



# how britain sleeps 2023

Brought to you by Silentnight,  
the UK's **most trusted** sleep brand

# contents

- 3** Welcome from Silentnight CEO, Tracey Bamber
- 4** How we sleep
- 6** The poor sleep problem
- 8** Sleep and work
- 10** Sleep solutions
- 13** Final thoughts
- 14** About Silentnight



# welcome

We spend about a third of our lives sleeping. If practice makes perfect, we should all be experts at it by now. So why is it that so many of us struggle to drift off at the end of the day?

Sleep is a big part of our health and wellbeing. A bad night's sleep can have a big impact on your day, affecting your work, health, relationships and more.

It's such an important issue, which is why we at Silentnight have commissioned the research in this report.

We want to shine a light on the issues keeping us up at night – including the fact that seven out of ten Brits are sleeping on the wrong mattress – while also exploring how sleep affects our every day lives and investigating how we can all sleep more soundly.

So, we surveyed over 5,000 people, including more than 200 business leaders, to understand how the world of work can affect how we sleep, and vice versa.

We're doing this because it is our mission to help the nation sleep better.

We've been making mattresses for more than 75 years and we've earned the title of most trusted sleep brand. We have refined our craft, developing our expertise with the aim of creating the perfect sleep solution for everyone. With that comes a responsibility to help Britain sleep better.

To that end, the experts in our state-of-the-art testing lab continue to work and innovate to advance mattress technology using the latest data and techniques.

And we're sharing the learnings from this report, alongside analysis and advice from our sleep guru Hannah Shore, with the aim of helping Britons sleep better.

I hope you find this report inspiring and informative – but most of all, I hope it helps you get a good night's rest.

**Tracey Bamber,**  
CEO, Silentnight



# how we sleep

There are so many myths and much we still don't know about sleep. It's an opportunity for our bodies and minds to relax, recharge and repair after a long day.

**6.5** the amount of hours sleep the average Brit gets per night

Without enough sleep, we wouldn't be able to function properly and our health would quickly decline.

So, how much sleep is enough sleep?

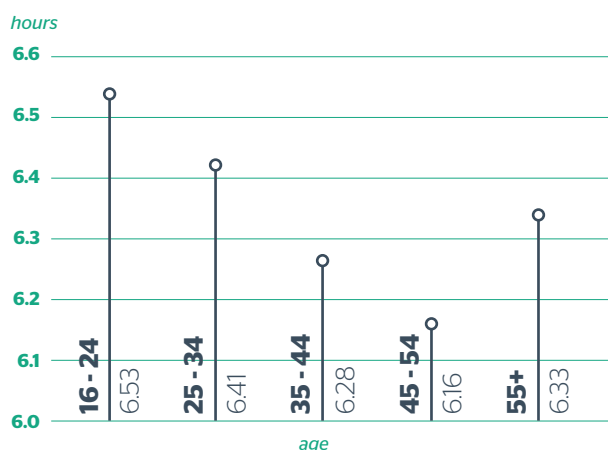
The conventional wisdom is that eight hours is what we all need for a 'good' night's sleep.

But our research found that fewer than one in five (19%) people get eight to nine hours a night, with the average being 6.5 hours.

Worryingly, 22% of those we surveyed got fewer than five hours sleep each night.

Men and women sleep for roughly the same amount of time, but the amount we sleep naturally declines gradually as we get older, until it rises again in the over 55s age group.

## average sleep



## Introducing Hannah Shore

**Hannah is Silentnight's in-house Sleep Expert, for all things sleep science.**



After studying biomechanics at the University of Central Lancashire, Hannah joined Silentnight to understand how mattresses support our bodies during sleep, exploring how mattresses perform in real life sleep environments. Hannah is a recent graduate from Oxford University, giving her a broad knowledge of the neurological side of sleep as well as its physical aspects.

*"The recommended amount of sleep an average adult needs is seven to nine hours per night. Those who regularly get less than six hours can start to suffer from a range of health issues – they take an additional six days off work per year compared to someone sleeping seven to nine hours, for example."*

*"Understanding our bodies is key – 16-24-year-olds normally have a shift in their circadian rhythm that means they naturally want to go to bed later and wake up later. When people reach their 50s, we see our circadian rhythm shift again, prompting us to go to bed earlier and sleep longer. Our cyclical sleep patterns change as we get older too, so the over 55s may be having more fragmented sleep."*

**Hannah Shore,**  
Silentnight's Sleep Expert



## Now that we've looked at the quantity of sleep people are getting, what about the quality?

On average, it should take 10-15 minutes to get to sleep, but our survey found that the average person has difficulties falling asleep 3.3 days a week, with men sleeping slightly easier (3.2 days) than women (3.5 days).

