

Bensons for Beds Big Sleep Report

Created in collaboration with Bensons for Beds and the Sleep School

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Executive Summary

The importance of a good night's sleep on our overall health and wellbeing is scientifically well documented. Sleep enables our minds and bodies to mentally, emotionally and physically prepare for every day, in addition to offering long term prevention against diseases and other illnesses including obesity, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's and heart failure (1).

In spite of this, the importance of sleep is overlooked, in part because of its unconscious nature but also due to a lack of grassroots education on the value and power to our health. In fact, sleep is more important to our society than ever, with longer working hours and over stimulation from digital technology there has been a significant decline in sleep quantity and quality – and it's set to get worse.

This report presents the latest research from Bensons for Beds' (Britain's number one bed specialist) Big Sleep Survey (December 2016), which suggests that the UK is currently experiencing a sleeplessness epidemic. It outlines the main contributing factors and identifies potentially harmful consequences on all aspects of society, including the economy, work performance, home lives, children's performance at school, as well as on our long term health and wellbeing.

However, the sleepless epidemic is reversible and throughout the report there are a series of achievable actions that the UK government, corporations, universities, schools and individuals could perform in order to support the nation's sleeping patterns.

The Partnership

The annual Big Sleep Report is the product of an ongoing collaboration between the UK's leading sleep institution, The Sleep School and Britain's number one Bed specialist, Bensons for Beds. On a mission to help the nation to sleep better naturally, the survey and report provide a detailed examination of the nation's current sleeping habits and offer crucial insights into how to improve the nation's sleep.

In total, almost eleven thousand (10,753) working age adults were surveyed between August and October 2016. An ongoing programme of sleep improvement, including the creation of a free sleep clinic and sleep centres within Bensons for Beds', 270 store portfolio, online sleep education and employee sleep training have been put in place to provide solutions for the public. (For further information see Appendix 1).

National Sleeplessness Levels

The UK is currently experiencing a sleeplessness epidemic, with the average person losing the equivalent of an entire night of sleep (7.7 hours) every single week. Unsurprisingly, only 1% of those surveyed reported waking up feeling 'completely refreshed' and 49% reportedly feeling 'not at all refreshed' on waking.

With such widespread levels of sleeplessness and daytime tiredness, it's understandable that the reported stages of Chronic Insomnia among this group reached 39%. This is 9% higher than the commonly recognised number of 30% (2).

The level of sleeplessness reported for both men and women was identical at 6.4 hours sleep per night, although women reported needing 5% more sleep than men to be able to perform at their best during the day (7.6 hours vs 7.2 hours). This could explain why the reported incidence of Chronic Insomnia within the female group was 11% higher than when compared to their male counterparts (28% to 39%).

