

# Local slow-wave activity in regular sleep reveals individual risk preferences

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## Background

- Human risk-taking: Large amount of individual heterogeneity.
- Manipulation of total sleep time affects risky decision-making.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Slow-wave activity (SWA, a physiological marker for sleep depth) and its scalp topographical distribution shows large inter-individual variation, remarkable stability within an individual across nights, and is unique to each person.<sup>3,4</sup>  
→ Due to these trait-like characteristics, SWA provides an ideal neural trait marker to investigate interindividual differences in risk-taking.



Do individual, temporally stable neural sleep characteristics (the topographic distribution of SWA) during a night of sleep under normal conditions relate to individual differences in risk preferences?

## Methods

**Participants.** 54 healthy young adults (mean age  $\pm$  SD = 21  $\pm$  2 years, 42 females).

### Study protocol

Regular sleep-wake rhythm, activity-monitoring and sleep- & consumption diary for 7 days



### Risk-taking task

How many meters do you want to drive on a 50-meter road?  
A wall will appear at a random distance, every meter driven earns you 0.1MU.  
If you drive more meters than the distance to the wall you will crash and lose the start-fee (5MU) and the payment for the driven meters (1MU = 1CHF).



### High-density sleep EEG

Portable polysomnographic system at participants' home, 64 electrodes



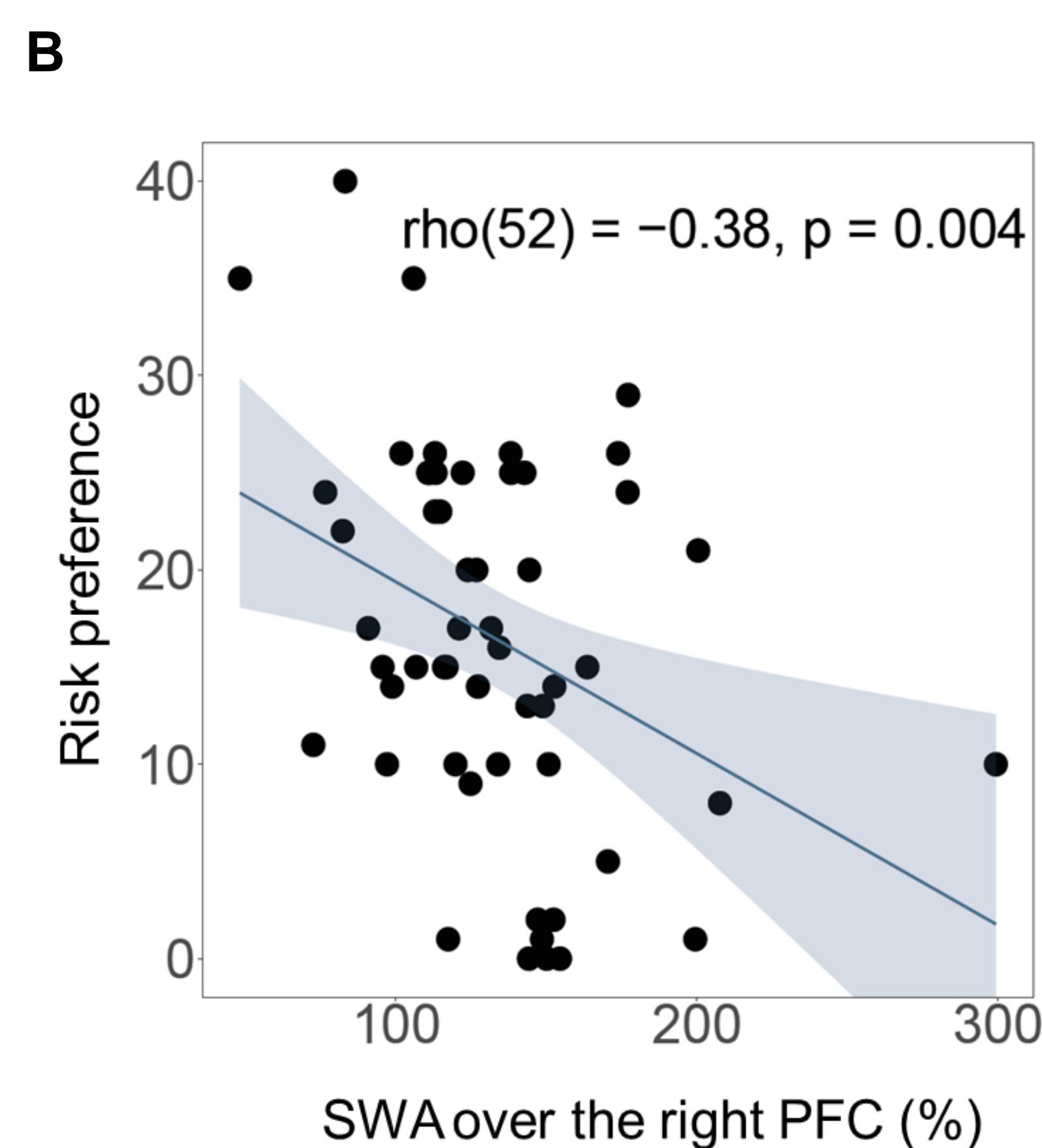
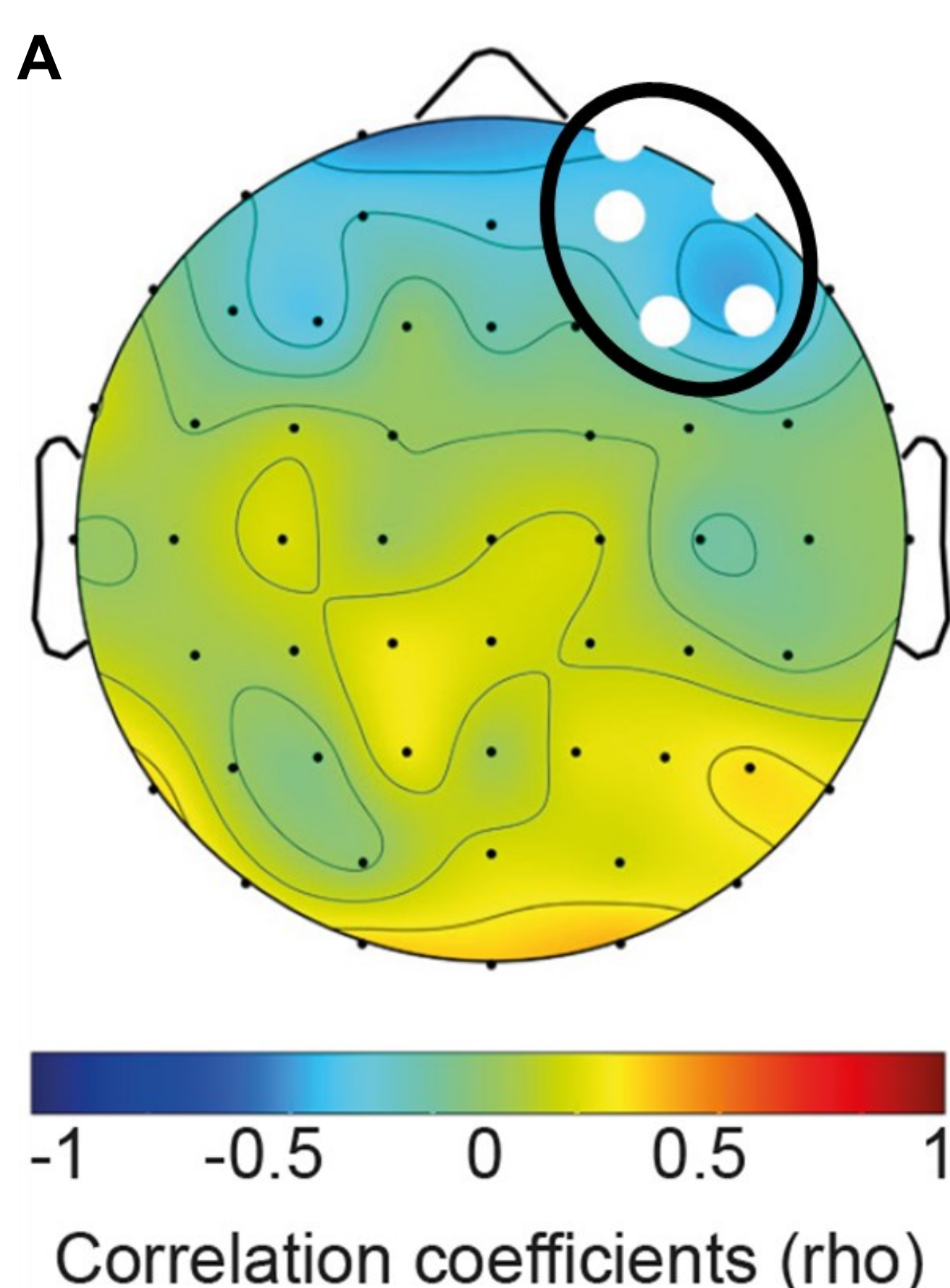
### Normalized SWA (0.8-4.6Hz)

