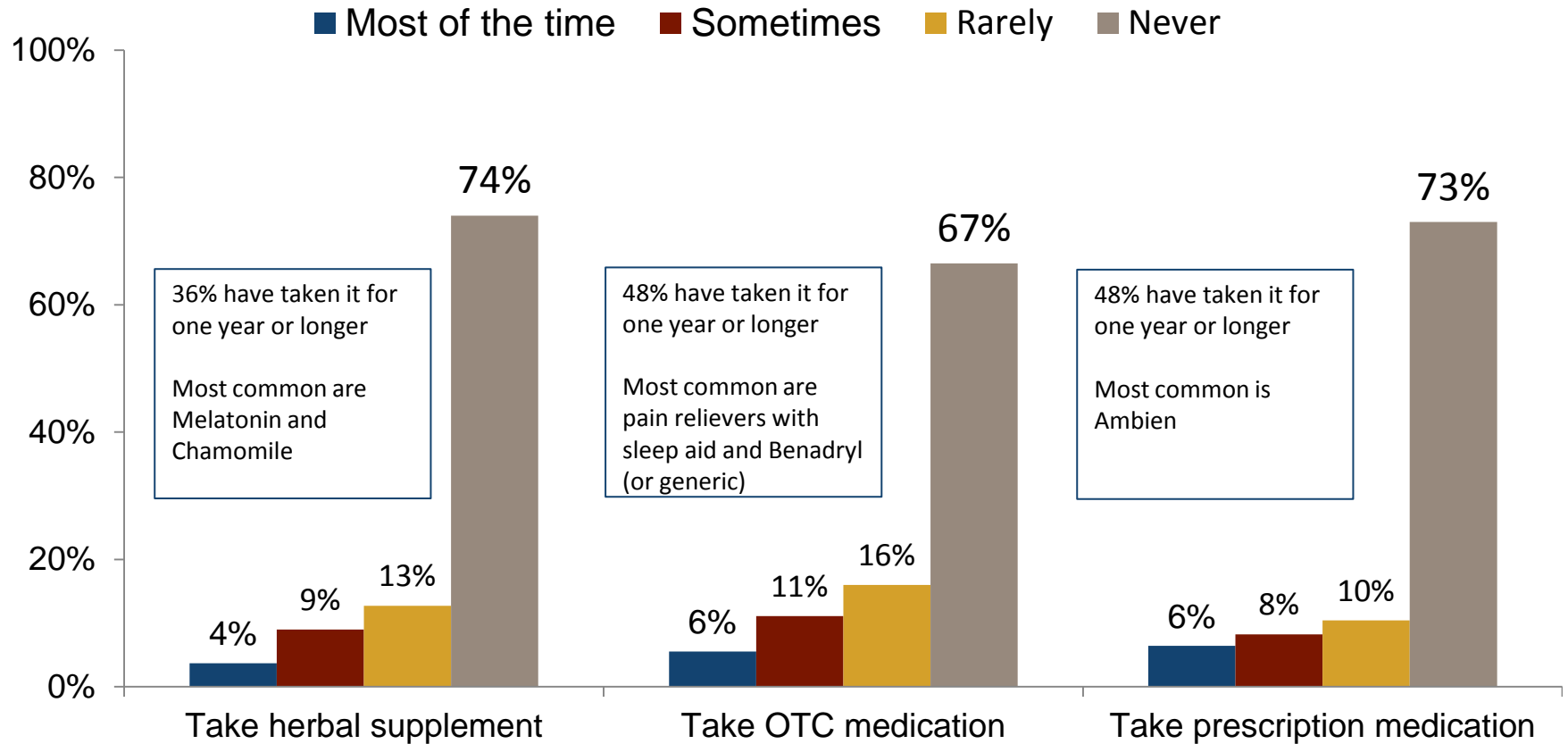
■ Most of the time ■ Sometimes



Q7: People may engage in a variety of activities before going to bed. Please tell us how often you do any of the following activities within one hour of going to bed.

Q7a: How often do you do this while you are in bed?

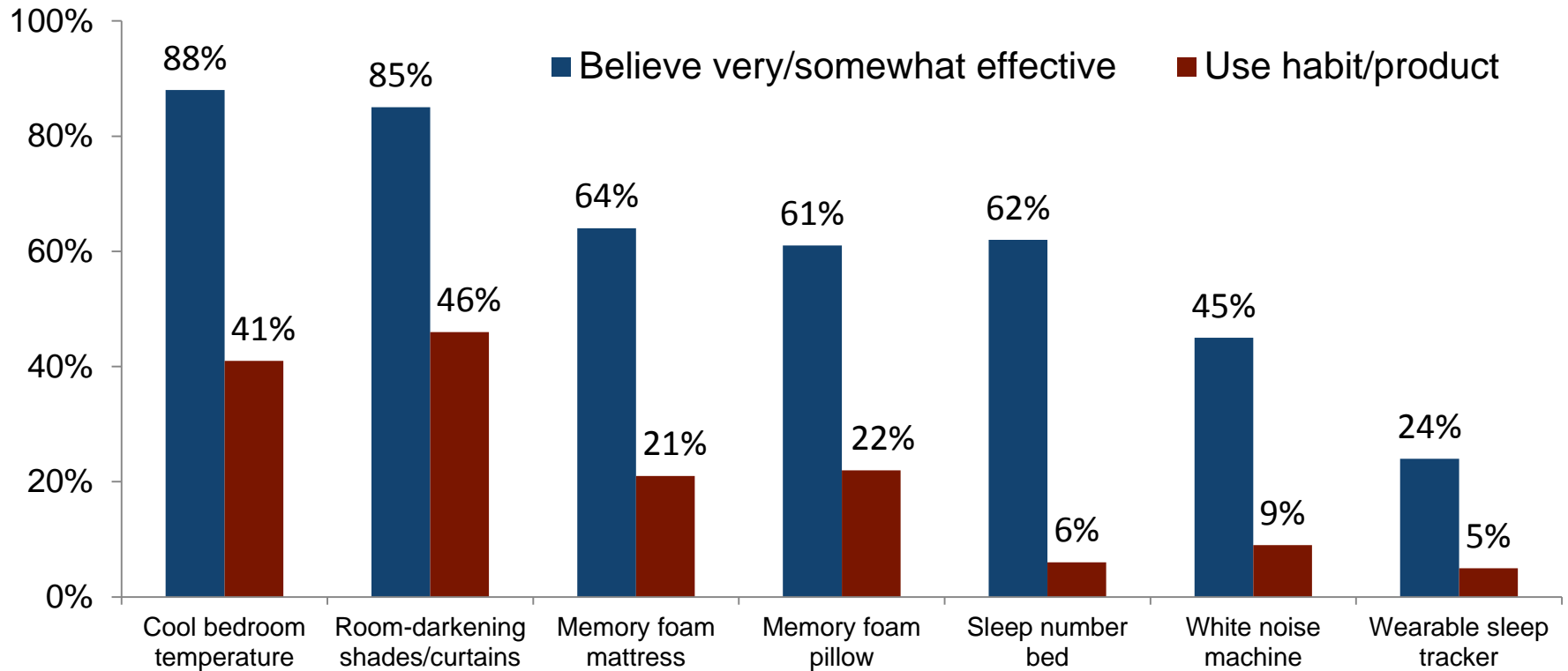
Very few 40+ adults take any medications (prescription or over-the-counter) or supplements to help them sleep. Among those who do, many are long-time users.



