

INCOMING YAWN: WHY AUSSIES ARE NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

New research reveals Aussies' sleep struggles and the true cost of a bad sleep.

SYDNEY, AUGUST 2023 – Sleep is essential for everyone, and having a good night's rest is vital for cognitive function and mental health. However, new research reveals that more than a third (39%) of Aussies consistently struggle with sleep difficulties which is impacting their relationships and work life.

The most common sleep issues among Aussies include insomnia (15%), heavy snoring (14%) and Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) (10%). In addition, stress and anxiety (53%), financial worries (42%) and family concerns (36%) emerged as the top personal factors that keep Aussies awake at night.

Commissioned by Real Insurance, in partnership with consumer research group CoreData, [The Real Sleep Report 2023](#) surveyed 1,202 Australians over 18, delving into the relationship between Australians and sleep and uncovering its various impacts. It explores sleep issues and habits, work performance repercussions, sleep's influence on sexual intimacy, and the toll of parenthood on sleep quality.

Aussies in sleep trouble

Despite the average Aussie securing around 7 hours of sleep on a typical working day, they generally consider 8 hours of sleep ideal. The research found that sleep-related issues can contribute to or worsen various health issues among Australians, including mental health problems (22%), high blood pressure (14%), weakened immune system (12%), and obesity (12%).

In an effort to improve their sleep, nearly half (49%) have attempted to implement a regular sleeping schedule, or tried to avoid caffeine, alcohol, or nicotine before bedtime (47%). Additionally, almost half (44%) have also made efforts to maintain a balanced diet, or even use health supplements (28%) designed to promote better sleep.

Unfortunately, these methods don't work for everyone. As such, more than a quarter (26%) of Aussies are currently consulting or have consulted a medical professional to address their sleep issues, and many (28%) would consider seeking medical advice.

Tim Stephenson, Clinical Sleep Physiologist at ResMed states: "These results show the increasing amount of importance that people are beginning to place on sleep as a pillar of their health and wellbeing. It is great to see an increasing number of people taking steps to proactively manage their sleep health and this needs to be encouraged. As highlighted in the survey, financial worries and family concerns are big drivers of sleep issues and this is not liable to lessen in the near future. However, there can sometimes be underlying causes that are important to address. If symptoms persist for longer periods or you have compounding medical conditions, then you should consult your Health Care Provider for advice."

The Impact of Sleep Issues on Couples

A lack of sleep can affect a range of aspects in one's personal life, including their relationships. In fact, the research revealed that many Aussies (40%) experienced a strain in their relationship due to their partner's sleep issues.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Aussies in a serious relationship said sleep issues can keep each other awake. Further, more than a quarter (26%) revealed that their partner's sleep issues occasionally disrupt their own sleep, with a similar proportion (25%) experiencing mutual disturbances during the night.

For some couples, the extremity of the sleep issues has prompted them to explore separate sleeping arrangements (38%).

Despite many Aussies (68%) reporting improved sleep quality when engaging in frequent sexual activity, close to half (48%) prioritise sleep over sex, while many (40%) strike a balance between the two.

Tim Stephenson comments: "Poor sleep can certainly have a negative impact on your sex life. Sleep plays a crucial role in regulating hormones, energy levels and mood; all of which influence relationships, sexual desire and performance. When our sleep is poor then we can experience decreased libido, prolonged fatigue and poor concentration which all combine to make sexual activity in any form challenging. This then becomes a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy as the stress this places on our relationships makes elusive sleep even harder to find. Maintaining a high quality of intimacy and emotional connection with your partner should also allow you to have better sleep and to awaken your best every day."

Impact of sleep deficiency on work performance

Feeling fatigued at work is a common experience, but accumulating sleep debt can lead to persistent tiredness and sleepiness, which can significantly reduce productivity. According to the research, close to a third (31%) of employed Aussies reported that the quantity and quality of their sleep significantly or considerably affects their work performance.

Shockingly, most employed Aussies (78%) said that insufficient sleep negatively impacts their workday at least once a week. In addition, many (20%) have called in sick three or more times in the past year solely due to inadequate sleep.

Parenthood's toll on sleep quality

Putting children to sleep can be an ongoing challenge for parents. Unsurprisingly, the research shows that the average Aussie parent with young children can spend a considerable amount of time putting them to bed. The younger the children are, the longer it takes, with an average of 64 minutes to put 0–3 year olds to bed, 53 minutes for 4–7 year olds, and 39 minutes for 8–12 year olds. Perhaps these significant time investments in putting kids to bed have led to many parents (27%) always letting their 0–3 year olds sleep in bed with them over the past year, with slightly less (21%) doing the same for their 4-7 year olds.

Almost a quarter (21%) of parents find it challenging to get their kids to bed on time, with some (16%) reporting that their children wake up multiple times during the night. With difficulty getting

kids to sleep, many (44%) parents have also observed behavioural problems when their children do not get enough sleep, noticing difficulties with focusing and attention (39%), and mood disorders (24%).

Furthermore, most (72%) parents with children younger than 18 years old said their own sleep quality has suffered since having kids.

Tim Stephenson comments: “As most parents know bedtime can become very stressful and almost a dreaded part of the day, patience and consistency can really help here. Children often respond well to a regular bedtime routine with a very similar sleep and wake time even at weekends.”

While the study highlights the prevalence of sleep deprivation among Aussies – impacting every part of their daily lives – sleep habits can be significantly improved by prioritising self-care, seeking the necessary support, and embracing healthy sleep practices.

Further insights from the research can be found on the Real Insurance website [here](#).

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About the *Real Sleep Report*

The Real Sleep Report 2023 forms part of the Real Insurance Research Series, delving into the relationship between Australians and sleep, and examining its various impacts. The report investigates the effects of parenthood on sleep, including the impact of having kids on parents' sleep quality and its repercussions on work performance. Moreover, the research addresses parental concerns regarding their children's sleeping habits, as well as explores the relationship between sleep and sex.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Real Insurance and conducted by CoreData between 4 May and 19 May 2023.

The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 1,202 responses from Australians over 18 years old.

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning provider of insurance products, specialising in life, funeral, pet, travel, car, home, landlords and health insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance has protected the quality of life of many Australians through the delivery of innovative products. Real Insurance is the proud recipient of many product and service awards, most recently being announced a winner of the 2023 Product Review award for Life Insurance and Funeral Insurance, 2023 WeMoney Finalist award for Best in Flexibility in the life insurance category, and Feefo's 2023 Gold Trusted Service Award across a range of products. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd.