

# SLEEP, GENERAL HEALTH AND WORK-LIFE



## RESULTS FROM A STUDY OF THE



## AUSTRIAN FEDERAL CHAMBER OF LABOUR (BAK-Study)

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**Objectives:** Sleep problems negatively affect working ability and stress resistance and are one of the risk factors for psychosomatic complaints, often a reason for increased days of sick leave. Other consequences are daytime fatigue and impairments of attention and concentration which may result in work related accidents.

**Methods:** The current investigation was based on a survey conducted by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour on 4.214 employees (BAK Study). Participants were asked to rate their work satisfaction, stress- and workload, general health, risk for burnout and other somatic diseases, etc. From the 256 questions presented, seven items were related to sleep quality, sleep problems or daytime tiredness. Difficulties in initiating and maintaining sleep were analysed with respect to work-related fatigue, general health, working ability and work satisfaction.

**Results:** About 23% of the sample complained of difficulties of initiating and maintaining sleep occurring several times per week (see Figure 1, 2) which had significant negative effects on ratings of general health, working ability and work-related tiredness.

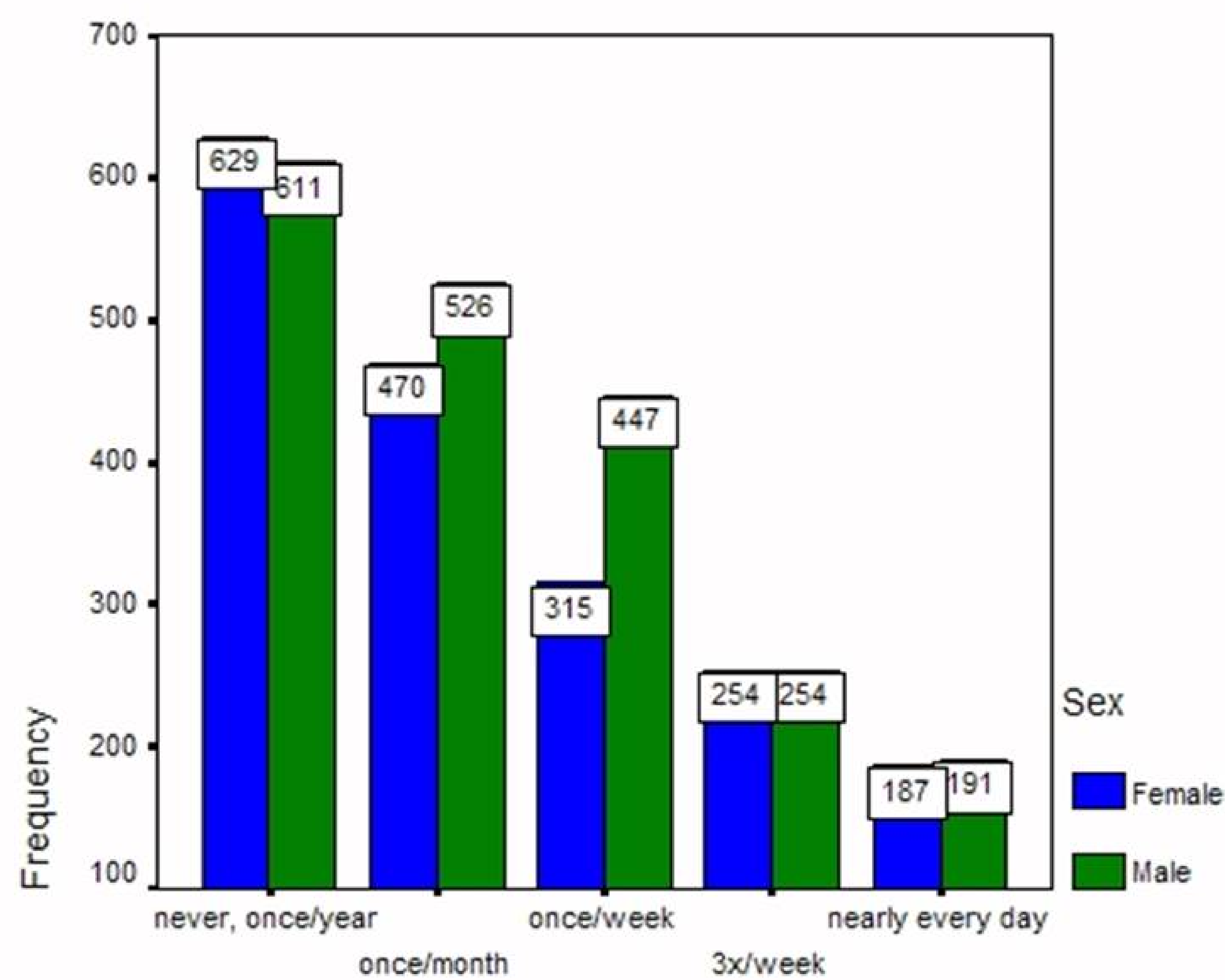


Figure 1: Frequency of non-restorative sleep in a sample of employees in Austria (N = 3.884). 32% of the sample reported no sleep-related problems, 23% reported difficulties initiating and maintaining sleep at least three or more times per week.

