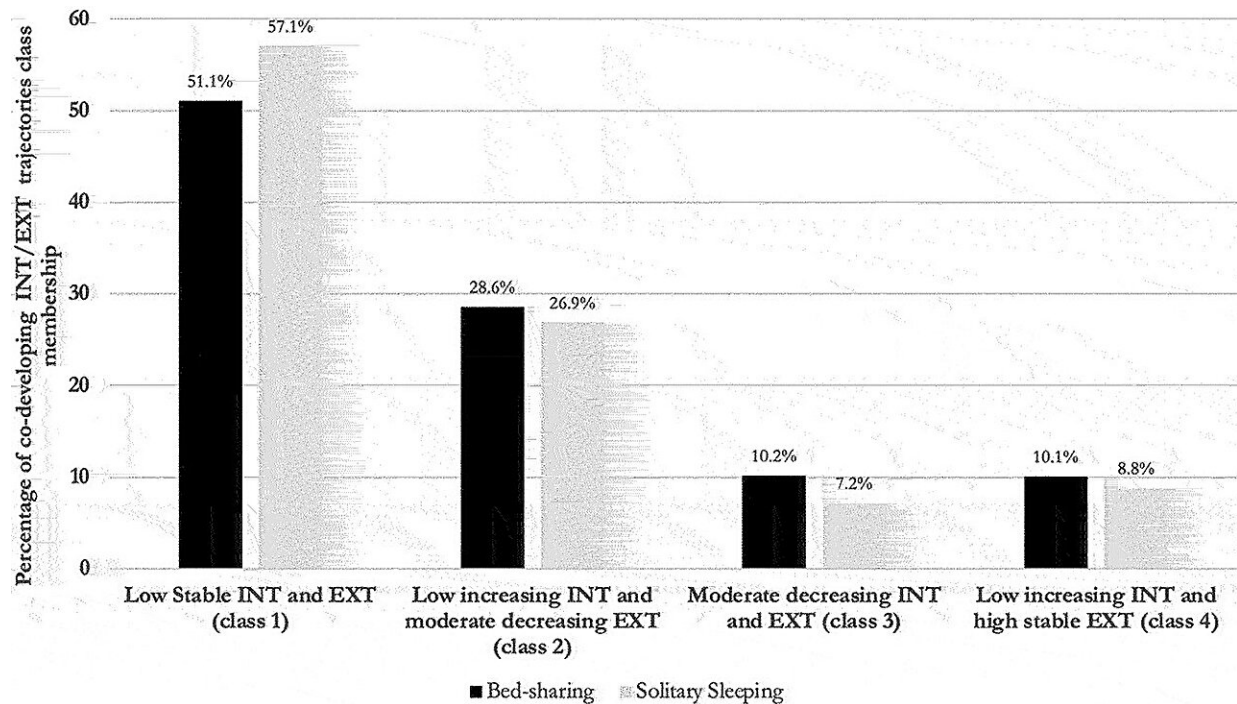


# Bed-sharing has no impact on children's psychological development, finds study

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Percentage of co-developing internalizing (INT) and externalizing (EXT) symptom trajectories class membership based on bed-sharing and solitary sleeping infants. Credit: *Attachment & Human Development* (2024). DOI: 10.1080/14616734.2024.2380427

Parental bed-sharing is unlikely to impact children's psychological development, new research has found.

The study from the University of Essex looked at nearly 17,000 British babies and tracked them for 11 years—finding kids who shared beds were happy and healthy. Dr. Ayten Bilgin, from the Department of Psychology, found no association between bed-sharing at 9 months and childhood emotional or [behavioral problems](#).

The practice is mired in controversy as some experts previously thought it negatively affected children's development. However, others say it helps both parents and children as they are nearby for feeding and if they wake in the night.

Dr. Bilgin, said, "Despite the ongoing debate about the potential long-term harms and benefits of bed-sharing, little scientific research has been conducted on this topic.

"Parents can rest assured that as long as it's practiced safely, bed-sharing is unlikely to have any negative impact on children's emotional and behavioral [development](#).

"There is a lot of guilt and shame around bed-sharing—but it is a parental choice."

The study, [published](#) in *Attachment and Human Development*, used data from the UK Millennium Cohort Study which follows the lives of 16,599 children born in the UK.

Parents reported on bed-sharing at 9 months and on their children's internalizing [behavior](#)—such as depression and anxiety—and externalizing, like aggression and hyperactivity, when they were 3, 5, 7 and 11 years old.

**More information:** Ayten Bilgin et al, Associations between bed-sharing in infancy and childhood internalizing and externalizing

symptoms, *Attachment & Human Development* (2024). DOI: [10.1080/14616734.2024.2380427](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2024.2380427)

Provided by University of Essex

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