

# How Prevalent is Men's Pornography Use? And Why Sexuality Educators Need to Know

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# Introduction

Many believe that porn has the potential to influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of consumers

Among young adults, porn is commonly endorsed as a helpful source of information about sex, more so than parents, sexual partners, friends, media, and healthcare professionals (Rothman et al., 2021)

Accepting the idea that porn has the potential to “teach” its consumers raises a number of questions:

- What proportion of people consume pornography?
- How frequently?
- By what means?
- Under what circumstances?

This is discussed in terms of large representative datasets and smaller studies making use of convenience samples

# Large Surveys

## Advantages

- Representative samples

## Disadvantages

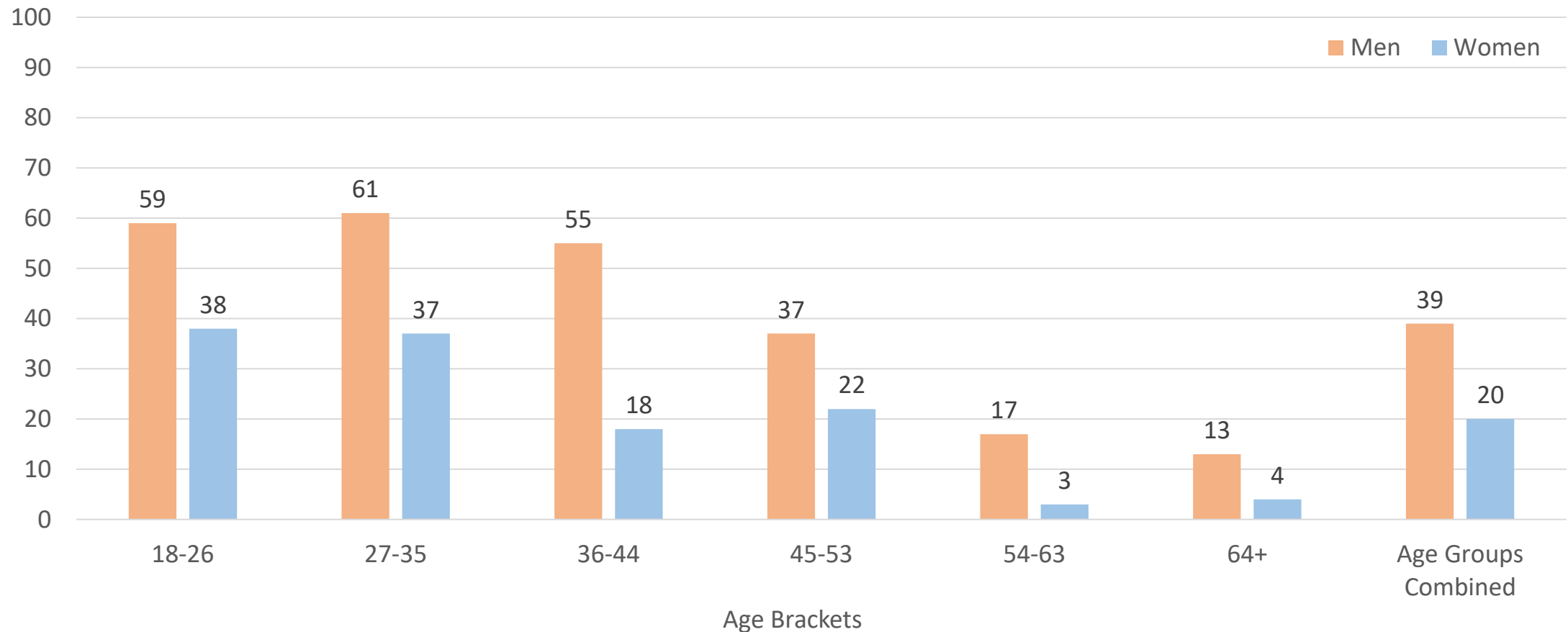
- Typically, only one or two questions about pornography use