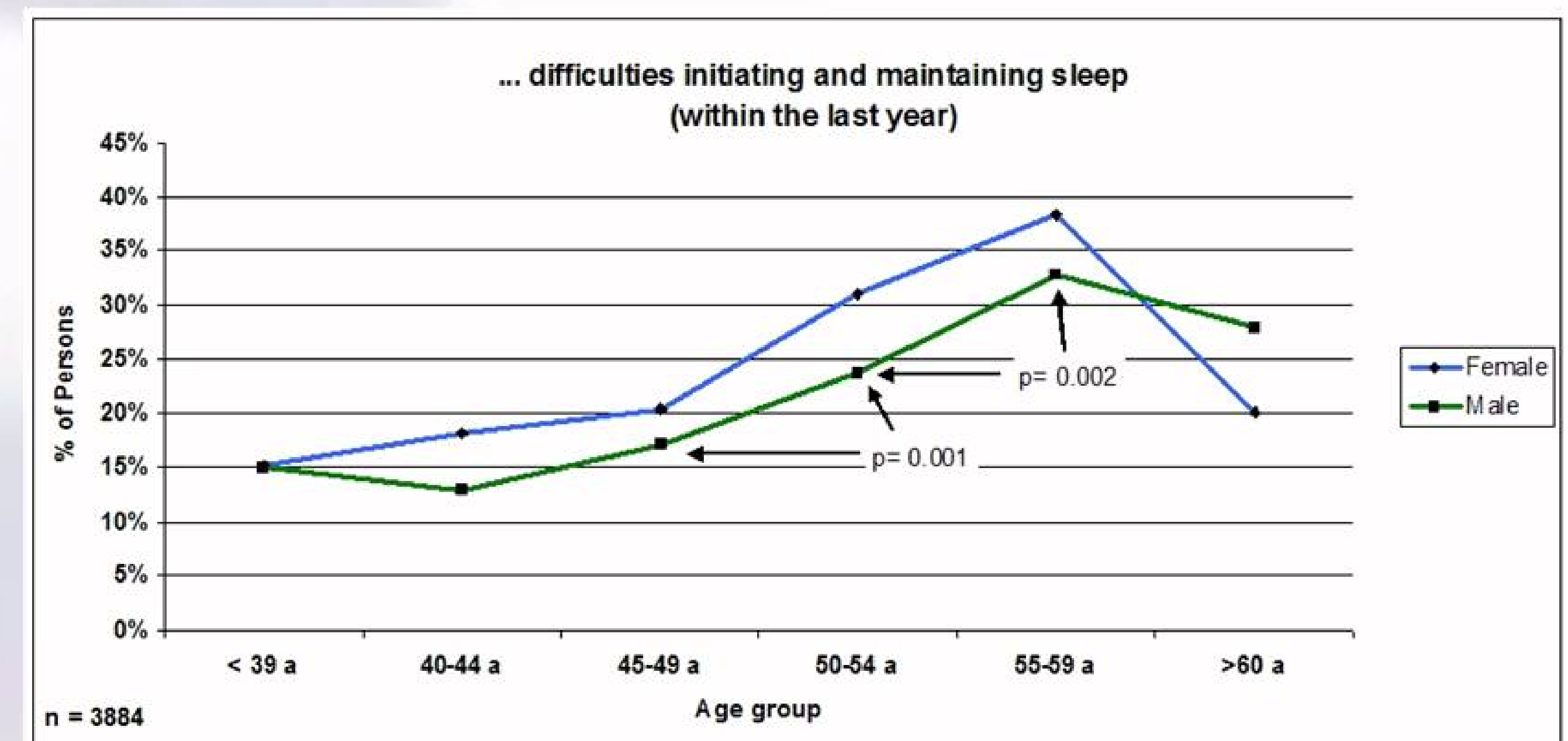


Figure 2: Difficulties in initiating and maintaining sleep during the last 12 months are more frequent in females than in men. There is also an increase in sleep complaints with age (4.8% per decade). Significant differences were found between age groups 45-49, 50-54 and 55-59 (Chi-Square Test).

Logistic regression analysis showed that problems in initiating and maintaining sleep were significantly associated ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) with general health (OR [odds ratio] = 3.6; 95% CI [confidence interval] = 2.5-3.6), work-related tiredness (OR = 1.8; 95% CI: 1.6-2.1), working ability (OR = 1.6; 95% CI = 1.3-2.1) and gender (OR = 0.7; 95% CI = 0.6-0.9). Sleep problems were not correlated with a person's job, branch of work, marital status, and work satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** Disturbed sleep is an important factor of daytime fatigue and has negative effects on general health and working ability. Moreover, females seem to be more affected by sleep complaints than males, and age plays also an important factor. An open question remains whether sleep disturbances impair general health or whether poor physical health causes sleep problems. Nevertheless, this is a major public health issue that should receive greater attention.