

hims & hers

LET'S TALK ABOUT

SEX



THE UK REPORT

# Introduction

We've got sex on the brain. We talk about, think about, and Google about sex more than almost anything else. In fact, an online search for "sex" yields nearly 11 billion results—1.5X more results than there are people on Earth. The global sex toy market is projected to reach \$62.32 billion by the end of the decade.<sup>1</sup> Pornhub is still one of the most trafficked sites in the world (right after Amazon, right before Netflix),<sup>2</sup> and OnlyFans—the social media platform aiming to "elevate the world's online erotica," according to its founder—adds half a million subscribers each day.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, for how popular a topic sex is, there's still so much we don't know. Studies about how often the average person thinks about sex, for example, give a range from 10 to 10,000 times each day (if you believe the myth that men think about sex every seven seconds). Headlines argue that Gen Z is the least sexually active generation to date,<sup>4</sup> yet it is also the generation expanding the sexuality spectrum most,<sup>5</sup> which makes a generational apples-to-apples comparison nearly impossible.

Furthermore, digital media is a double-edged sword when it comes to sex literacy. "Whilst propagating sex-related information on one hand, digital platforms also reinforce the idea that it's taboo on the other by installing frequently conservative and heavy-handed 'official community guidelines' on sexual content, which are then inconsistently interpreted and applied by moderators" explains Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator. "On platforms like TikTok and Instagram, you see people self-censoring and using indirect euphemisms—connoting secrecy and shame—because they're concerned that speaking openly about sex, even in an educational manner, will get them shut down." Fox adds that digital media has also sensationalised sex. "There is a proliferation of conversation about sex online, but not all of it is particularly constructive or accurate. Social media algorithms reward engagement regardless of whether or not a post is truthful and helpful, or misinformed and controversial."

With this in mind, we set out to find out what Brits think about sex by conducting research into the realities of sex in the UK. According to our research, secrecy surrounding sex still abounds: half of Brits (49%) fantasise about sexual activities they would never do in real life, nearly half (47%) fake orgasms, and one quarter have a sex toy that no one else knows about.<sup>6</sup> In other words, much of our sex life is still under wraps, even to our partners. So where does this leave us? More than simply feeling as though we're in the dark, we experience a deep disconnect between what we believe and what is really true when it comes to sex. This dissonance breeds shame and makes it difficult to have honest conversations about sex, leading many of us to assume our sex lives aren't up to par. In fact, 80% of the UK rate their sex life as average (34%) or below average (46%) when comparing it to that of their peers.<sup>7</sup>

"Most of the people I've been around and talked to are not happy with their sex lives," says sexologist and life strategist Octavia Vance, which syncs up with our finding that 87% of Britain would like to change at least one thing about their sex lives, from having a better libido (22%) or better orgasms (21%) to having more sexual confidence (19%).<sup>8</sup> Vance also notes that one of the biggest issues—and fears—that people face about sex is judgement. "There's shame and guilt still built around sex. We feel like we can't have the sex life of our dreams because we can't fully be who we desire to be sexually, because we're deathly afraid of being scrutinised for it."

56%  
of the UK agrees with the statement,  
"My overall quality of life would improve  
if my sex life improved."

1. Businesswire, May 2022  
2. Similarweb, June 2022  
3. OnlyFans, August 2022  
4. Newsweek, October 2021

5. Gallup, February 2022  
6. Hims & Hers Nationally Representative Study, November 2022  
7. Hims & Hers Nationally Representative Study, November 2022  
8. Hims & Hers Nationally Representative Study, November 2022

# Sex in 2023

This year, seismic economic and political shifts in the UK have had a far-reaching impact on Brits' lives—including their sex lives. The sharply rising cost of living, coupled with political turmoil from Brexit, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the revolving door of Number 10, have combined to create an atmosphere of anxiety and financial uncertainty. The result? People in the UK are pulling back on anything that further complicates, or adds cost to, their lives, including dating and sex. In fact, more than 1 in 10 (13%) have quit pursuing sexual relationships *altogether* because it's just too much to deal with in the current environment. This has created a ripple effect of different sexual behaviours, including divergent patterns in dating, masturbation, pornography consumption, and more.

This comes, of course, on the heels of more than two years of social distancing during the pandemic and a backdrop of rapidly evolving attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Case in point: the full acronym for the queer community has expanded threefold over the past generation, from LGBT to LGBTQIP2SAA, not including the "+" that signifies even more possibilities. On top of this, Gen Z women are overturning sexual conventions with nearly one quarter (24%) not identifying as heterosexual or wanting to define their sexuality at all, as compared to just 13% of women in the UK overall (a topic we explore in Myth 7).<sup>9</sup>

There is also a growing awareness of how sex impacts our lives as a whole, not just what happens in the

**“Sex has a profound impact on mood, self-esteem, and motivation. It’s an integral part of quality of life....”**

—Dr. Peter Stahl, MD and SVP of Men's Sexual Health and Urology at Hims & Hers

bedroom. “Sex isn't isolated. It has a profound impact on mood, self-esteem, and motivation,” Dr. Peter Stahl, MD and SVP of Men's Sexual Health and Urology at Hims & Hers, explains. “It's an integral part of quality of life that has far-reaching impacts into, really, all aspects of health: mental and physical.” And 56% of Brits agree with the statement, “My overall quality of life would improve if my sex life improved.”<sup>10</sup> With this in mind, we set out to lift the veil on the UK's sex lives.

42%

Nearly half of the UK (42%) says recent political or economic events have impacted their sex and dating lives.

9. Hims & Hers Nationally Representative Study, November 2022

10. Hims & Hers Nationally Representative Study, November 2022

# About the Report

*Let's Talk About Sex: The UK Report* is the first-ever annual sex report from Hims & Hers about sex in the UK. To start this meaningful dialogue about sex, we tapped into primary data and consumer trends, as well as interviews with subject matter experts and customers. **Our research revealed 10 myths** about sex in the UK regarding a range of topics – from how much sex we're having

(turns out, that's not the right question) to the impact of politics and the economy on our sex and dating lives (it's complicated).

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to uncover the realities of sex in the UK, normalise everyday sexual health conditions, and help people embrace healthier, happier, and more confident sex lives.

## METHODOLOGY

This report is based on results from a 3,688-person online survey, conducted in November 2022, of 3,500 nationally representative<sup>11</sup> adults between 18 and 65 years old and 396 Hims & Hers customers (246 from the nationally representative sample and an additional 150 from Hims & Hers customer list).

Findings were analysed using 40 different demographic and psychographic cuts, including gender (when we refer to "women" and "men," we include all people who self-identify as such), age, region, race and

ethnicity, relationship status, and sexual orientation (heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, asexual, queer, etc.), among other areas of interest.<sup>12</sup> In-depth trends research and a series of interviews with 10 experts in sexual psychology, health, and education further informed findings for this report.

All data and quotes in this study are from these sources, unless otherwise noted. Hims & Hers engaged independent research firm Culture Co-op to conduct and analyse research and findings.

## EXPERTS:

- **ALIX FOX**, Journalist, Broadcaster and Sex Educator
- **DR. DENISE ASAFU-ADJEI**, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board, Hims & Hers
- **DR. LAWRENCE JENKINS**, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board, Hims & Hers
- **DR. BETH PAUSIC**, Clinical Psychologist and Director of Behavioral Health at Hims & Hers
- **DR. RACHEL RUBIN**, Urologist and Sexual Medicine Specialist
- **CAROLINE SPIEGEL**, Founder and CEO of Quinn
- **DR. PETER STAHL**, MD and SVP of Men's Sexual Health and Urology at Hims & Hers
- **MARTIN ROBINSON**, Founder and Editor, The Book of Man
- **OCTAVIA VANCE**, Sexologist and Life Strategist
- **MARGOT WEISS**, Associate Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University

11. The sample is representative of the country's population by age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity

12. Demographic analysis included generation (Gen Z, Millennials, Gen Xers, Boomers), gender (cis female, cis male, transgender female, transgender male, gender nonbinary), sexuality (heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, asexual, other sexuality), race (White, Asian/Asian British, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Middle Eastern/Arab, Other ethnic group), region (London, South-East, North-West, West Midlands, Yorkshire & Humberside, East Midlands, Eastern, Scotland, South-West, Wales, North-East, Northern Ireland, other region), relationship status (single-not dating, single-dating, married/civil union, monogamous relationship, open relationship, divorced/separated, widowed), parenting status, political affiliation (Labour party, Conservative party, Liberal Democrats, Other political party, No political party), and other demographic cuts



THEME 01



MORE  
MORE  
MORE

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How much sex are we really having?

## MYTH

# “Everyone’s having more sex than I am”

## REALITY

Everyone’s worried that everyone’s having more sex than they are

01

Arguably the most top-of-mind question when it comes to sex is, “How much?”—as in, how much other people are having, how much I’m having, and what the difference between the two is. It’s simple math, but the problem is: There are few proxies for the first part of the equation. After all, peers can be either private, or worse, posturing; pop culture gives us different answers; and porn certainly doesn’t reflect reality.

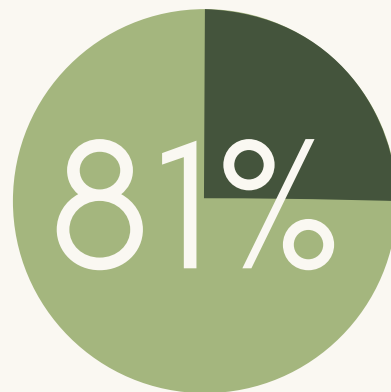
All of this aside, here is what we do know: 21% of Brits—23% of women, 18% of men, and 47%<sup>13</sup> of gender nonbinary people—report not having had sex in the past month, yet 98% assume everyone else has. Or take this data point: almost half of Brits (45%) say they are having sex less than once per week, but 81% assume the average person in the UK has sex weekly or more. Either way you look at it, our sex frequency radar is way off.

Though there is no “right” amount of sex, doctors have reached consensus on how much sex is normal: it depends. “When someone asks, ‘How many times a week should I be having sex?’ or ‘How many orgasms should I be having?’ I’m like, that really varies,” Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Medical Advisor for Hims & Hers, explains.

Dr. Peter Stahl, MD and SVP of Men’s Sexual Health and Urology at Hims & Hers, agrees: “There’s incredible variability amongst couples’ sex lives.

There are lots of couples who have sex once or twice a month and they are super happy with that. And there are other couples for whom not being able to have sex 2, 3, or 4 times a week is really a relationship stressor.”

But even with medical consensus that there is no “normal,” the UK is wary. “It’s hard to convince people that there truly isn’t a standard sex life,” Dr. Asafu-Adjei says. “There is a spectrum and I feel like people have a false sense [that there is a number]. It’s really different for everyone.”