While one in six (16%) of us never has any difficulties falling or staying asleep, a slightly higher proportion (18%) always struggles to sleep.

It means that the average person only wakes up feeling well rested 3.2 times a week.

Despite getting roughly the same number of hours sleep, men report a better quality of sleep than women, feeling well rested 3.5 times a week, compared with 2.9 for women.

Hormones, including progesterone and estrogen, fluctuate during a woman's life, as well as during the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and menopause. This can negatively affect the quantity and quality of sleep they get.

Again, the subjective quality of sleep we get gradually declines as we get older, until it rises again in the over 55s age group.

We also surveyed business leaders, to see if their sleep was affected differently.

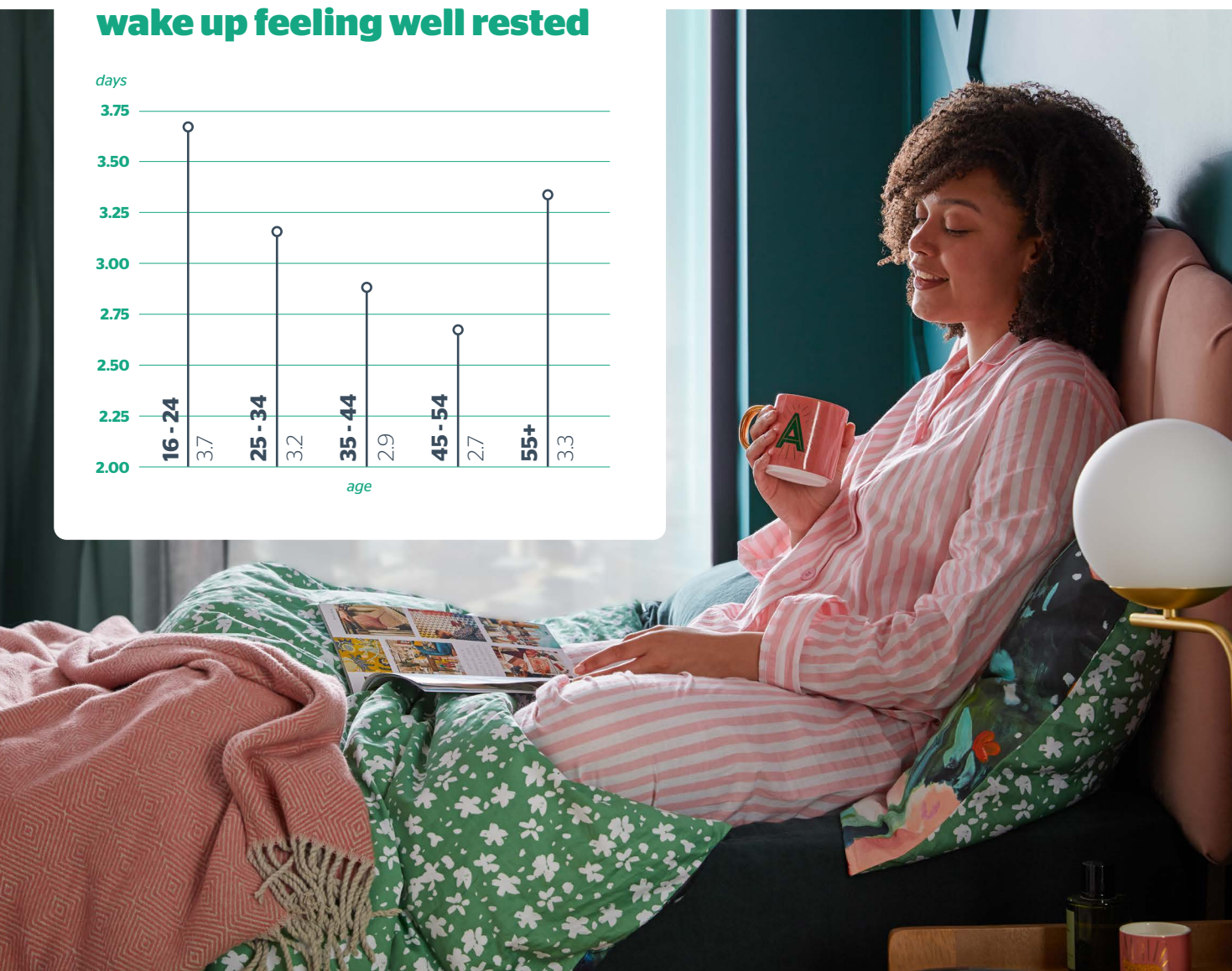
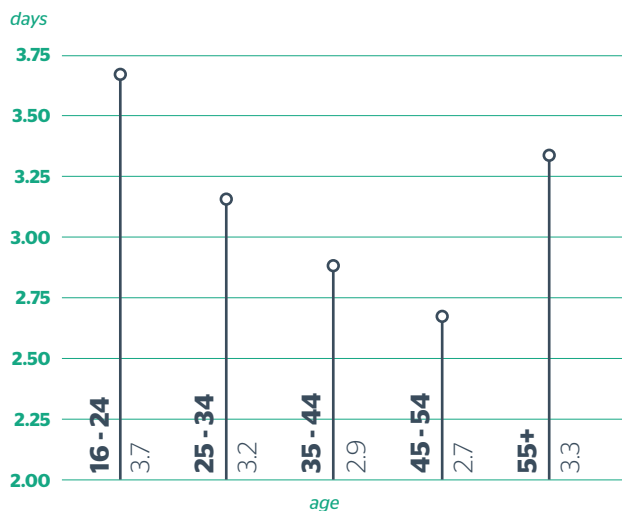
We found they struggle to sleep 3.9 nights a week, compared with 3.3 days a week for the average person, and they sleep for a slightly shorter time - 6.3 hours compared to 6.5 hours in the wider public.