# General Social Survey (GSS)

- Nationally-representative survey conducted every 2 years in US
  - Carried out by the National Opinion Research Center
  - Data publicly available ([here](#))
  - Uses “computer assisted personal interviewing”
- Since the 1970s has assessed pornography use with the question “Have you seen an X-rated movie in the past year?”
  - GSS data indicates a modest increase in porn use over time (Price et al., 2016; Wright, 2013)

# General Social Survey

Percentage of men (N = 728) and women (N = 849) who reported viewing an X-rated movie in the past year on the 2018 GSS



# Other Large Surveys

Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships (Rissel et al., 2017)

- *N* of approx. 20,000 Australians aged 16-69 (about half given the pornography questions)

Gender	Seen porn ever	Seen porn in past year*	Feel addicted to porn*
Male	84%	76%	4%
Female	54%	41%	1%

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\* Percentage among those who had seen porn ever, rather than overall sample

# Other Large Surveys

Regnerus et al. (2016) review data from four large surveys of US adults: GSS, National Study of Youth and Religion, New Family Structures Study, and Relationships in America (RIA)

- They suggest that the RIA generates the most accurate responses

RIA asks participants “When did you last intentionally look at pornography?”

- Samples US adults aged 18-39 (N = 5,165)

Gender	Intentionally view porn in a given:		
	week	month	year
Male	46%	56%	69%
Female	16%	26%	40%

# Smaller Surveys

## Advantages

- More detailed measurement of porn use

## Disadvantages

- Convenience samples (e.g., of university students); sample age tends to skew younger



# Smaller Studies: Lifetime Exposure

Studies typically report the percentage of participants to have viewed porn at some point

- Most studies report a lifetime exposure figure in excess of 90%:

90% +	80-89%	70-79%	60-69%
16 studies	2 studies	2 studies	3 studies

Citations are provided on p. 508 of Miller et al. (2020).

# Smaller Studies: Use in Past Year/6 Months/Month

Study	Percentage	Country; Sample
Willoughby et al., 2016 <sup>a</sup>	70	US; young adults/uni students
Cooper & Klein, 2018 <sup>b</sup>	75	US; uni students
Morgan, 2011 <sup>b</sup>	79	US; uni students
Böhm et al., 2014 <sup>c</sup>	80	Germany; uni students
Sinković et al., 2013 <sup>b</sup>	80	Croatia; young adults
Hald et al., 2013 <sup>a</sup>	88	Netherlands; young adults
Martyniuk et al., 2016 <sup>b</sup>	92	Poland & Germany; uni students
Kvalem et al., 2014 <sup>a</sup>	99	Sweden & Norway; young adults

<sup>a</sup> past year; <sup>b</sup> past 6 months; <sup>c</sup> past month

Study	Percentage	Country; Sample
Viewing at least weekly		
Bulot et al., 2015	18.4	France; uni students
Sinković et al., 2013	21.7	Croatia; young adults
Willoughby et al., 2016	25.0	US; young adults & uni students
Poulsen et al., 2013	26.0	US; heterosexual couples
Marshall et al., 2017	31.4	US; uni students
Hald et al., 2013	38.7	Netherlands; young adults
Svedin et al., 2011	39.1	Sweden; high school seniors
Cooper & Klein, 2018	40.1	US; uni students
Hald & Mulya, 2013	42.8	Indonesia; uni students
Morgan, 2011	58.1	US; uni students
Franczyk et al., 2014	66.5	Poland; young adults
Sun et al., 2014	74.1	Korea; heterosexual uni students
Kvalem et al., 2014	78.2	Sweden & Norway; young adults
Donevan & Mattebo, 2017	80	Sweden; high school seniors
Rosenburg & Kraus, 2014	95	US; uni students who had used porn
Viewing at least several times per week		
Landripet & Štulhofer, 2015	40, 57, 59	Croatia, Norway & Portugal; adult men
Böhm et al., 2014	43	Germany, uni students
Martyniuk et al., 2016	54	Poland & Germany; uni students
Rosenburg & Kraus, 2014	62	US; uni students who had used porn
Used porn in past week		
Baltazar et al., 2010	22	US; uni students at a Christian uni