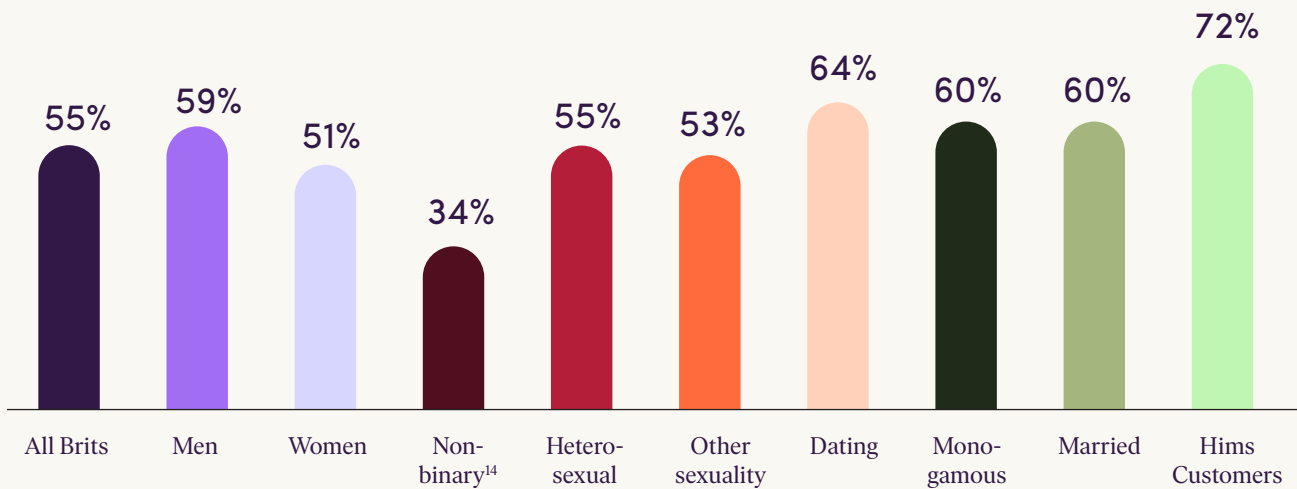


of the UK assumes other people  
have sex once a week or more;  
only 54% of Brits actually do.

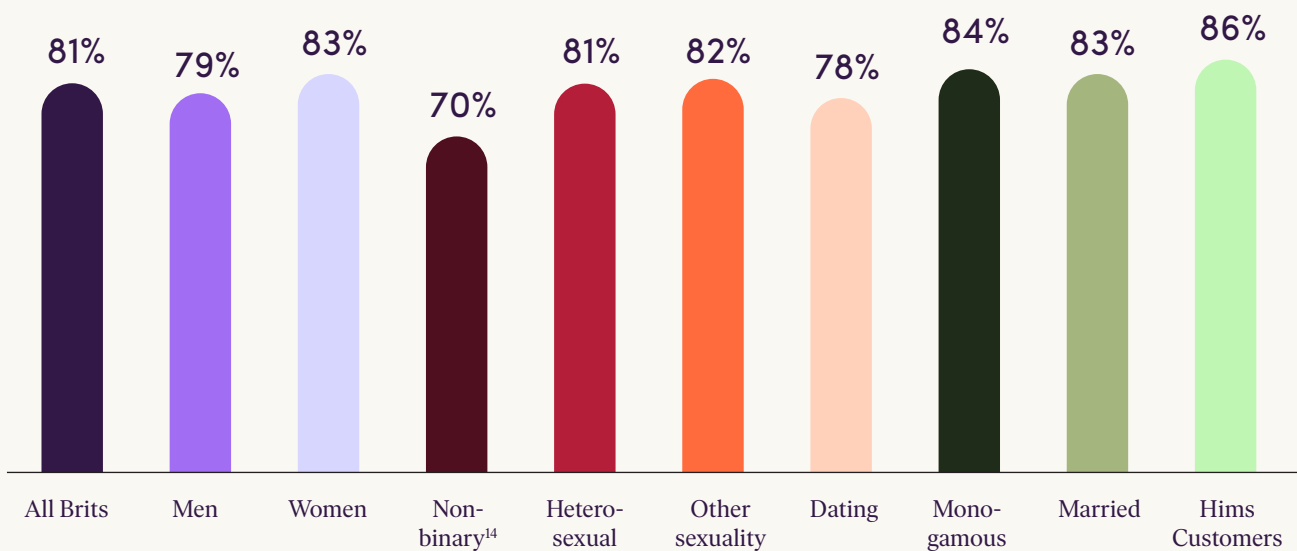
13. This finding is qualitative as there was a low sample size of gender nonbinary people

## The Sex Frequency Myth by Demographics

% who say they are *having sex weekly or more*

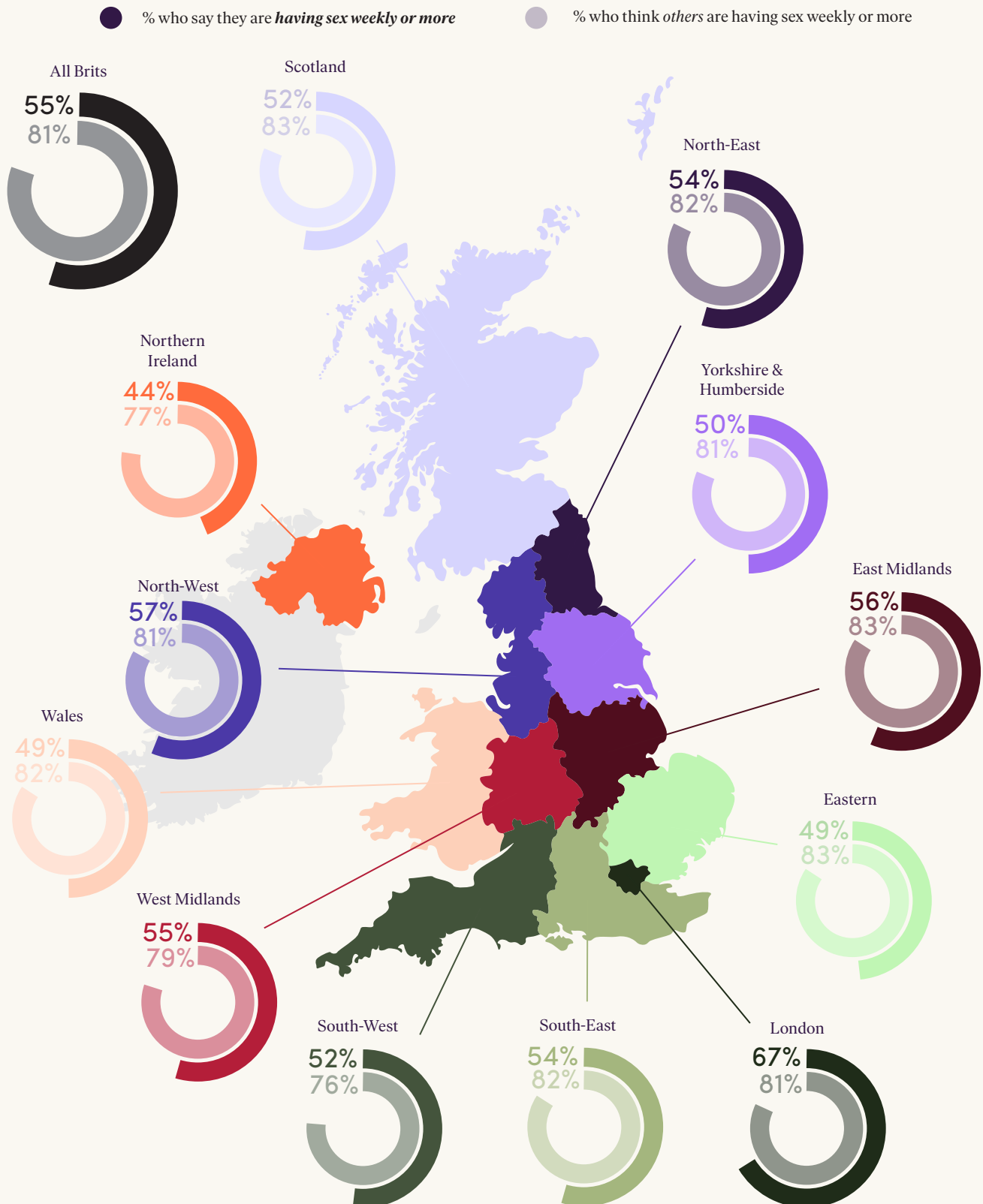


% who think *others* are having sex weekly or more



14. This finding is qualitative as there was a low sample size of gender nonbinary people

## The Sex Frequency Myth by Regions



## MYTH

**Brits want to have more sex**

## REALITY

**Brits want to have different sex**

02

As fixated as the UK is with “How much?”, it turns out that that’s the wrong question to begin with. Most people in the UK are not looking to have more sex—they want to have different sex. In fact, when asked what they’d like to improve with their sex lives, 74% of UK respondents don’t name “more sex” as one of those things. Instead, more than two-thirds (67%) are interested in sex trends they haven’t tried, ranging from sexual voyeurism to solo polyamory (see Top Sex Trends the UK Wants to Try on page 10).

But switching sex up isn’t as simple as trying the latest sex trend: according to Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn, a female-centric sex app for audio erotica, the difference is in the details. “When I look at what’s performing the best [on Quinn], it’s the audios with the most context, plot, detail, and emotion. Users want sex that exists in a fantasy life, not necessarily the fantasy of a specific act,” she told us.

Like Spiegel, sexologist Octavia Vance believes fantasy plays a big role in the sex equation for women: [in the context of discussing the role of fantasy for women] “They often say things like, ‘If he would just be more sexually open with me, then I could be more sexually expressive and have a better sex life,’” she explains. “So many women fear judgement from others, especially the judgement of their own husbands.” But wanting different sex rather than more sex isn’t