However, perhaps counter-intuitively, they report waking up feeling well rested more often - 3.7 days a week, compared to 3.3 days in the wider public.

### **Silentnight says:**

*"These people are more likely to be making big and potentially risky decisions. A lack of sleep can increase the risks you take, meaning your decision making is likely to be more impaired when you are sleep deprived than when you aren't."*

## wake up feeling well rested



# the poor sleep problem



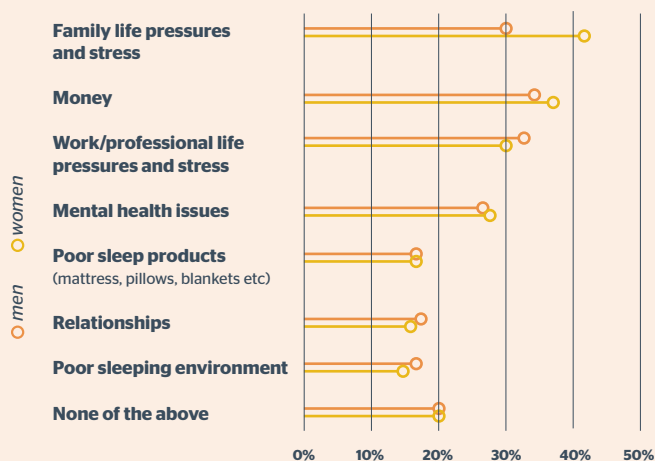
It seems that significant numbers of Britons aren't getting enough sleep, are facing challenges falling asleep and, as a result, they don't feel well rested when they wake.

## So, what's causing this issue?

When we asked our respondents what factors negatively affected the quality or duration of their sleep, the most common answer was family life pressures and stress (36%), followed by money worries (35%) and work pressures and stress (31%).

And it's noticeable that more women feel stressed by family life pressures than men.

### Which of the following factors negatively affect the quality or duration of your sleep?



Perhaps surprisingly, money worries were a bigger concern for business leaders (45%), followed by work pressures and stress (43%) and family life pressures (36%).

It's noticeable that stress related to family life, money, work and relationships all peak in middle age, with the 35-44-year-old age group suffering the worst.

Indeed, only 8% of the 35-44 age group have no issues, compared with 35% of over 55s.

Mental health issues are the biggest cause of poor sleep for 16-24-year-olds and were reported by 37% of those surveyed, before declining in every age group, with just 17% of over 55s citing mental health as an issue.

This is also reflected in recent studies of young people's mental health by health providers and charities, including the Resolution Foundation<sup>1</sup>, with the pandemic, social media and the cost-of-living crisis all cited as factors.

And it's worth noting that a lack of sleep can in itself be a cause of stress. Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents said they worry that the quality of their sleep will negatively affect their health in the long run.