Q7: People may engage in a variety of activities before going to bed. Please tell us how often you do any of the following activities within one hour of going to bed?

Sleep-Enhancing Techniques or Products

Keeping the bedroom cool is believed to be an effective way to help people sleep yet only two in five (41%) 40+ adults actually keep their room between 60 and 67 degrees.



Q29: In your opinion, how effective do you think each of the following is for helping people sleep?

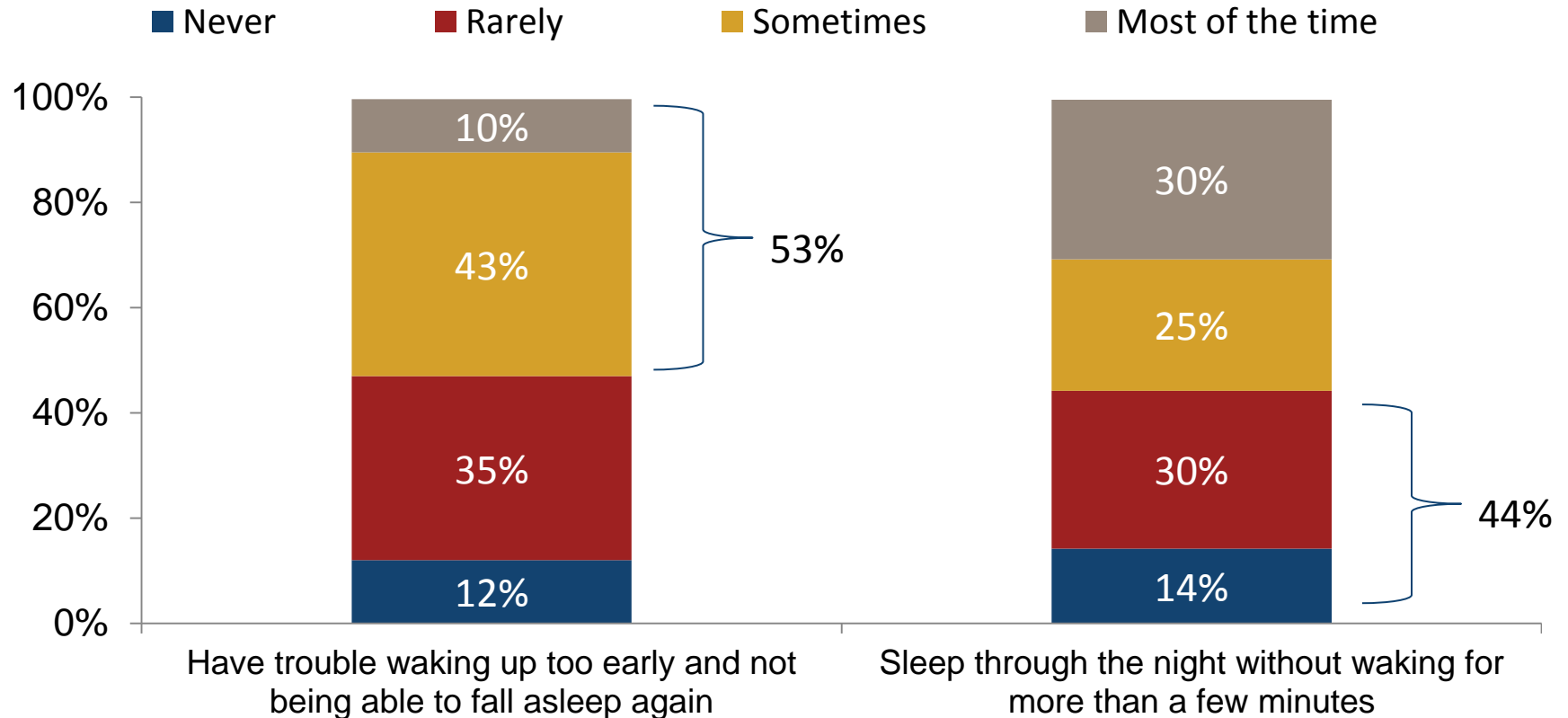
Q30: Do you use any of the following products to help you sleep?

Q31: As you may know, studies suggest that lowering the temperature in your bedroom can lead to better sleep. The optimal temperature for sleeping is said to be between 60 and 67 degrees. Would you say the room you sleep in is within this range, warmer than this range, or cooler than this range?

Sleep Difficulties

Many adults have some difficulty sleeping or staying asleep. Over four in 10 (44%) say they rarely or never sleep through the night and over half (53%) say they cannot fall back to sleep when they wake up.

