

Osmo Kontula

BETWEEN SEXUAL DESIRE AND REALITY

The Evolution of Sex in Finland



Väestöliitto

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FOREWORD

While sexuality, like eating, is one of our most basic needs, it is also one of the most silenced and furtively treated issues in our Western culture. It will take a long time until we have unravelled all of the myths surrounding the subject of sexuality.

In the West, religion has been the primary regulator of sexual culture. The church and public authority have sanctified the cultural ideal of marital monogamy. Social, political and spiritual punishment has been assigned on those who have publicly deviated from this model. Homosexuality was still classified as a crime in Finland as recently as in the 1960s. In the 2000s, public opposition to homosexuality has lent considerable force in the presidential elections of the world's greatest nation. Sexuality can be a tool for wielding power and exerting control: in certain UN members states it remains acceptable to stone to death an adulterous spouse.

This study is the product of a long process that started in the 1970s with the first comparable study conducted in the field of sex research in Finland. It is the fourth of its kind, and Research Professor Osmo Kontula of the Population Research Institute of Väestöliitto has now been involved in three of them. Through this research process, Prof. Kontula has been indispensable in placing Finland as well as Väestöliitto on the map of international sex research.

Although the FINSEX study has increased our level of knowledge about sexuality and its nature, knowledge can be painful. This study tells us a bleak truth about the frequency of unmet sexual needs, longing for tenderness, and lack of sexual skill in contemporary Finland. Väestöliitto and the book's author hereby offer a glimpse into what Nordic sexuality currently entails as well as a look at the methods and practices that people have found useful and necessary in their everyday sex lives.

The main finding of this book is that in the course of the last ten years there has occurred a renaissance of romanticism. Finnish respondents' attitudes toward infidelity, parallel relationships, and the early sexual initiation of young people are now markedly less accommodating. It remains to be seen how permanent the change is, and it will be important to continue to study the new developments that take place in sex and sexuality.

I would like to thank Research Professor Osmo Kontula for conducting this exceptional study. We hope that the contributions of this book, in bringing increased understanding of sexuality and all the factors associated with it, will evoke international interest in the research and teaching communities. Without sex, this book would have few readers.

The book was translated from the Finnish by translator Maija Mäkinen and the desktop publishing is by Publications Secretary Mika Takoja. I would like to thank both for their excellent work.

Helsinki, 5 May 2009

Ismo Söderling

Director

Väestöliitto, Population Research Institute

PROLOGUE

This book will take you, the reader, directly to some of the greatest sexual mysteries in Finland and the West. It is thanks to the systematic surveys conducted in Finland over many decades on sexuality and the values related to it that I am able to illustrate these mysteries for you. Because sexuality is the most secret and intimate part of human life, the only way to reliably access information about it is through this type of long-term study.

This long journey into sexual patterns and values all the way from the 1940s up to the present is possible thanks to the first study on Finnish sex, conducted in the early 1970s by the three researchers Kai Sievers, Osmo Koskelainen, and Kimmo Leppo. At the time, their 1971 sex study was only the second in the world to be representative of an entire population. In the early 1990s, I took on the tradition started by those three researchers, working together with Elina Haavio-Mannila at the University of Helsinki. We gave the research project the name “FINSEX study”. The original financing came from the Academy of Finland.

I went on to study the sexual lives of Finns also in the later part of the 1990s at the Population Research Institute at Väestöliitto (Family Federation of Finland), again with Elina Haavio-Mannila. We compared our Finnish data to late-1990s data from Sweden, Estonia, and the city of St. Petersburg in Russia. This time, our project was financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The majority of the data applied in this book derive from the third phase of the FINSEX study. In 2007, I conducted a new, representative sex survey at Väestöliitto’s Population Research Institute. Once again, financial support came from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. This time also, I was able to compare Finnish data on number of sexuality issues to eight other European countries.

The main idea in this book is to provide comprehensive information about the changes that have taken place in the sexual lives of Finnish people in recent decades, and to compare Finland to other European countries. In addition to gathering the research materials, I have also reviewed a wealth of international research on the subject throughout the book’s chapters. I present the most important sexual theories to help explain people’s sexual motives and behavioural differences. These theories offer an international frame of reference for interpreting the Finnish findings and viewpoints.

I wish to thank those whose contributions to this book have been essential. My greatest gratitude is owed to the Population Research Institute of Väestöliitto and its Director Ismo Söderling. Without their support, it would not have been possible to write or publish this book.

I also want to give my heartfelt thanks to Statistics Finland for gathering the most recent data through a postal survey – and to their researchers Päivi Hokka and Outi

Stenbäck, who were the contact persons for this project. The survey data from different years were expertly combined by Édua Holmström at the Population Research Institute. In addition, I would like to thank Elina Haavio-Mannila for her earlier, wonderful co-operation.

Writing this book took me on a captivating journey through the basic challenges of human sexuality, and its most recent and in many ways surprising trends. I hope that readers will learn as much from reading this book as I did from writing it. Sexuality – even the study of it – is a fascinating subject.

Helsinki, May 4, 2009

Osmo Kontula

1 THE ORIGIN OF SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

Assumptions and knowledge about sexuality

Sexuality is the most secret and intimate feature of human life. People guard their sexual secrets so closely that they, or their partner, may never share all their sex-related experiences, desires and dreams together, even in long-term relationships. Sometimes people hesitate to admit even to themselves that they long for a particular kind of arousal or pleasure, because it feels somehow, strangely, inappropriate. Just a few short decades ago, most women had a hard time acknowledging to themselves that sex was in general something they wanted. We have come much further along now, thanks to more open public discourse and improved information on the subject of sexuality.

The public claims that are made periodically about the over-sexualisation of our society are paradoxical, when, at the same time, most people continue to experience needless pressures and false expectations about sex. These are often a consequence of a lack of information and faulty assumptions. Sexual problems, especially the pitfalls of trying to reconcile the sexual wants and desires of two partners, are extremely common. Research provides an important source of data in looking for solutions for these issues. Research reveals the experiences and thoughts on sexuality of many different types of people and the factors that affect them. Research can also step in to help individuals who are encountering one another in a sexual context and to solve the different sexual problems they face. At least as important is to help people to find new ways of enjoying their sexuality in its entire spectacular potential and in the many meanings it can take.

As new research data gradually accumulated and as representatives of other professions besides the employees of the church were accepted and invited to serve as experts on sexual issues, public discourse on sexuality found a new direction. Nevertheless, in relation to other scientific data, knowledge about sexuality has continued to occupy a particular and controversial status. One example of this today is that when matters pertaining to sexuality are being processed in the Parliament, legislators are allowed to “vote their conscience”, while for all other issues representatives of the political parties that currently govern are required to support the Government bill.

This and many other administrative practices illustrate that decisions regarding sexual issues are still often made more on the basis of moral views or the principle of “I personally feel that...” than on the basis of scientific knowledge and relevant research findings. Although the nature of sexuality is otherwise mostly private and intimate, the regulations and norms that govern it are public. All kinds of prejudices and ideological attempts to manipulate other people’s views and lives still influence the way sexuality is regulated. In our society, sexuality is still a public battlefield.

What do sex and sexuality mean?

Sexuality is the most central, elemental aspect of each person, determined largely by whether we are physically and psychologically male or female. Over the course of history, the definitions and conceptions of sexuality have varied greatly. It is not my intention here to offer some new, self-made definition of sexuality; instead, I will rely on the consensus-based definition agreed on by a number of international experts several years ago, at a meeting convened by the World Health Organization (WHO). This definition addresses sexuality on four different levels:

- 1. Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.*
- 2. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.*
- 3. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors.*
- 4. Sexuality includes the basic need for human affection, touch and intimacy, as consciously and unconsciously expressed through one’s feelings, thoughts and behaviour.*

Sexuality may be the origin for happiness and satisfaction on the other hand, but in cases of sexual dysfunction it may cause frustration and suffering. Sexuality is a central motivation in couple formation.

While the WHO definition, above, attempts to account for the different aspects of sexuality, it is by no means perfect. In practice, sexuality is an omnipresent human characteristic, and for some people, it is the only component of life that brings true and genuine miracles. Sex and love can precipitate surprising turning points in life. Suddenly, in a crowd of people, you may find yourself falling in love, and your entire life changes. Sexual attraction holds inexplicable mysticism, and it can be delicious and irresistible.

To elaborate further, the WHO working definition, and the field as well as the concept of sexuality, encompasses the following aspects:

- Individual capacity and desire
- Sexual functions
- Social organisation of sexual relationships
- Associations between sexual behaviour and individual identity
- Sexual appetites, style and group identity, based on the expression of sexuality and/or sexual preferences.

At different stages in history, sexuality has had different meanings and perspectives. In the scientific world, anthropology has played a pioneering role. In the earlier teaching [ei voi olla education] and study of anthropology, sexuality was associated only with reproduction, marriage and family ties. It was only later that issues such as the moral double standard, sexual risks, and the discourse on same-sex sexual relationships, were raised in traditional communities.

Malinowski's functional approach in particular limited the definition of sexuality to the needs of individual biology and reproduction. In part, this was because in traditional communities, marriage arrangements were social and political unions rather than individual or romantic expressions of choice. Even research was blind to other forms of sexuality – in childhood, in youth, outside of marriage, and in old age. Either they were considered unimportant from the standpoint of cultural understanding, or they were treated as manifestations of deviance or abnormality.

In the community of humans, sexuality is expressed through sexual culture. Sexual culture refers to the social and psychological processes that regulate sexual behaviour. They include the rules, beliefs and norms that are defined through membership in a community. Sexual culture also includes the approval or disapproval of members of a community toward other members, based on the virtuousness or acceptability of their sexual behaviour.

Sexual cultures are born of social traditions, including myths and social customs, rituals and ceremonies. They create the sense of social reality and participation in it. Sexual culture also encompasses a theory of human nature and defines what constitutes natural or unnatural sex. This definition creates consistent social and political order, regulates behaviour and ensures order as well as the continued existence of the community. Sexuality is also an important part of non-sexual institutions, such as religion and politics.

Sexual cultures assign sex roles and the associated demands and opportunities for a person's life span, including masculine, feminine and androgynous roles. From sexual culture are also derived gender-based customs and the characteristics they assign, including conceptions of desire, eroticism, how to view the body, sexual instinct, and the subjective conditions, conceptions and objects that are related to gender. Together, they define the ways in which personal and cultural desires are able to pursue and find satisfaction.

In Western countries religion is the fundamental regulating force of sexual culture. The church has sanctified the cultural ideal of a monogamous marriage. Deviants have been punished socially, politically and spiritually. Sexual socialization comes with various claims regarding the nature of sexuality and biological genotypes, which make reference to religious and moralistic conceptions of why things are done a certain way and warn of the dire consequences of breaking sexual taboos. Not only does sexual culture determine what people are supposed to desire and attain in their lives, it also tells us what to avoid and what is especially forbidden. As members of a community, we often become aware of the boundaries that have been defined for us only when we crash into them.

Sexual activity and health

Many scientifically reviewed and validated epidemiological studies have revealed the beneficial health effects of sexual activity. Komisaruk, Beyer-Floes and Whipple have reviewed these. For example, a ten-year follow-up study of male subjects showed a lowered mortality risk for those who had had at least two orgasms per week. In another male-focused study, the DHEA hormone released during orgasm was found to reduce the risk of cardiac disease. Among women, sexual abstinence has been connected to increased risk of heart attacks.

It has been suggested that sexual activity may lead to lowered cancer risk, because, in both sexes, it increases the release of oxytocin and DHEA hormones connected to sexual arousal and orgasm. Indications of this have already been seen in cases of male breast cancer, and prostate cancer has been shown to be less common among men who experience a higher frequency of ejaculations. The assumption is that this is a result of a reduction in carcinogens and stress that ejaculation brings.

Orgasm also reportedly eases menstrual pain and migraines. Vaginal stimulation has been linked to an increase in overall pain thresholds, and the greatest increase was found when stimulation resulted in orgasm. The pregnancies of women who remain sexually active during pregnancy are more likely to continue to term. Women who are sexually active and experience more orgasms while menstruating were less likely to suffer from endometriosis (growth of tissue that resembles uterine tissue in the wrong place).

Sexual behaviour may be a way to share intimacy and communion, a spiritual connection, or simply to have fun. Sexual activity and orgasms have been shown to reduce stress. In an orgasm, the oxytocin and endorphins that are produced create a sedative effect that helps people sleep. An orgasm a day may keep the doctor away!

The changing meaning of sexuality in the public and private spheres

Over the last one hundred years, the meaning of sexual issues has been completely revolutionized in the lives of Finnish people. It is true that people have always felt sexual attraction toward one another, but actual discussion about sexual issues only took place in the form of impudent sex talk among “the big boys”, as others listened on, red faced. Human relationships were closely controlled, particularly in small villages, where everyone knew each other’s business. In an atmosphere where virtuousness was cultivated, opportunities for forming sexual relationships were limited.

In the past, sexual matters often became current for young people only when they began dating a future spouse. Even though a third of all brides were pregnant before reaching the altar, most women had no other sexual partners before marriage. In its important aspects, marriage was essentially the agreement to share life with a partner and it offered social safety, income and labour for the family. Tenderness between spouses, if any, was concealed from the gaze of others – not to mention spousal sex. For inexperienced young people, sexual compatibility was luck of the draw. It was unseemly for women to publicly acknowledge a yearning for sex or pleasure. Virtuousness was to be guarded and projected from the outside world. Only in marriage did sex become acceptable; indeed, the church elevated marital sex to a gift from and a way of serving God.

An indirect indication of sexual activity among the population was that children kept being born at a rapid rate. One hundred years ago, Finnish families had an average of five children. As family planning gained ground, already in the 1920s the number of children declined to an average of three per family, and by the 1960s, to fewer than two per family. The introduction of new and effective contraceptive methods, birth control pills and IUDs on the market contributed to the latter decline. In practice, this spelled the end for the linkage between sex and reproduction. It also made it possible to begin discussing women’s equal right to sexual pleasure.

The positive meanings associated with sexual interaction were part of a certain kind of underground culture, transmitted either in secrecy or discussed with hypocritical disapproval. Folk culture transmitted and “archived” stories, anecdotes, jokes, manners of speech, and songs that carried a strong sexual undercurrent. In the public sphere, they were usually labelled obscene or depraved. Even though censored, folk poetry offered a gorgeous sampling of the sexual lexicon of the times. The collected tradition features sayings and various contemporary conceptions of topics like lust, “coupling”, cocks, pussies, sexual potency and the way children are made. Such folk wisdom was thought to offer valuable tips about things like avoiding conception or venereal diseases, and it was derived from magic and people’s life experiences.

Usually, folk traditions have been allowed into the public sphere disinfected of sex. In pre-19th century literature, sexuality was addressed only in religious and legal writings, and characterized by strict admonitions regarding whoring and depravity, incest and various “unnatural” acts. Until the 1960s, the educated classes were either silent about sex, or at most only ventured to make sexual allusions. Sexual guide books certainly discussed sex, but mostly in a tone of caution, giving rise to unfounded fears regarding, for example, the alleged dangers of masturbation.

It took until the 1960s for writers to dare to tackle the subject of sex in the same vein that people themselves had long spoken of it. Gradually, translations of erotic novels began to be available. Slowly, the written word was released from the ban on pornographic content. Illustrated pornography, on the other hand, continued to be rather strictly regulated until the mid-1980s. In the early years of the 21st century, standard pornography officially became a legal form of inspirational bedroom material. Yet, to this day, we continue to prefer roundabout wordings when discussing sex. Frank talk about sex is often seen as low-brow and uncivilized.

The culture of sexuality evolves driven by the public discourse concerning it. Whenever new information about sexuality surfaces, or when certain manifestations of sexuality begin to be viewed with greater tolerance, people re-evaluate their own relationship to these issues and sometimes also revamp their own sex lives.

Public discourse defines acceptable forms of sexuality and delivers disapproval for “unacceptable” forms, as well as for deeds that have been deemed illegal. In the West, an individual’s right to sexual self-determination now represents an important sexual standard, as long as it doesn’t conflict with someone else’s right to sexual self-determination. In our culture, sexual interaction occurs as the outcome of a negotiation between two individuals; society is generally unwilling to interfere with these mutual understandings and agreements. The lines are mostly drawn on a “just-in-case” basis, not because there is any persuasive evidence of the postulated harms.

The exceptions to the principle of sexual self-determination mainly have to do with children, certain individuals who are in treatment, and some commercial manifestations of sex. The mere fact of mutual desire does not necessarily confer acceptability on all forms of sex. The exceptions are justified with the necessity of protecting people who are seen as weaker, from experiences that might harm them.

Naturally, culture also shapes the ideals related to sexual interaction itself. Examples that emerged in the 1920s introduced the ideal of both sexual partners reaching climax simultaneously and the duty of the man to stimulate his female partner. Fifty years ago, people were being warned of the dangers of masturbation and of nymphomaniac women. It was also said that women got turned on slowly and viewed sex more negatively than men.

Some of the old claims have been called in question as new information has come to light; in particular, attitudes regarding masturbation have shifted from admonishments

to downright recommendations to engage in it. The conception of female sexuality has also undergone a complete re-evaluation. What used to be seen as an unpleasant marital duty for women has morphed into a positive opportunity and women's right to sexual pleasure. At the same time, women's opportunities for sexual pleasure have come to be an important measure of women's sexual equality.

The cultural significance of sexuality has been redefined. Most notably, what used to be seen as obligation has turned into a right. Definitions like this influence not only actual human behaviour but also the emotions that people associate with sexual experiences. It is no longer as necessary as it used to be to feel ashamed about a number of sex-related issues.

Over the last twenty years, the key shift in sexual culture in the West has been the opening up of the private sexual sphere into something that is now part of the public sphere. This is manifested in the public proliferation of images of scantily clad people, intimate stories about well-known personalities, and new technological breakthroughs in pornography (private webcams, annual sex expos and so on). Sex and nudity are a natural and everyday part of our public culture. At the same time, marriage and cohabitation have lost their power to determine whether a particular sexual relationship is acceptable or not. Sex is for everyone, even though not everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in it.

The seismic change in sexual culture took place when sexual knowledge moved away from the realm of sin- and morality-based teachings and took on the shape of medically informed risk analysis. The heyday of this transition was the 1960s. The priests and ministers and their oft-quoted proclamations were gradually replaced by physicians and other experts. Sexuality eventually became more of a public health issue. Simultaneously, with the move toward women's equality, one key question to emerge concerned the sexual rights of women. In Finland, the new public health legislation of 1972 established family planning services at health-care centres. Thereafter sex education gradually spread throughout the school system. Thus, the basic structures for the promotion of sexual issues had been created.

Michel Foucault has offered the criticism that our conceptions of sexuality were actually formed through medical texts, therapeutic manuals and self-help guides, which define what is normal and what is pathological in sexuality and sexual activity. Psychiatrists' classifications of sexual perversions have had numerous consequences and applications beyond medicine, in the fields of social welfare, education, criminology and sexology. The result is that sex has been bound up even more tightly than it was before with knowledge and power and people's internal self-control. Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are key arenas for the exercise of this power. We can see how closely connected power and helping someone can be, and the extent to which interpretations depend on the chosen frame of reference.

The foundation of sexual research

For as long as humans have had the ability to write, there has been written information about sexuality. Most of these texts have been moral and philosophical discussions on sexuality. They have also included contemporary sex manuals, the most famous, though not the oldest, being the Indian Kama Sutra. Many of the older writings contained plenty of useful information, but there were no systematic studies of sexuality.

In the late 19th century, medicine began to surpass religion as an authority in science in general, as well as in the area of sexuality, by scientifically examining sexuality as something that was seen as a natural part of us. Sex became a subject of medical research and early scientists like Richard von Kraft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis wrote about sexuality as an instinct-driven, inherited human trait. In practical terms, this was a theoretical shift from defining sex as “an evil” to sex as an “illness”. The sexologists of the time came up with a new hierarchical assessment of sexuality, including definitions of sexual perversions as manifestations of sexuality, which originated in biology. Sex by its nature was seen as an uncontrollable drive.

The view of sex as a drive or instinct has since been challenged and questioned in numerous studies and theoretical writings. Early research on sexuality began to appear in the 19th century in the fields of social science and anthropology, exploring the above-mentioned biological and medical claims. The studies theorized and proposed that sexuality could be reasonably seen as socially determined. Early research focused especially on ethnography. George Herbert Mead came up with an interaction theory, a radical challenge to the biological paradigm of sexuality. Medicine’s instinct-based view of sexuality was disputed in the 1920s by a number of sociologists at the University of Chicago, who posited that social constructs could produce particular sexual worlds.

In the 1920s, various surveys concerned with sexuality were already being conducted. They focused mainly on forms of sexuality that people found exotic, that elicited their curiosity, or that were considered neurotic or illegal. It was only later that people’s everyday sex lives became the subject of sexual research.

Also in the 1920s, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic model came to enjoy a position as the main reference framework that lasted for several decades – a great, successful orthodoxy in many fields, including anthropology, clinical psychology and some areas of political science, while it had relatively little impact in the field of academic psychology and sociology. The psychoanalytic model helped people to explain and justify their own sexual behaviour. New, competing viewpoints arose from within psychoanalysis, represented at first by Adler and Jung and later Reich, Fromm and Marcuse, the latter attempting to unite psychoanalysis and Marxism.

Albert Kinsey became famous in the United States in the 1950s with his sex studies. His perspective was still elementally founded in 19th century versions of the theory of evolution; his research methods removed sex from its social, psychological and cultural contexts and focused instead on the frequency, incidence and methods of sexual release related to sexual experience.

Kinsey and Freud shared a belief in the biological roots of behaviour (albeit employing largely different versions of biology) and both maintained a connection to the role of what was “natural” in determining the meaning of sexuality. For Freud, “natural” meant the biological necessity to procreate, and for Kinsey, “natural” was the variation that was found in evolution. For both, nature was at the centre of their argumentation, which made their work and viewpoints acceptable in the public eye. The cost was that both men interpreted sexuality through a narrow, biological perspective.

In the pioneering laboratory studies of Masters and Johnson, nature continued to play a prominent role. They proposed in their studies on sexual dysfunction that if inhibitions and conscious control mechanisms could be diminished, natural biological reflexes would set in and wake up sexual function. The idea was well suited to 1960s public opinion and the views expressed in the media at the time.

In the early 20th century, both the medical establishment and the church sought to find justifications for marital sex. Sex drive was viewed as something natural, an innate human characteristic. It was not acceptable to artificially compromise or arouse the sex drive, for example through the use of pornography. The idea of naturalness has since remained unverified in studies in the field. Sex drive has been something to control – either for our own good, to protect us, or to liberate us so that we can better actualize ourselves. Both conservative and liberal politicians have used these ideas for their own discrete ends.

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers combined, for example, Herbert Blumer’s symbolic interactionism with ethnographic research methods in order to study issues such as homosexuality, prostitution, nudism, striptease, and premarital sexual activity. In other words, scientists were still looking at special issues within the area of sexuality, not the larger general questions and problems of sexuality in individuals and couples. Studies from this period conclude that social factors not only shape sexuality but that it is the social that produces the sexual.

A particularly strong argument against the instinct-oriented viewpoint came in the 1960s from William Simon and John Gagnon, who crafted counter-arguments to the idea of sexuality being biologically determined. Their research also challenged Freud’s biologically founded basic therapeutic views (as well as those of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse). Simon and Gagnon were critical of the idea that sex was in effect repressed energy that contained potential that could be used toward revolutionary and various other ends. They proposed that sex plays an important

role in human relationships, because society has acknowledged and created that importance – not because of some compelling urge that derives from the biological origins of sex. According to them, it was thanks to all the restrictions and prohibitions that sex was so intense, so passionate and so special.

According to Simon and Gagnon, sex was not rooted in biology. Sexuality emerged and took shape through complex social negotiations and definitions. The researchers questioned the idea that sexuality was merely a characteristic of individuals. For them, sexuality was dynamic and connected to social interaction – it was in fact born in the interaction between people.

Simon and Gagnon saw human beings as acting out, in essence performing their sexual lives. They did not see a drive or instinct at work, but a kind of “script” that people applied in the different situations that emerged in connection with sex. A script consisted of internalized and typically repetitive models for interaction to be used in sex. Instead of sex representing a kind of uncontrollable energy, it consisted instead of actions that were regulated by social rules. The later theory of social constructionism was also founded on this idea.

The concept of sexual scripts or interaction models came out of the multi-disciplinary tradition that had preceded it. The thinking included symbolic interactionism, meaning that the self is created in the process of social interaction and reciprocal communication. Another role model was dramaturgy, rendering stories into practically applicable methods. Behind the idea of sexual scripts were also the systems of symbols in Kenneth Burke’s theoretical discussions as well as the Freudian perspective. Simon and Gagnon liked to use the language of dramaturgy to describe the stage on which sexuality was played out. For example, they viewed sexual foreplay as a type of drama that contained different rituals where one participant must respond to a move initiated by the other in a way required by the script.

Often, participants involved in sexual interaction do not share a common drama or “script”. The result may be discord. A particular gesture or move can be interpreted as ‘twisted de Sade’ or ‘soft, romantic “Love Story”’. If one partner misreads a gesture by the other by using the wrong script, this may complicate the couple’s interaction. Most mistaken interpretations are made at the early stages of a relationship. In some cases, mistaken assumptions may even lead to accusations of sexual harassment.

Throughout history, and to the present day, sexual research has been conducted in unusually difficult circumstances. It has not been very highly valued in scientific circles, and the field suffers from a lack of specialized funding sources. Researchers who undertake sexual studies and evaluate their findings often face prejudice and opposition. Frequently, the resistance is oriented in moral condemnation, but there are also those who disagree with sex research because of what they perceive as its excessive invasion into private life.

The basic tenet of sex research is that no moral condemnation should be directed at any sexual matter that a subject or interviewee brings up. In the course of history, some of the issues that have arisen would have constituted illegal acts. For the interviewees, bringing them up may be a freeing experience. The objective is to discover what people do in their sex lives, not to tell them what they should do. This neutral approach has received criticism particularly in the United States, when studying young people. Similarly, there have been attempts to limit funding only to subjects that involve the negative consequences of sexual behaviour.

Human sexual responses have been studied relatively widely in laboratory settings, where people's physiological and genital reactions have been measured as they receive various types of visual or auditory sexual stimulation. Such research has greatly increased our understanding of sexual responses and related sexual dysfunctions. The studies have also produced new knowledge about the subjective and physiological changes that have to do with functional and dysfunctional responses, as well as the effects of various medications and hormones on sexual arousal.

In Kinsey's research sex was mostly addressed in the context of marriage. Other sexual experiences paid homage to marriage through terminology: they were 'pre-marital' and 'extra-marital' relationships. During the 1970s, research into sexual behaviour began to finally dislodge from marriage, and reproductive health and contraception emerged as important issues. Homosexuality, anal sex and oral sex, on the other hand, still received scant attention.

In the era of AIDS, starting in the 1980s, homosexuality and anal intercourse became particularly visible topics. Studies began to look beyond marriage, paying more attention to the particular type and character of sexual partners and relationships. The focus was now on the different types of partners people had and on the various sexual expressions they used. Instead of the earlier moral condemnation, relationships began to be seen as health risks. Future research may be increasingly engaged in trying to define what constitutes sexual experience. For the majority, it will likely still be sexual intercourse.