**“People have become more curious. They’re doing a lot more than we are taking stock of.”**

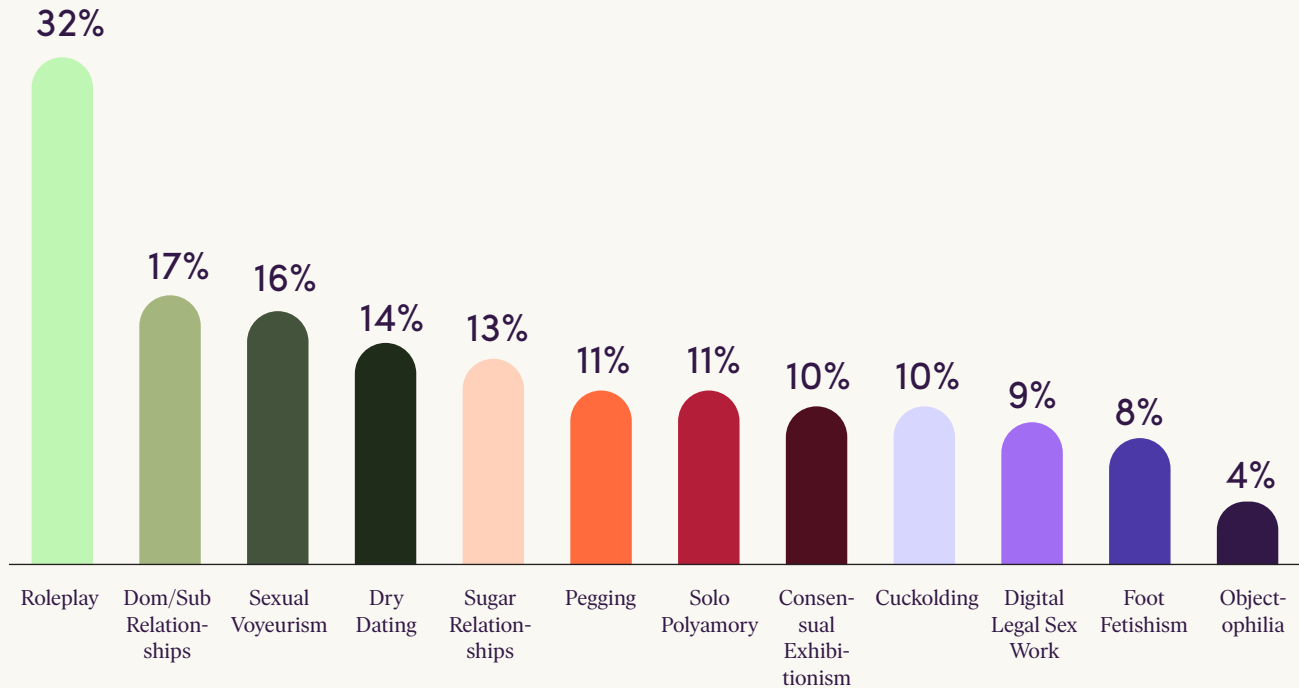
—Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board, Hims & Hers

just on women’s wishlists. Men are looking for variety over frequency as well, a topic we cover in Myth 3.

Different sex is also about moving beyond the labels of “straight” and “gay.” Approximately one-fifth (21%) of Gen Z does not identify as heterosexual, as compared to just 13% of Brits overall. Instead, younger generations are taking a more fluid, open-ended approach to discovering their sexuality. A number of Gen Z celebrities have recently identified as pansexual, and a growing number of young people refuse labels that limit their sexual expression, opting instead to be ‘beautifully themselves.’



## Top Sex Trends the UK Wants to Try



Experimenting with more fluid sexual identities and diverse relationships extends beyond Gen Z, according to Martin Robinson, Founder and Editor of The Book of Man, a media brand trying to change the narrative around men and masculinity. He cites polyamory and bisexuality as two movements gaining traction among people of all ages. “There are a lot more apps that you can use, or different types of people you can follow, that expose you to new sexual experiences,” he explains, adding that this is a positive trend for men. “Growing up in the UK, things were so heteronormative. Technology opens up the boundaries a little bit.”

**Roleplay:** Engaging in a fantasy scenario with a partner(s), such as acting like strangers, teacher/student, or other people

**Dom/Sub Relationships:** A relationship with a consensual power imbalance consisting of a dominant and a submissive partner

**Sexual Voyeurism:** Observing others while they are engaging in sexual acts

**Dry Dating:** Dating without drinking alcohol or taking other substances

**Sugar Relationships:** A mutually beneficial relationship in which one partner offers financial or material gain in return for companionship or intimacy from another partner

**Pegging:** Performing anal sex on someone else by penetrating them with a strap-on

**Solo Polyamory:** Having multiple sexual or intimate partners without the goal of a monogamous relationship or romantic partnerships

**Consensual Exhibitionism:** Being seen naked by others, or being seen engaging in sexual activities by others

**Cuckolding:** An individual “making” their partner watch them “cheat” with another person outside of the relationship, to the enjoyment of all parties

**Digital Legal Sex Work:** Getting paid to perform sexually on a legal online platform, such as OnlyFans

**Foot Fetishism:** Using the feet for visual or physical stimulation

**Objectophilia:** Engaging in a sexual and/or romantic relationship with an inanimate object(s)

An illustration in a stylized, layered paper-cut style. On the left, a hand holds a spray bottle with a black nozzle, spraying a dark liquid. On the right, a hand is shown with three 'X' marks on the back and is handcuffed with a metal chain. The background is a solid dark purple.

THEME 02

# ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL

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How men and women get it done

## MYTH

**Men want sex, women want romance**

## REALITY

**Everyone wants a little  
tenderness**

03

In the mid 90s, sex and relationship dynamics were summed up in one, quick celestial quip: *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. The book sold 15 million copies and was the “highest ranked work of nonfiction” in the 90s,<sup>15</sup> so it’s no wonder that, a quarter of a century later, the stereotype sticks. When it comes to sex and relationships, men are assumed to be aloof (read: clueless—the book’s words, not ours), while women are colourful, romantic, intimate, and in tune. As the title implies, men and women orbit sex and relationships on two completely different paths and need a cosmic intervention—or, in this case, a self-help book—to collide and connect.

But our research revealed something quite different: either the universe has shifted or we were never

from those planets to begin with. Today, men are channelling their inner Venus and looking for more emotionally complex sexual experiences. “When it comes to sex, men suddenly have to turn into this animal, this kind of superman,” says Martin Robinson of *The Book of Man*. “Why can’t [sex] be funny, emotional, awkward, all of those things?” Women, on the other hand, are anchoring down in relationship realities (aka, Earth), with twice as many women (38%) than men (16%) saying they prefer relationship realities to sexual fantasies.

This sexual-fantasy vs. reality divide widens with age: a full 92% of women 55+ choose relationship realities over sexual fantasies, as compared to 65% of men 55+ who choose fantasies and 35% who choose reality.

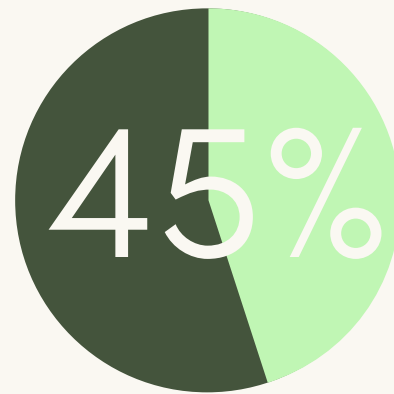
2X  
as many men as women say they prefer  
sexual fantasies to relationship realities.

15. HarperCollins, 2017

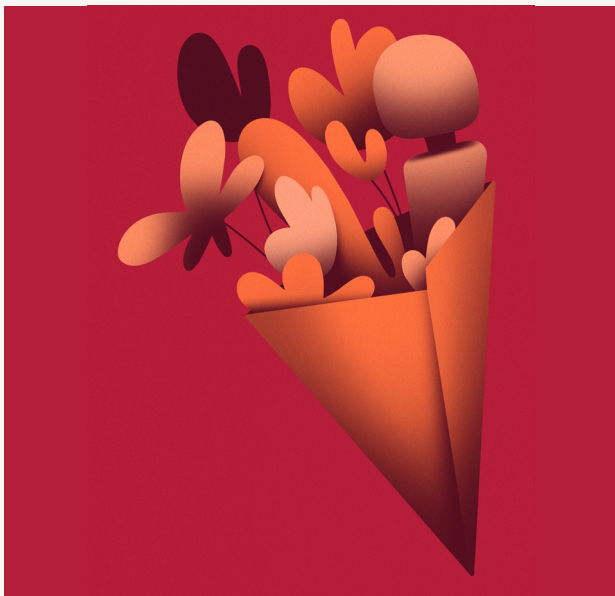
**“The ideals of masculinity that you see in the media are very different from the reality of being a man. We are very emotional. We can cry. For all the assumed bravado, men are quite shy and vulnerable.”**

—Martin Robinson, Founder and Editor, The Book of Man

What's more, young men are finding themselves in need of some serious love and attention: twice as many Gen Z men (45%) agree, “I feel lonely or isolated as a result of some aspect of my sex life”, than do Boomer men (21%). But this makes sense. Gen Z men have graduated into adulthood—and likely their peak sex lives—alongside the pandemic, where opportunities to date and physically connect came to a screeching halt. As such, many young men have been more isolated at, arguably, the most social and physical time of their life.



of Gen Z men agree,  
“I feel lonely or isolated as  
a result of some aspect  
of my sex life”



## MYTH

## Only women fake orgasms

## REALITY

Everyone does

04

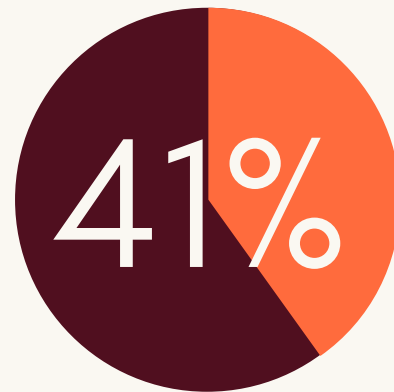
Men are constant climax machines, and women are all stuck at the starting line, right? So the stereotypes would have us believe. But the truth is far more complicated.

It's true that 15% of women have never orgasmed, either by themselves or with a partner. For many women, it's one of their biggest sexual stress points. "There are women out there, and I'm talking about women in their 20s and 30s, that have never had an orgasm," Octavia Vance, Sexologist and Relationship Strategist, told us. "They think their body is broken. They think they can't be fixed or that they're undeserving of orgasms."

Whereas men, as the story goes, suffer from the opposite problem—not being able to last long enough and, consequently, reaching orgasm too quickly: 25% of men worry about lasting longer, 6X more than women do (4%).

### 14 Minutes in Heaven

It turns out the proverbial 7 minutes in heaven may not be enough. According to our study, half of the UK (including 55% of men and 47% of women) says it takes more than 10 minutes to reach an orgasm, with the average Brit coming in at 14.3 minutes.

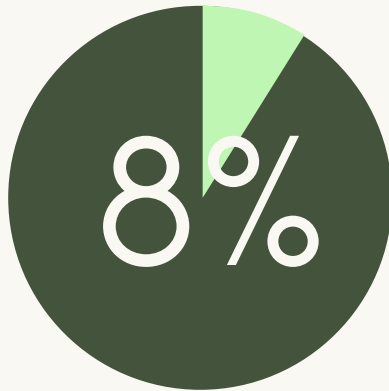


Nearly half (41%) of  
Gen Z men say they fake orgasms  
from time to time.

But it turns out the inverse is also true: men and non-binary people struggle to orgasm, too, and—wait for it—also fake it. In fact, 31% of men and 42% of non-binary people<sup>16</sup> say they fake orgasming from time to time. Among the men, Gen Z men fake it most (41%). Also surprising? More than one quarter of men (26%) say it's difficult or impossible for them to orgasm during penetrative sex, and 27% of men say they have a difficult time reaching an orgasm without the help of a sex toy or masturbation.

16. Low sample size of gender nonbinary people





1 in 12 (8%) of men  
report they  
have never orgasmed.

