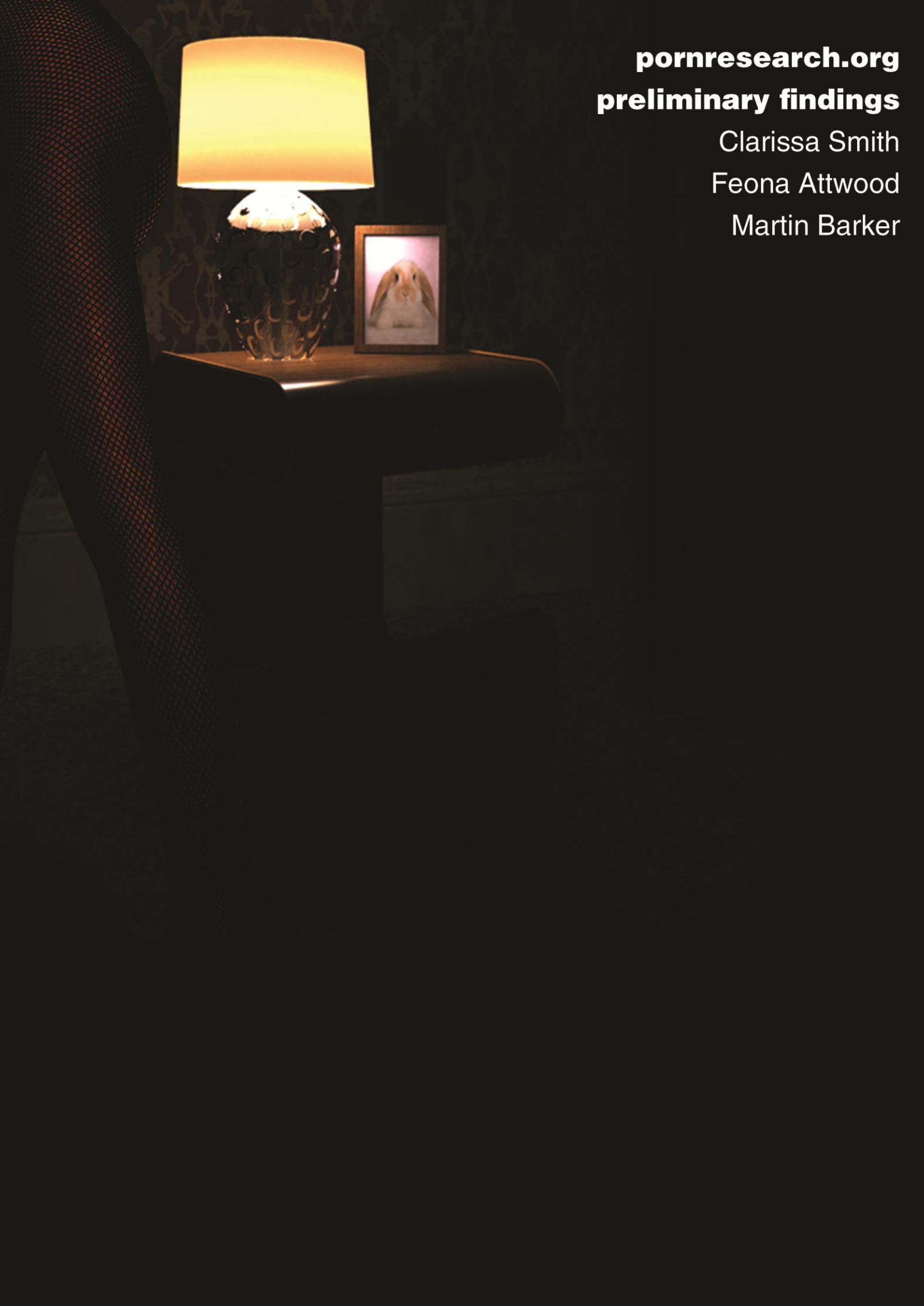


pornresearch.org
preliminary findings

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KEEPING OUR PROMISE

We promised that we would publish on this website a summary of our first findings from this research, as a way of giving back to all of you who took the time and trusted us with your responses. This is our attempt to keep that promise. We have to tell you that so many people completed the questionnaire, and at such length – to which must be added the 700 people who carried on talking to us via email about our research – that it is going to be a long time before we ‘complete’ our work.

