

Schott's Almanac of Sleep

In the first of an occasional series exploring some of the more curious aspects of British life and society, **Ben Schott** has teamed up with Ipsos MORI to examine sleep – the “soft embalmer of the still midnight”.

PRAYING

27% of us pray before going to sleep – at least sometimes. Women are 9% more likely to pray before bed than men; Labour and Liberal Democrat voters are 7–10% less likely to pray before drifting off than Conservatives.

How often, if at all, do you pray before going to sleep?

Frequency %	All	♂	♀	Con	Lab	Lib	Other
Always	12	9	14	14	14	7	5
Usually	5	4	5	6	4	7	2
Sometimes	10	9	11	14	10	10	11
Rarely	9	9	9	10	10	11	13
Never	64	68	60	56	63	65	70
At least sometimes	27	22	31	34	27	24	18
Rarely or never	73	78	69	66	73	76	82

8% of those who sleep naked usually or always pray before going to sleep.

INFLUENCE OF PARTNERS

56% of those surveyed lived with a spouse or partner. The tables below illustrate what effect on sleeping that partner has.

How often do you and your partner share the same bed?

Always	86%
Usually	5
Sometimes	2
Rarely	2
Never	3

[Tables divided by sex indicate the sex of the interviewee. For example, 28% of women sleep with a partner who always snores, compared with just 7% of men.]

How often do you and your partner disagree about when to go to sleep or wake up?

Frequency %	All	♂	♀
Always	5	5	6
Usually	1	2	1
Sometimes	10	12	8
Rarely	17	18	15
Never	66	62	70
Don't know	1	1	1

ALARM CLOCKS

42% of us always set an alarm the night before we have to get up for work (or equivalent), although 4% usually or always sleep through it anyway – and 26% always hit the snooze button every time the alarm goes off.

How often do you set an alarm on weekdays?

Frequency %	All	♂	♀
Always	42	2	26
Usually	13	2	5
Sometimes	9	7	7
Rarely	11	22	8
Never	24	67	53

82% of those ≥65 never hit the snooze button, but, then, 75% of them rarely or never set an alarm. 62% of Tories say they never hit the snooze button – compared with 50% of Labour and 51% of Lib Dem voters.

SLEEPING & WAKING

80% of us go to sleep before midnight on weekdays (days when we have to work, or have tasks to accomplish, the following day). Predictably, 82% of those in full-time work go to bed before midnight on a weekday, compared with 76% of those not in full-time work. 16 to 24-year-olds, and those 55 or over, are much more likely to go to bed after midnight on a weekday. At weekends, 40% go to bed after midnight, though men are significantly more likely to do so than women (44%, compared with 35%).

What time do you usually go to sleep on a typical day?

% Weekday	Time	Weekend %
1	Before 9pm	1
6	9pm–10pm	3
36	10pm–11pm	20
36	11pm–midnight	34
20	After midnight	40
2	Don't know/refused	2

On a weekday, 62% of us wake up before 7am, and only 6% wake up after 9am. Of those not in full-time work, 53% still rise before 7am, and only 4% lie in after 10am. At a weekend, only 34% of us get up before 7am (although 53% of those ≥65 do). 20% of us lie in after 9am at a weekend – 9% slumber until after 10am. Singletons are almost 5 times more likely to wake after 10am at a weekend than those with a partner or spouse.

What time do you usually wake up on a typical day?

% Weekday	Time	Weekend %
6	Before 5am	3
19	5am–6am	10
37	6am–7am	21
25	7am–8am	23
7	8am–9am	21
3	9am–10am	11
3	After 10am	9
1	Don't know/refused	1

CUDDLY TOY

6% of us take a stuffed toy or other comforter to bed – 3% of men, and 8% of women. 6% of Labour and Lib Dem voters sleep with Ted, compared with just 3% of Tories. Singletons are twice as likely to seek the comfort of a furry friend than those with a partner or spouse (9% vs 4%).

ON SLEEPING

O soft embalmer of the still midnight! Shutting with careful fingers and benign Our gloom-pleased eyes, embower'd from the light, Enshaded in forgetfulness divine. — JOHN KEATS

Even people who sleep in the same bed each dream their own dreams. — *Chinese proverb*

Sleep is when all the unsorted stuff comes flying out as from a dustbin upset in a high wind. — WILLIAM GOLDING

In our dreams, we are always young. — SADIE DELANY

Laugh, and the world laughs with you – snore, and you sleep alone. — MRS PATRICK CAMPBELL

The amount of sleep required by the average person is about five minutes more. — MAX KAUFFMANN

We surrender to sleep, but in the way that the master entrusts himself to the slave who serves him. — MAURICE BLANCHOT

Amor vincit insomnia. — CHRISTOPHER FRY

Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,005 adults in Britain aged 16+. Interviews were conducted by telephone on August 3–5, 2007. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. BEN SCHOTT is the author of *Schott's Almanac*. www.benschott.com

SLEEP NUDE

27% of us usually sleep naked; 2% refused to answer the question.

Do you usually sleep with some garments on, or in the nude?

Group	Sleep nude %
All	27
Men	36
Women	18
16–44s	27
45–64s	36
≥65s	12
In full-time work	36
Not in full-time work	19
Single	16
With partner/married	32
Widowed/divorced/separated	23
Conservative voter	28
Labour voter	26
Lib Dem voter	28
Other voter	32
Broadsheet newspaper reader	27
Tabloid newspaper reader	29

DREAMING

55% of us wake up and remember our dreams – at least sometimes.

How often do you wake up and remember dreaming the previous night?

Frequency %	All	♂	♀
Always	9	8	11
Usually	15	11	19
Sometimes	31	31	31
Rarely	27	31	24
Never	16	17	14
Don't know	1	1	–

Only 2% of those who remember dreaming keep a record or diary of their dreams.

DURATION OF SLEEP

It used to be said, in regard to the number of hours' sleep needed: *Nature* requires six; *Custom* requires seven; *Laziness*, nine; and *Wickedness*, eleven. In reality, most get 6–8 hours sleep both on weekdays and at weekends:

% Weekday	Hours of sleep			Weekend %		
All	♂	♀	All	♂	♀	
5	6	4	≤4 hours	3	2	
13	17	10	4–6 hours	11	11	
62	59	65	6–8 hours	48	47	
18	17	20	8–10 hours	35	35	
4	5	3	>10 hours	10	13	

In general, do you think you get enough sleep?

Too much sleep	3%
About the right amount	60
Not enough	36
Don't know	1

SIDE OF BED

75% of us have a preference for which side of the bed to sleep on

On which side of the bed do you usually sleep?

Side	%
Right	36
Left	32
Middle	7
No preference	22
It depends/varies	2
Don't know	1

Disappointingly, it transpires that political affiliation does not seem to extend to choice of bed side:

Side	Con	Lab	Lib	Other
Right	39	37	44	34
Left	33	32	33	29
Middle	10	6	2	8
No pref.	14	23	19	26
Varies	3	2	–	3
D/K	2	1	2	–

POSITION

The positions in which we fall asleep (regardless of whether we move during the night or not) are reasonably evenly divided, though women more often sleep on their front, and men on their back.

In what position do you usually fall asleep?

Side	All	♂	♀
On front	10	8	12
On back	13	17	10
Left/foetal	26	24	28
Right/foetal	30	32	29
Varies	20	19	20
Don't know	1	–	2

25% of those who sleep for more than 9 hours on a weekday claim they do not get enough sleep.