Research on the subject sexual arousal has earned special antagonism. Many would like to think of sexual arousal in an idealized way, as a spontaneous expression of romance, love and intimacy. A topic like that is not seen as suited to scientific analysis. Arousal may not comfortably fit in with our idea of human dignity. For individual people, though, sexual arousal is a feeling that lifts them up, away from everyday life, makes sex something special, and leads to unique pleasure as well as the ensuing feelings of relaxation and wellbeing.

Is sex a biological drive, or is it a learned social characteristic of individuals and communities?

The fundamental nature of sex continues to sow conflict and competing viewpoints all over the world. In part, this has to do with the fact that so many sexual issues are used toward political ends. People justify their own objectives with views that support them, often ignoring extensive, well-proven research data and conclusions on the subject of sexuality.

Reiss argues that the intention of theories is to illustrate the ways in which we believe things function in our world. Theories also have practical applications. If we assume that people are able to make considered and responsible choices, it follows, for example, that effective condom distribution will increase their use. But if we assume that people can be led by their emotions, we can anticipate that even by distributing free condoms we will not substantially increase their use.

Earlier, we discussed the assumption that sexuality comprises a natural instinct or sexual urge. DeLamater and Hyde introduce that the philosophical application of this type of thinking is essentialism. Contemporary essentialist thinking involves the belief that certain events are natural, unavoidable and biologically determined. Scientific research approaches that employ essentialist thinking include socio-biology, evolutionary psychology, genetic research, brain research, and endocrinology.

In part, evolutionary research was a counter thesis to the theory of social constructionism, which began to achieve an important position in the 1970s.

The essence of social constructionism is that reality and sexual desire are socially and culturally constructed and fundamentally subjective. This viewpoint is critical of positivism (objective, empirically tested knowledge) and emphasizes language as an important tool in interpreting experience. Feminism often applies this framework. Because it assumes that men and women experience the same essential degree of sexual desire, the strong sexual desire that men feel has been interpreted as an expression of something non-sexual, for example a desire to exercise power. Studies on gender also involve a certain degree of cultural essentialism. In any case, explanations that originate in evolution and the social construction of knowledge have dominated sexual theory in recent times.

Darwin was one of the first researchers to abandon pure essentialism. His conception of the changes brought about by evolution was in conflict with essentialist thought, which was founded on the idea of an unchanging stasis. Socio-biology has since been defined as applied evolutionary biology, consisting of an attempt to understand the social behaviour of not only animals but also people. It presumes that natural selection leads to gradual change. In the process, only the animals that are able to adapt to their environment survive.

David Buss has crafted a slightly more complex theory of evolution in his sexual strategies theory. It is used to examine various strategies that particularly humans employ in short-term or long-term dating relationships. According to the theory, the strategies for short-term relationships are more common among men than women. Couple formation, again, is critical from the standpoint of reproduction and continuation of the species.

The preferences that have to do with people's attraction to one another are intended to maximize an individual's reproductive success and fitness. According to the theory, physical attractiveness, along with youth, is a key clue for men as to a woman's fertility. Women, on the other hand, usually seek a long-time partner who is willing and able to provide them with the resources they need to care and rear children. In the course of a short-term relationship, women are able to assess the presence of these characteristics in a man.

Evolutionary psychology has been much criticized for the assumption that it makes regarding the unchanging customs of couple formation. The critics have documented the changes that have occurred in terms of mate selection, marriage and behaviour outside marriage. The theory of social constructionism, on the other hand, has been criticized for assigning too-passive a role to individuals in relation to their environment.

Attempts to unite biological and social effects into a single theory have been resulted in social interaction theories. One example is the two-component theory of love and attraction. It posits that passionate love is born when two conditions are met simultaneously: a) A person is in an intense state of arousal and b) the individual connects the cognitive concept of "love" with the strong emotions he or she is presently feeling. In other words, for the physiological state (arousal) to lead to action, a positive cognitive interpretation is needed to make sexual action both permissible and desirable in the given set of circumstances.

In the bio-cultural view of sexuality, sexual desire is an essential product of evolution. The expression of sexual desire, however, is channelled through memories, situational factors and a cultural understanding of sexuality. This is how we learn, for example, which partners are suitable and which are "dangerous". Although sexual desire may be biological in origin, its expression is strongly socially conditioned and constructed. In this theory, sexuality is, as a matter of fact, a somatic response created by culture.

Parker and Easton present that, according to the theory of the social construction of knowledge, sexual activity, the associated identities, sexual communities, as well as erotic interests can be socially constructed. This model arises from the conception that sexual activity has varied social and subjective meanings depending on the cultural context in which they take place. Cultural and historical factors influence these meanings. From a critical standpoint, authorities produce and disseminate conceptions of sexuality that benefit their own positions of power.

Epidemiological methods of conceptualizing and classifying sexuality quantitatively do nothing to help us understand the meanings of sexuality. These meanings have a commonly shared, collective nature. They describe people as personalities who are bound by their particular social environments. The subjective experience of a sexual life is created in the interpretation and application of symbols and meanings connected to sexuality in one's own community. This perspective has spurred the study of various sexual subcultures. The rapid post-1960s changes that have taken place in the way sexuality and particularly women's sexuality are viewed in the West are seen as proof of sexuality being socially produced.

Earlier, I referred to Simon and Gagnon, who replaced biological and psychoanalytical theories of behaviour with their own theory of sexual scripts in the early 1970s. They claimed that people use their interactive skills and fantasies as well as cultural myths to develop these scripts (which offer clues about behaviour and provide appropriate lines to communicate in a given situation), which constitute a method with which people are able to organize their sexual behaviour. It amounts to a kind of role play. Even in terms of sexual desire, people learn the kinds of situations, circumstances and ways in which it can be expressed. Each situation shines against a historical backdrop that lends it a particular sexual meaning and provides clues for behaviour.

Simon and Gagnon gained much impact particularly among the feminist and gay movements, starting in the 1970s. Their theory is well suited to the observation and analysis of sexual interaction and of the established rules and models of behaviour that are involved in sexual interaction in society.

In addition to the above theories, this book will also introduce the economics-oriented social exchange theory. The theory analyzes social interaction through the associated costs and rewards. Interaction is continued when and for as long as its rewards for both partners amount to more than its costs. The reward may be a love relationship or earning positive attention for oneself.

In social exchange theory, sexuality is a resource that can be traded in for other necessary or desired resources, which can also be economic. The theory's framework provides tools to examine things such as how many and what types of resources people are prepared to invest in order to get sex in exchange. Paid sex is part of this exchange, but some degree, this type of trading is present in all couple relationships. According to social exchange theory, sex can be exchanged for, for example, love.

The data sources used in this book

This book differs from most other books on sexuality in that the data it draws from are founded on long-term, systematic research on the evolution that has occurred in Finnish respondents' attitudes regarding sexual issues and in their sexual experiences. The data derive from the so-called FINSEX survey, which has tracked Finnish sexual

trends since the 1970s up to the present. Some survey questions that map out sexual behaviour in youth yield data all the way from the 1940s, a wealth of knowledge that is unique even worldwide.

The first study in what is today called the FINSEX study was undertaken in 1971 by Kai Sievers, Osmo Koskelainen and Kimmo Leppo. They published the study's central findings in 1974 in a book on the sexual lives of Finns (*Suomalaisten sukupuolielämä*, in Finnish). Worldwide, it was only the second study on sexuality that was genuinely representative of the population of an entire country. The researchers also achieved an astonishing and still-standing "world record" in their response rate, thanks in part to formal home visits by nurses and midwives.

The 1970s study functioned as an inspiration and valuable source of information when designing the larger FINSEX study in the early 1990s. At that time, together with Elina Haavio-Mannila, I launched and implemented a research initiative at the Department of Public Health of the University of Helsinki, with funding from the Academy of Finland. The initiative incorporated a representative population survey on sexuality conducted in 1992, a study examining changes in the media's treatment of sexual matters from the early 1960s to the 1990s, and a project to compile Finns' sexual autobiographies which was implemented as a writing contest. The 1992 population survey was designed so that its central findings were comparable to the data in the earlier study from 1971.

When, in 1998, I transferred from the University of Helsinki to the Population Research Institute of Västoliitto (Family Federation of Finland), I had just received new funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to conduct a new population survey on sexuality. I implemented the survey with my long-time collaborator Elina Haavio-Mannila. The new data was gathered primarily in 1999. Again, the survey was designed to be as comparable as possible with previous studies. The limited funding precluded the possibility of using home visits by Statistics Finland interviewers to compile the data, as was done in 1992. Thus, the survey was carried out as a mailed survey, which reduced the study's response rate in comparison with the earlier studies.

In 2007, I was again granted funding by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to conduct a new sexual survey at the Population Research Institute of Västoliitto. This time I compiled the data on my own, with support from Statistics Finland and its researchers Päivi Hokka and Outi Stenbäck. The data gathering methodology was the same as in 1999, making it easier to compare the two most recent data sets. Compared with 1971 and 1992, the response rate was again so much lower that the comparability of the results has had to be analyzed very carefully.

Table 1. Population surveys of Finnish sexual trends in the FINSEX study:

Year	Authors	Age group	Sample size	Response rate (%)
1971	Sievers, Koskelainen, Leppo	Ages 18–54	2,152	91.4
1992	Kontula, Haavio-Mannila	Ages 18–74	2,250	75.9
1999	Kontula, Haavio-Mannila	Ages 18–81	1,496	45.8
2007	Kontula	Ages 18–74	2,590	43.4

Each survey's sample was drawn from the Central Population Register, so that all Finns have had an equal opportunity to be selected into the sample.

The generational perspective has been of paramount importance at all stages of FINSEX. This book continues the same practice, which has been found to work well. The study's respondents are organized into three age cohorts that are compared to one another as well as to earlier studies:

Young adult age group	Ages 18–34
Middle-aged age group	Ages 35–54
Older adult age group	Ages 55–74

The impact of the lower response rates in the 1999 and 2007 studies on comparability with the 1971 and 1992 surveys has been evaluated particularly by analyzing the ways in which people in a particular birth cohort have responded to the same questions concerning their own youth. The data collected in 1971 and 1992 can be viewed as representative because of high response rates. Possible differences in these findings in 1999 and 2007 thus manifest the selection of respondents on the basis of certain characteristics being studied.

One example is the reported age at which respondents said they first began to have sexual intercourse. People born in certain years may have reported in the 1971 and 1992 surveys that they began to have sexual intercourse at the average age of, say, nineteen. This result can be considered quite reliable and representative because of the studies' high response rates. The representativeness and comparability of the later studies can be assessed by verifying whether respondents who were born in the same years also reported beginning to have sexual intercourse at approximately nineteen years of age. If this is the case, there is no reason to assume that respondents have been particularly selected with regard to this particular issue at least. Similar comparisons have been done for many other research questions as well, some which ask about the respondents' entire life span.

The selection of respondents in 1999 and 2007 occurred in a very similar fashion, largely as a result of the same data gathering method (Statistics Finland mailed survey) and the same response rate. The representativeness and comparability of the data in relation to 1971 and 1992 data remained quite good, except in the case of male

respondents over the age of 55. Men in the older age group who were respondents in 1999 and 2007 reported experiencing sexual initiation later, on average, when compared with what their age cohort in earlier studies had reported, and they also represented the sexually monogamous relationship category. They had married their first sexual partner at rates that slightly exceeded that of other respondents, and had had fewer sexual partners in their lifetime, as well as a lower prevalence of parallel relationships. In terms of these issues, the 1999 and 2007 findings provide a slight underestimation of men above the age of 55, compared with the entire age cohort of people over 55 years of age.

Otherwise, the responses of men and women of different age groups were rather consistent with the results for men and women of the same birth year cohorts in earlier population surveys. The willingness to respond to questions probing sexuality did not vary greatly, then, on the basis of people's life situation or sexual interests.

In addition to the data from the FINSEX project, this book also compares data to population surveys conducted in eight different European countries, originally carried out for the purpose of exploring sexuality from the viewpoint of HIV prevention. These EU-funded NEM surveys are known by the full name of "New Encounter Module for following-up HIV/AIDS prevention in general population surveys". The entire initiative was coordinated by Michel Hubert in Brussels. FINSEX study was a collaborative Finnish survey to the NEM surveys, and therefore it is possible to adopt some data from these surveys for comparison. The surveys are described below:

Table 2. NEM surveys in 8 European countries.

Country	Year	Respondents	Response rate (%)
Norway	1997	3,723	37.2
United Kingdom	1998	2,935	77.9
France	1998	1,614	75.9
Portugal	1999	1,000	86.0
Switzerland	1997	2,777	68.9
Spain	2001	2,935	69.9
Italy	1998	2,603	80.9
Greece	1998	2,000	84.1

The aim of the NEM studies has been to compile representative population data from each participating country. The methods for obtaining the sample and gathering the data varied from country to country. In most countries, there was no available central population register, like there is in Finland. Therefore, in many countries the sample were selected from phone books and the surveys were conducted by telephone. As a result of the differences in samples and data gathering, comparing the results of the different countries is not entirely without problems. The results are also nearly ten years older than

those in the 2007 FINSEX study. There have, however, been no subsequent collaborative sexual surveys to produce more up-to-date, comparable European sex survey data.

Since the European surveys were mainly focused on HIV prevention, their data on sexuality is significantly more limited than in the FINSEX study. The NEM surveys inquired into respondents' latest sexual partner and intercourse with that partner in great detail. Some of the survey questions, however, were presented in the same way as in the FINSEX study, and for those items are comparable to the Finnish study. The comparable items concern attitudes toward sex, age of sexual initiation, sexual intercourse partners, frequency of sexual intercourse, and paid sex. The comparable age group is 18–49-year-olds in each country.