To start with some raw stats. 5,490 people completed the questionnaire. That’s an extraordinary total in itself. If we add that your answers to seven key questions amounted in all to 1,262,419 words, then you can perhaps see why this is going to take us a long time! Some people gave what we would call quick, throwaway answers – it’s for wanking, isn’t it, duh? – and that’s your right. But thank you for doing the questionnaire because there’s something to be learned even from the shortest answers we received.

We also got a very small number of very hostile responses from people who think pornography is obviously evil and dangerous – and that’s their right, too. But there were two aspects to these hostile responses that we unequivocally reject. The first is the claim made by some people that it is wrong even to research this – it is so ‘obvious’ to them that porn is a bad thing, that no sorts of evidence of what it means to people who use and enjoy it can ever count. Sorry, but that reeks of every kind of prejudice that we have ever encountered. The second was the assertion that we were wrong to design our questionnaire to speak only to people who use and enjoy porn. But that was the entire point of the exercise. People who don’t like it, and don’t use it, have had many outlets for their views. The ‘silenced voice’ to date has been the users. We designed our research to learn about how porn matters to the people who use, not the people who hate it.

We want to begin with the fact that many of you have been extraordinarily open with us, about your sex lives, your histories, ambivalences, pleasures, desires, and fantasies. We guaranteed that every response would be fully anonymised, and that guarantee will be kept. But in a much more positive direction, we want to say that we will do our level best to respect the fullness and complexity of what so many people have told us.

We never believed, and don’t want to claim, that we have gathered a ‘representative sample’. For that, we would have had to be able to identify the overall ‘population’ of porn viewers, and then measure your responses to see to what extent you fit or deviate from that overall spread – and only then would it make sense for us to explore your responses. But of course nobody knows what that population is. What we have been able to do instead, is to look for patterns within our responses, and this is what we want to report on here. What follows is a first selection of emergent patterns, and some thoughts about what they suggest to us.

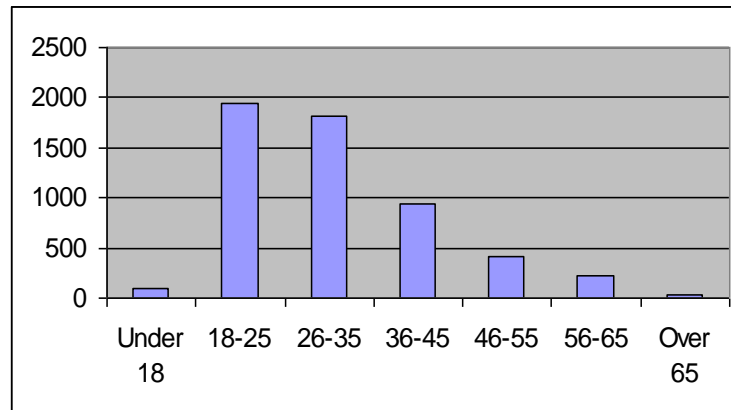
WHO RESPONDED

Of the 5,490 responses, the great majority named themselves as heterosexual, as these figures show:

Heterosexual = 3842 (70.1%); Gay = 186 (3.4%); Lesbian = 56 (1.0%); Bisexual = 905 (6.5%); Queer = 303 (5.5%); and Unsure = 189 (3.4%). What’s interesting is that females are the predominant group in the Bisexual and Queer groups, while males

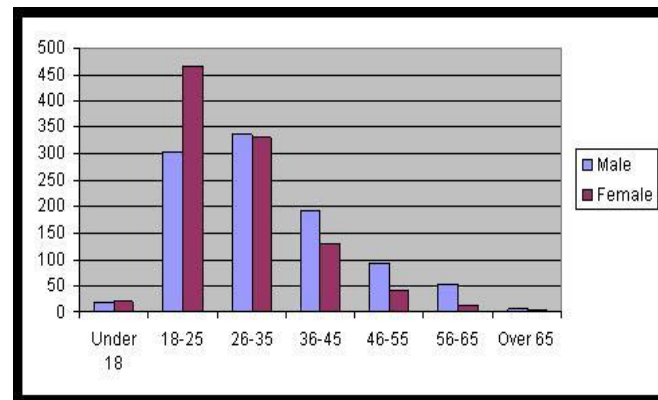
predominate in the Unsures. We suspect this is related to the potentially greater personal and social challenge facing men admitting to these desires to themselves, and coming out.