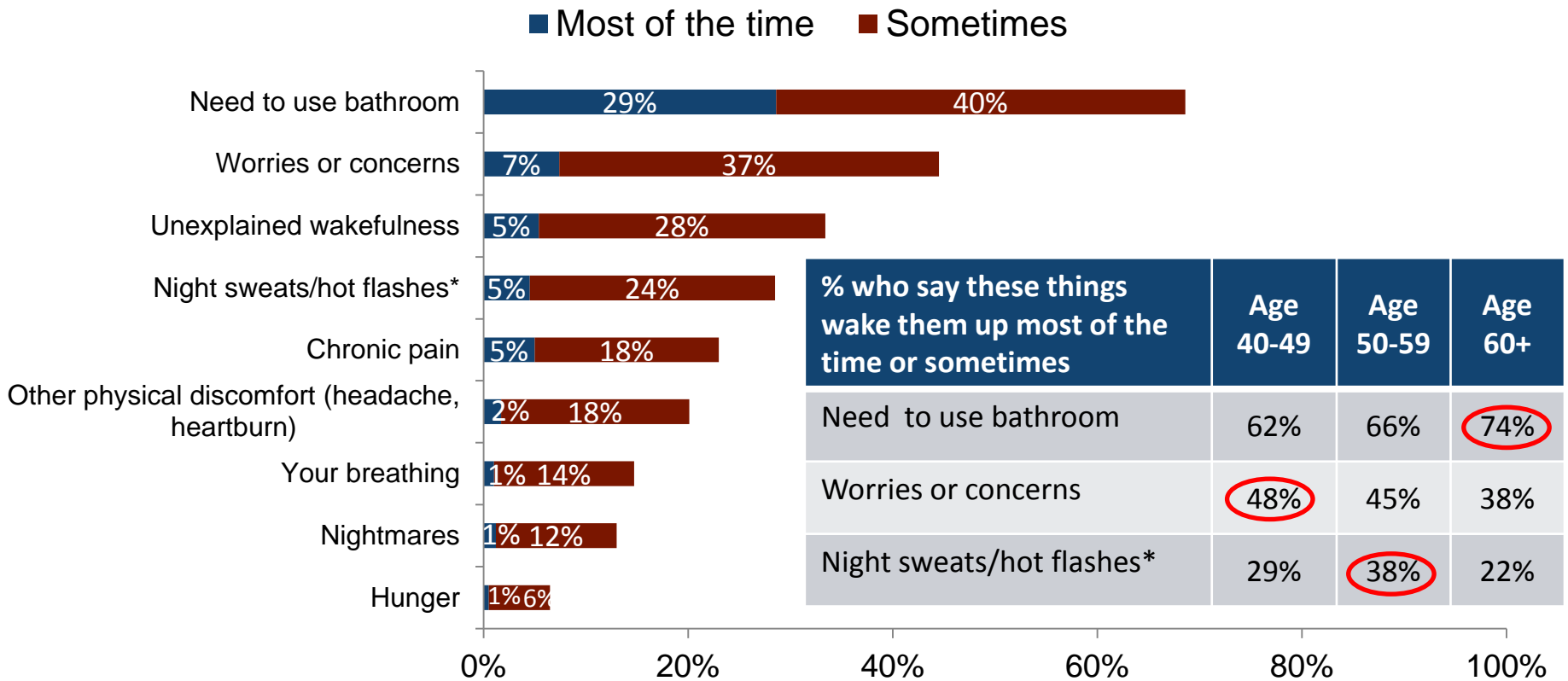
How often do you...



Q13: How often do you have trouble with waking up too early and not being able to fall asleep again?

Q14: How often do you sleep through the night without waking for more than a few minutes?

The need to use the bathroom is the most frequently cited reason people wake up during the night. Worries or concerns awaken or keep over four in 10 (43%) adults up at night. Adults age 60+ are more likely to wake up during the night to use the bathroom but less likely to wake up due to worries or concerns.