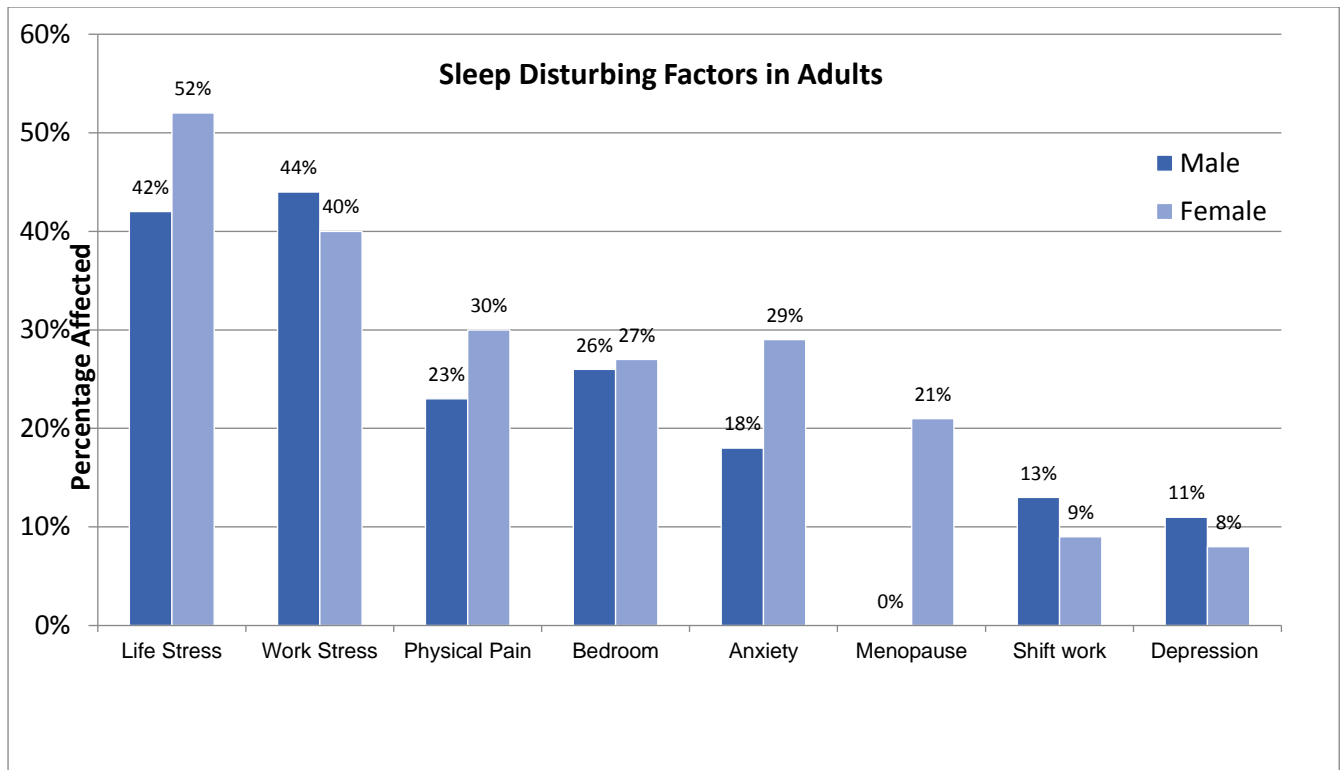
The survey reported that UK's children were also 'under slept', with 20 - 22% of children aged between 3 and 17 years not getting the recommend hours of sleep for their age groups.

While such reported sleeplessness levels within the UK are concerning, they are not unique. It is estimated that up to 20% of the global population now suffer from insomnia highlighting its populous nature (3,4) and the World Association of Sleep Medicine (WASM) believes that when considering all of the recognised sleep disorders, they could potentially effect up to 45% of the world's population (5). In USA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have gone one step further by labelling sleeplessness as a public health epidemic, something that should now happen in the UK.

Why Are We Not Sleeping?

A wide range of societal factors have been cited as the reason for the sharp rise in global sleeplessness levels.

Stress was reported as the largest trigger for poor sleep, with women being more affected by life stress (52%) than work stress (42%), in comparison to men (life stress 42% versus work stress 44%). Additional sources of disturbance included physical pain, anxiety, poor bedroom environment, shift work, menopause and parenting (see Sleep Disturbing Factors in Adults).



24-hour access to stimulating technology can also be blamed for the nation's lack of sleep, with 91% of respondents accessing the internet (via phones, tablets and laptops), 86% watching TV, 37% responding to work emails and 7% playing video games all in the last hour before bed. Such devices are deemed to be unhelpful for sleep due to the combined stimulating effects of 'blue light' emitted from such devices, as well as the mental stimulation from using them.

Poor dietary choices within this last hour before bed can also disrupt sleeping patterns, with 11% eating food, 10% drinking caffeinated beverages and 9% drinking alcohol just before bed time. Leaving at least 2 hours between eating food and sleeping ensures that digestion doesn't disturb sleep. Similarly, avoiding caffeine after 2pm and limiting alcohol consumption close to bedtime all help to improve sleep quality. Of those surveyed, 36% also reported living a completely sedentary lifestyle, something which impacts negatively on the quality of sleep.