### Hannah explains:

*"When we are stressed, our bodies create a higher amount of a hormone called cortisol, which keeps our bodies on high alert."*

*"This stops the body being able to make sleep hormones like melatonin, preventing us from falling asleep, or keeping us in a lighter form of sleep where we are easily wakened."*

*"Looking at women specifically, gender inequality means there are still fewer women in higher paid jobs and maternity responsibilities mean women take time off work and are often penalised for it through their wages, leaving them worried about how they can still provide for their families."*

ZZZZZZZZZZ

<sup>1</sup> [www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/left-behind/](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/left-behind/)

## Now we've looked at the causes of poor sleep, let's look at the effects.

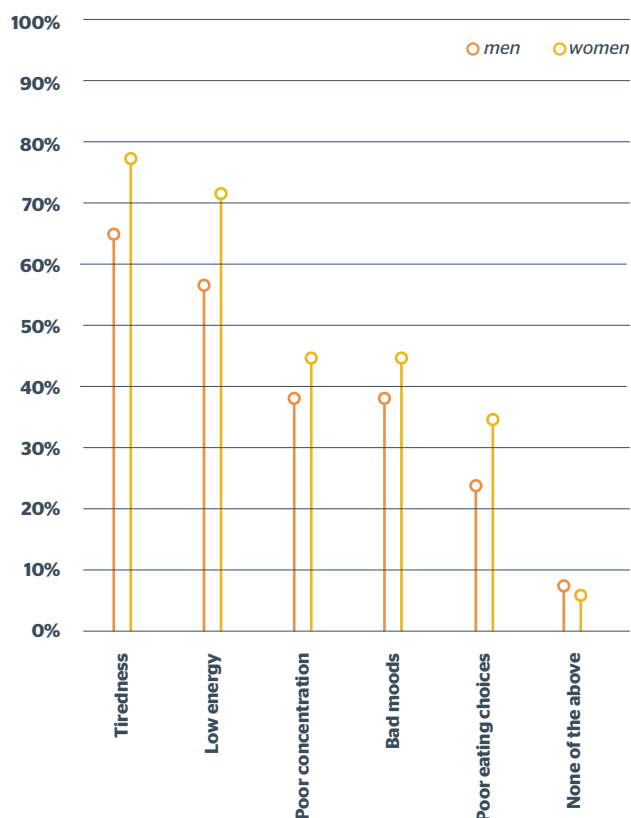
More than four in five of the 84% of us who can struggle to sleep experience symptoms of sleep deprivation, such as fatigue, irritability or difficulty concentrating.

This rises to 92% of business leaders.

And our survey found poor sleep has a bigger impact on women than men, with women reporting significantly more symptoms when they are not well rested. Studies have found that women take longer to recover after a poor night's sleep – whereas men's fatigue levels are back to normal after one night of good sleep, women can take up to four nights to bounce back.

Respondents in the 16-24 age group also seem to experience fewer symptoms of poor sleep than their older peers, with their youth perhaps making them more resilient to the symptoms of sleep deprivation.

### Do you ever experience any of the following as a result of poor sleep?



### Silentnight says:

*"When we sleep, we cycle through different sleep stages. Each type of sleep does something special for our bodies, so we need a good mix of all types of sleep to feel well rested."*

*"Deep sleep helps repair the body physically, releasing growth and repair hormones to help our bodies recover, as well as proteins that boost our immune functions."*

*"Lighter sleep focuses on repairing the mind – it's good for memory consolidation and emotional processing. A lot of this type of sleep happens in the second half of the night, so if you cut your sleep short it can leave you feeling very moody!"*

*"When we don't get enough sleep, we look for energy elsewhere, and unfortunately this often means craving high sugar, fatty foods. This is one of the reasons why long-term poor sleep is linked with obesity and type two diabetes."*



# sleep and work

## 29%

Nearly a third of employees say **their employer supports them** in getting a good night's sleep.



But we've also seen that almost a third of people blame work stresses for their poor sleep. So how does that affect how we perform at work?

Tiredness, low energy and poor concentration – the most commonly-reported symptoms of poor sleep – certainly aren't conducive to an effective and productive day at work.

And Britain as a nation is suffering from a well-known productivity problem. Growth has flatlined since the 2008 financial crisis whereas other countries have recovered, making us less competitive internationally.

But this research has exposed a clear gap between employers' and employees' perceptions of this issue, with business leaders appearing to overestimate just how much work affects their staff's sleep.

Four in five (82%) bosses told our survey that they thought work factors affected their employees' sleep, for example, but only three in five (61%) employees agreed.

And three quarters (73%) of bosses say work stress means their employees sleep fewer hours, but only 54% of employees agreed.

This view peaked among 25-34-year-olds (65%) and then declines with age, affecting just 38% of over 55s.

It's reassuring to learn that business leaders recognise that there is a relationship between work and sleep, and that they are taking this issue seriously.

However, there appears to be a disconnect between acceptance and action. Just 29% of employees say their employer supports them in getting good quality sleep, but 80% of bosses think they support their employees in getting good quality sleep.

Indeed, while just one in seven (14%) bosses say they haven't done anything to help staff sleep better, twice as many staff (28%) say their employer has failed to act.

