

THE REST OF THE WORLD

Why women in other countries sleep deeper and longer than we do—and how you can follow their snooze cues. BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY

ONE NIGHT YOU'RE STARING at the ceiling for an hour, willing your eyelids to feel heavy. The next you conk out immediately—only to wake up and see the numbers 4-0-0 glowing on your alarm clock. Sound familiar?

Sadly, it's the status quo for American women, 67 percent of whom report trouble sleeping multiple times a week, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF). But not all members of the fairer sex wage this battle: In its most recent international poll, the NSF found that our counterparts in Mexico, Germany, the U.K. and Canada doze regularly—and with relative ease. Women in America? We're sleeping an average 30 to 40 minutes less per night than our peers abroad.

We looked at the data and tapped experts to find out what foreigners are doing differently and why it works. Read on and slumber soundly (at last!).



UNITED KINGDOM

We might poke fun at the Brits' tea habit, but 43 percent of the population consume a heated beverage before crawling under the covers—and they average 18 more minutes of sleep nightly than we do. New York City sleep specialist Allen A. Towfigh, M.D., acknowledges that while the comforting nature of toasty drinks may play a role, a deeper biological mechanism could also be at work: "An animal study showed that warming a part of the brain called the preoptic anterior hypothalamus induces sleep, and this part of a human brain sits close to the roof of the mouth," he says. "Warm beverages may trigger receptors in the region and set off a chemical cascade that promotes sleep."

To try this strategy, stick to one cup of chamomile or other noncaffeinated quaff half an hour before bedtime, says Towfigh. And there's no need to finish the entire cup: "You don't want to wake up to go to the bathroom because you drank too much tea," says Russell Rosenberg, Ph.D., a member of the NSF's expert poll panel.

Not into hot sips? You could also sleep in the buff, to which 30 percent of English respondents attribute their stellar shut-eye. (And you thought those Brits were buttoned-up!) "This idea has yet to be scientifically studied, but the increased comfort associated with being naked may help," says Towfigh. And if it keeps you up with your delighted partner, nothin' wrong with that! »