Computed in deep sleep (N2 and N3)



## Results

- Negative association between normalized SWA distribution map and risk-taking in a cluster of five electrodes over the right PFC (corrected for multiple testing, **Fig. 1A**).
- Mean SWA in the significant cluster and risk-taking behavior:  $\rho(52) = -0.38$  (df = 52),  $p = 0.004$ ,  $R^2 = 0.14$  (**Fig. 1B**).
- The negative correlation between SWA in the right PFC and risk-taking behavior is independent of sleep quantity and time spent in deep sleep ( $\rho(51) = -0.39$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ,  $R^2 = 0.15$ ;  $\rho(51) = -0.39$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ,  $R^2 = 0.15$ ).



**Fig. 1. (A)** Statistical topographical distribution of rho-coefficients between normalized SWA and risk-taking behavior. **(B)** Scatterplot of the negative correlation between mean normalized SWA in the significant cluster over the right PFC and risk-taking behavior.

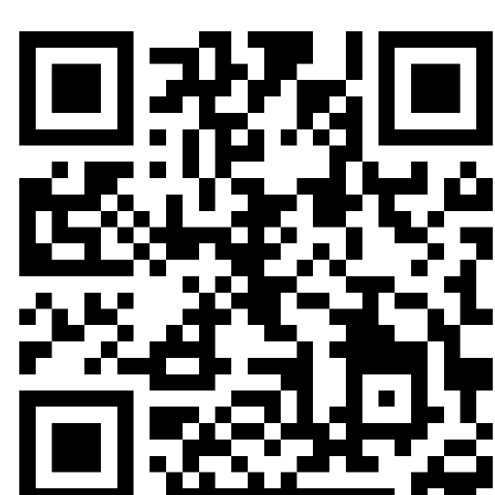
## Discussion

- Normalized SWA over the right PFC is negatively associated with an individual's propensity to engage in risk-taking behavior.
- Higher levels of baseline and task-related activation in the lateral PFC correlates with increased self-regulation, inhibitory control, or executive functions in general.<sup>5,6</sup>
- We assume that higher SWA in the lateral PFC during sleep is critical for restoring self-regulatory abilities, which are fundamental not only in mitigating risk-taking but also in other important decision-making processes.
- Our results could inspire targeted interventions during deep sleep (via TMS, tDCS, or auditory closed-loop stimulation)<sup>7,8</sup> to boost the functioning of the right PFC to improve self-regulatory abilities and consequently functional decision-making.

## Conclusion

- Individual fingerprints in sleep EEG topography relate to individual differences in risk preferences.
- Individuals with a high-risk preference showed less SWA in the right PFC than those with a low risk-preference. These findings were highly specific to the right PFC.
- SWA over the right PFC might be a dispositional indicator of self-regulatory ability.

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