### Hannah comments:

*"I think for 29% of people to say they are not supported by work around improving their sleep is mind-blowing. Sleep affects our productivity levels, mental capacity and emotions. A well-rested workforce is therefore more likely to effectively solve problems, think outside the box and be more productive. If business leaders invested in sleep, they would see an increase in productivity and overall wellbeing within the workplace."*

*"And solutions exist. The Sleep Charity hosts a Workplace Sleep Ambassador Course, for example, that includes teaching the skills to recognise and deal with sleep issues in the workplace and a sleep toolkit to ensure businesses get the best results possible."*





## The Sleep Charity

**Lisa Artis is the Deputy CEO of The Sleep Charity, the organisation on a mission to empower the nation to sleep better. It works to improve access to sleep support, raise awareness of the value of a good night's sleep and promote understanding around the complexities of sleep.**

"We now have a wealth of tangible evidence showing that poor sleep is impacting how people perform at work, which has important implications for employers as well as individuals.

"This should prompt organisations to start thinking seriously about how they can help their colleagues achieve their full potential by putting structures in place to look after all aspects of their wellbeing, including sleep.

"After all, when people sleep better, they are happier, healthier and more energised in every aspect of their lives.

"At The Sleep Charity, we want to drive awareness of sleep-related issues and their impact on our working lives.

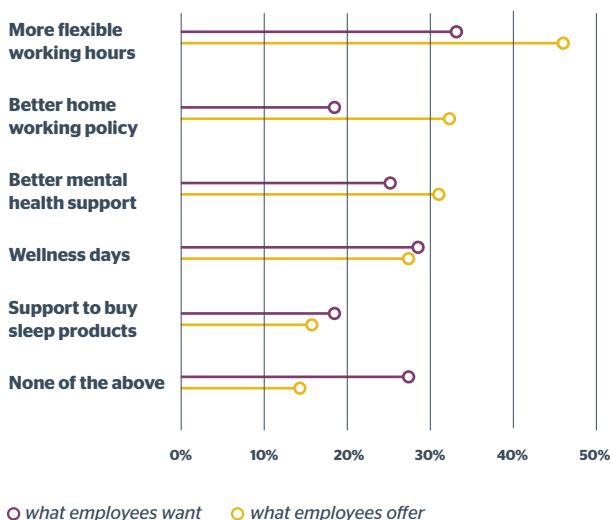
"We're supporting businesses that are working to help their teams to sleep better, including delivering training for sleep advocates in workplaces across the country, but more still needs to be done.

"Research shows sleep deprivation costs the UK economy £40.2 billion every year in lost productivity.

"We all stand to benefit when sleep is taken seriously,"

Our research also identified some diversion between the measures employees want to help them sleep better and what's being offered by employers.

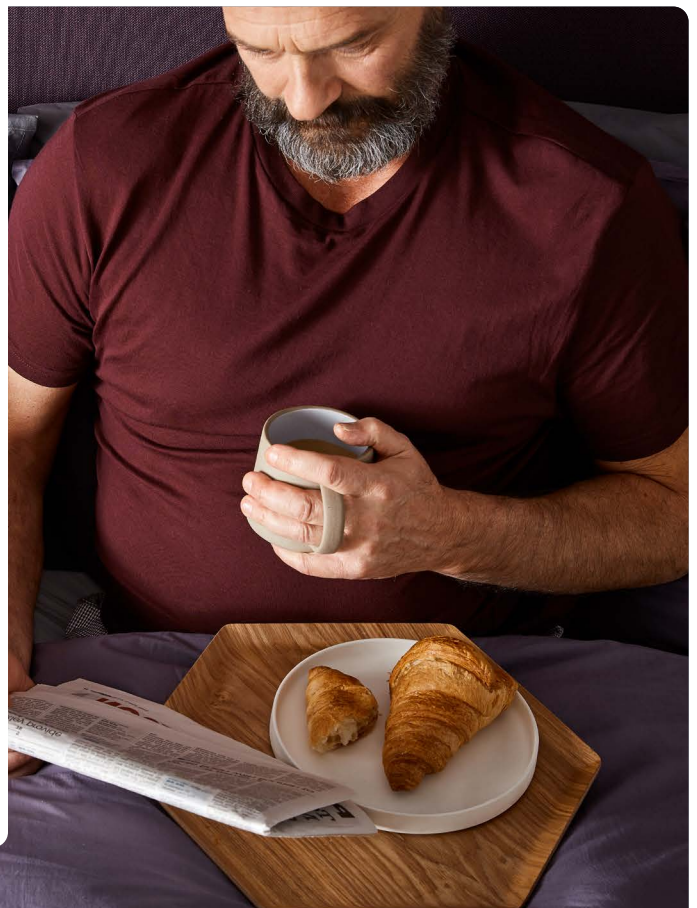
### Support for sleep



### Silentnight comments:

*"Flexible hours mean that people can sleep at the right time of day for them. For example, a night owl may prefer to start work at 10am and finish at 6pm whereas an early riser may opt for a 7am start and finish at 3pm. Supporting mental health problems is a great start to support sleep too. However, it's worth bearing in mind some issues might have been exacerbated by poor sleep in the first place. Investing in sleep education could reduce the physical, mental and emotional stress we put ourselves under."*