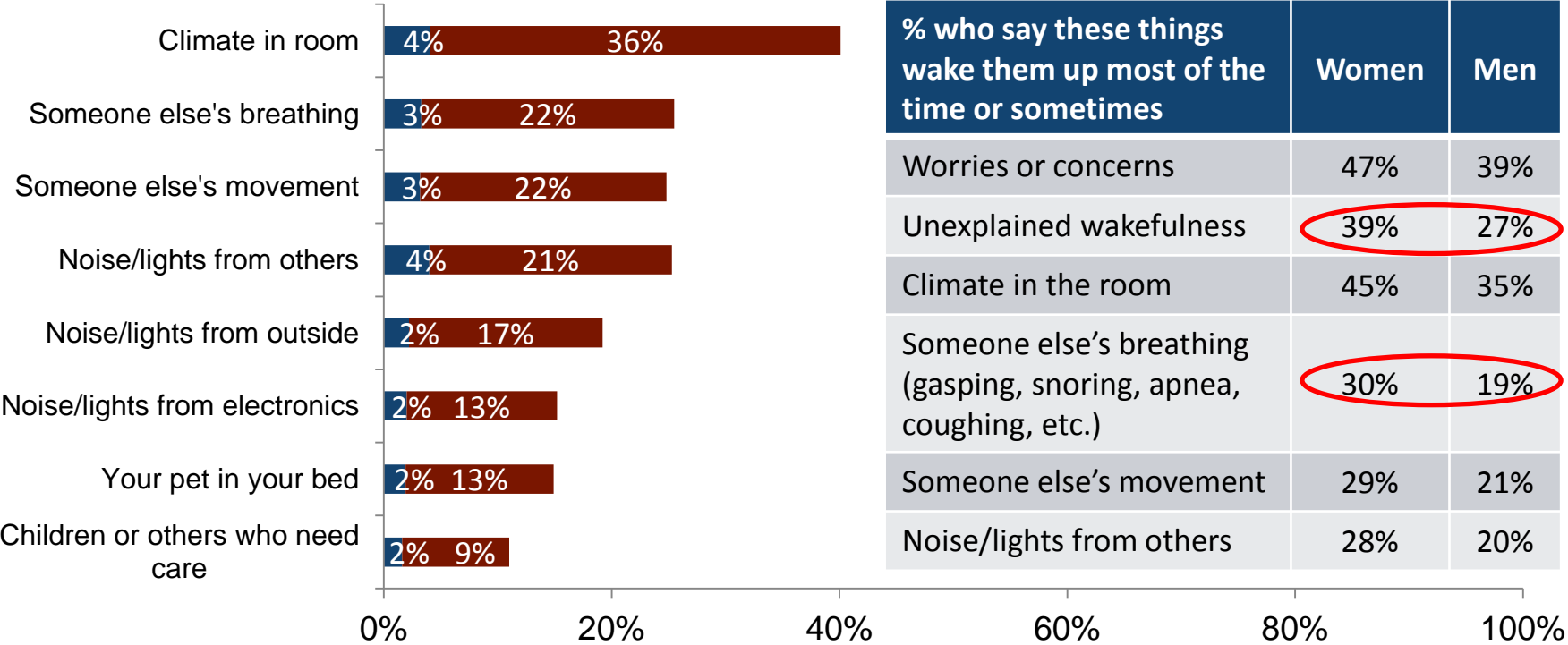


Q15: How often, if at all, does each of the following things wake you (or keep you up) while you are trying to sleep?

* Women only.

The climate in the room is the most frequently cited environmental reason that people wake up, followed by someone else’s breathing. Women are significantly more likely to wake up during the night than men.

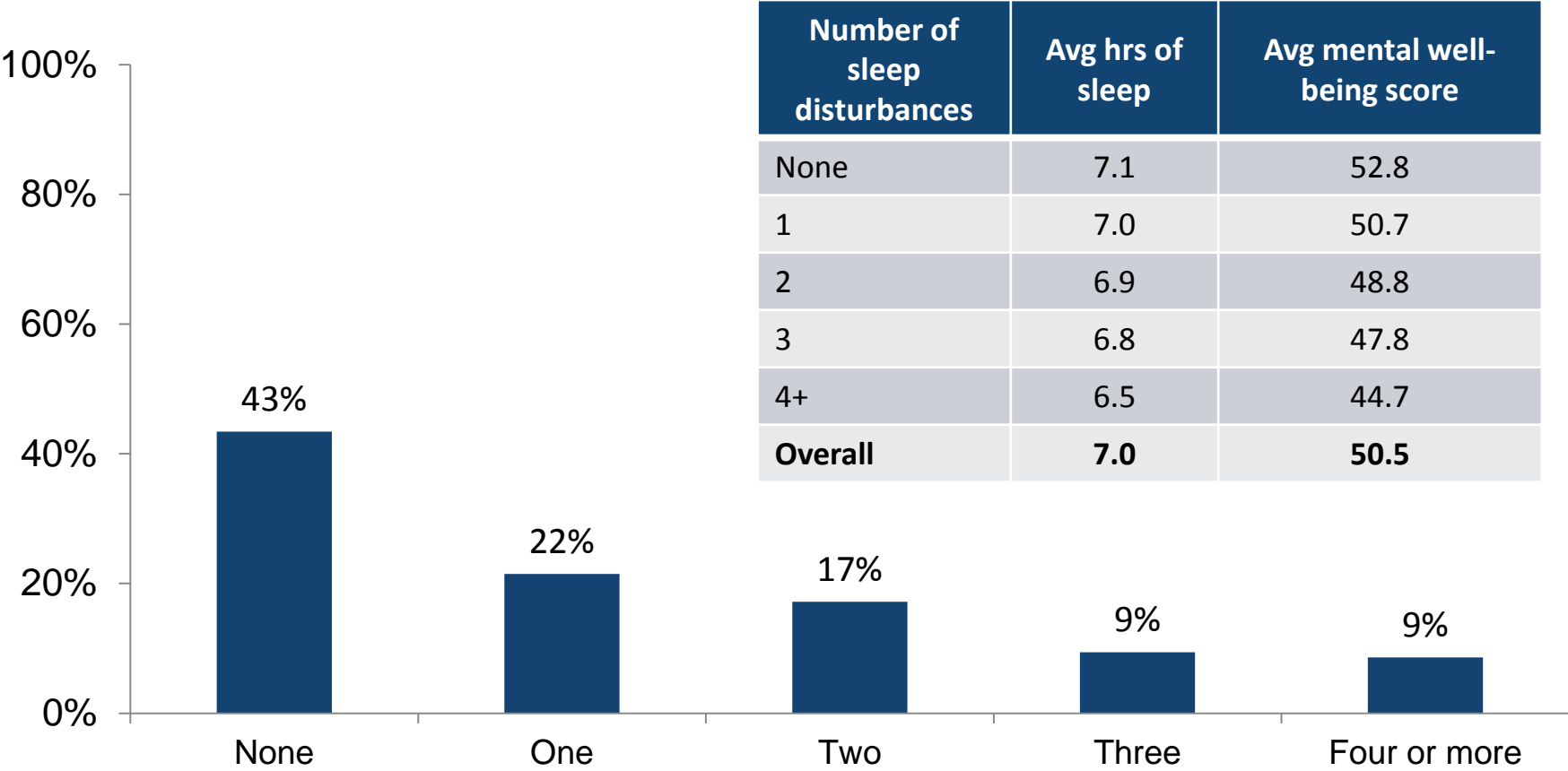
■ Most of the time ■ Sometimes



Q15: How often, if at all, does each of the following things wake you (or keep you up) while you are trying to sleep?