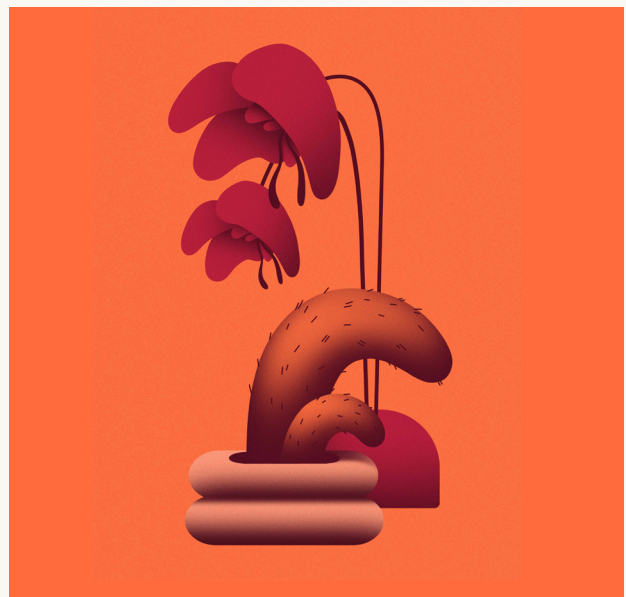
The path to reaching an orgasm isn't always a straightforward one: more than just feeling good, orgasming is important because it is the "gold star" of sex—or "the biological cue that there was success," as Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn, put it. But as she also points out, reaching an orgasm can be a catch-22: "The more you think about orgasming, the less likely you are to do it." This can create a performance pressure cooker for men and women alike, 30% of whom agree, "Sex stresses me out", and who both name the inability to orgasm as a key reason why.

The point is, people have different paths to reaching an orgasm, a topic we break down in the O, Baby! sidebar.

### O, Baby!

Here's a snapshot of how people orgasm differently.

- A majority of men reach orgasm penetratively (54%), whereas a majority of women (63%) and nonbinary people (64%)<sup>17</sup> reach orgasm by masturbating.
- A vast majority of men (75%) and nonbinary people (77%)<sup>18</sup> reached orgasm for the first time in their tweens and teens, whereas a majority of women (51%) didn't have their first orgasm until their 20s or later.
- Women are nearly 2X more likely to reach orgasm with a sex toy (41%) than men are (23%), and 43% of nonbinary people<sup>19</sup> say they have difficulty reaching an orgasm without a sex toy.



17. Low sample size of gender nonbinary people

18. Low sample size of gender nonbinary people

19. Low sample size of gender nonbinary people

THEME 03

# SEX FOR THE AGES



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The stats on generational gaps

## MYTH

**Male sexual dysfunction happens after 40**

## REALITY

Sexual dysfunction can happen at any age

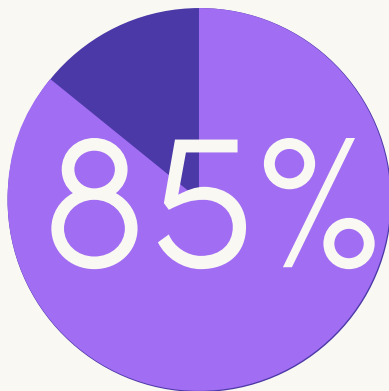
05

If women are stereotyped as losing their libido with age, men are supposed to lose their sexual stamina. 85% of the UK believes that sexual dysfunction is directly related to age, and that the average age men experience sexual dysfunction at is 45. In fact, almost one fifth of people we surveyed (18%) don't believe that sexual dysfunction for men can even occur before 40.

This perception runs as rampant in culture as it runs counter to medical facts. "Erectile dysfunction is not a disease of older people," Dr. Peter Stahl, MD

and SVP of Men's Sexual Health and Urology at Hims & Hers, asserts. "It's a condition that affects men of all ages." Backing this up, 33% of Hims customers with erectile dysfunction (ED) are between 25 and 40 years old, and nearly half (45%) are under 45.

Dr. Lawrence Jenkins, also a Urologist and Medical Advisor for Hims & Hers, thinks the percentage of men who suffer from sexual dysfunction may be underreported, as not every man who suffers from ED, for example, seeks help. "Erectile dysfunction under 40 affects at least half of all guys at some point in time," adding, "Almost 100% of guys have had at least one bad encounter [during sex] when things didn't work right."



of the UK believes that  
sexual dysfunction is directly  
related to age.

Sexual dysfunction is more common and age-agnostic than the UK thinks: ED is just one of the sexual hurdles men face. Taken together, 59% of men we surveyed have experienced at least one sexual dysfunction in the past year, from low sex drive (15%), to ED (14%), to performance anxiety (14%) and premature ejaculation (11%). Furthermore, the data proves sexual dysfunction isn't nearly as age-dependent as society has led us to believe: more Gen Z men report having experienced one or more sexual dysfunctions in the past year than did Boomer men (62% vs. 59%, respectively).

Another way that younger men are more impacted by sexual dysfunction than their older counter-

**“Our society has pushed men to be the manliest men possible. Guys don’t go to the doctor for chest pain, they don’t go to the doctor for diabetes. But when they have problems with getting an erection—that’s when they become concerned.”**

—Dr. Lawrence Jenkins, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board, Hims & Hers

parts is through the stigma that comes with it. 52% of Gen Z men, as compared to 44% of Boomer men, agree that sexual performance medication has a stigma in our society.

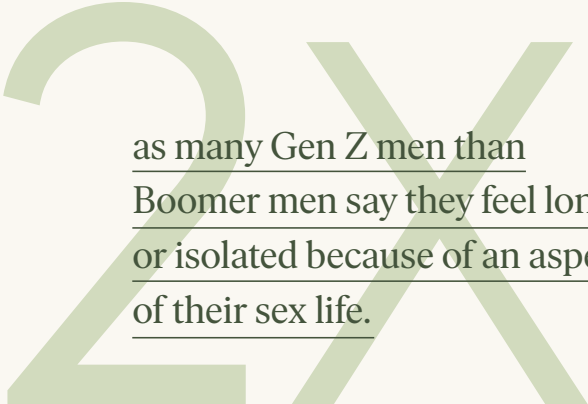
Dr. Beth Pausic, Clinical Psychologist and Director of Behavioral Health at Hims & Hers, says the stigma, particularly for younger men, is real. “Even in 2022, there is such a thing about being able to perform sexually. If a man can’t perform, there’s this stigma that exists—men feel they are less than.” Dr. Lawrence Jenkins agrees that not being able to sexually perform “erodes at masculinity” and is tied to a long-standing, albeit outdated, “be a man” mentality. “Our society has pushed men to be the manliest men possible. Guys don’t go to the doctor for chest pain, they don’t go to the doctor for diabetes. But when they have problems with getting an erection—that’s when they become concerned.”

So perhaps it’s unsurprising that more than twice as many Gen Z men (45%) than Boomer men (21%) say they feel lonely or isolated because of an aspect of their sex life, such as a medical issue.

Also at play, according to Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Hims & Hers Medical Advisor, is sexual education. “Sexual education is still, in my opinion, not very balanced between men and women. I find women to be far more educated about their sexual

being before men are,” she told us. “Young women are exposed to their sexual being as teenagers. They start menstruation, and come face to face with questions around their sexual being. There isn’t an earlier moment in a lot of guys’ lives where they deal with their sexual health maybe outside of an annual doctor’s visit.”

Martin Robinson, Founder and Editor of The Book of Man, agrees, saying men aren’t encouraged to ask questions. “There isn’t really a dialogue with young boys on issues around sex,” he says. “With boys, it’s bragging rights more than anything else. If you speak about sex at all, it’s like, ‘You should know. As a man, you should know what you’re doing.’”



as many Gen Z men than  
Boomer men say they feel lonely  
or isolated because of an aspect  
of their sex life.



## MYTH

## Older women don't want to have sex

## REALITY

Older women want to have sex,  
but aren't

06

The sex gap is real: one trend that emerged from our study points to the “sex gap” between women and men. 23% of women aren't having sex compared to 18% of men. While this may not seem like that big of a discrepancy at first, the reality is that women hit a sexual glass ceiling as they age. Men enjoy an active sex life well into their midlife, while women's sex lives slow way down in their 40s and 50s...but not

by choice. Whereas women under 45 report having about the same amount of sex as men are having, the sex gap between women and men widens dramatically as women reach their midlife (see The Sex Gap on page 20).

But before writing this off as menopause or a lack of libido, think again: according to our study, 80% of women 45+ who aren't having sex are not happy about it, and a recent study conducted on Facebook found that 40% of midlife women want more sex.<sup>20</sup> “The idea that women have low libidos and men have high libidos is absurd,” Dr. Rachel Rubin, Urologist and Sexual Medicine Specialist, explains, emphasising that menopause, or women losing sex drive with age, isn't the issue. “There are many post-menopausal women with super high libidos who love sex and have great orgasms. And I have many male patients with very low libidos who are wishing that

**“There's this idea that young men need pleasure [and] young women need to behave. Women need to just show up and make sure everyone is taken care of. And that's a problem.”**

—Dr. Rachel Rubin, Urologist and Sexual Medicine Specialist

**80%**  
of women 45+ who aren't having sex aren't happy about it.

20. The Guardian, April 2022



their libidos were higher for their partners.” All of this points to the fact that women aren’t losing their sex drive with age—yet they aren’t having as much sex as men are.

This “sexual glass ceiling” is arguably amplified by sex being a more male-oriented experience—one that is ingrained in societal norms, according to Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of audio erotica platform Quinn. Speaking for her generation, Gen Z, she explains: “A lot of women I talk to learned sex as a series of how-tos [for men]. Not what feels good for them, but rather, ‘This is how you give a blow job,’ or ‘This is how you make the man orgasm.’”