*"Investing in sleep products is great but how do you know it is the best thing for that person? By working with a sleep expert, employees would get tailored advice on which products would help them most."*



# sleep solutions

Even though our survey found 84% of people struggle to sleep at least once a week, which causes them a raft of sleep-related issues, it's telling that only 38% have taken action to help solve the problem.

This likely reveals a deep-seated lack of knowledge of ways we can improve our sleep, with over three in five (62%) apparently resigned to the fact that sleep will always be a struggle.

That's striking, especially considering the growing focus on health and wellbeing, which accelerated during the pandemic.

Indeed, our research found more people feel well informed about nutrition (28%) and physical and mental health (29%) than they do about sleep (20%).

Only 48% are aware of current sleep guidelines, which recommend 7-9 hours of sleep per night for an average adult, though this rises to 70% among business leaders.

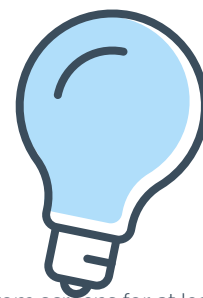
But it doesn't have to be this way.

This research reveals an opportunity to arm individuals with advice they can apply to help improve their sleep and enjoy all the benefits that can bring.

And there are plenty of easy wins.

Only 38% take steps to help them sleep, like using a white noise machine or reading before bed, for example, though this rises to 50% among business leaders.

Of course, screens are a growing presence in all our lives. In 2008 only 17% of adults had a smartphone. By 2021 that had grown more than fivefold to 88%.

