# Gays have worse sleep problems than the rest of the world. Why?



Research has show that sexual minorities experience sleep disturbances at rates significantly higher than their heterosexual counterparts. Neurologist Laura Bojarskaitė, speaking in an episode of the LRT RADIO programme Sleep DNA, explored the factors contributing to these discrepancies and suggested potential interventions.

Sleep is influenced by myriad social and psychological factors, including connections, mental health, and community support and studies have shown that LGBTQ+ people are more likely to face sleep-related issues. A survey conducted in 2020 found that those within sexual minority groups are 28% more likely to get less than six hours of sleep per night. Additionally, findings reveal that members of the LGBTQ+ community often do not consistently meet the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep, instead oscillating between sleep deprivation and excessive sleep. Bojarskaitė noted, "Interestingly, bisexual women report the poorest sleep; they assess their sleep quality worse than lesbian and heterosexual women."

Central to the discussion is the role of stress as a primary factor impacting sleep quality. Bojarskaitė identified daily experiences of discrimination and stigma as significant contributors. She stated that "even minor microaggressions raise cortisol—stress hormone—levels, which in turn prevents restful sleep." Moreover, she pointed out that LGBTQ+ people often face greater mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, which are closely associated with impaired sleep. The neurologist also highlighted that hormonal therapies can further complicate sleep patterns for those in the sexual minority.

In terms of improving sleep quality among LGBTQ+ individuals, Bojarskaitė emphasised the importance of fostering a supportive and affirming sleep environment. "It is vital to create a cozy, safe, and identity-reflecting sleep environment to improve sleep for LGBTQ+ individuals," she advised. Strategies such as meditation, breathing exercises, journaling, and connecting with supportive peers can help alleviate feelings of isolation and stress, facilitating a more peaceful sleep.

Bojarskaitė called for broader changes to societal attitudes to better support these communities. She asserted, "First and foremost, we need to ensure that our environment is safe, accepting, and supportive, not dismissing even the slightest aggression." Further, she suggested that healthcare systems should enhance training for specialists in recognising and addressing sleep issues in LGBTQ+ contexts, while advocating for anti-discrimination measures in workplaces and educational institutions to reduce overall stress levels.

"The sleep disparities within the LGBTQ+ community are not only a personal health issue but also a societal challenge arising from systemic inequalities," she concluded.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/12/e017067> - This study highlights that sexual minority students experience poorer sleep quality compared to their heterosexual peers, with factors like bullying contributing to these disparities.
* <https://jcsm.aasm.org/doi/10.5664/jcsm.8030> - This research explores the relationship between sexual orientation and sleep behaviors, noting specific disparities among sexual minority females in aspects like snoring and daytime sleepiness.
* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30975620/> - This review indicates that sexual minority individuals generally report lower quality sleep and more sleep difficulties than heterosexual individuals, often due to increased stress.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides an overview of the discussion on sleep disparities within the LGBTQ+ community, highlighting factors such as stress and discrimination.