The results from the Finnish and the European population sex surveys are complemented throughout this book's chapters with previous qualitative research findings from the FINSEX studies as well as international research and literature in the field. A list of references can be found at the end of the book. Together, these sources of information offer a rich and multifaceted picture of Finnish sexuality and the manner in which it has evolved from a European and international perspective.

The study's findings will be viewed through several different theoretical frameworks on sexuality, discussed earlier in this chapter. They offer examples of the multitude of ways in which differences in sexual behaviour have been explained thus far. As the author, I take no stand within this book as to which theory best explains human sexual behaviour. The decision-making and responses that are involved in sexual situations are complex processes that have to do with a particular person's history, the interaction between partners, the social environment as well as cultural traditions. No one theory can simultaneously address and comprehensively explain all of these levels, but different theories do provide a framework for the research findings and make them more interesting to analyze.

2 MYSTERIES OF SEXUAL DESIRE

Sexuality is a central, innate characteristic of each person from birth. Its key component is our gender: how we ourselves experience our gender and how we are perceived at first as girls and boys, and later as women and men. An integral part of sexuality is also a rapidly emerging interest in one's own body and the different body of the other sex.

Out of the interest in one's own body and its essential difference compared with the other sex is born the interest in getting close to the other person and experience the pleasurable feelings that arise from the difference. Sexual interest produces the motivation, which intimately approaches the world of desire. We want, wish and yearn to experience sexual intimacy and pleasure.

So far, academic research has only rarely looked into sexual desire at a theoretical level. Nevertheless, sexual desire represents a kind of ideal case study through which to examine the synergy and interaction of biological and socio-cultural factors that are associated with sexuality.

Sexual desire and passion

The basic element of sexual motivation is sexual desire. Sexual desire means sexual motivation, which is usually manifested as desiring sexual activity and pleasure. In other words, we yearn for sex. Greater sexual desire results in more frequent and intense attempts to achieve longed-for sexual satisfaction. People may yearn for sex for its own sake or may use it as a medium to attain some other aim.

Sexual desire is conscious yearning for pleasure-producing sexual activity with the object of one's desire. Sexual desire can lead to rapid or gradual psychic arousal, subsequent physiological changes (rapid breathing and pulse, getting wet, erection), approaching the object of desire, physical contact that yields pleasure, and possibly resulting in sexual release. Sexual desire is also a key motive in forming short-term and long-term couple relationships.

Alongside the feeling of desire emerge sexual images, thoughts, dreams and fantasies. The aesthetic of the human body also produces sexual desire. Sexual motivation and desire drive us to seek, receive and evaluate various sexual stimuli. Desire regulates sexual arousal and enables sexual contact and interaction.

Apart from desire, another relevant concept here is sexual capacity, which refers to the maximum amount of sex of which a particular person is capable. A person with a greater capacity for sex is better positioned to have more sex, more frequently and with a greater number of sexual partners, and for a longer time. Desire and capacity are discreet concepts of sexuality.

Desire is close to the concept of lust, and when it manifests powerfully, it approaches the concept of passion. Passion is strongly felt desire that takes over one's thoughts and feelings. Passion is an irresistible temptation to throw oneself fully into enchanting, wild, and intoxicating experiences which may seem like they alone finally make life feel worth living. Passion may be in response to a metaphysical hunger to experience more. For some, passion instead looms as a frightening, primitive, subconscious and dangerous force that may seem to wrest control from the rational self.

An inevitable feature of passion is being aroused to the point of disorientation. In an aroused state, a person's psychological powers set fire under his or her biological potential. The more we think of the partner as the fulfillment of our sexual dreams, the more powerfully our passion and arousal swell within us. In other words, passion blossoms between the ears.

Passion emerges with the most absolute certainty when we feel that we have encountered our ideal partner. This partner represents an archetype or a veritable icon of the sexual ideal that a given person has formed out of the various clues obtained from his or her social environment. Such generalized ideals are manipulated effectively in the world of commercial sex. Thus are created the models for 'sexy woman' or 'hot guy' in our culture at large.

In extreme cases people strive to realize their lust and passion regardless of the objections of the object of their desire. Passion can become an obsession that fills one's mind and leaves no room for hearing out the feelings or desires of the other person. In choosing and approaching the object of passion and in responding to the feeling of lust, people frequently overlook their own previous resolutions and principles, social or practical barriers that stand in the way of acting out their feelings, as well as the relationship's potentially negative effects. A single momentous instance may surpass all of an individual's later life in its entirety. Feelings like this may also translate into sexual dependency or hypersexuality. In its most potent manifestation, the urge to act out desire may turn into an oppressive obsession.

Although people generally avoid risk taking, one could claim that the ultimate fascination and desire in the deepest recesses of people's life and dreams is the

longing for passion, the dream of an encounter that changes one's life in a single strike. People who have not experienced such rollicking emotion may wonder if there is something wrong with them. Are they too fearful and cautious to live fully and deeply, occasionally even at their full potential? The fear of passion is indeed a central aspect of our culture.

The fear of passion resides already in Greek philosophy and the teachings of Christianity. Plato pondered how much passion life should contain. He concluded that passion had no place in life, that it was insincere, painful and destructive. To attain happiness, people should reject passion. This view of Plato's has since had a significant impact on the status of passion in the history of ethics.

In more recent times, the denigration of the meaning of passion, or a downright fear of passion, have stemmed largely from the Christian ideology of love. This ideology separates the spirit from the body, and love from sexuality. Spiritual love, based on rationality, has been elevated to an ideal. This type of romantic love is not (cannot be) blurred by sexual lust. In this conception of love, the body as well as sexuality are secondary.

Critics of passion have claimed that passion is not love, because it is not subject to our will. Passion has also been branded as unserious, with no genuine intention to commit. It has been thought that the longing for passion rips people apart to a desperate degree. Some have feared that passion saps love dry and prevents people from encountering the emotions of others. They feel that people should proceed more distantly in relationships, and that people who refrain from sinking fully into the throes of passion in the early stages of a relationship will not see their relationship go stale at a later stage.

The relationship of spiritual and rational love to carnal passion is similar to that of eroticism to pornography. Eroticism almost exclusively emphasizes a spiritualized longing and desire, whereas pornography is focused on simplified physical fulfillment. As a matter of fact, eroticism constitutes what is conventional and in accordance with prevailing morals and customs. It is not necessarily even concerned with seeking physical fulfillment. Pornography, on the other hand, is concerned with immediate physical satisfaction. Many aver such frank physicality.

Some people have adopted an ideologically reasoned positive stance toward passion. For such people, life without adventure and risk represents a disgusting idyll of the petit-bourgeois; certainty and safety turn sexuality and eroticism boring. A passionate relationship shakes up a slew of other values as well and changes all of life. From this perspective, passion can be a revolutionary social force.

Archetypes of passion are particularly abundant in cinema. In movies, passion is often a vehicle to the fulfillment of dreams. Tales of passion are narratives of dependency, desire for lust, and feeding that lust over and over again. Movies also offer us a set

of instructions for expressing sexual feelings and interest, the art of seduction, and ways of touching another person. Films shape our fantasies. Private passion and desire become collectively shared, collectively owned.

The scripts in passion-films usually repeat the same pattern: giving in to the throes of passion becomes increasingly dangerous and leads to the death of at least one partner. Passion releases fierce and surprising forces and emotions, with unforeseen consequences. It is no wonder then if we connect passion with danger and death in our imaginations.

Passion tales often involve a depiction of the road from success to perdition. Frequently, the stage is set by raising the female lead on a high pedestal. Later, she gives in to an animalistic passion and greed. She then inevitably faces a descent into ruin, perhaps death in a gutter, or else undergoes an eleventh-hour rescue through religious repentance.

In men, an insane passion or profound desire toward a loved one signifies weakness and thus also leads to a man's destruction. We learn that being guided by emotions rather than rational thinking takes us to fatal waters. It is safest to think rationally and control our passions.

Movies serve up dangerous objects of passion that simultaneously shape our stereotypical conceptions of certain human types. Particularly dark, openly sexual women are representatives of peril and should therefore be avoided. At most, men may be permitted to have an adventure with this type of woman, as long they are careful not to take it too far. Blond women who don't make us crazy with passion represent spousal safety. Such generalizations are examples of some of the recurrent codes in the cinema of our Western culture.

Women too should avoid passionate relationships with men, because no-one is ever safe from the consequences of passion. Men who are ravaged by passion are Peeping Toms and stalkers and can make life a living hell. On the other hand, women who allow themselves to give in to a passionate relationship may suffer repeatedly because of men's unfaithfulness. And a woman who gives free reign to her own passion risks her very life. Who has the courage, then, to take a risk and truly give in to this kind of desire? Or is it the risk that makes passion so irresistible?

The origin of sexual desire

The examination of sexual desire has yielded a continuous polemic of its essential origin and its many meanings for human beings. The most popular subject of study has been the extent to which sexual desire is a product of biological or evolutionary development and to what extent desire is created as learned cultural values and behaviour patterns. According to the theory of evolution, sexual desire ensures the continuation of the species, and natural selection determines that men are more likely

than women to desire short-term sexual relationships. In the social construction theory of knowledge, male and female desire are deemed equal, and whatever differences there are in male and female desire are a product of learning and culture.

Evolutionists view sexual desire and the search for desire as an internal motivation. According to this view, even non-reproductive sexual behaviour represents surrendering to evolution, with the ultimate aim of increasing the possibility of fertilization.

Pondering the origin of desire is not only the purview of academic theoreticians, but it has important practical consequences all the way from education and treatment to legislation. The more biological desire is seen as, the greater the number of arguments on behalf of acting it out as well as for the necessity of restricting it. Where desire is seen as learned behaviour or as cultural embodiment, it is seen as something that can be influenced, and the possibilities of acting out the desire are not considered as important as in the biologically oriented view.

Among explanations of sexual desire, some focus purely on genes and hormones and omit environmental factors, while others see only social and cultural factors and pay no heed to biology. Generally, the scientists in these different schools of thought have very little tolerance or respect for one another's viewpoints.

Tolman and Dimanod introduce that, historically, sexuality has been depicted in various theories, studies and among regular people as an innate, unchanging and biologically determined drive. Philosophers and professionals have often analyzed the phenomenon of sexual desire specifically as an instinct or urge. The German physician Albert Moll divided sexual motivation into two parts: "detumescence", which was the drive to release sexual tension, and "contractation", which was the instinct to approach, touch and kiss the sexually stimulating object. In other words, the instinct existed both in the absence of an object as well in relation to it.

Although sexual desire has been restricted, celebrated, sublimated and labelled in various ways in different cultures and eras, it has nevertheless usually been assumed to be based in biology rather than society and culture. Sexual desire has been linked particularly to the function of hormones, such as androgens.

Hormones have been shown to be linked to sexual desire in many ways, also in animal studies. Spontaneous, strong sexual desire has been associated with hormone levels present in the sexual glands. Androgen doses have been shown to increase sexual desire among both women and men. Among women, variations in estrogen levels have been proven to be associated with a concomitant fluctuation in sexual desire. The differing sexual motivations between men and women have been explained by way of their different testosterone levels.

Androgen levels in women are substantially lower than in men. Women's high level of estrogen plays a role only on several days during each menstrual cycle, around

ovulation. Men's androgen levels are high on a steady basis. Compared with animal studies, men's levels have even represented maximum values in terms of sexual motivation. Women reach these levels only during ovulation.

No link from hormonal levels has been established to the arousal that results from erotic stimulation. The assumption has been that this type of arousal is more significant in shaping the sexuality of women than of men.

Sigmund Freud considered pleasure to be the origin of human life; it was the attempts to control pleasure both in private life and in society at large that gave rise to neuroses. Freud came up with a "biological" meta-theory in which biological instincts control pleasure. These instincts are focused on the body's vital pleasure-producing erogenous zones. According to Freud, the sexual instinct was the most important biological instinct. It focused on the genitals and produced the desire for pleasure.

According to Freud, pleasure relied on three cognitive meta-processes: the id (instincts), the ego and the super-ego. Which one won – whether it was the pleasure-seeking id or the reasoning ego depended on the strength of the inhibiting efforts of the moral super-ego, applied especially to the impulses for desire originating from the id.

Freud's importance in sexual desire was and is substantial, because the opportunity to act out on desire, in this school of thought, has been interpreted as a significant precondition for health. Yet this way of thinking has imprisoned people by their instincts, and has overlooked highly different growth and cultural environments. This assigns sexual desire with different individual and communal forms and meanings.

Following a disagreement with Freud, Wilhelm Reich took the necessity of acting out sexual desire even farther than Freud. In his view, sex served a deep, biological need to ease tension. Sexual arousal produced biological orgone energy, which was released through orgasms. Sexual repression that resulted from the adoption of norms regulating sexual behaviour resulted in neurotic behaviour, anxiety, and violence.

These and other biology-oriented ideas have produced claims and perusals of the absolute necessity of sexual release and pleasure, and of whether men have a greater need for sexual release than women. "Emptying the sack" has sometimes been considered a necessity and even assigned minimum requirements in terms of frequency. This idea has also spurred a dispute as to whether men have greater sexual needs than women.

In bio-cultural views of sexuality, sexual desire is fundamentally the product of evolution. It is channelled, regulated and constrained through memories, situational factors and cultural understandings. These border conditions offer hints and point out, for example, who is a suitable partner and of whom we should beware. According to this view, even if sexual desire has a biological origin, its expression is a soundly social construction.

The social construction theory of knowledge is in a way a counterpoint to the definition of sexual desire that is biologically determined. The theory explains the differences in men's and women's sexual desire as a consequence of different cultural and psychosocial processes that have socialized men and women to experience sexual feelings and events that are considered appropriate for men or women. The social construction theory of knowledge also highlights the political nature of such conceptions by making reference to various social forces that determine and maintain different definitions of sexuality in different cultures and times.

Analyses of educational materials used in schools have shown that schools have mainly discussed the sexual desire of men, not women. By disseminating the message that women's sexual desire is different and less significant than men's culture is producing a self-fulfilling prophecy. We will find out in the following whether research supports this assumption.

Manifestations of sexual desire

Sexual behaviour and sexual fantasies are shaped and transmitted through powerful cognitive processes. Sexual desire, on the other hand, is often (not always) more spontaneous, less conscious and associated with unconscious biological factors (particularly hormone levels). Sexual desire is therefore an especially useful study subject in attempting to discover how people's internalized socio-cultural norms regarding sexual feelings and experiences interact with the body's unconscious biological processes.

Sex researchers have been more likely to focus on measuring the frequency of sexual thoughts and acts in various cohorts, rather than on the meaning and subjective quality of sexual desire for people living in different social contexts and life situations. This represents an important challenge to the field of sex research.

David Buss has developed a sexual strategy theory applied from the theory of evolution. He proposes that desire is the basis for sexuality and mating. In couples, problems and violations of desire and fulfilment are among the primary reasons for incompatibility and conflict. When a relationship is a successful conduit for desire, on the other hand, a solid foundation for maintaining the relationship is formed and harmony between the partners is established.

In the sexual strategies theory, desire and fulfilment are closely related to various strategies for highlighting one's own attractiveness, retaining one's partner, and putting down competitors. These strategies are implemented in slightly different forms in both short- and long-term relationships. Sometimes the strategies are used to get rid of a partner. The sexual strategies theory also addresses conflicts between the sexes, reasons for the dissolution of relationships, and harmony between the partners.

If a man and a woman have similar sexual desires, the couple is able to focus negotiations concerning their interaction for other purposes. The partner who wants more sex is in a weaker position in the relationship, more dependent on the other partner and on the pleasure to be obtained through that partner.

Roy Baumeister has presented different manifestations of sexual desire in earlier studies. Differences in sexual motivation are manifested in how much sex a particular individual wants, the type of sex and partner, and the frequency of fantasies, masturbation, partners and sexual thoughts, as well as the willingness to make sacrifices in other areas of life in order to obtain sex, and other similar considerations.

Measures of sexual desire:

- Thoughts, fantasies and spontaneous arousal
- Desired frequency of sex
- Desired number of sexual partners
- Masturbation
- Continuous willingness to engage in sex
- Emergence of sexual desire in youth
- Seeking out experiences and initiating them
- Desiring a variety of experiences
- Investing resources for sex
- Attitudes that are favourable to sex
- Infrequent lack of sexual desire
- Self-assessed degree of desire

Earlier studies have shown that men think about sex more often than women, experience desire and spontaneous arousal more often, have more masturbation-related sexual fantasies, and more frequent and variable fantasies. Men have also been shown to desire greater frequency of intercourse in relationships, compared with women. Men have shown greater desire for a greater number of sexual partners, have also had a greater number of partners, and a greater number of parallel relationships. Men were also more likely to report having sex with a partner they just met for the first time.

Studies also show that men masturbate more frequently, exhibit a more continuous level of sexual desire even after a break-up (there is greater variation among women), and experienced the onset of sexual desire at a younger age than girls. Men also initiate sex more frequently, whereas women are more likely than men to reject sexual advances. Men show more interest in a variety of sexual experiences, including certain paraphilias (unusual objects of sexual interest).

Men use more money to purchase sexual products and aids. They also pay women for sex. They are more likely than women to risk a marriage for a parallel relation-

ship. These relationships have sometimes led even to political scandals and stepping down from a position.

Men exhibit more liberal attitudes about sexuality than women, particularly with regard to short-term relationships. The same applies to their attitudes toward infidelity, pornography, and prostitution. The only exception is in attitudes regarding homosexuality, toward which most men show no sexual interest. Women are more likely to fantasize about sex with another woman, whereas men view their own and their partner's genital organs more positively than women.

Sexual autobiographies collected in Finland in the 1990s often describe sexual images or fantasies. Men were much more likely to describe them. Among women, the images depicted a rich eroticism that was not dependent on intercourse. Women were more likely to dream of having sex with another woman, of bondage, and of making love in a romantic, exotic environment.

Similar dreams among men had to do with fantasizing about making love with a random stranger (a passer-by) and with recalling previous sexual experiences that had been very good. The sexual imagery of men approximated everyday life somewhat more than that of women.

In the sexual autobiographies, middle-aged women often dreamed of bondage, making love with another woman, or rape fantasies. Young women dreamed of sex with another woman, making love in a romantic, exotic environment, bondage, impersonating a whore, and being the recipient of sexual attention. The influence of pornography was apparent in the images reported by young women.

Men in the older age group reminisced especially about good sexual experiences they had had earlier in life, imagined having intercourse with just about anyone, or imagined how a particular sexual encounter would take place. Middle-aged men talked about sex dreams and described visually-oriented sexual events. Young men as well dreamt of making love with just about anyone and of being the object of sexual attention. Both young men and women were aroused by the idea of being desirable and of being the recipient of candid sexual propositions.

How much desire?

Desire is an individual characteristic and varies depending on the current partner and life situation. Some people have stronger sexual inclinations than others already as children, whereas some only learn to desire truly following a unique and arousing sexual experience. For many, desire fluctuates significantly at different life stages. For example, a new partner may ignite dormant desire into full-blown flame. On the contrary, ageing or widowhood may diminish sexual desire in the mind of an individual, even to the point of insignificance.

Our sexual desire can be activated by something we think, see, smell, hear, or touch – by an external stimulus, such as meeting a person we find sexy. Desire may also awaken through reminiscing about pleasurable experiences, imagining something one has not yet experienced, or through fantasies. The object of desire may be another person or it may also be oneself (masturbation).

It has been shown that, in women more so than in men, sexual desire often derives from a particular situation. In women, sexual arousal is more influenced by being subjected to particular sexual stimulation, internalized sexual scripts, and adaptation to particular psychological and socio-cultural situations and contexts. Men have been shown to be more likely to experience desire regardless of such situations or barriers.

Throughout the FINSEX study, respondents have been asked for information and their own assessments about the frequency with which they crave sexual contact because of sexual desire, as well as about possible lack of desire in the respondent and her/his partner.

The measures of sexual desire included in the FINSEX study (by year) were:

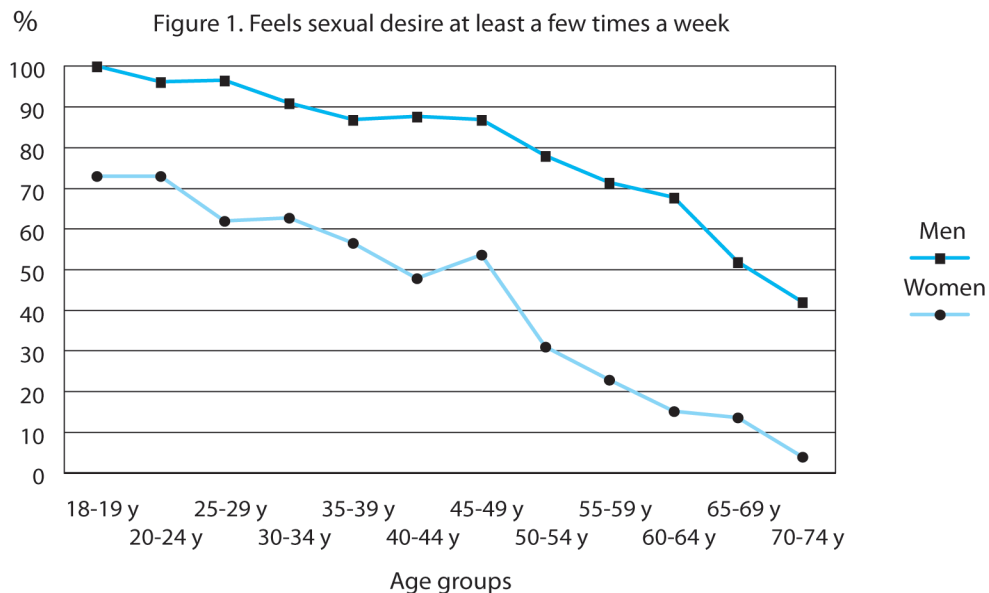
- a) Lack of own sexual desire (1992, 1999, 2007)
- b) Lack of partner's sexual desire (1992, 1999, 2007)
- c) Satisfaction with the frequency of sexual intercourse in the current relationship (1992, 1999, 2007)
- d) If respondent could choose, preferred frequency of sexual intercourse (1971, 2007)
- e) Frequency of sexual desire (2007)

Compared with Baumeister's list of indicators of sexual desire, presented earlier, this study utilized respondents' own assessments regarding sexual desire, preferred frequency of sex, and lack of sexual desire. The study also gathered data about the emergence of sexual desire in youth (sexual activity), attitudes that are conducive to having sex, sexual initiative-taking, and masturbation. We will look into the data in later chapters in connection with these latter topics.

In 2007, for the first time, Finns were asked to evaluate their own sexual desire in response to the following question: "How often do you experience sexual desire?" The framing and wording of the question were elaborated further: "This feeling (of desire) may entail a desire for sexual intercourse or other sexual activity, planning such activity, or frustration because of a lack of sex". Respondents were able to describe how often they experienced sexual desire by choosing one of eight responses, ranging from "More than once a day" to "Never".

The most typical response among both men and women was that they experienced sexual desire several times a week. In terms of frequency, this amounted to 14 times

per month. On average, men experienced sexual desire much more frequently than women, on average 21 times per month (medium value 12), whereas women experienced it on average 9 times per month (medium value 4). Young people, compared with older people, were much more likely to feel desire – men, on average, every day, and women, a few times a week. Nearly one in three young men, but only five percent of young women reported feeling sexual desire more than once a day.



Men in the older age group experienced sexual desire on average twice a week and older women slightly less than once a week. Nearly half of the women in this age group and less than one-tenth of men experienced sexual desire less frequently than once a month. For these people, sexual desire was an unimportant aspect of life, at least for the time being. They did not think about sex much, often because they had no regular partner.

Compared with young and middle-aged women, men in the same age groups experienced sexual desire twice as frequently. For men in the older age group, sexual desire was four times as frequent as for women. These gender differences in sexual desire are supported by earlier international research.

Among women, sexual desire was more frequently associated with whether they had a spouse or regular partner. For men, the frequency of sexual desire remained mostly the same regardless of marriage, cohabitation, living apart from a partner, or living alone (in the oldest age group, too few respondents were cohabiting or living apart to draw any conclusions). “Living apart”, here, refers to a regular relationship in which partners live in separate households (living-apart-together, or LAT, relationships).

Women living apart from a partner were more likely to experience sexual desire than other women. Single women were least likely to experience sexual desire. They were often missing an object of desire, without which they rarely felt sexual desire.

These averages describe a nearly three-fold difference (five-fold in the older age group) in the sexual desire felt by single men versus single women. It must therefore be challenging to match the sexual desires of available men and women who are interested in one another. Often, the prince really has to awaken the sleeping princess.

An interesting observation in terms of male and female sexual desire is that the level of desire reported by men is compatible with the level of desire in women approximately 20 years younger, and vice versa. This may explain relationships where an older man has found a much younger spouse. If sex and desire are important in this type of couple formation, the choice may not only be appealing on the basis of feelings, but also on the basis of rational reasoning.

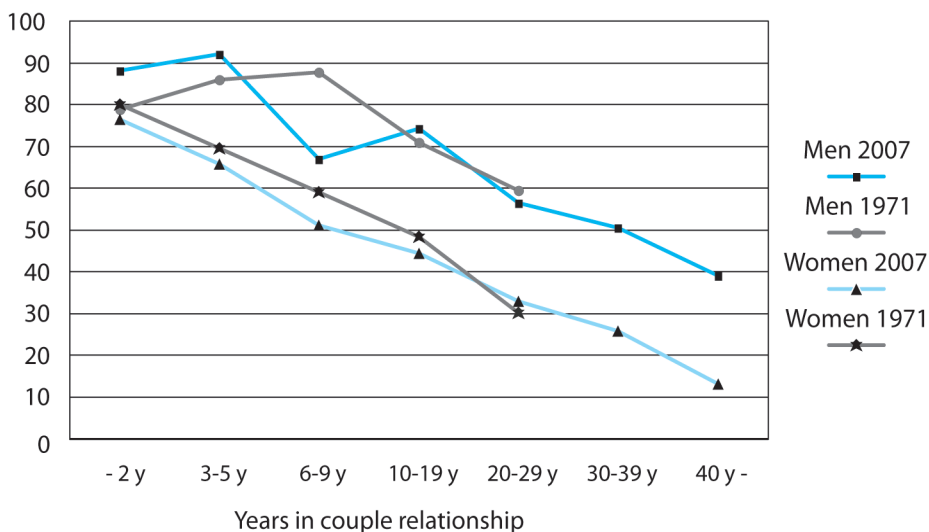
In this way, a young woman may get herself a partner whose sexual desire does not significantly exceed her own. Based on these averages, it would be much more difficult for an ageing woman to find a young man whose sexual desires are well suited to her own.

Interestingly, male and female respondents showed much less deviation when responding to a question about preferred frequency of sexual intercourse if they were able to choose the frequency. In this case too, men showed a preference for greater frequency, on average a couple of times a week, whereas women reported desiring sex on average slightly more than once a week.

Young women and young and middle-aged men reported preferring sex at least a couple of times every week. Middle-aged women and older men would have preferred to have sex slightly more frequently than once a week. Older women would have been satisfied with two or three times per month. In this comparison, too, men's preferred frequency of sexual intercourse coincided with the desires of women approximately 20 years their junior.

Half of all women and men desired sex at a frequency that coincided with the number of times per month that they reported feeling sexual desire. For them, sexual desire was compatible with their desire for intercourse. Women (one in four) were more likely than men (one in ten) to report wanting a greater frequency of sexual intercourse than their reported frequency of sexual desire. Half of the women who felt no sexual desire nevertheless wanted sexual intercourse. Perhaps they were taking the wishes of a partner into consideration, and not acting out their own sexual desire when engaging in intercourse. Nearly half of men, but only one-fifth of women, reported wanting sex less frequently than their reported frequency of sexual desire.

% Figure 2. If could freely decide, would like to have intercourse at least twice a week



Compared with women, sexual desire in men was more likely to represent more variant sexual desire than mere desire for intercourse. This may have resulted from men's experience of their own relationship (or lack thereof), where acting out their actual sexual desire through intercourse was not very realistic. As a result of the average differences in male and female desire, men were more likely to have been disappointed in fulfilling their desire for intercourse. Women were more likely to experience sexual intercourse when they desired it.

This experience gap between the sexes was also visible in responses to a question about whether or not respondents were satisfied with the frequency of intercourse in their current relationship. Approximately 60 percent of middle-aged women were satisfied with the frequency of sex in their relationship, but only a third of men of the same age felt similarly. Two-thirds of men and one-third of women would have liked more frequent intercourse. In other words, middle-aged women had been much more successful than men in satisfying their need for sexual intercourse.

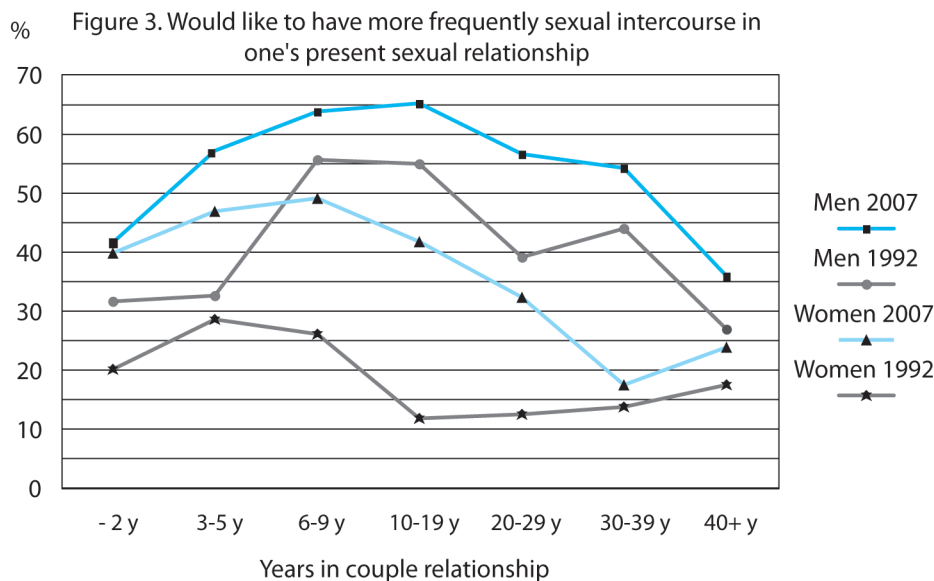
Among the younger generation, women's desire for sexual intercourse was realized more successfully than men's. Differences between women and men of this generation were, however, significantly smaller. A desire for more frequent intercourse was reported by 46 percent of women and 56 percent of men. Nearly half of older men but only a quarter of older women would have wanted more intercourse. It was only among young adults that men's and women's desires in terms of frequency of intercourse matched one another relatively well.

Men rarely wanted less sexual intercourse than they were having. Conversely, women who would have wanted a lesser frequency of intercourse made up 15 percent of

older women, 5 percent of middle-aged women, and 4 percent of young women. It seems that they had often engaged in intercourse only to satisfy a partner.

Between the early 1990s and 2007, a significant change took place in the proportion of women who longed for more sexual intercourse – it doubled in all three age groups. The change was more significant from 1992 to 1999, but the trend continued through 2007. The proportion of men reporting a desire for more sex increased as well, but only by about ten percentage points. Nevertheless, the proportion of middle-aged and older men who would have wanted more intercourse was nearly two-fold compared with women in the same age groups.

The increase in women who wanted more sexual intercourse can be an indication of a number of things. It could mean an increase in female desire. We will return to this topic in the next section by analyzing the changes that have taken place in the lack of sexual desire among women. It looks like the explanation is not in the increase of sexual desire among women. Another possibility is a lower intercourse frequency, which may precipitate longing for a return to a situation that better satisfied own desires. I will revisit this theme in greater detail in the “15 minutes of happiness” chapter. We will see that this may contain the answer for why women are now more often reporting that they would like to have more sex in their relationship.



A third possibility is that the gatekeeper's role in the relationship has shifted from women to men more than was previously the case. Thus, it could be more difficult than before for women to realize their sexual desires. This may be true of individual couples, but the growing proportion of men who want more intercourse indicates instead that no major changes have taken place in sexual decision-making in couples. A fourth option is that the external circumstances beyond the relationship have changed, and as a result, people have had less shared time and less energy left over for love-making.

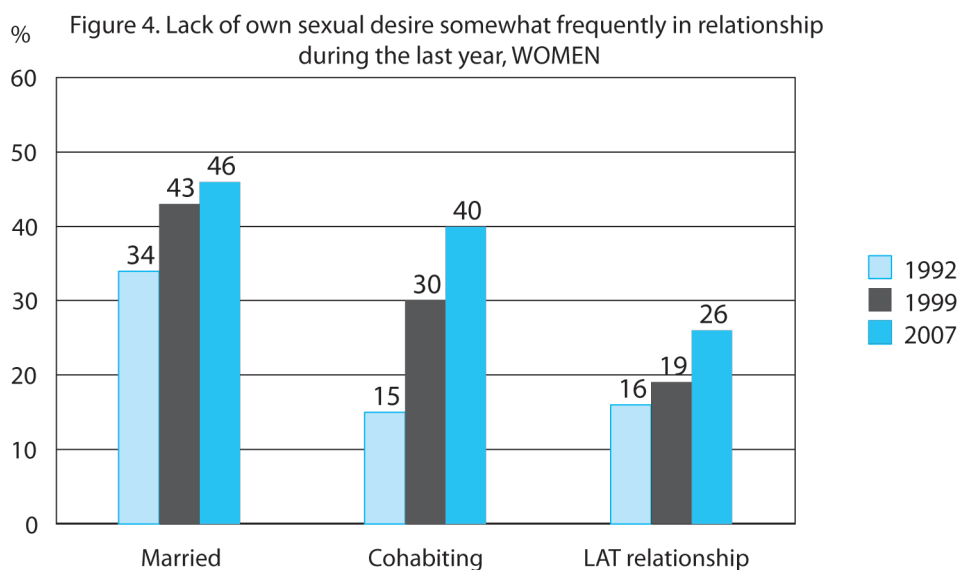
Slightly more than half of married men and one-third of married women reported a desire for more intercourse. Among cohabiting couples, approximately half of both women and men would have preferred to have sex more often. People in living-apart-together relationships were the most satisfied with the frequency of intercourse. Of them, approximately 40 percent of both men and women would have wanted more intercourse. In practical terms, the desire gap between men and women, when viewed through frequency of sexual intercourse, focused on marriage.

The desire for intercourse between married women and men differed to a substantial extent only in relationships that had lasted more than ten years. In long-term relationships, men were much more likely than women to desire sexual intercourse more frequently. On the other hand, the proportion of men wanting more frequent intercourse was highest in relationships that had lasted slightly more or less than ten years, and highest among women in relationships that had lasted slightly less than ten years. To the extent that sexual dissatisfaction is an important factor in explaining marital infidelity, this stage of marriage is a particularly critical period.

Lack of sexual desire is on the rise

The reverse side of sexual desire is the lack of desire, or libido loss. It is the most common sexual problem requiring counselling, treatment and therapy, to which too little public and private support and assistance has been available thus far in Finland. In relationships, the constant lack of sexual desire on the part of one partner unavoidably complicates the couple's communication and erodes the satisfaction that they feel with the relationship. Especially in new relationships, the perhaps unexpected lack of sexual desire in one's partner may easily lead to separation.

In 1992, 1999 and 2007, the FINSEX survey included a question asking respondents whether they had had a problem with lack of sexual desire in themselves or in a partner within the last year. Lack of desire was defined here as a problem, if a respondent reported that the issue arose at least fairly frequently, either in the case of the respondent him- or herself or in the partner. The introduction to the question specifically addressed the incidence of various sexual problems.

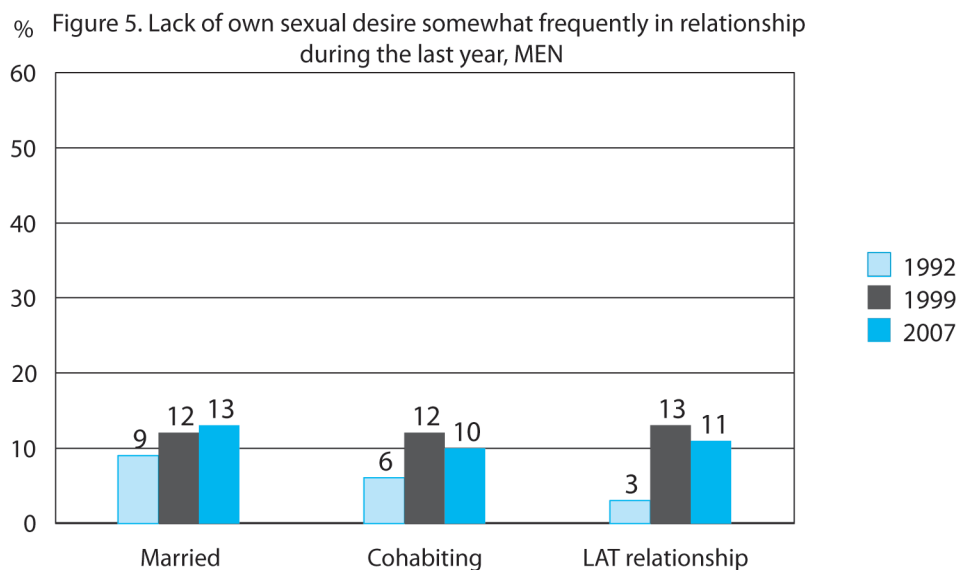


Lack of own sexual desire was significantly more common among women than men. In 2007, 41 percent of women and 12 percent of men had experienced lack of sexual desire at least fairly frequently. The reported prevalence of lack of desire increased among men and women between 1992 and 2007, but only among women did the trend continue also from 1999 until 2007. As a result, the desire gap between women and men has grown even more.

In a number of international studies, the proportion of people who have no interest in intercourse has fluctuated between 10 and 15 percent. In the present study as well, 14 percent of women reported experiencing lack of sexual desire very frequently.

Lack of desire was more common among older than younger people. In 2007, half of the women in the older age group and one-third of young and middle-aged women had been affected by fairly frequent lack of desire. Among men, the respective proportions were one-fifth and one-tenth. The effect of ageing on lack of desire was much less significant for men.

Libido loss becomes a social issue and is often a problem for anyone who has to contend with it in a regular relationship. In 2007, 46 percent of married women but only 13 percent of married men had found their own lack of sexual desire a fairly frequent problem. Those in cohabiting and living-apart relationships were experiencing lack of desire somewhat less. In all of the above relationship types, though, from 1992 to 1999 and further through 2007, the proportion of women experiencing libido loss was growing.



In relative terms, the largest increase in problems of lack of desire occurred in cohabiting relationships. Previously, cohabiting couples and living-apart relationships had featured the same extent of loss of desire, but recently cohabiting relationships have begun to resemble marriages in terms of lack of sexual desire.

Some of the men and women who experienced sexual desire at least several times a week also reported experiencing lack of desire. For example, eight percent of men and women who experienced sexual desire once a day had regardless also experienced fairly frequent lack of desire and considered it to be a problem. Nevertheless, actual problems with lack of desire focused on the men and women who experienced sexual desire less than once a week. In this group, slightly less than half of men and more than half of women reported a frequent problem with lack of sexual desire.

The responses concerning a partner's lack of sexual desire coincided well with respondents' reports regarding their own lack of desire, in the sense that men were more likely to report lack of desire in a female partner than women were to report lack of desire in a male partner. One difference was that women reported lack of sexual desire in their partner in exactly the same degree as men reported experiencing lack of their desire. In 2007, lack of sexual desire in the partner was a frequent problem for 13 percent of women and 25 percent of men. Although it occurred in greater proportion among partners in the older generation (16 percent of women and 29 percent of men), differences between age groups were not substantial.

Men reported a partner's lack of sexual desire significantly less frequently than women themselves reported feeling lack of desire. It seems quite likely that men were

not always fully aware of the lack of desire on the part of their partners, who had been able to conceal it from them. In this way, women were protecting their own sexual image in the eyes of a male partner and had avoided hurting his feelings with repeated complaints about not feeling desirous.

For women, a male partner's lack of sexual desire is easier to observe as a lack of erection (even though this is different than lack of desire), but for men, identifying lack of desire in a woman by how lubricated she is may be more difficult (especially when using lubricants). When a woman had not shared her lack of desire with a man, he had not always been cognizant of it. This serves as a good example of how partners do not always express or share sexual issues with one other, even within couples.

Married respondents were somewhat more likely to report lack of desire in their partner, compared with cohabiting and living-apart couples. In 2007, the figures for married women were 14 percent and for men 30 percent. Lack of partner's desire remained near 1999 levels, but in 2007, lack of desire was reported much more widely than in 1992.

In 2007, of respondents who were in couples, five percent were in a relationship where mutual, frequent lack of desire was present. Conversely, one in five relationships had never experienced lack of desire in either partner, not even temporarily. Others had experienced it on occasion.

In our society, sexual desire has become a rather essential component of a satisfying relationship. Lack of sexual desire in one's partner has ended many relationships or led the partner with more sexual desire to seek compensation for the perceived shortcomings or deficiencies in temporary or long-term parallel relationships.

Lack of sexual desire is one of the central areas in the treatment of sexual dysfunction. Pharmaceutical companies compete to develop various products to enhance sexual desire. Desire is being molded into a commercially regulated subject. Perhaps the end result is that it will be taken more seriously as a social issue. The greater the economic interests associated with desire, the more seriously the thematics of desire will be viewed in society. This has already happened in the case of male erectile dysfunction with drugs for its treatment flooding the market.

It is surprisingly common for people to experience lack of sexual desire even in new relationships. This is not, therefore, only about the boredom that sets in in a longer relationship. One in ten men and women noted recurrent lack of desire in their partner in relationships that had lasted two years or less. In addition, one in four women in short relationships reported experiencing recurrent lack of desire.

Among men in long-term relationships lack of sexual desire has not changed much in contrast with short-term relationships, as reported by both men and women. Approximately 15 percent of male and female respondents in relationships that had

lasted more than three years reported this problem in men. The rate did not deviate significantly even in relationships that had lasted more than 40 years.

Female lack of desire was significantly more common in relationships of more than five years. Men reported it in one-third of their female partners and women themselves reported it at a rate of about 45 percent. According to the responses of women themselves, more than half had trouble with sexual desire in relationships of more than twenty years. Contrary to popular belief, the duration of the relationship did not significantly affect problems with lack of desire, regardless of gender.

Lack of desire and the impact on relationships

Loss of sexual desire, whether in oneself or a partner, was strongly associated with the feelings respondents had about their relationships. Loss of desire had no impact on whether one shared a feeling of love with the partner, but it did affect assessments of relationship happiness. The proportion of men who considered their relationship very happy was substantially lower when a partner repeatedly experienced lack of desire (17 %), compared with no reports of such problems (47 %). Among women the respective figures were 24 and 40 percent. Only five percent of male and female respondents, however, considered their relationship unhappy even in the presence of problems with a partner's sexual desire.

Libido loss in oneself or one's partner was linked directly to how easy or difficult it was to discuss sexual matters with the partner. It is impossible to say to what extent lack of desire resulted from a problem in communication, or to what extent the lack of desire itself had made talking about sex more difficult. Where lack of desire was present, approximately 40 percent of both men and women had found it difficult or awkward to discuss sex with their partner. When a partner suffered from lack of sexual desire, the proportion of respondents who found it easy to talk about sex openly declined from 58 to 17 percent among men and from 44 to 17 percent among women – this in spite of the possibility that discussing the topic might have alleviated lack of desire.

There is a frequent assumption, or at least a wish, that the problem of loss of desire in a relationship can be compensated by other forms of closeness and touching. This study, unfortunately, reveals that in most cases the opposite is true. The proportion of respondents who felt there was too little intimacy and touching in their relationship was significantly higher among those relationships where one partner was experiencing lack of desire. In these cases, the share of respondents who found there to be too little physical closeness in their relationship increased by as much as from 9 to 61 percent among men and from 18 to 54 percent among women.

Problems with loss of sexual desire also reflected on how important sex was considered for relationship happiness. If a respondent's partner had experienced lack of desire, 26 percent of men and 42 percent of women did not consider sex very

important for relationship happiness. Of other respondents, only 8 percent of men and 18 percent of women felt the same way.

Not all relationships were similarly affected by loss of desire in oneself or one's partner. Among both genders, one-fifth of respondents found their relationship very happy in spite of recurrent lack of sexual desire. Even here, approximately 15 percent of women and men found it easy to talk about sexual matters. About 40 percent of those who experienced lack of desire themselves, or in their partner, reported having the right amount of closeness and touching.

The link between loss of sexual desire and other life factors

Earlier studies have identified a number of factors that are linked to a decrease in sexual desire: long marriage, dissatisfaction with one's partner, large number of children, and financial worries. Pregnancy and childbirth have also sometimes been observed to have long-reaching consequences for a woman's sexual interest.

Sexual desire has been shown to decrease in approximately one in two women during the third trimester of pregnancy. It becomes more difficult at the same time to have orgasms. Three months following birth, one in four or one in two (depending on the study) women have shown decreased sexual desire. Six months following birth, the proportion still ranged from one in five to one in three. Factors linked to decreased sexual desire post-partum include higher education, psychological symptoms experienced during pregnancy, and concern about the effects of pregnancy.

In this study, the factors behind lack of sexual desire included various problems in the respondent's own life or in the relationship. Approximately one-third of desire problems among men were associated with some illness that interfered with sex. Among women, one in five suffering from lack of desire had had some detrimental illness.

People with psychological problems and pressures were most likely to experience lack of desire. According to this study, this link only accounted for about 10–20 percentage points. Other factors associated with lack of desire included alcohol use, childlessness, or a small number of children.

Respondents who experienced lack of sexual desire were more likely than others to have problems with arousal: in men, problems with getting an erection and in women, getting wet. One-fifth of men who had suffered from repeated lack of desire also experienced problems getting an erection in sexual intercourse. One-third of women who experienced loss of desire also had repeated problems with vaginal lubrication. This issue only affected a few percent of the women who had no trouble with arousal.

The difference between people who repeatedly suffer from lack of sexual desire and others is essentially that the former were much less likely to have found sexual relations in general and their last love-making sessions pleasurable and enjoyable. Only one in four respondents who suffered from lack of desire found sexual intercourse very enjoyable, whereas the proportion among other men and women was two-thirds. Part of the missing pleasure was the outcome that among those who had problems with desire, one in two women and one in ten men did not have an orgasm the last time they had sex.

Among those who suffered from reduced desire, the quality of sexual intercourse had been eroded by more monotony in terms of intercourse methods, shorter intercourse, and, especially, dissatisfaction with the speed of sexual response in the partner. One-third of women with lack of desire frequently considered the partner's performance too fast, and one-third of men found their partner too slow to climax. Sexual disappointments with a partner had clearly diminished people's zeal for sex.

As is both understandable and expected, lack of sexual desire was related to how welcome a partner's sexual initiatives were. Two-thirds of men but only one-third of women experiencing lack of desire reported generally accepting their partner's initiation to have sex. Among other women and men, nearly everyone reported doing so. If the problem was a partner's lack of desire, sex that was initiated by that partner was received with even greater enthusiasm than among male and female respondents whose partners had no significant problems with libido loss.

People who suffered from lowered libido also assigned a lesser value to sexual desire, or experienced frequent frustration and anxiety over the issue. Two-thirds of women who suffered from loss of desire thought that wanting sex constantly was either perverted or sick. The proportion of other women who felt the same was 40 percent. Among men such thoughts or opinions were less frequently associated with lack of desire. One-third of men suffering from lack of desire considered a constant desire for sex perverted or sick, whereas the rate among other men was one in four.

Lack of sexual desire affected respondents' sexual self-confidence and self-awareness. Only a minority of those suffering from lack of desire – 28 percent of men and 15 percent of women – considered themselves sexually active. Also, three-quarters of men and women did not consider themselves sexually very skilful. Only less than half of those not affected by lack of desire suspected the same. With regard to respondents' views regarding their own sexual attractiveness, lack of desire had little impact.

Lack of sexual desire in one's partner seemed to have little to do with respondents' own sexual self-confidence. It seems that respondents did not connect lack of desire on the part of a partner to themselves, but viewed it as a characteristic in the partner specifically.

Sexual desire or lack thereof affects sexual life in many different ways, which we will discuss in later chapters of this book.

3

WHAT CONSTITUTES 'ACCEPTABLE' OR 'PERVERTED' SEX?

There is no behaviour to which we do not apply social and moral judgment. This is especially true of sexual behaviour. The social dimension and all of its meanings and valuations which “coat” sexuality also coat its biological dimensions. Most explicitly this is realized and experienced by those who deviate from the accepted sexual customs of a particular community or society. In the moment of discovery, society’s hidden and sometimes unconscious rules and sanctions come to light.

The covert justifications for regulating sex

Rules that govern sexuality are shaped powerfully by the fact that sex has always been used as a tool of social exchange. The most glaring example of this is human sex trafficking, but even the basic social institution of sexuality – i.e. marriage – is built on sexual exchange. Throughout the history of the world, families and parents have conducted commerce with their own children. The value of the goods has been evaluated on the basis of not only their attractiveness as well as the size of the dowry, but also, in particular, the guarantee of virginal purity of the goods.

In transactions like these, both parties have created sets of rules to ensure the sexual exclusiveness that is entailed in the deal. As a result, the sexuality of children and young people has been the object of particular moral review and punitive threats. Because commercial justifications for purity would have an ethically unpleasant ring to them, rules and sanctions have been exalted by making reference to the teachings and sanctions of the church and later also to psychiatric argumentation. The views of young people have not been solicited – they have been the targets and often also the victims of these rules.

Another guiding line that influences the moral and social regulation of sexuality stems from the requirement that semen should be restricted only to reproductive purposes – a requirement that is remarkably similar in a number of religions. This ancient idea was cut and pasted into Christian ideology as well. As time has passed, the justification has gradually become blurred, and people have sought other rationalizations for the old premise. This reflects the general attitude toward the social regulation of sexuality: keep the old rules, but find new rationales for them that better suit the present place and time.

In the West, during the 19th century, Pfaus has presented that a certain renaissance occurred to bring back the idea that the central purpose of sex was procreation. This gave birth to the concept of the reproductive instinct and the newly launched requirement for men to spread their semen. Forms of sexuality that conflicted with this, including masturbation, homosexuality, sex with animals, and fetishes were designated as either the symptoms or consequences of psychological disorders. Sexual behaviour that was for pleasure instead of procreation, such as sex with a lover or prostitute, was seen as immoral but generally not a sign of mental depravity. Even these behaviours contained the possibility of reproduction, whereas depravity was to waste semen on pleasure alone.

These two basic principles of the social regulation of sexuality – guaranteeing sexual exchange and saving semen for reproductive purposes – were complemented by a socio-political element. In order to safeguard the children who were born, sexual activity ought to be restricted to marriage only. Other forms of sex should mostly be banned and sanctioned. In marriage, however, sex was put on a pedestal as a ritual of reproduction.

One manifestation of this ideology has been the enactment of sex as a marital obligation, much as the Christian church has instructed us. About one hundred years ago, the idea of this duty began to be tempered somewhat, and reproduction was adorned with more elevated aspirations. Marital intercourse was established as a rite to honour God, and at the same time, marital sex was introduced as salutary to the health of the spouses. This view was an interesting prelude to the expansion of the authority of medicine in regulating sexuality in society.

Tolman and Diamond have argued that long ago, Islam determined that female sexuality was dangerous, because God had given women nine of the ten parts of sex, leaving men with only one. Many Muslim communities have even directed the removal of the clitoris as a way to control dangerous female desires and means to avoid the social chaos caused by women's potent sexuality.

In general, Western cultures have condemned sex whereas Muslim cultures have judged women. In the West, people have emphasized women's passivity and relied on their internalized system of sanctions that prevent them from engaging in sex before marriage and steer them away from marital infidelity. In Muslim cultures, on the other hand, women's sexuality has been seen as active and aggressive, and it has therefore been controlled from the outside with veils, perpetual monitoring, and severe punishments for actual or suspected infractions of female virtue.

In Finland, too, the limits of acceptability in sexual matters have been primarily defined, monitored, and sanctioned by the Christian church for as long as its sphere of influence has extended here. For centuries, the teachings of the Christian church have strived to restrict sex to marriage only, and even there, only for the purpose of reproduction. Beyond unmarried sex, also sex where the semen did not end up in

the vagina (oral sex, anal sex, sex with animals, coitus interruptus) used to be on the church's list of forbidden items.

Later, the church began to treat sex as a marital obligation, and sex became one of the integral features of marriage. It was natural and healthy to enjoy sex with (only) one's spouse. In marriage, the spouses owned each other's sexuality and body. In Christian marriage, infidelity was controlled by the community, and the sanctions for women were much harsher than for men.

Gagnon has argued that the church has been forced to seek new justifications for sexual morality, as sexual radicals in different periods have challenged and questioned the church's sexual morals and teachings. The basic drive has been to grant individuals the right to determine their own sexuality. Sexual utopians of the early 20th century, for example, believed that disturbances in the sexual instinct will vanish as natural sexual energy is released, and that sexuality will enable greater self-actualization. It was asserted that people were repressing themselves with their excessive sexual restraint.

In a more radical view, the liberation of sexuality was seen as the foundation for freeing people from the binds of capitalism and the distortions of free human relationships that originated in the nuclear family. Liberated sex was presented as a necessary counterforce for an economic revolution, by helping to free people's consciousness. Such utopian sexual ideas were implemented to some extent following the rise of Communism in Russia. They were later abandoned, because even individual sexuality had to be reined in to serve the Soviet Union.

Sexual conservatives have always wanted to protect people whom they have seen as weaker and more gullible than themselves, including the lower classes, women, and children. Conservatives have attempted to prevent the target groups from being exposed to sexually damaging ideas and materials. This attitude was the justification for various kinds of sexual censorship as well as for the media's treatment of sexuality in the 20th century. This kind of conservatism continues to be vital in Finland to this day.

The questions of who it is acceptable to have sex with, in what ways, what circumstances and with what consequences are never simple. Transformations in sexual and inter-sex relations have always reflected broader societal shifts in politics, economy and culture. Since the 1960s, the most important forces for change in terms of sexual morality have been the sexual revolution, feminism, gay liberation, and the human rights movement. Campaigns for the availability of contraceptives and abortion, for example, have been based on a growing theoretical understanding of female sexuality and traditional gender roles.