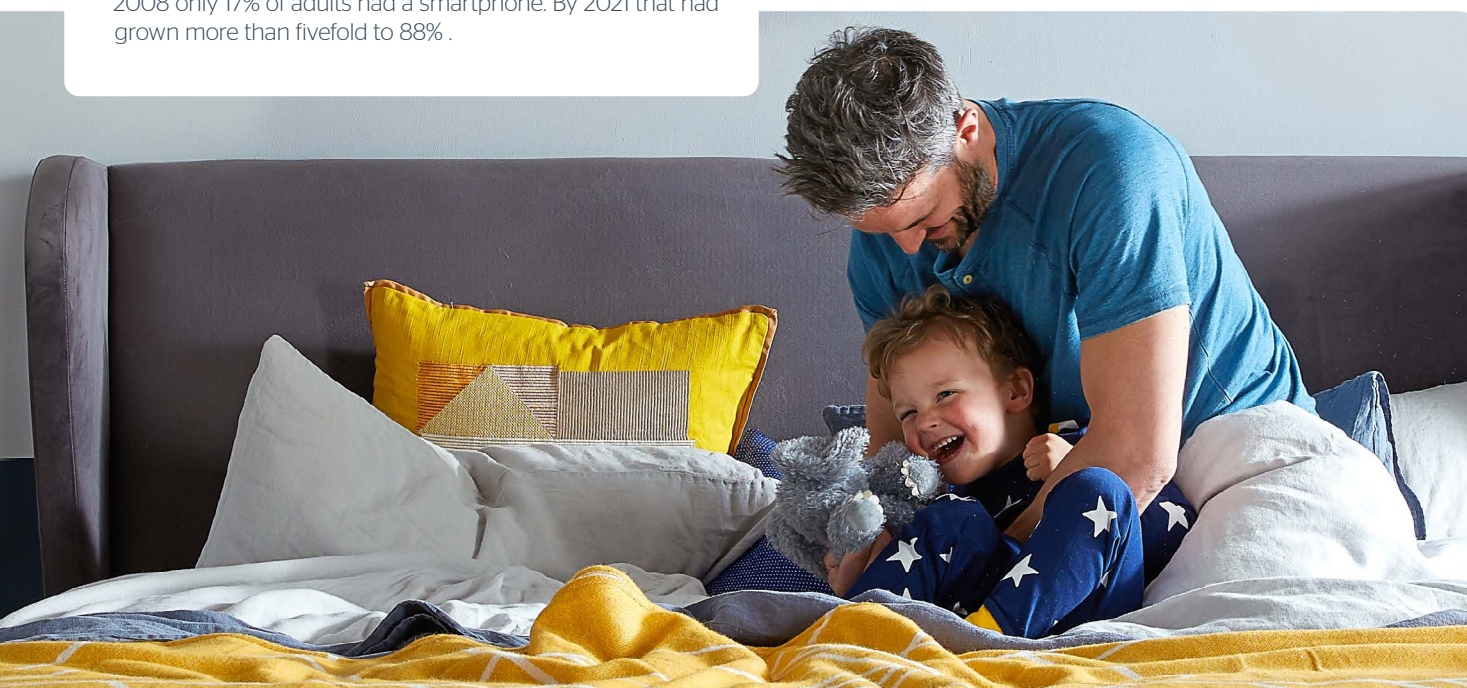


As a result, the advice is to stay away from screens for at least an hour before bedtime.

But almost half (49%) of those we surveyed said they always use technology, such as a smartphone or TV, in the hour before they sleep, with just 13% saying they never do.

## Hannah says:

*"There's a common misconception that it's the blue light produced by screens that keeps us up at night, but it's actually the content we watch that has a bigger effect. When we are engrossed in scrolling through social posts, or binge watching a favourite TV series, it can physically prevent us from falling to sleep. It can cause the body to be stressed, meaning sleep hormones aren't produced and therefore we struggle to drift off. For the same reason, using your work laptop and phone in the bedroom is also a big no."*



#### Silentnight advises:

*"Using technology before sleep is not always a bad thing. Watching something on TV or scrolling through something unengaging on phones can help some people switch off."*

*"If you are doing this, you need to ensure the content is something boring, not binge watching the latest thriller, and make sure your device's eye comfort mode setting is on, swapping out those harsh blue tones for subtle yellow ones."*

*"However, if you are using technology and are struggling to sleep, why not try something a little different? Either alter the content, try reading, or use an app like Spotify or YouTube on your phone to create relaxing sounds, like white noise or rainfall."*

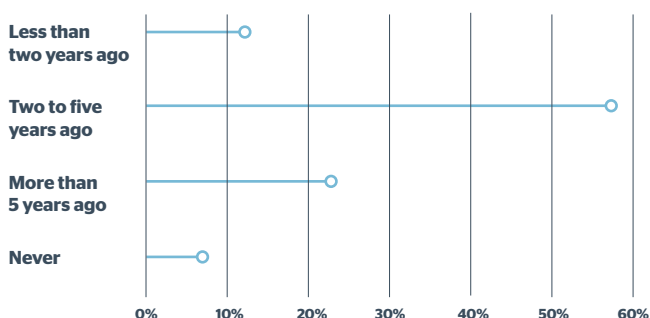


### Another important factor in ensuring a good night's sleep is, of course, comfort.

The room where you sleep should be cool, dark and quiet to help ensure a good night's rest.

And consideration should also be given to the mattress you sleep on.

#### When did you last buy a new mattress?



Everyone has different needs when it comes to sleep and the mattress you choose will depend on factors including your body stature and what type of sleeper you are.

Given that, under normal conditions, the average life of a mattress is six to eight years, choosing a mattress is a big decision.

But it's one that we often get wrong; our research shows that seven in ten people are sleeping on the wrong mattress for them.

To that end, we've teamed up with the University of Central Lancashire to develop sleepunique® - a free online intelligent algorithm that uses your body measurements and sleeping habits to recommend your perfect mattress.

Many manufacturers - including Silentnight - now also offer a sleep trial, where you can try out a mattress at home, which can be a useful and risk-free way to ensure you've made the right choice.

But a mattress will ultimately need replacing as years of use can mean it no longer supports your needs.

Our survey found a small majority (51%) of respondents don't know how often they should replace their mattress, though 49% were aware of the six to eight-year rule.

However, Brits seem to be replacing their mattresses more often than they really have to.

The average person told us that they last bought a mattress four years ago.

Most (58%) said their mattress was two to five years old, while 30% said their mattress was more than five years old.

Sadly, according to the National Bed Federation, only around a quarter (24%) of mattresses are currently recycled when they reach the end of their lives, with the rest ending up in landfill.

That's a priority for Silentnight. Our focus is on creating mattresses that deliver optimum comfort for as long as possible while providing value for customers and reducing waste.

