

# 70 million in U.S. have sleep disorders

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The U.S. Institute of Health estimates as many as 70 million people in the United States suffer from chronic, treatable sleep disorders.

"Unfortunately, sleep disorders and sleep deprivation is underappreciated by the public, the health professions and medical researchers," said Dr. Harvey Colten, a former senior associate dean for health sciences at Columbia University and chairman of a 14-member expert panel that prepared the report.

The study said apart from physical factors such as obesity, growing sleeplessness is "driven largely by broad societal changes, including greater reliance on longer work hours, shift work and greater access to television and the Internet," The Chicago Tribune reported.

Insomnia affects more than 30 million people, while another 6 million people have moderate to severe sleep apnea, where breathing briefly stops. More than 6 million people have restless leg syndrome and periodic limb movement disorder, neurological conditions that jolt them awake repeatedly, the report said.

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