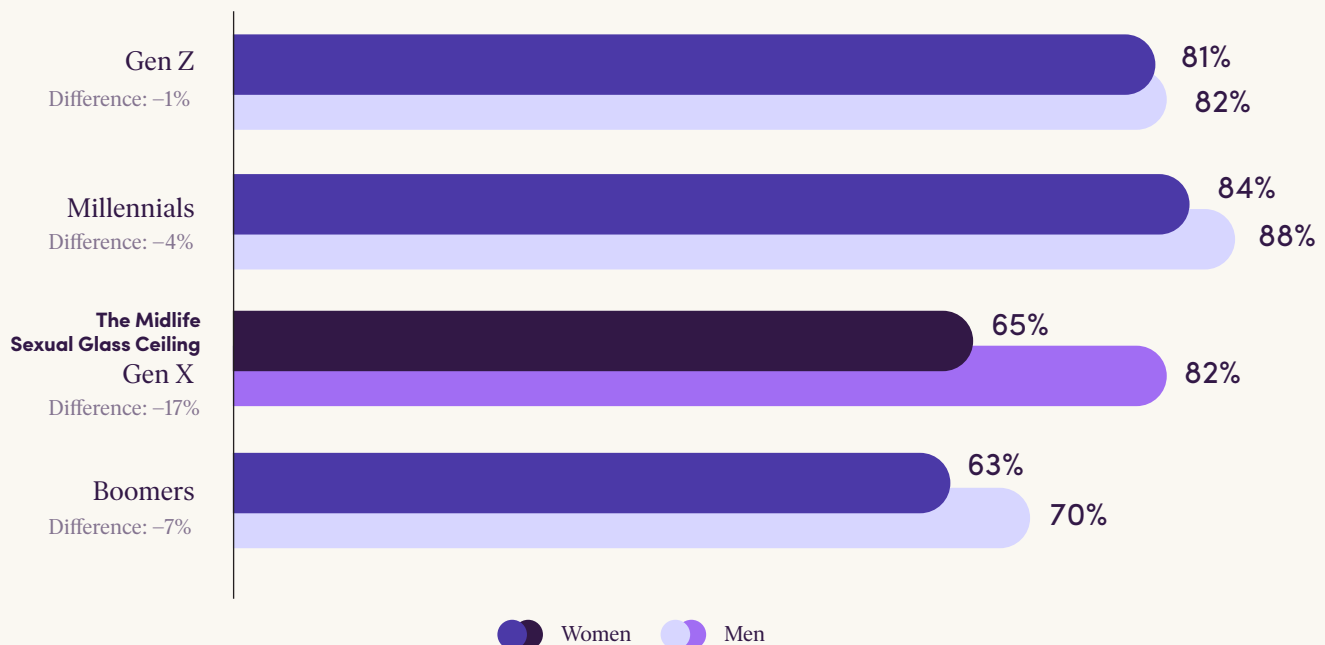
Spiegel traces this back to women’s equality, or lack thereof. “For thousands of years, women didn’t

have the same rights as men. Their economic power was directly tied to their spouse,” she points out. “And I think that has been reflected in their sexual pleasure. The way we have sex today reflects a history of men’s pleasure as the most important.” This begs the question: are older women having less sex because they have yet to fully explore (or prioritise) their changing sexual desires and needs?

Regardless of the reasons for the “sexual glass ceiling,” women may soon break through it. Gen Z women are leading a new sexual revolution, a topic we explore in the next myth; as they age, the sex gap may finally close for good. And in the meantime? Boomer women are already making strides, with women 55+ reducing women’s midlife sex gap by more than half.

## The Sex Gap

Percent of women vs. men who have been sexually active in the past month<sup>21</sup>



21. Findings on gender nonbinary respondents were not statistically significant

## MYTH

**The sexual revolution ended in the 70s**

## REALITY

A new one is just getting started

07

Gen Z women are overturning sexual precedents and making their own rules—stigmas be damned! Take porn, for example, which social norms insist is primarily a male pastime. Today, nearly as many Gen Z women have watched porn alone in the past year (51%) as have Gen Z men (55%). This highlights a stark generational divide with the Boomer generation: only 9% of Boomer women have watched

porn alone in the past year compared to 55% of Boomer men. And while this could be dismissed as life stage-based rather than generational, 32% of Boomer women say they have never watched porn, as compared to 19% of Gen Z women who haven't. Of course, watching porn isn't solely a marker of female progress, but it is a marker of the sexual-fantasy tables turning.

**“Gen Z women want to understand their own fantasies more. They’re curious, they’re intellectual, they’re political.”**

—Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn

One reason for this shift might be that women's attitudes towards sexuality have changed. Gen Z women are, statistically speaking, the most sexually exploratory demographic, with 24% not identifying as heterosexual (see Sexuality, Interrupted above), and 78% being interested in one or more emerging sexual trends—more than 2X as interested as older women (34%).

Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator, says the broader spectrum of sexual identities and experiences can also be credited to the fast-evolving language surrounding sex. “My personal belief is that there have *always* been people with proclivities towards sexual identities and relationship models outside the heterosexual, monogamous, mainstream ‘norm,’” she explains. “Nowadays however, greater knowledge of terms like ‘pansexual’, ‘demisexual’ and ‘consensually non-monogamous’ means it’s easier to describe and discuss these feelings, and there’s enhanced appreciation of their legitimacy.”

**“People having new words to describe themselves sexually means that they’re better able to talk about their emotions and desires. It’s bringing heightened attention to the fact that these are legitimate ways to feel, to be, to model your life.”**

—Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator



And while all people—not just Gen Z women—have access to new sexual language and labels, Gen Z women are arguably the ones using it to reframe gender and sexuality the most. “I don’t think so many Gen Z women have the desire to get married as young as previous generations, if at all. They don’t want to have children as early, if at all, and they have more options to expand their family later in life should they wish.”, Fox reflects. “Cultural gender roles are changing. And when you open your mind about what life as a woman can be, then questioning how you might want things to look for you sexually is a natural part of that. It can be very liberating.”

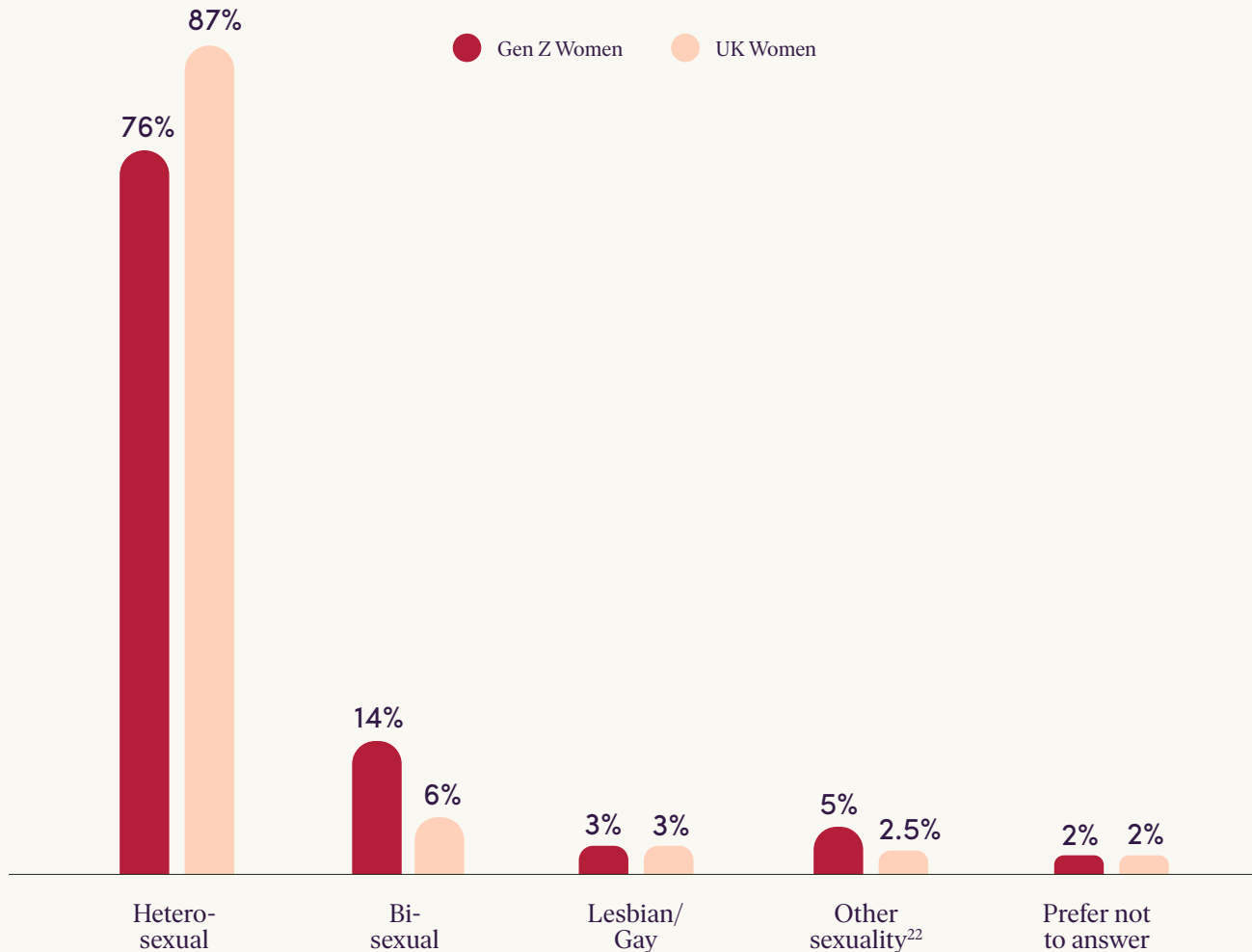
What’s more, 84% of Gen Z women are interested in learning more about one or more sexual topics, from exploring pleasure spots (33%) to having more mindful sex (23%), as compared to 76% of Millennial women, 61% of Gen X women, and just 47% of Boomer women.

Alongside Gen Z Women, Brits of mixed ethnicities are also leading the sexual revolution

as many mixed ethnicity respondents (25%)  
than white respondents (12%) *don’t* identify as heterosexual.

## Sexuality, Interrupted

Gen Z women are the least likely to self-identify as heterosexual, shaking up traditional sexuality norms. Here's a look at how their identities compare to those of UK women overall.



"[Gen Z women] want to understand their own fantasies more," says Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn. "They're curious, they're intellectual, they're political, and it's cool." Spiegel goes on to say that the next generation of women are not unlike the Gloria Steinem-esque women who revolutionised sex in the 60s and 70s. "I imagine that they will be creating a much better society than we live in now around sex."

Margot Weiss, Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University, agrees. "It's a more fluid time than this mythical past when there were only hard-core normative people and radical fringe people." In other words, Gen Z women aren't radical or fringe—they're just shaking up the hetero-normative status quo.

22. Includes Pansexual, Asexual, Queer, and Other Sexuality



## THEME 04



# ANXIETY

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Opening the incognito window on porn



## MYTH

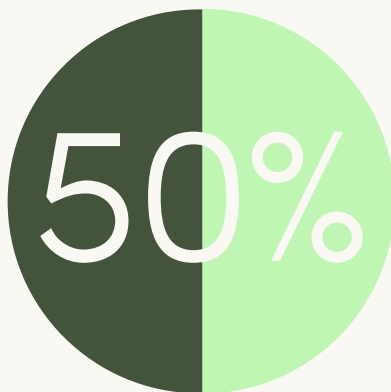
**Porn turns men on**

## REALITY

**It also stresses them out**

08

27% of Brits say most of their sex education comes from pornography, making it a top three source of the UK's sexual savvy, right after learning from their partners (37%) and trial and error (33%). However, according to medical professionals, porn provides more of a sex mis-education. "It's not that porn can't be fun," Dr. Rachel Rubin, Urologist and Sexual Medicine Specialist, explains. "But it's not helpful in terms of understanding what's 'normal' when it comes to sexual health."



of men say porn has  
changed their perception  
of sex entirely.

This is particularly true for men, who are more likely to turn to porn to turn them on, only to find it stresses them out. Half of men (51%) say porn has changed their perception of how long they should last and how erect their penis should be, and a similar 50% say porn has changed their perception of sex altogether.