**Sustainability is a key consideration in everything we do, and we've made a number of industry-leading commitments, including:**

- Being a Carbon+ neutral organisation, offsetting more carbon than we produce in our manufacturing processes
- Becoming zero waste to landfill, repurposing 230 tonnes of manufacturing waste every year to make new mattresses
- The first and only sleep brand to commit to being a Net Zero Carbon business by 2040, 10 years ahead of the Paris Agreement



Average age of respondents' mattress is **4 years**

**Hannah says:**

*"We should be changing our mattresses when it begins to impact our sleep. If we start to find them uncomfortable or are waking up with aches and pains when we didn't used to, or there are clear signs of wear and tear, it's time for a new mattress."*

*"Taking care of your mattress, including using a protector, means that it can last longer."*

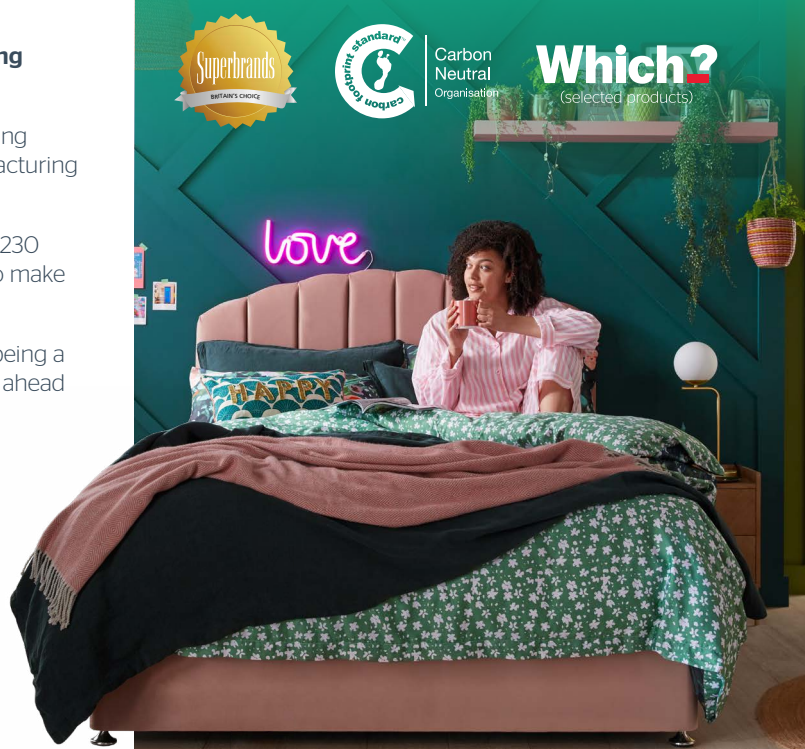
*"By designing mattresses with durability in mind, we are extending the lifespan of mattresses and reducing the amount ending up in landfill."*

**committed to sleep,  
with the awards to prove it**



Carbon  
Neutral  
Organisation

**Which?**  
(selected products)





# final thoughts

Sleep better, live better.

It's clear that every aspect of our lives can influence how we sleep, and vice versa.

It's also apparent from this research that too many of us are living with the symptoms of poor sleep, but are suffering in silence.

I hope that this report helps people connect the dots and realise that the quality and quantity of sleep they get is not outside their control.

Simple steps, like keeping your bedroom a little cooler, changing your mattress or switching off social media, can have a transformative effect.

That can have a knock-on impact on your relationship, career, health, happiness and so much more.

We want to empower everyone to sleep soundly, which is why we're sharing this research.

And it's why we invest so much time and money in innovation, to create the perfect sleep solution for every sleeper.

We hope that you have found something in this report that you can apply in your own life, and that you can sleep more soundly as a result.

# about Silentnight

**Silentnight is proud to be the UK's most trusted sleep brand. One in five households own a Silentnight mattress.**

We were founded more than 75 years ago and we're still based in the North of England.

We have a reputation for innovation and rigorous testing. Our state-of-the-art testing lab is unique within the bed industry and we continually monitor and invest in the latest technology and techniques.

We are proud to have become the first sleep brand in the world to commit to the Science Based Targets initiative to be net zero carbon by 2040.

We are also a signatory to the Climate Pledge and are a Carbon Neutral+ organisation, offsetting more carbon than we produce each year.

70% of the raw materials which go into our beds are from where we live, and we are committed to repurposing our manufacturing process waste and put zero back to landfill.



## methodology & data sources

This is the first in a series of annual reports that aims to assess the sleep habits of UK consumers and business leaders, including the impact on their health and wellbeing, and implications for their working lives.

It also considers the availability, awareness and efficacy of information and support relating to sleep.

To gather representative data, Silentnight commissioned independent market research consultancy Censuswide to survey 5,006 UK consumers between 21st April and 27th April 2023.

It also separately surveyed 232 business leaders/employers, excluding sole traders, between 24th April and 27th April 2023.

## contact us

To contact the brand directly,  
email [info@silentnight.co.uk](mailto:info@silentnight.co.uk)

For media enquiries,  
contact: [silentnight@citypress.co.uk](mailto:silentnight@citypress.co.uk)



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