We got some fascinating overall figures by Age. This first raw Table just shows who responded to us:



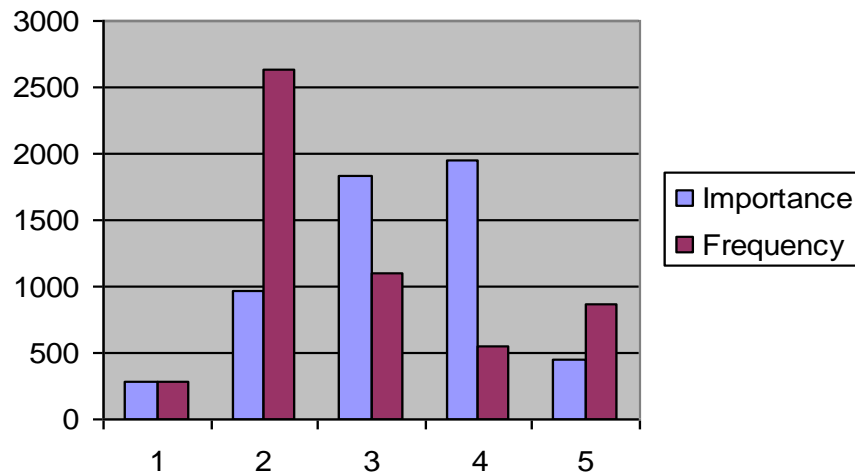
But when we cross-related age with importance and frequency, the picture changed. The peak period for viewing porn appears to be older than many people assume. The peak age for extreme and high importance for viewing porn is 26-35, while the age at which it has the lowest importance is 18-25. That's really interesting! It suggests to us a generational shift in the significance of pornography.

It's pretty clear that more men than women are viewing porn, more often, and attaching greater importance to it. We had 3,743 responses from men [that's 68.4%], against 1,726 [31.6%] from women. But that picture gets a bit more complicated once you factor in age. Here is a Table derived from your responses:



What this Table suggests to us is that younger women, although their number is still smaller than men, show more interest in porn than older women. What we can't tell, from this snapshot, is whether this is simply a 'passing phase' for them, or whether it signals that wider generational shift we think we have identified – something which over time will reduce the overall differences between male and female interest in pornography.

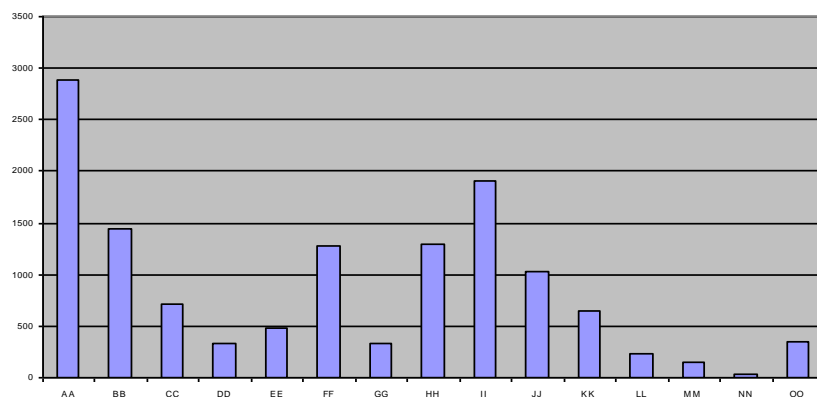
We asked you how important porn was to you, and how frequently you access it. The figures we got from this were quite striking. Frequency was pretty high overall – but that went along with lower levels of attached importance. Here is the main Table for these:



(It's important to remember what those numbers mean. For Importance, it went: 1 = Extremely, 2 = Very, 3 = Reasonably, 4 = Hardly, 5 = Not at all. For Frequency, it went: 1 = As often as I can, 2 = Most days, 3 = Maybe once a week, 4 = Several times a month, 5 = Occasionally.) Let's put it like this. There are people who scoff porn, there are people for whom it is a regular meal, there are gourmet specialists, and there are porn tourists! Whether there are 'addicts' ... well, that's complicated, and we are exploring what our materials can tell us about this. It's a word too easily used, and very unclear.

What is also clear is that men attach more Importance to porn, and visit it more Frequently, than women. We can follow that through a bit, to ask how that affects the *meanings* that porn has to men and women. If you remember, one of the questions we asked was about the place and purpose of pornography in your life. There were some clear patterns here. To 'read' it, you need to know what those double-letters refer to – here is the 'translation':

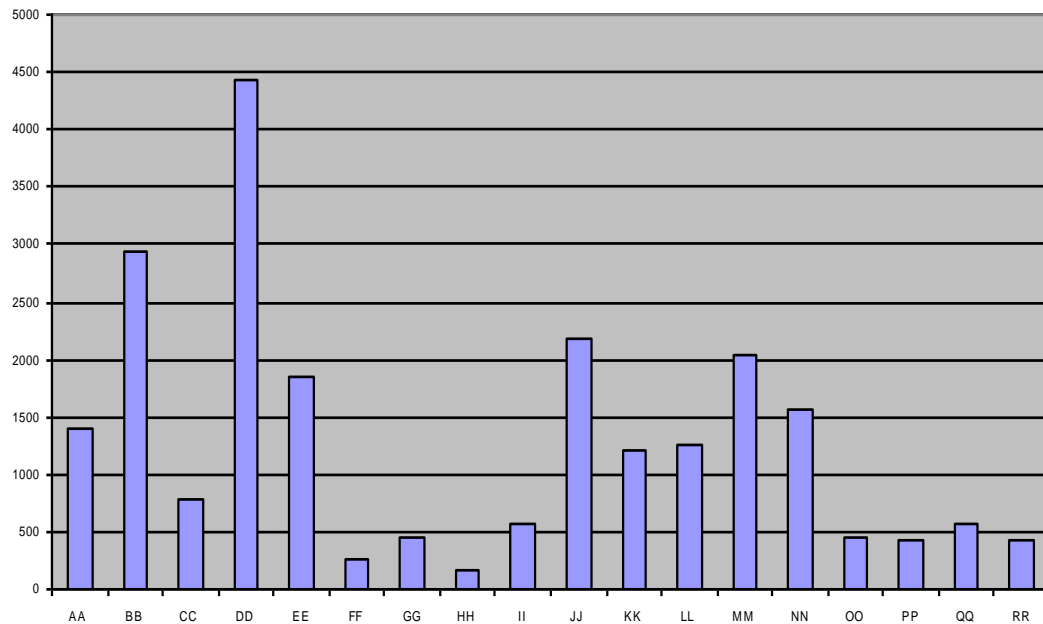
- AA When I feel horny
- BB Because I want to feel horny
- CC I want to feel involved in a world of sex out there
- DD For reconnection with my body
- EE To get in the mood with my partner
- FF For recognition of my sexual interests
- GG To find stories that dramatise what sex is all about
- HH Sometimes I've nothing better to do
- II When I'm bored, can't relax, or can't sleep
- JJ To see things I might do
- KK To see things I can't do
- LL To see things I wouldn't do
- MM To see things I shouldn't do
- NN I just get attracted by pop-ups
- OO For a laugh



In some ways it is interestingly unsurprising that the first (when I feel horny) got the highest levels of choices, by a long way. And we were interested, straight off, in the fact that a number of people *only* chose that option. For some, porn is purely functional, a way of ‘getting off’. For others, it is more complicated, and tied in with, for instance, exploring and reinforcing *what kind of person* they feel they want to be. We will be exploring both these options, for what they connect with – for instance, does it affect what *sources* people select? How does it relate to the *preferred kinds of scenarios*? And so on. One thing did jump out at us, as we started looking. While men and women both made the first choice (When I feel horny) their preferred one, more women than men chose the second option (When I want to feel horny). That’s an interesting difference, and we will be exploring it in detail.

We will, of course, in due course be exploring *all* the choices. OK, so not many people chose ‘To see things I wouldn’t do’, or ‘To see things I shouldn’t do’. But such people are just as interesting to us, and we will be examining your stories as much as the larger groups.

