

Extreme night owls: I can't tell anyone what time I go to bed

Jenny Carter, 27, an NHS co-ordinator, is an "extreme night owl", one of an estimated 8.2% of the population whose natural inclination is to fall asleep well after midnight. Left to her own devices, she'd prefer to go to bed around 3am and wake up about noon.

Why do night owls exist? There is no single universally accepted theory, but evolutionary biologists think that communities with more variation in **chronotypes** may have been more likely to survive.

chronotype 睡觉类型

Another theory is that variation is simply how genetics works. Colin Espie, professor of sleep medicine at the University of Oxford, says this mirrors differences in hair, eye and skin color, or height.

Natural night owls are fundamentally different to insomniacs or people who stay up until the early hours because of family or work circumstances. Being a night owl isn't a problem.

But this isn't always well understood. Jessica Batchelor is a medical writer who feels most productive at 11pm. "I can't tell anyone when I went to sleep, woke up, showered, or ate a meal without being judged, " she says. "I struggle with feelings of guilt and shame."

This mentality is rooted in our **agrarian** past, when farm work had to begin at dawn.

agrarian 土地的; 耕地的

extoll 赞美; 吹捧

Our culture mistakenly associates sleeping little and rising early with virtue. It is often **extolled** as a habit of successful people: for instance in the fascination with Margaret Thatcher's four-hour rest, or articles about "sleepless-elite" CEOs who start their days with a 4am jog.

Yet this **belies** a glaring **inconsistency**: around eight hours of good-quality sleep is essential for better health for almost everybody.

belie 掩饰; 与...不符

inconsistency 不一致