While porn influences women too, historically it has been made "by men, for men," as Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn, put it. "In mainstream visual porn, the man is usually the 'agent' and his gratification is the focus—women are there in service of the man's pleasure." As such, producers delivered content that was bigger, longer, and hotter, and that finished stronger. "Pornography can be problematic if it's someone's barometer for what their sex life could be," Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Medical Advisor for Hims & Hers, noted. To Dr. Asafu-Adjei's point, some research suggests a correlation between compulsive porn consumption and erectile dysfunction, or porn-induced erectile dysfunction (PIED). The reasoning is that what leads a person to become aroused online may not carry over into real life.<sup>23</sup>

Watching too much porn could become a bigger problem for future generations: Dr. Asafu-Adjei says the exaggerated version of sex that plays out in porn is becoming even more problematic. "It's a lot easier

23. Psychology Today, April 2021

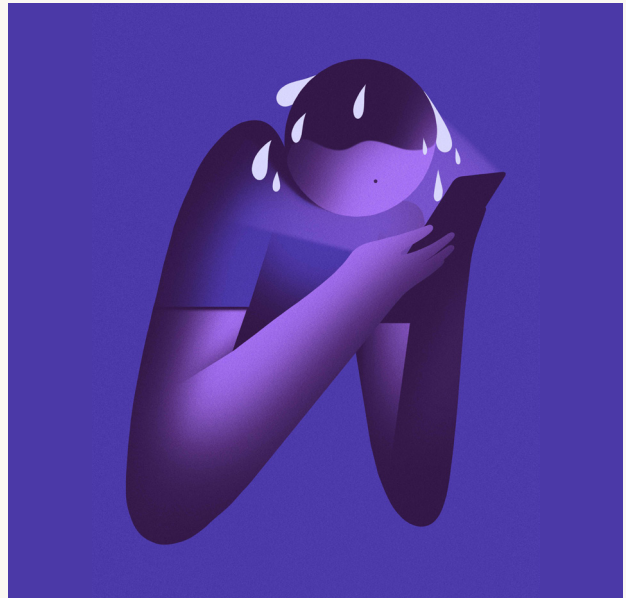
**“We need to have normalised conversations with young men about sex, not only so that they know what to expect, but also so they don’t look to a fantasy as a benchmark to what they should be.”**

—Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board, Hims & Hers

to access porn now than it was 20 years ago, and so younger and younger guys [are watching] it,” says Asafu-Adjei.

Perhaps it’s not a coincidence then that young men are more stressed out about sex—38% of Gen Z men say sex stresses them out, as compared to 15% of Boomer men. And, statistically speaking, porn has made a bigger impression on the sex lives of Gen Z men: 54% of them, as compared to 33% of Baby Boomer men, say porn has changed their perception of what sex should be like. All of this is taking a toll on men’s mental health, according to Martin Robinson, Founder and Editor of *The Book of Man*. His company has found that a significant source of men’s anxieties trace back to porn culture, and the “huge impact of having porn as lads’ primary source of sexual education.”

Maybe even more problematic? It creates a cognitive dissonance between what sex is supposed to look like and what romance is supposed to look like. Hollywood and the porn industry are writing very different scripts. “If you go to the most viewed video



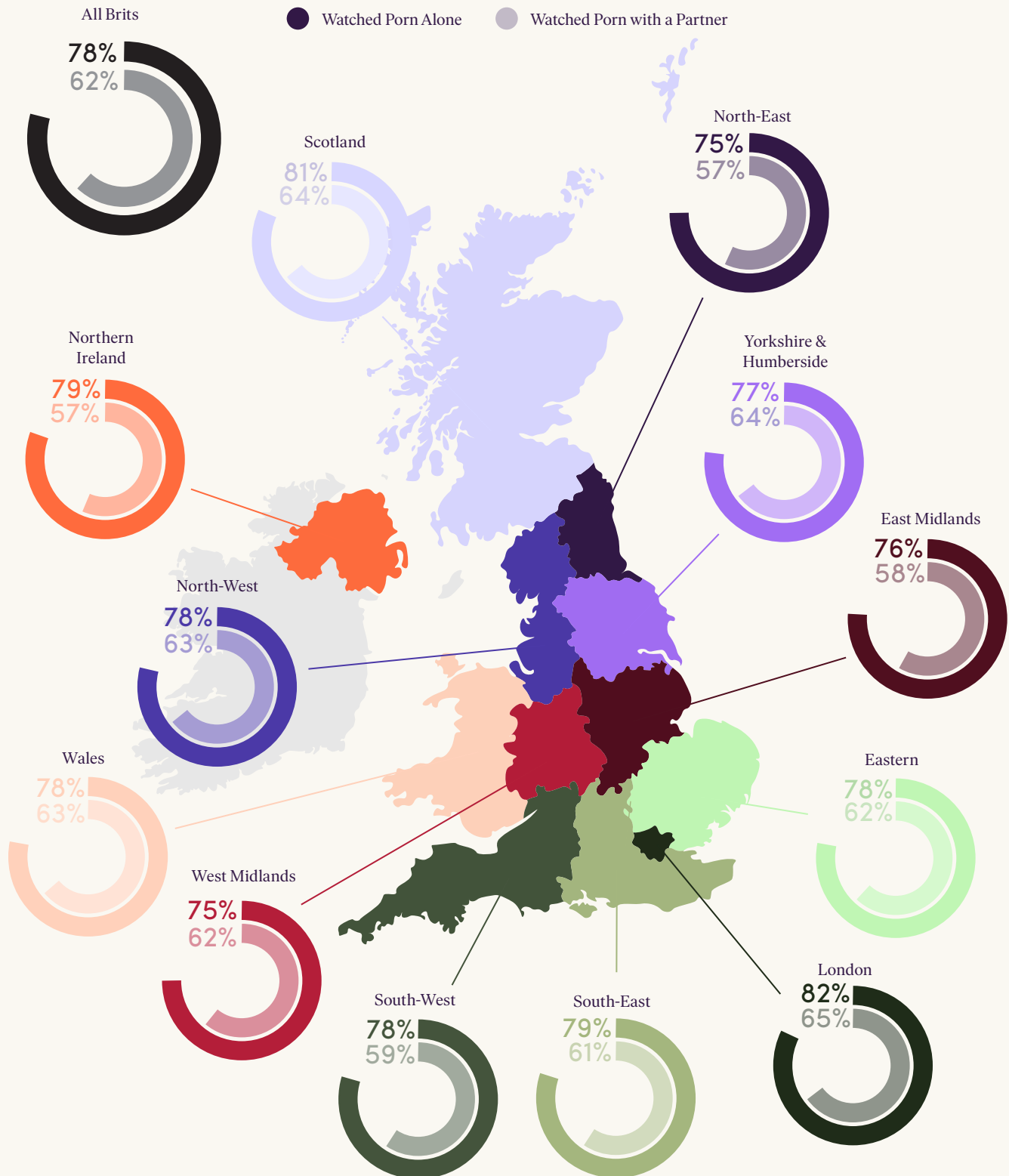
on Pornhub this week, compared to the *Atonement* scene, or compared to *The Notebook*, it’s like, ‘How are young people supposed to make sense of what their sex lives are supposed to look like?’” says Caroline Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Quinn.

Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator, sees porn education as a way to reduce this cognitive gap. “We need to make people more porn-literate,” she explains. “I advocate teaching people how to view porn with a critical, informed eye and realise that not all of the content they see necessarily reflects real life.”

But drawing a line between the porn you watch and the sex life you have isn’t that simple. “I think that the relationship between fantasy porn and reality sex is not a binary,” says Margot Weiss, Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University. “While it’s true that what you want to watch in porn is not necessarily what you want to do in your actual life, it’s also not the case that fantasy is disconnected from actual life. It’s not just a totally different realm that has no relationship to the real world.” In other words, it’s a blurry line. For men (and women), this confuses the baseline of sex in the UK further, making it even more stressful to discern what’s okay and what’s not, what’s normal and what’s just in the movies.