Sleep Disorders/Disturbances

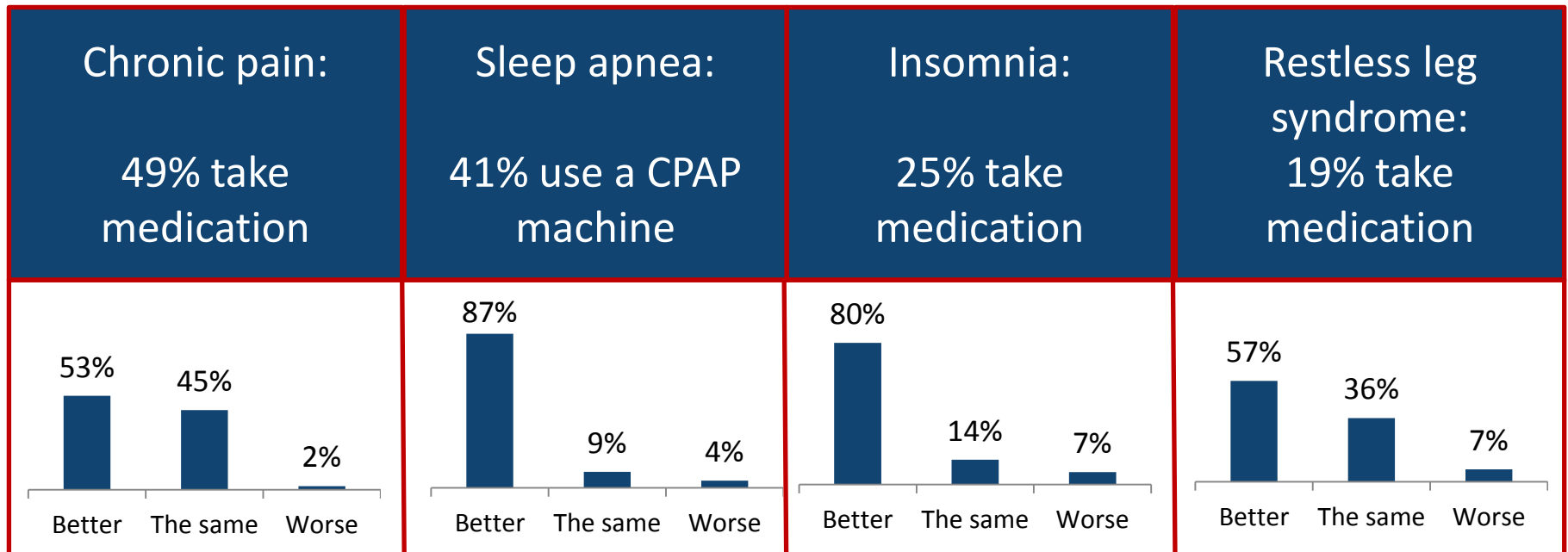
The majority (57%) of 40+ adults have at least one sleep disturbance. The more sleep disturbances one experiences, the less sleep one gets and the lower their mental well-being score.



Q28: Do any of the following negatively impact your sleep? (Insomnia, chronic pain, other physical discomfort, restless leg syndrome, sleep apnea, snoring, working the night shift, circadian rhythm disorder, narcolepsy)

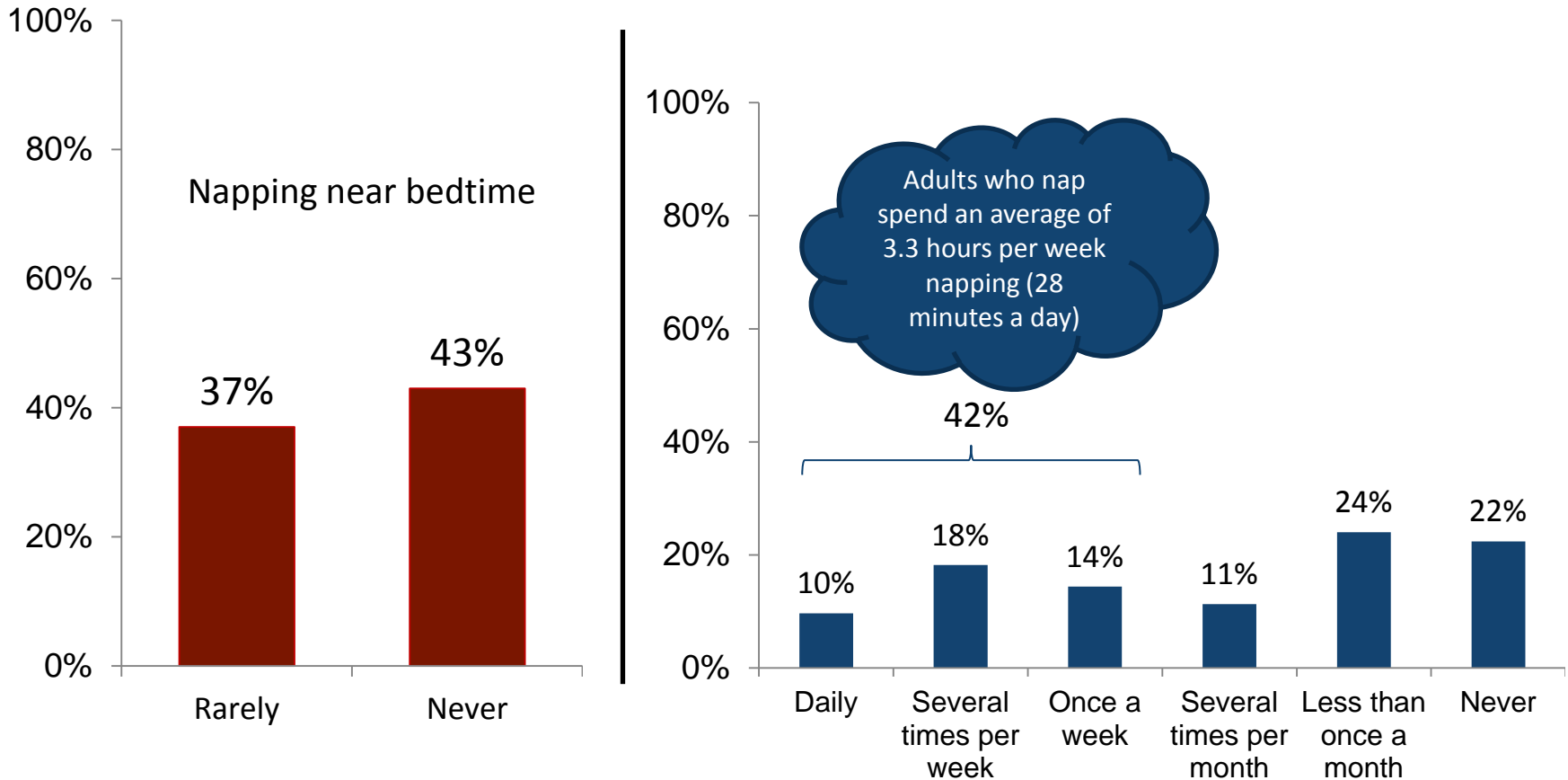
Among those with sleep disturbances, less than half are doing something about it.

Percent who use a device or take medication to help them and its effect on sleep:



Napping and Sleepiness

Four in 10 (42%) 40+ adults nap once a week or more. Those who nap limit their naps to one hour or less and they tend not to nap near bedtime.



Q9: How often do you take naps?

Q9b: When you nap, how often is it within three hours of your regular bedtime?

Q11a: During a typical week, how many hours would you estimate you spend napping each week?

The percentage of adults who nap increases with age. Additionally, more retired adults, men, and African Americans are nappers.*

Non-nappers have small but significantly higher average mental well-being scores (51.1 vs. 49.7) compared to nappers

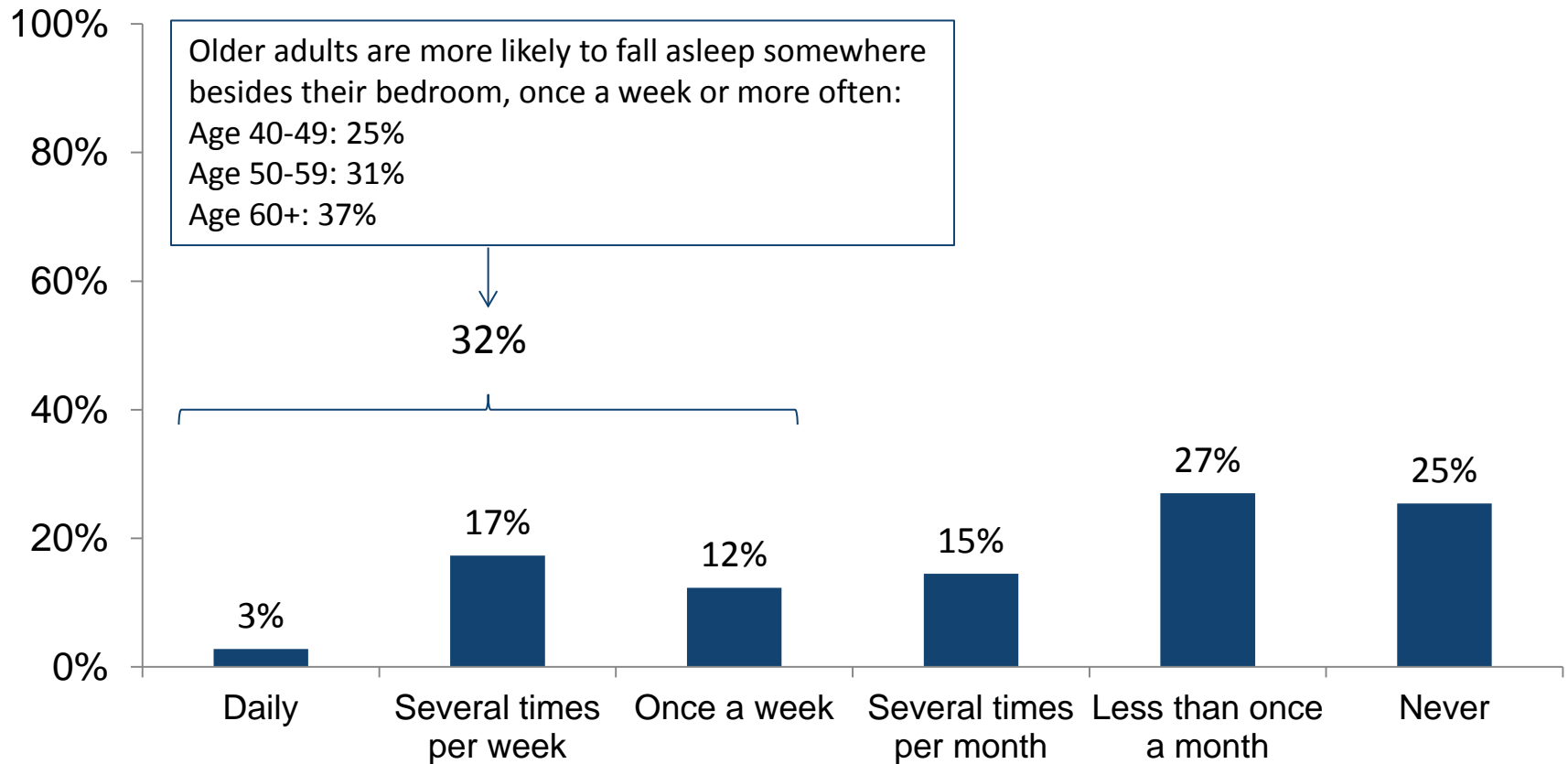
Nappers are no more well-rested than non-nappers:

- 22% of nappers are very well-rested
- 26% of non-nappers are very well-rested

Age, retirement status, gender, race/ethnicity	Non-Nappers	Nappers
Total	58%	41%
Under age 45	68%	32%
Age 45-54	63%	37%
Age 55-64	58%	42%
Age 65-74	53%	47%
Age 75+	41%	59%
Not retired	61%	39%
Retired	50%	50%
Male	52%	48%
Female	63%	37%
African American	47%	53%
Hispanic/Latino	61%	39%
Asians	58%	42%

* Nappers are adults who nap once per week or more often.