Economy and Work Performance

The study by Bensons for Beds found that lack of sleep is costing the UK economy over £1 billion in annual revenue due to 8% of respondents reportedly calling in sick due to feeling too tired to work after a poor night's sleep. Worryingly, nearly a quarter (22%) of those surveyed said that poor sleep impacted their ability to do their job and 12% had actually fallen asleep at their desk or during a meeting at work. As for the negative impact of poor sleep on key performance indicators, 68% reported a reduction in their ability to be focused and attentive, 44% felt less motivated and 28% felt more stressed as a result. It is speculated that if the impact of sleep deprivation on a workforce's

productivity levels were also considered, the cost to the economy would be significantly higher than 1 billion.

The power of sleep on performance cannot be underestimated. Scientists agree with research demonstrating that sleeping six hours per night for 14 nights, compared to regularly getting eight hours per night, results in the equivalent reduction in mental and emotional performance as two full nights without sleep (6). In fact, the more sleep deprived the individuals became, the less they were aware of their sleepiness levels, despite displaying worsening cognitive impairments.

Our pre frontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for many of the higher order executive functions, such as focused attention, creative problem solving and memory recall is incredibly vulnerable to sleep deprivation.

This explains why we feel more stressed after a night of poor sleep because we get pushed into the amygdala, the primitive threat detecting part of our brain. The net result is that we tend to view ourselves, others and the world around us in a more negative light (7).

Given that the reported level of sleep deprivation within the UK's working population is akin to some of the sleep deprivation studies mentioned above, the potential for improvements in mental and emotional performance is vast. Investing in sleep programmes similar to those launched by Bensons for Beds, will help educate both employers and employees on the benefits of sleep and could therefore be considered as the most valuable staff training ever!

Home Performance

If the impact of poor sleep on the workplace wasn't enough, it can also affect home life too. If you suffer from insomnia you're four times more likely to experience relationship issues, which is not helped by the fact that you're also three times more likely to experience low moods (2). When you don't sleep, you spend more time in the primitive part of your brain (8) causing your whole outlook on life and mood to be negatively charged and inwardly focused (7). In this state, the brain's ability to recall pleasant memories decreases in favour of negative ones. Life becomes more about surviving from one night to the next, rather than engaging with your partner, children, family and friends.

An obvious and yet often overlooked cause of sleeplessness within the home is that faced by new parents, reportedly affecting up to 11% of respondents. Recent research has demonstrated that the levels of sleep deprivation and consequent excessive daytime sleepiness reported by new mothers remains at 'clinical levels' for over four months post pregnancy, seriously increasing their risk of accidents when performing critical and potentially dangerous tasks such as driving (9). This is not surprising since even normal levels of sleep deprivation incurred by being awake for 17 to 18 hours per day produces the same reduction in driving performance as seen with a blood alcohol level of 5%, the current legal limit. The negative impact of sleep deprivation on cognitive performance is akin to moderate alcohol intoxication (10).

Dr. Ashleigh Filtness, who carried out Research & Road Safety suggested that *“policy makers developing regulations for parental leave entitlements should take into consideration the high prevalence of excessive daytime sleepiness experienced by new mothers, ensuring enough opportunity for daytime sleepiness to diminish to a manageable level prior to reengagement in the workforce”*.

Alongside The Sleep School, Bensons for Beds offers a number of tips and help to new parents and those of children who do not have regular sleeping patterns, via in-store sleep advice and blogs on the Bensons for Beds website.

School Performance

Unfortunately, sleep deprivation and its performance are not isolated to adults. Over the past three decades the amount of sleep achieved by children has fallen dramatically, which many believe to have negatively affected their intelligence and behaviour.

A 2013 global study of 900,000 school children cited the UK as the 6th most sleep-deprived children in the world (11). The same research reported that 64% of British children couldn't concentrate at school due to being over-tired. The data showed that the more children slept, the better they performed academically, with higher results in mathematics, science and reading.

This is further supported by a study, which investigated the effect of losing one hour of sleep every night for three nights, on children's academic performance (12). The loss of sleep equated to the loss of two years of cognitive maturation and development, which meant that the 11-year-old children who were tested, achieved academic levels equivalent to that of a nine years old.

Additional research has also shown a correlation between the amount of sleep a child attains and their academic performance at school. Teenagers who got 'A' grades, were found to get on average 15 minutes more sleep than those who got 'B' grades and 'B' graders got 15 minutes more than 'C' grade students (13). Put simply, the school children who slept the most, performed the best academically.

