Techno-pressed societies sleep no less than primitive ones

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

For years, public health authorities have warned that smartphones, television screens and the hectic pace of modern life are disrupting natural sleep patterns, fueling an epidemic of sleep deprivation. By some estimates, Americans sleep two to three hours fewer today than they did before the industrial revolution.

But now a new study is challenging that notion. It found that Americans on average sleep as much as people in three different hunter-gatherer societies where there is no electricity and the lifestyles have remained largely the same for thousands of years. If anything, the hunter-gatherer communities included in the new study — the Hadza and San tribes in Africa, and the Tsimané people in South America — tend to sleep even less than many Americans.

The findings are striking because health authorities have long suggested that poor sleep is rampant in America, and that getting a minimum of seven hours on a consistent basis is a necessity for good health. Many studies suggest that lack of sleep, independent of other factors like physical activity, is associated with obesity and chronic disease.

Yet the hunter-gatherers included in the new study, which was published in Current Biology, were relatively fit and healthy despite regularly sleeping amounts that are near the low end of those in industrialized societies. Previous research shows that their daily energy expenditure is about the same as most Americans, suggesting physical activity is not the reason for their relative good health.

Read full, original post: Do We Really Need to Sleep 7 Hours a Night?