One thing did strike us – the tiny number who said that they were Attracted by Pop-Ups. It strikes us that, if it was ever true, the era of the random pop-up is over. And indeed, this connects with something else – that when we looked at preferred sources, the majority made very clear that they preferred *amateur* rather than *professional* or *paid-for* materials. How far that is just a matter of money, we don’t yet know – but from a quick skim through comments, it looks to us that for many people the home-made nature of a lot of pornography adds to its interest. Here is the Table for your overall choices of sources (again, with the list underneath, so you can see what the letters signify):

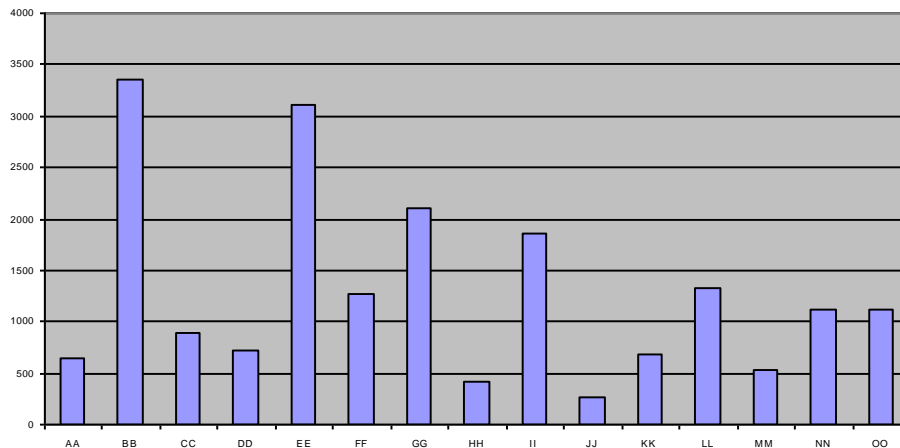


- AA DVDs
- BB Downloads
- CC Magazines
- DD ‘Tube’ sites (eg. porntube.com)
- EE ‘Specialist’ sites (eg. kink.com)
- FF ‘Studio’ pay per view sites (eg. Vivid.com)
- GG ‘Indie’ pay per view sites (eg. geekgirlsonline.com)
- HH ‘Star’ pay per view sites (eg. evaangelina.com)
- II ‘Authentic’ sites (eg. gooddykeporn.com)
- JJ ‘Amateur’ sites
- KK ‘Alt.porn’ sites (eg. suicidegirls.com)
- LL ‘Erotic’ sites (eg. ishotmyself.com)
- MM Fiction sites (eg. Literotica.com)
- NN Sex Blogs (eg. Glimpsesofdave)
- OO Chatrooms

- PP Live sex cams
- QQ Webcams
- RR Hook-up sites

Finally, for now, here are the overall levels of response to another of our key questions – ‘What comes closest to describing your feelings about sex?’ We asked people to choose up to three from this list (although some of you sneakily managed to choose more than three ...):

- AA sex works best when there’s lots of fantasy
- BB sex keeps you healthy, physically and emotionally
- CC sex is best when it’s a bit animalistic
- DD sex can get you close to who you really are
- EE good sex requires communication with your partner(s)
- FF sex doesn’t have to be ‘nice’ to be good
- GG real sex isn’t like porn sex
- HH sex should involve pushing your own boundaries
- II sex works best when there’s feelings, especially love
- JJ sex is over-rated, everyone does it
- KK sex should be about intimacy but often isn’t
- LL sex is about connection
- MM porn sex may be arousing, but it can spoil real sex
- NN you have to work at good sex
- OO porn sex feeds my imagination



BB (sex keeps you healthy, physically and emotionally) and EE (good sex requires communication with your partner(s)) are way out in front of all the others. But here we found some real differences when we cross-related Sex Meanings with Importance. For those to whom pornography has the highest levels of importance and indeed frequency, there are some real shifts. The highest associations with Importance are for AA (sex works best when lots of fantasy), OO (porn sex feeds my imagination), and HH (sex should involve pushing your boundaries). Clearly we have to explore what that means for those of you who chose these, and what stories you tell about yourselves.

We have a ton of work to do. And we have a hundred presentations to make – some to people who will be interested to hear what we have to say, some to people who will be very hostile to hearing your voices. We are as interested in minority groups as we are in the ‘mainstream’. And we are committed, as far as we can, to not judging people. Thank you again to our 5000 – this time round, it is you feeding us, rather than the biblical version.

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