

We're sleeping even less than we think we are, study finds

Waking up is oh so hard to do. At least it seems like it's probably getting harder according to the many studies, which are drawing a tired picture of modern day adults. It seems that we are sleeping a lot less than our predecessors were 100 years ago—and not only that, but we think we're sleeping more than we actually are. A recent University of Chicago sleep study looked at the sleep characteristics for 669 middle-aged adults and found that not only are people not getting enough sleep, but they are getting even less sleep than they think they are.

In the study, participants spent 7.5 hours a night in bed, however, they spent only 6.1 hours actually sleeping. The study's authors say that sleep times have been decreasing since 1900, when people reported sleeping an average of nine hours a night. By the 1970s people were reporting getting an average of seven hours per night.

The study combined the use of sleep diaries with a motion sensor, called an actigraphy, that participants wore like a watch so researchers were able to measure not only the time that participants went to bed, but when they actually fell asleep.

Using this combined method researchers found that, overall, participants spent 7.5 hours per night in bed, and it took them an average of 22 minutes to fall asleep, and they actually spend 6.1 hours sleeping. Researchers then divided the time asleep by the time in bed to determine total sleep "efficiency." They found that sleep efficiency average to be 81 percent.

The study found that black men had particularly short sleep spans and poor quality of sleep – 5.1 hours per night and 73 percent efficiency.