# Smaller Studies: Weekly Use

Huge variation in estimates of weekly pornography use

- Averaging estimates across studies (weighting by study sample size) produces a weekly use estimate of **approx. 45%**

Time spent watching porn/week: **1.25 to 3 hours**

- Only a few studies to assess this

# Smaller Studies: Use of Violent Porn *Ever*

Study	Description Used	Percentage	Country; Sample
Hald & Mulya, 2013	Violent	5%	Indonesia; uni students
Bridges & Morokoff, 2011	Harmful/degrading	6.6%	US; heterosexual couples
Svedin et al., 2011	Violent/forced-sex	12.8%	Sweden; high school seniors
Gonsalves et al., 2015	Violent; degrading	15.6%; 18.5%	US; uni students
Romito & Beltramini, 2011*	Violence against women; women enjoying violence	45.6%; 36.3%	Italy; senior high/vocational school students
D'Abreu, 2013	Violent	46.7%	Brazil; uni students

\* definition used in study is provided

# Smaller Studies: Use of Violent Porn *in Past Year*

Study	Description Used	Percentage	Country; Sample
Hald, Kuyper, et al., 2013	BDSM; violent/forced sex	9.3%; 8.1%	Netherlands; young adults
Kvalem et al., 2014	BDSM; violent/coercion	17%; 0.4%	Sweden & Norway; young adults
Foubert et al., 2011*	Sadomasochistic; rape	27%; 19%	US; uni students (fraternity members)

\* definition used in study is provided

# Smaller Studies: Violent Porn

Averaging estimates across studies (weighting by study sample size) produces the following prevalence estimates:

- Use of BDSM porn in past year: 13%
- Use of violent porn in past year: 8%
- Use of violent porn ever: 17%

Estimates of the percentage of porn scenes to contain violence range from 2% (McKee, 2005) to 88% (Bridges et al., 2010)

- Variation partially driven by whether violence is defined to include consensual acts of violence (e.g., playful spanking; see McKee, 2015)

# Smaller Studies: Ways of Accessing Porn

With a few exceptions, the internet is the most commonly used medium to access porn

- Laptops/computers used more frequently than smartphones/tablets
- Paying for site subscriptions relatively uncommon (11% of those sampled in Downing et al., 2017)



# Smaller Studies: Sexual Behaviors Associated with Porn Use

Porn use closely tied to masturbation for men

- Most men have masturbated while watching pornography
  - Estimates range from **74%** (Shaughnessy et al., 2011) to **98%** (Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014)
- Men most typically masturbate on occasions they view pornography (Rosenberg & Kraus, 2014), but they may also masturbate without the use of pornography (Træen & Daneback, 2013)
- Very high correlation between frequency of porn use and frequency of masturbation (Miller et al., 2019)

# Smaller Studies: Sexual Behaviors Associated with Porn Use

Using porn with a partner occurs less frequently

- 5% of men and women have engaged in partnered porn use in the past month (Böhm et al., 2014); 45% have done so ever (Maddox et al., 2011)
- Women more likely to have viewed porn with a sexual partner compared to men (Carroll et al., 2017)
- 90% of men report most typically watching porn alone (Donevan & Mattebo, 2017)

Important consideration as partnered porn use may have different relational outcomes compared to solitary use

- Partnered porn use associated with greater sex satisfaction (Maddox et al., 2011), higher relationship intimacy (Huntington et al., 2020), and less sexual boredom (Groß et al., 2011)

# Smaller Studies: Sexual Behaviors Associated with Porn Use

Commonly reported reasons for using porn include:

- *for solo sexual stimulation and for use during partnered sex* (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011)
- *for sexual satisfaction, to feel arousal, and to achieve orgasm* (Wéry & Billieux, 2016)