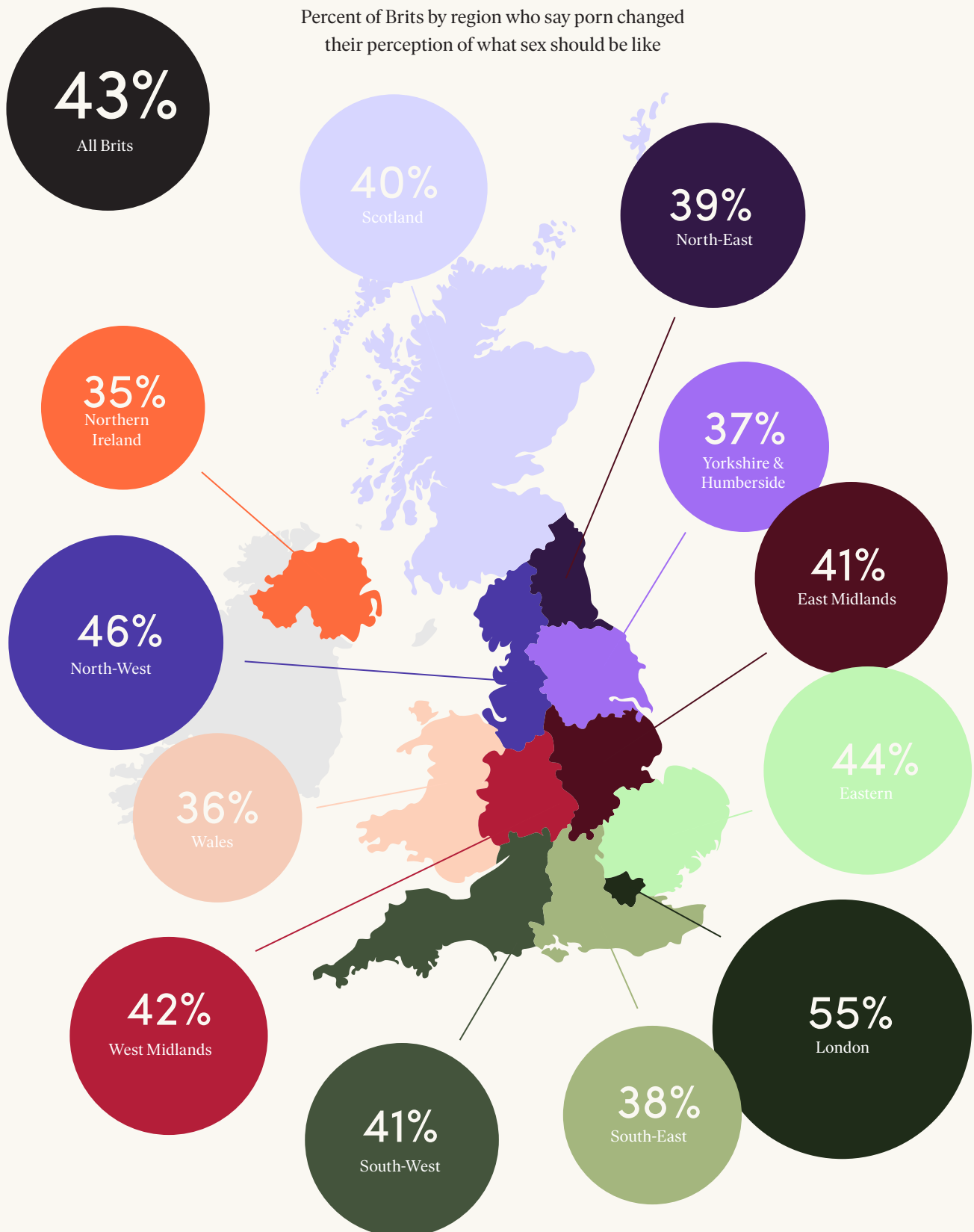
## Porn by Postcode

Percent of Brits by region who have watched porn alone or with a partner

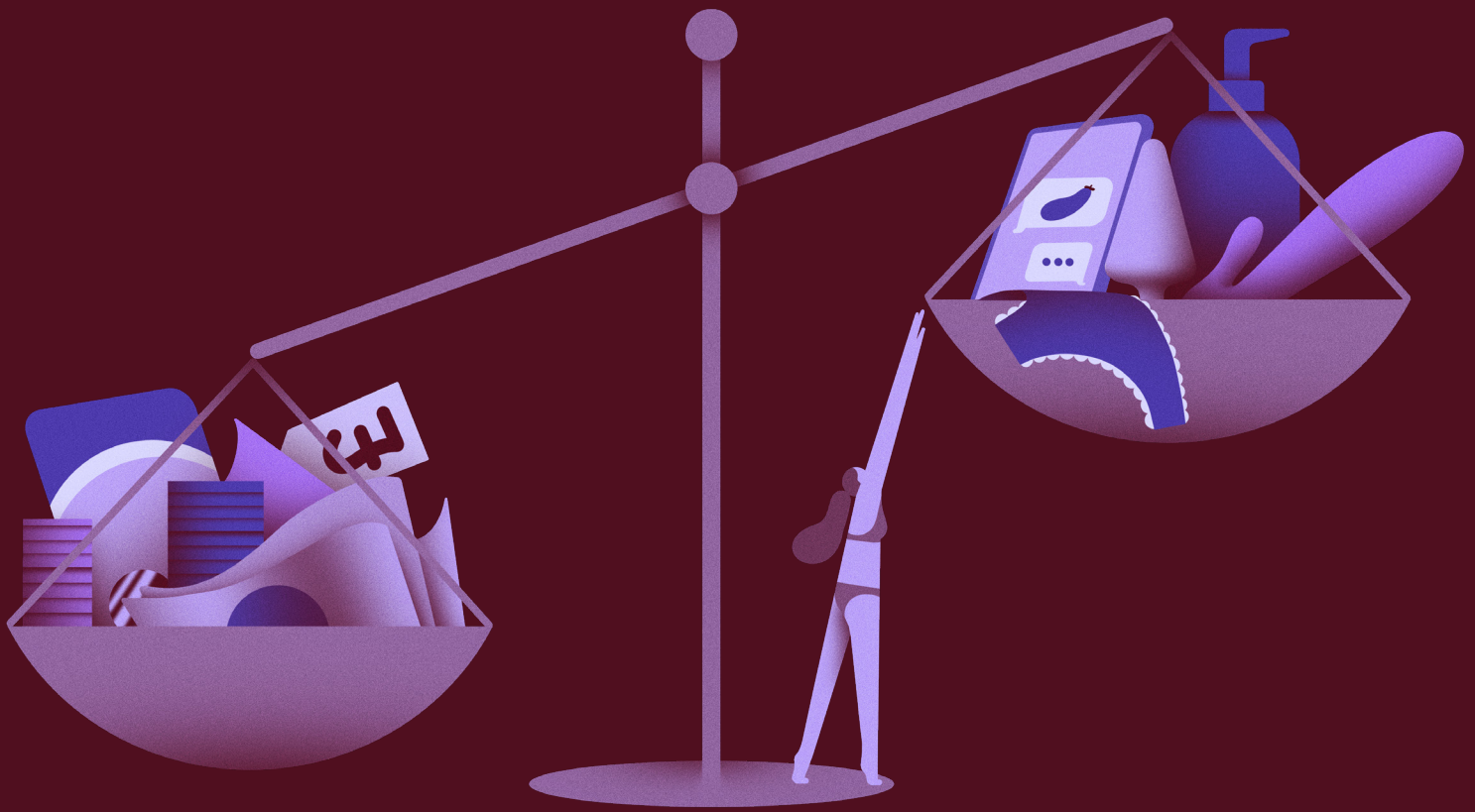


### Porn Anxxxity by Region

Percent of Brits by region who say porn changed their perception of what sex should be like



## THEME 05



# SEX ISN'T SELLING

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When the costs of living and loving don't add up



## MYTH

## The pandemic took a toll on our sex lives

## REALITY

Rising cost of living took a bigger one

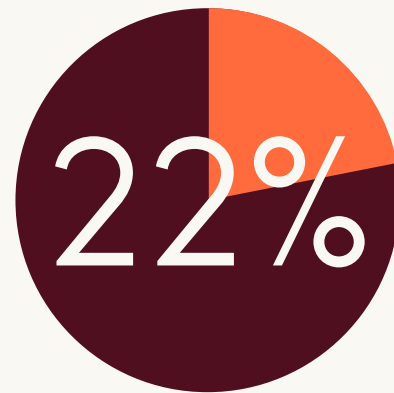
09

We all thought COVID's gloom, doom and social distancing would ruin sex and dating. But the pandemic didn't wreak that much havoc: the same percentage of people were satisfied with their sex lives before and after the pandemic, and, during the pandemic, sexual satisfaction dipped just a small amount (see: Sexual Satisfaction, Pre and Post-Pandemic on page 31).

However, what these numbers don't show is that sex and dating are different today than they were pre-COVID... but because of the economy, not the pandemic. Nearly half (42%) of respondents we surveyed said that at least one economic or political event of the past year has impacted their dating and sex life, with the number one factor being the rising cost of living and energy (see: The Economics & Politics of Sex). "Anything that makes life difficult—the cost of living crisis, job loss, the relentless bad news—can be quite overwhelming. None of these things may translate directly into the bedroom but [their effect is] cumulative," explains Martin Robinson, Founder and Editor of The Book of Man. "There are just so many stresses that it can be difficult to suddenly switch on to being a sex god."

Not surprisingly, the economy's impact on Brits' sex lives has been largely negative. UK respondents report having less sex (30%), a decreased libido (24%), poorer mental health because of the changes in their sex lives (24%), and more anxiety around sex (17%) (see:

Sex and the Economy on page 32). Furthermore, 15% are dating less and 13% have quit having sexual relationships altogether, saying that, with the economic and political climate the way it is, "things are already complicated enough."



of people in the UK report they are spending less on dating and sex this year due to the current economic and political environment.

Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator, says the cost-of-living crisis has created a cost-of-lov-ing crisis. "If you are in a housing situation which is stressfully unstable; if you are having to work around the clock until you're knackered; if your health is impacted by poverty; you may well have less time and inclination for sexiness," she explains. Ultimately, this is creating a new class divide, where those who are

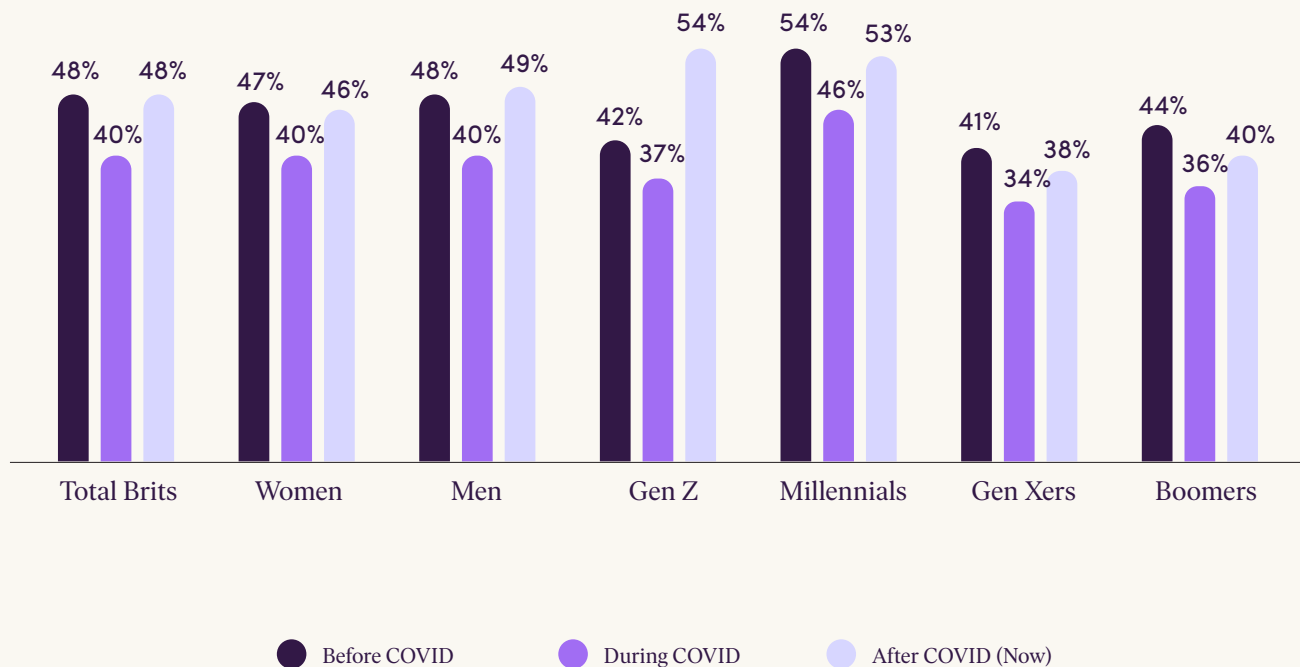
financially strapped may also be more likely to be sexually stymied (see: Erotic Equity on page 33).

But it's not just that the economy is putting a damper on people's dating and sex lives; people's dating and sex lives—or lack thereof—may be putting a damper on the UK's economy. Nearly one quarter of respondents (22%) report that they are spending less on dating and sex than they were in the past.