One of the main culprits for such sleep deprivation is the increased access to digital devices in the bedroom, which was a key finding from Bensons for Beds Big Sleep Report. The current report found that 56% of children's bedrooms contains a laptop or tablet, 50% had a mobile device and 42% had a games console. The combination of heightened brain activity from chatting with friends on social media sites and the extended exposure to the sun-mimicking 'blue light' emitted by such devices resulted in difficulty falling to sleep and thus reduced sleep quality leading to excessive daytime tiredness (15).

Researchers at University College London have also shown that the timing of sleep is just as important as the duration (16). Worryingly the report found that 20% of children kept an irregular sleeping pattern, in addition to being sleep deprived. Children, who have irregular bedtimes display

more behavioural difficulties, such as hyperactivity, conduct problems, issues with peers and emotional difficulties, than those who go to bed at a regular time. It is now known that following an irregular sleep pattern leads to a 'jet lag' effect on the brain, causing sleeplessness and other symptoms. The good news is that switching to a more regular sleep pattern lead to improvements in performance.

Health and Well Being

Sleep plays a pivotal role in maintaining the state of the nation's health and well-being. Recently researchers discovered that getting less than six hours per night for two weeks, when compared to sleeping seven hours, quadrupled the risk of catching the common cold, as well as increasing the recovery time (17). Sleep protects us during the day by boosting our immune system at night. Plus a good night's sleep has been proven to help wash our brains of harmful toxins built up during the day (18), manage an ideal weight (19), regulate blood glucose levels (20) and keep our heart (21) and blood pressure healthy (22). It's fair to say, a good night's sleep truly is the best medicine and it is completely free!

Sleep is also recognised as vitally important for the physical health of children, with poor sleeping habits in pre-school children linked to an increased risk of adolescent obesity (23). Ensuring that your child is getting enough sleep is critical, especially because up until the age of 19 for women and 21 years for men, the bulk of development occurs whilst asleep. Without adequate sleep, the brain and body is simply not given the time to grow physically, mentally or emotionally.

Call to Action

The positive outcome is the current sleepless epidemic is reversible and has enabled Bensons for Beds to enhance the existing multifaceted sleep programme which is currently operated by the retailer. An effective, nationwide awareness and education campaign could achieve sizeable shifts in the sleep quality and duration of the nation in a relatively short period of time.

Bensons for Beds and The Sleep School Activities

National Activity

- **In Store Sleep Clinic** - Creation of an instore sleep clinic offering free sleep consultations to the general public with a professional sleep doctor. Now available at Bensons for Beds, Tottenham Court Road, London. As of February 2017, free sleep sessions will also be available to the whole country via Skype and phone.
www.bensonsforbeds/sleepclinic. www.bensonsforbeds.co.uk/sleep-clinic
- **In Store Sleep Centres:** The creation of instore sleep centres offering the general public access to helpful sleep educational videos and printed guides and leaflets on topics such as

parent and baby sleep, insomnia, snoring and stress. Currently established in 3 new stores in Manchester, Bolton and Aintree.

- **Employee Sleep Accreditation:** Online sleep training for Bensons for Beds employees. Established in 2015 and with over 1,000 employees now trained it includes education on sleep regulation, optimal lifestyle and bedroom environments for sleep and common sleep disorders.
- **In Store Sleep Workshops:** Instore group workshops by a trained sleep doctor to high need groups including new parents, stressed workers, insomnia sufferers etc. (to commence in 2017).
- **The Sleep School Blog:** Online resource of sleep education, news, research and helpful blogs discussing the importance of sleep and how best to achieve it.
<http://www.bensonsforbeds.co.uk/sleep-school/sleepcentre>

Online Sleep Video Resource: A collection of [YouTube videos](#) of Dr Guy providing his most helpful sleep tips across a variety of areas

Summary

The current report by Bensons for Beds, highlights significant deficits in the nation's sleep, negatively impacting the economy, workplace, home life, school education and long term individual the health and well-being. Given the importance of sleep, it is proposed that a wide spread sleep campaign is needed to create a seismic shift in sleep education, helping the nation to sleep better naturally.

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