Sexually-based motivations most common motivations to use porn among both men and women (Esplin et al., 2020)

# Smaller Studies: Gay and Bisexual Men

- No dataset (of 7) reported lifetime exposure below 90%
- Two datasets reported use in past 3 months to be above 98%
- Weekly use relatively high:

Study	Timeframe	Percentage	Country; Sample
Stein et al. (2017)	Viewing at least weekly	70 <sup>a</sup>	US; non-monogamous MSN
Downing et al. (2017)	Viewing 2x per week or more	82	US; gay men who had used internet porn in past 6 months
Hald et al. (2013)	Viewing at least 1hr of porn a week	77	US; Internet using MSM
Træen, Noor et al. (2014)	Viewing at least 1hr of porn a week	76	Norway; MSM
Nelson et al. (2014)	Viewing daily	57	US; MSM

MSM = men who have sex with men

<sup>a</sup> porn featuring protected anal sex

# Smaller Studies: Gay and Bisexual Men

Time spent viewing porn/week:

- 3hrs on average in 3 studies
- 1-2hrs on average in 1 study

Ways of accessing porn:

- Internet followed by DVDs
- Computers more popular than phones/tablets
- In Nelson et al. (2014) 30% of men had accessed live webcam feeds

# Smaller Studies: Gay and Bisexual Men

## Sexual Behaviors Associated with Porn Use

- Partnered porn use:
  - In two datasets about 35% of men had engaged in partnered porn use ever (Hald et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2014)
- Common motivations to use porn:
  - *Horny at time, wanting to orgasm, boredom, and stress relief* (Nelson et al., 2014)

# Smaller Studies: Gay and Bisexual Men

Possible reasons for discrepancies between gay/bisexual men and heterosexual men:

- Sampling differences (studies of gay/bisexual men more likely to sample from dating sites, porn websites, etc)
- Gay/bisexual men are more truthful when responding to surveys about porn use
- Gay/bisexual men really do consume more pornography (perhaps because they get something out of porn that heterosexual men do not)

# The Contents of Porn

Some recent content analytic studies:

- **Carrotte et al. (2020)**: Literature review of content analyses, with a focus on frequency of particular aggressive behaviors (e.g., name calling, spanking, hair pulling; available open-access [here](#))
- **Fritz et al. (2020)**: Largest content analysis of acts of aggression in Internet porn
- **Shor and Seida (2019)**: Recent content analysis focusing on consensual and non-consensual aggression
- **Willis et al. (2019)**: Focuses on consent communication in porn



# The Effects of Porn

Some useful articles on the effects of porn:

- **Paslakis et al. (2020)**: Review of porn use and general body image/sexual body image
- **Hesse & Pedersen (2017)**: Focus on porn use and sexual health knowledge
- **Koletić (2017)**: Systematic review of research into porn use and attitudes and behaviors (e.g., permissiveness towards casual sex, engaging in oral sex) among adolescents
- **Kohut et al. (2021)**: Longitudinal study of porn use and sexual violence among adolescent males (porn use not associated with later sexual violence)
- **McCormack & Wignall (2017)**: Qualitative study exploring the positive effects of porn among young men with non-exclusive sexual orientations (available open access [here](#))
- **Kohut & Fisher (2013)**: Experiment in which women who watched porn depicting clitoral self-stimulation were more likely to later try this behavior

# Final Note

- Perceived realism of porn frequently conceptualized as moderating the relationship between porn use and negative outcomes, especially among younger people
- Any kind of sex education would likely reduce perceptions of the realism of porn
- In this way, sex education may play a key role in mitigating the potential negative effects of porn use

## Reference List to:

### How Prevalent is Men's Pornography Use? And Why Sexuality Educators Need to Know

#### Presentation based on:

Miller, D. J., Raggatt, P. T., & McBain, K. (2020). A literature review of studies into the prevalence and frequency of men's pornography use. *American Journal of Sexuality Education, 15*(4), 509-529. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2020.1831676>

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