## Sexual Satisfaction, Pre and Post-Pandemic

By Gender & Generation

Percent satisfied included the percentage of respondents who rated their sex lives a 5 (Highlight satisfied) or a 4 (Satisfied) on a 5-point scale

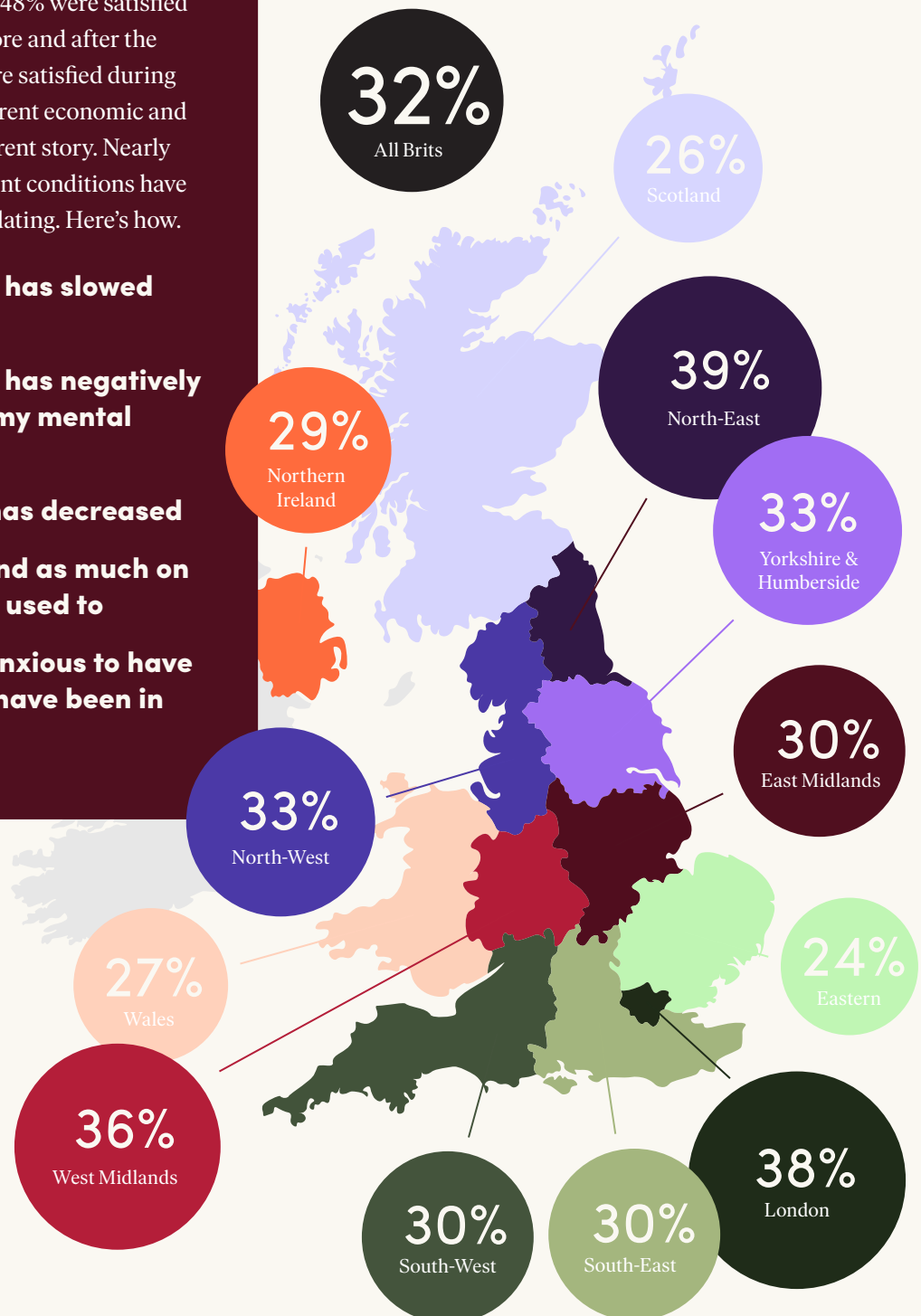


## Sex and the Economy

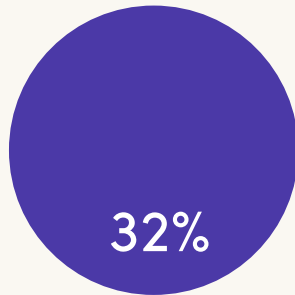
Whereas the pandemic only took a slight toll on Brits' sex lives—48% were satisfied with their sex lives before and after the pandemic and 40% were satisfied during the pandemic—the current economic and political crisis is a different story. Nearly *half* (42%) say the current conditions have changed their sex and dating. Here's how.

- 30%** My sex life has slowed down
- 24%** My sex life has negatively impacted my mental health
- 24%** My libido has decreased
- 22%** I don't spend as much on dating as I used to
- 17%** I'm more anxious to have sex than I have been in the past

Percent whose sex lives have been impacted because of the rising cost of living



## Economic or Political Events that Have Affected the Uk's Dating and Sex Life



Cost of living/  
cost of energy



9%

Russia-Ukraine war



8%

Brexit



6%

Prime Ministerial  
changes



5%

Sarah Everard  
news



### Erotic Equity

**Remember the adage “Money can’t buy you love”? Turns out, it can.** Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator, Alix Fox, got down to the brass tacks of how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting Brits in the bedroom. “If you have access to money, that gives you access to more security and things that ease day-to-day life, which can mean that your mental health is likely to be a little better. You are more likely to have a comfortable, private, and safe living situation. Your relationships might be easier because you are less stressed about cash, so you’re not arguing about paying the bills. You have a little bit more freedom to go out on indulgent dates. You can maybe afford to pay somebody to help you with childcare or with cleaning around the house. Money buys the things that can make pleasure easier.”

## MYTH

**Sex comes with a partner**

## REALITY

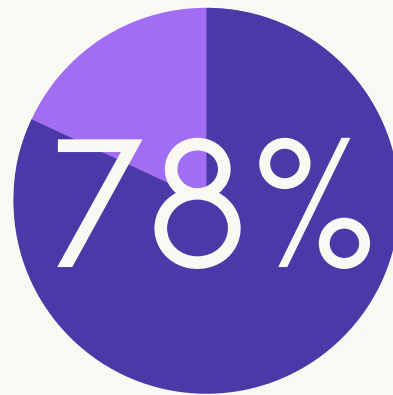
Sex can also be a solo endeavor

10

Brits are realising solo sex has its benefits, and more are turning to themselves for sexual satisfaction—no wining, dining, dating, or partner required! Part of this movement stems from social distancing during the pandemic. “Lockdown and COVID meant that people were forced into solo experiences. And some of them really leaned into it,” Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator explained. “They found that exploring themselves on their own terms could be a lot more pleasurable, enlightening, and exciting than hooking up with unsatisfying one-night stands.” However, solo sex is also a potential result of the rising cost-of-living in the UK.

Just take masturbation, which has seemingly become a cost-effective substitute for dating and partnered sex: 16% of people in the UK say that because of recent economic and political events, they masturbate more and 10% say they have become more experimental with masturbation.

Porn is another convenient remedy for the UK's dating and sexual relationship depression. More than one in ten (13%) report watching more porn than they used to, and 8% report that they've started to watch porn because of the recent economic and political environment. And like masturbation, porn doesn't require a partner: 78% of respondents say they watch porn alone, with the vast majority having watched more porn alone in the past year (48%) than in their entire lifetime (30%)!



Among the 78% of people  
in the UK who have  
watched porn alone,  
48% have watched more porn  
solo in the past year,  
as compared to  
30% who have watched it  
prior to the past year.



And then there's also a new movement where people arrange to meet but intentionally (and sometimes mutually) ditch their date. "Ghosting is much more prevalent than it used to be," Fox tells us, explaining that some young people are feeding their egos by "collecting matches" on apps or booking dates with no intention of showing up. The buzz that comes from knowing someone is attracted to them gives them validation. Plus, digital dating apps make cancelling plans feel less personal. "There's a psychological distance that makes it easier to ditch a stranger on a screen last minute," says Fox.

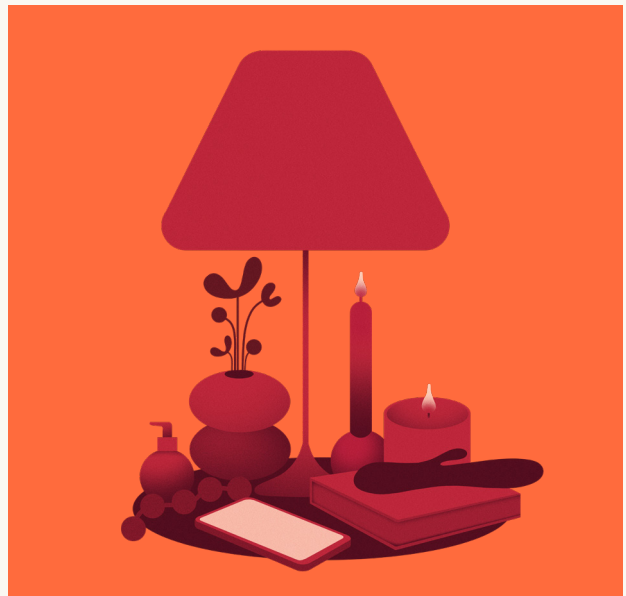
But as counterintuitive as it may be, solo sex has an economic upside: sex toys and subscription ser-

vices have surged in the past year. One in 10 Brits say they are using sex toys more often now than in the past; 9% purchased a new sex toy in the past year; and 4% have subscribed to a sexual subscription service like OnlyFans—perhaps as a solution to supplementing their personal finances in these dreary economic times.

Another upside of solo sex? Less stress. "More partners equal more of other people's needs to think about," Fox told us. But solo sex puts young people "at the centre of their own solar system," as Fox puts it. "I can see how that might appeal to a lot of Gen Zers, given the pressures that they're under at the moment."

**"Solo sex puts young people at the centre of their own solar system. I can see how that might appeal to a lot of Gen Zers, given the pressures that they're under at the moment."**

—Alix Fox, Journalist, Broadcaster, & Sex Educator



# Conclusion

The state of sex in the UK is as much about the numbers that tell a story of the fantasies, realities, perceptions, and truths common among us as it is about the nuances within our individual sex lives. As Dr. Denise Asafu-Adjei, Urologist and Medical Advisory Board Member, Hims & Hers, puts it: sex is diverse. “Everyone’s normal is different,” she says. It’s also fast-changing and environmentally sensitive. As prices rise and political chaos prevails, dating and partnered sex seem to fall—or at least ebb and flow differently—making inflation and politics a new barometer of sorts for dating and sex in the UK. Furthermore, new social norms, an up-and-coming generation, and new digital health resources are all at play, changing how Brits perceive sex, what they want from it, and how they access information and care related to sexual wellness. “We’re beginning to see people focusing on topics related to sexuality that nobody ever talked about before,” says Dr. Beth Pausic, Clinical Psychologist and Director of Behavioral Health at Hims & Hers. “I think that’s a fantastic development.”

Hims & Hers believes deeply in having open and honest dialogues about sex and other stigmatised issues impacting people’s everyday lives. Hims & Hers provides resources to help people achieve healthier, happier, and more confident sex lives—in fact, in our survey of nearly 400 Hims & Hers customers, 90% say their experience with Hims & Hers has improved their sex lives—paving a path for all people to feel their best.

**“We’re beginning to see people focusing on topics related to sexuality that nobody ever talked about before. I think that’s a fantastic development.”**

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**For more information on the *Let’s Talk About Sex* report or Hims & Hers, go to [TheUKSexReport.com](https://TheUKSexReport.com) or reach out to [press@forhims.com](mailto:press@forhims.com).**