

Survey reveals how we use music as a possible sleep aid

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Many individuals use music in the hope that it fights sleep difficulties, according to a study published November 14 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Tabitha Trahan of the University of Sheffield, UK, and

colleagues. As described by the authors, this is the first online survey on the use of music as a sleep aid in the general population.

Sleep loss is a widespread problem with serious physical and economic consequences, and music might serve as a cheap, non-pharmaceutical sleep aid. However, there is a lack of systematic data on how widely it is used, why people opt for music as a sleep aid, or what music works. To address this gap in knowledge, Trahan and colleagues investigated music as a sleep aid within the general public via an online survey that scored musicality, [sleep habits](#), and open-text responses on what music helps sleep and why.

In total, 62% of the 651 respondents reported that they use music to help them sleep, describing 14 musical genres comprising 545 artists. Even respondents who don't suffer from [sleep disorders](#) use music in their everyday lives to help improve the quality of their sleep experiences, and younger people with higher musical engagement are significantly more likely to use music to aid sleep. Respondents believe that music both stimulates sleep and blocks an internal or external stimulus that would otherwise disrupt sleep.

The study relied on self-reported answers and could only investigate respondents' beliefs about how music helped them sleep, rather than drawing conclusions about music's physiological and psychological effects. The participants also self-selected for the study, so it may have been biased towards music users. Nonetheless, the study provides initial evidence that many people use diverse types of music in the belief that it helps them sleep.

The authors add: "The largest ever survey of everyday use of music for sleep reveals multiple pathways to effect that go far beyond relaxation; these include auditory masking, habit, passion for music, and mental distraction. This work offers new understanding into the complex

motivations that drive people to reach for [music](#) as a sleep aid and the reasons why so many find it effective."

More information: Trahan T, Durrant SJ, Müllensiefen D, Williamson VJ (2018) The music that helps people sleep and the reasons they believe it works: A mixed methods analysis of online survey reports. *PLoS ONE* 13(11): e0206531.
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