About one-third (32%) of 40+ adults often fall asleep somewhere other than their bedroom. Adults who fall asleep somewhere other than their bedroom get significantly less sleep than those who never do (6.0 hrs vs. 7.2 hrs).

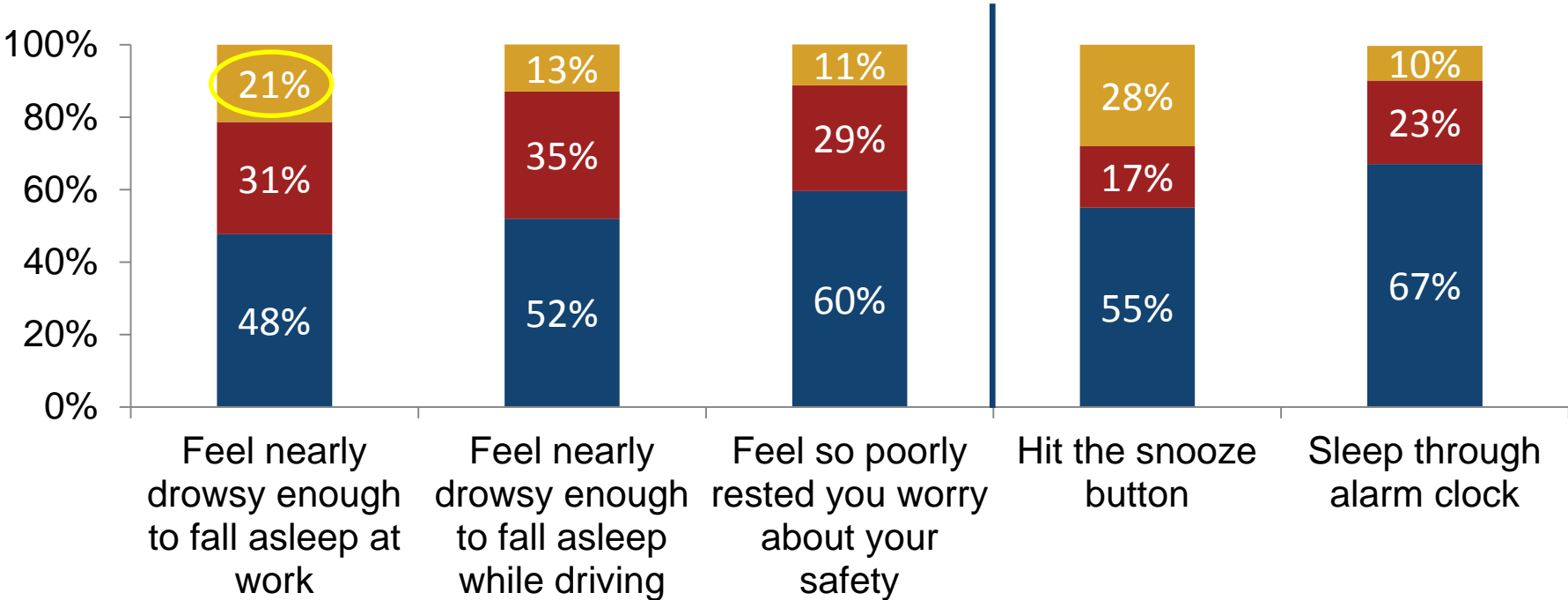


Q10: How often do you fall asleep unintentionally before bed, for example, when you are watching TV on your sofa or chair?

Few 40+ adults feel drowsy enough that it jeopardizes their safety. However, two in 10 (21%) say they feel drowsy enough to fall asleep at work at least sometimes.

How often do you...*

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes/Most of the time



* Excludes not applicable and refused.

Q19: How often do you...?

Over eight in 10 (84%) 40+ adults drink beverages with caffeine but few regularly need it to stay awake and even fewer are kept awake at night by caffeine consumption.

84%

Drink
caffeinated
beverages

53%

Do not drink any
caffeinated
beverages after
6 pm

63%

Rarely or never
drink a beverage
with caffeine to
stay awake

77%

Rarely or never
are kept awake
by the caffeine
they drink



but...

32% drink it after
six or until
bed time

but...

16% drink it to
stay awake

and only...

5% are kept
awake by it

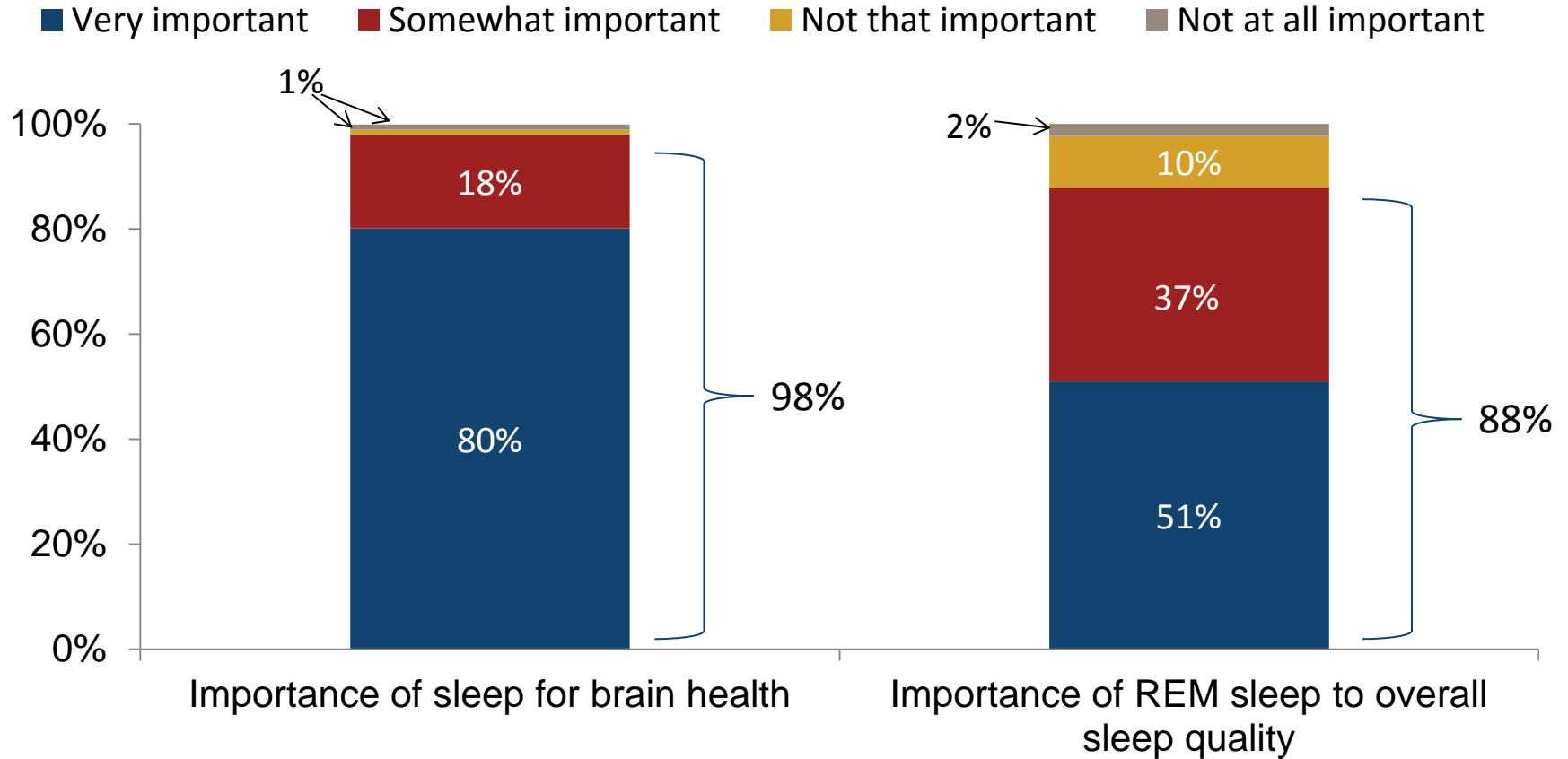
Q8: If you drink beverages with caffeine, when do you typically drink your LAST caffeinated beverage (e.g., coffee, soft drinks, tea, etc.)?

Q8a: How often, if at all, do you drink beverages with caffeine to help you stay awake during the day?

Q8b: How often, if at all, does caffeine keep you awake when you are trying to sleep?

Brain Health and Mental Well-being

Nearly all 40+ adults realize that sleep is important for brain health with eight in 10 saying it is very important. A lower percentage see the importance of REM sleep.



Q25: How important do you think getting enough sleep is for your brain health?

Q26: As you may know, REM sleep is the cycle of sleep known as “rapid eye movement” and it is one of the five stages of sleep. REM sleep is when dreaming takes place. How important do you think REM sleep is to your overall sleep quality?

Adults who have no trouble with waking up too early and those who sleep through the night, average more sleep and have higher mental well-being scores.

How often do you have trouble waking up too early and not being able to fall back to sleep...	Avg hours of sleep	Avg mental well-being
Most of the time	6.2	46.1
Sometimes	6.9	50.4
Rarely	7.1	51.0
Never	7.2	52.6

How often do you sleep through the night without waking up for more than a few minutes...	Avg hours of sleep	Avg mental well-being
Most of the time	7.1	52.2
Sometimes	6.9	50.7
Rarely	6.9	49.1
Never	6.7	48.9

Significantly more 40+ adults with better sleep habits (e.g., get 7-8 hours of sleep, sleep through the night, say they are very well-rested, etc.) report their brain health is excellent or very good.

Adults who say they...	% who say their brain health is excellent or very good
Sleep 7-8 hours a night	71% ★
Sleep less than 7 hours a night	60%
Sleep more than 8 hours a night	62%
Sleep through the night most of the time	75% ★
Sometimes/rarely/never sleep through the night	62%
Are very well-rested	78% ★
Are somewhat/not very/not at all well-rested	62%
Have excellent/very good sleep quality	79% ★
Have good/fair/poor sleep quality	57%
Get the right amount of sleep	73% ★
Don't get enough sleep	61%
Get too much sleep	47%
Sleep with a partner, pet, infant, or child	70% ★
Sleep by themselves	59%

Those who rate their sleep quality as “excellent” have higher mental well-being scores.

Sleep quality	Average Mental Well-Being Scores*			
	General Population	African American	Asian	Hispanic/Latino
Excellent	57.7	56.9	60.8	60.6
Very good	53.3	56.2	53.6	56.2
Good	49.7	49.9	48.7	51.1
Fair	46.3	45.9	44.9	50.2
Poor	40.2	42.0	38.8	40.6
Overall	50.5	51.6	50.0	53.4

*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved

Q22: Overall, how would you rate the quality of sleep you get?

As life stressors pile on, sleep and mental well-being are adversely impacted.

Number of stressors	Average hours of sleep	Average mental well-being score
None	7.0	52.6
1	7.0	51.0
2	7.0	50.0
3	6.8	45.9
4+	6.4	44.5
Overall	7.0	50.5

Q6: Have you experienced any of the following in the past year? -- Marital separation or divorce; marriage; household move; new job; money problem; retirement; job loss; major family conflict; loss of a business or major business client; major personal injury or illness; loss or major injury of a spouse, close family member, or friend.

Adults age 65+: Sleep and cognition

Seniors (adults 65+) who report better sleep habits also report less decline in memory and focus in the last five years.

MEMORY

60% vs. 45%

More seniors who sleep over 8 hours a night report a decrease in memory compared to those who sleep 8 hours a night or less

56% vs. 39%

More seniors who rate their sleep quality as good/fair/poor report a decrease in their memory compared to seniors who rate their sleep quality as excellent or very good.

51% vs. 40%

More seniors who say they are only somewhat, not very, or not at all well-rested see a decrease in memory compared to those who are very well-rested

FOCUS

24% vs. 11%

More seniors who rate their sleep quality as good/fair/poor report a decrease in their ability to focus compared to those who rate their sleep as excellent or very good