Gagnon concludes that in the West, major structural forces for a changing sexual morality have manifested in substantial waves of migration to urban areas and the erosion of familial and community control over dating and pre-marital behaviour.

Other forces for change include a broader public acknowledgement of the meaning of romantic love as well as a democratic belief in an individual's right to choose his or her partner. Together, these factors have changed the way communities control sexual relationships, especially before marriage. In cultural terms, this applies not only to the norms but also the general images that we associate with good and bad behaviour, with things to strive for and the things to avoid.

The values that are related to the sexuality of young people have been in a state of transition in the West. The marriage institution has new competitors, especially in youth, and the sexual rights of individuals are being emphasized more than previously. Cultural changes in values are also reflected onto public opinion regarding youth and sexuality. The field of international sex research has also begun to address the concept of young people's sexual rights.

Today, we try to instil sexual morality in children in particular. Children learn from their environment to identify the array of feasible or unfeasible forms of sexual behaviour, some of them having to do with nudity, touching, and modesty. Gradually, children learn to identify and discover the routes that the culture offers into the world of sexuality: falling in love can be a sufficient, accepted justification for taking down the social barriers that stand in the way of intimacy and touching. This initial discovery is later complemented by rules, values, and behavioural options that are learned through friends. This is when people learn the gender-specific expectations regarding sexual initiatives.

For girls, learning how to play the ideal role may mean applying in practice the role of gatekeeper of sexual experiences, which is ill-suited to the pursuit of sexual pleasure, even through masturbation. Instead of gaining sexual competence, girls often begin to dream of motherhood. Falling in love, then, represents the only available doorway to sexual experimentation. Boys, on the other hand, associate intimate relations with, for example, the sexual meanings and fantasies that they learn through masturbation. Reconciling these two very different sexual worlds is challenging as people begin to mature.

What is acceptable for young people?

We will start out with the prohibition on pre-marital sexual experiences that is at the core of sexual regulation; in practical terms in today's Finland, this means sex before cohabitation. This attitude was strongly influenced by the sexual revolution of the 1960s and early 1970s, which emphasized the right of women and young people to sexual self-determination. It reduced the influence of families in mate selection and sexual initiation. Women's expanding education and participation in the labour market also made them more independent. Marrying to make one's family happy was no longer as necessary for women, even from an economic standpoint.

When the first study on sexuality in Finland was conducted in the early 1970s, respondents comprised people under the age of 55, who had internalized a substantial portion of their sexual values in the 1940s and 1950s. The value system of their youth was manifested especially in their attitudes toward the conditions they set for sexual activity among young people. What also emerged was how seriously women had taken it upon themselves to control and monitor young people's sexuality. Women's attitudes toward youth and sexuality were much stricter than men's and they also controlled young people's sexual lives to a greater extent. This monitoring of the modesty of the young probably also reflected these women's own experiences of the kinds of fates that would have met especially young women who had not obeyed such controls.

In 1971, 58 percent of women and 32 percent of men were still of the opinion that sexual intercourse between young people was not acceptable, unless there was at least the promise to marry. Among women who were young in the 1940s, 77 percent and of men 49 percent, demanded that young people should not have sex unless they were committed to marry. In later studies, the proportion of respondents who have shared this opinion has utterly crashed. Only about ten percent of women and men have since felt that commitment to marry is required for young people to have sexual intercourse. These people tend to consider the role of religion very important in their lives, and their attitudes retain old Christian moral principles.

In the 1990s and early 21st century, Finnish attitudes regarding the acceptability of sexual relations between young people have remained fairly constant. Of women and men, approximately four-fifths approved of sexual intercourse among young people if they were in a steady relationship. As an institution, a steady relationship replaced the earlier commitment-to-marry requirement. Now that the promise to get married has lost its meaning also in the sense that young people no longer marry as often, instead moving in together to cohabit, a steady relationship now means a promise to consider moving in together.

One essential difference between men and women remains and has even been highlighted. It has to do with the values regarding sex and young people. Of men, nearly one-third, but only one-tenth of women, view intercourse among young people acceptable after just a few dates, in other words, without any steady relationship. Women continue to set stricter rules on sex between young people. In 2007, the gender difference was still sizable among respondents 35 and younger. Of them, 39 percent of men but only 14 percent of women considered it acceptable for young people to have sex after only a few dates. Among young men, the proportion was the same as in 1999, whereas among women it was five percentage points less in 2007, indicating a slight trend toward increased conservatism in the attitudes of women.

Apart from stronger opinions related to the necessity of being in a steady relationship, women also set harsher conditions on age. Three-quarters of women did not find sexual relations acceptable for young people, if they were 14–15 years of age, and

two-thirds of men who condoned sex between young people in steady relationships agreed. In addition, as expected, very few respondents who only approved of sex between young people with the intention to marry found sex acceptable for young people under the age of sixteen, even if they were engaged.

One-third of the men and one-half of the women who thought it was acceptable for young people to have sex after only a few dates also found it acceptable for young people aged 14 to 15. They may be viewed as especially liberal regarding the sexuality of young people.

In 2007, only 23 percent of men and 13 percent of women approved of sex between two teenagers aged 14–15. Respondents 35 and under were more understanding: 43 percent of men and 28 percent of women thought that sex between teenagers was acceptable. Respondents whose attitudes were entirely negative with regard to teenaged sex accounted for 45 percent of women in all age groups and 30 percent of men of all ages. These attitudes had become more conservative, to the tune of several percentage points, between 1999 and 2007. The religious convictions of respondents heavily influenced these views.

In contrast to these attitudes, practically one-third of all teenagers today have experienced a sexual relationship by the age of 16. For young people, this is normal, even as a majority of adults do not seem to approve. Hence, we continue to live in a time when adults' attitudes toward sex between young people are more stringent than what young people do and experience in real life. Teenage sex before the so-called age of consent (16 years in Finland) remains a major taboo for grown-ups.

Tolerance for sex between adolescents was compared to six other European countries in the 18–49 age group using the NEM surveys. The six countries were Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece Portugal and Norway. Most are in Southern Europe, where the sexual initiation of young women has been more bound up with marriage than it has been in Finland and Norway, and where a sexual double standard has had a much stronger hold. In practice, young men have been permitted significantly greater sexual freedom than young women.

The comparison yielded some surprising results. Finns turned out to have the most conservative views regarding sexual relations between adolescents. Of men in other countries, an average of approximately 60 percent tolerated sex between teenagers, whereas only approximately 40 percent of Finnish men did. About 40 percent of other European women approved of sex between teenagers, but only about 20 percent of Finnish women did. The figures were higher in the youngest age groups, and every country's youngest respondents were more likely than middle-aged respondents to approve of adolescent sex. In the other countries, of men aged approximately 20 years about 70 percent found sex between teenagers acceptable, but only 50 percent of Finnish men around the age of 20 agreed. The respective figures for young women

were approximately 60 and 40 percent. In other words, even in the youngest age group Finland stood apart from the other countries.

In Norway, the conditions and the culture are so similar to Finland's that it could be assumed that attitudes toward sex between adolescents are very similar. Among male respondents Norway was somewhere in the middle, near the average for all countries; there too, teenage sex was tolerated at a far higher rate than in Finland. Norwegian women of all age groups approved of teenage sex at rates that were 10–20 percentage points more favourable than in Finland. Norway, together with Greece and Finland, formed a trio of nations where women had greater reservations about sex between teenagers than women in the other countries included in the comparison. The most favourable attitudes toward sex between adolescents were found among women in Switzerland. In the case of male respondents, no single nation emerged above the others. Finland distinguished itself with its more stringent attitudes.

A third question in the FINSEX study to address attitudes and beliefs regarding sex and young people was one that asked whether respondents thought that school sex education encouraged young people to start having sex too early. In addition to 2007 results, comparative data from 1992 was also available.

Women had a slightly more positive view of school sex education than men. Sixty-one percent of women and 52 percent of men did not believe that sex education in schools enticed young people to start having sex too early. Sixteen percent of women and 20 percent of men were of the opposite opinion. In 2007, men were slightly more suspicious of school sex education than they had been in 1992, while women's views remained almost unchanged.

Even though older men and women had come to view school sex education more positively over time, young adults continued to hold the most favourable views of sex education in schools. It is noteworthy, however, that the proportion of young women and men who had negative views toward school sex education had increased by more than ten percentage points. This would indicate that public discourse on school sex education had been more critical after 2000, in contrast with the early 1990s.

Attitudes toward sex in uncommitted relationships

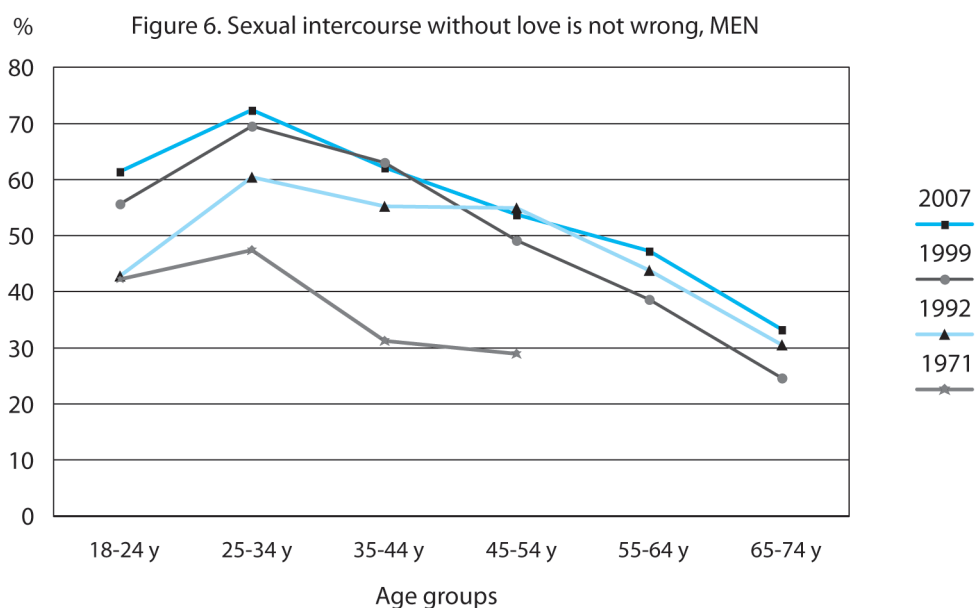
Formerly, marriage was the only social relationship where sex between a man and a woman was acceptable. Sex between young people was condemned, and sex among the young as well as among somewhat older unmarried, divorced or widowed adults was highly controlled. Gradually, however, the ideology of love gained a foothold and permitted sex between people who were in love. As a justification, love abolished the moral objections that were otherwise thrown at sexual relations. Of people

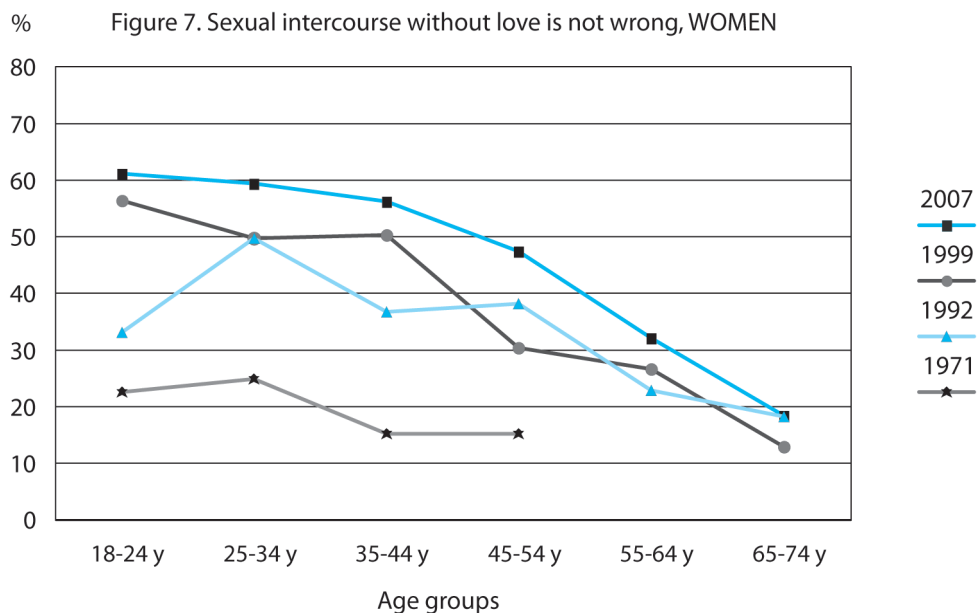
who were in love, much was forgiven. The temptation to have passionate sex was understood to be too hard to resist if you were truly in love.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s introduced radical ideas and values that said that sex was acceptable between all people, even those who were not in love. This was associated with the idea that partners in a couple did not own one another and that the positive aspects of even short-term sexual relationships should be acknowledged. In the spirit of the times, the survey conducted in the early 1970s inquired about respondents' support for the following ideas: 1) Is sex without love wrong? 2) A completely short-term relationship can be happy and mutually satisfying? Respondents' support for these views has been tracked through 2007.

Survey after survey, the proportion of people who consider sex without love wrong has declined. Among women, loveless sex was seen as wrong by 64 percent in 1971, but only by 30 percent in 2007. Men's views evolved as well, from 42 to 21 percent. Men have all the while been more positively inclined toward loveless sex, and on the basis of the study's other findings, have been more willing to engage in those types of relationships. In 2007, women's attitudes toward sex without love were roughly at the same level as the attitudes of men had been in the early 1990s.

Young people have consistently viewed sex without love in positive terms. The most favourable views were found among young adults in the 2007 study, when only 18 percent of young men and 27 percent of young women disapproved of sex without love. The strongest opposition to sex without love was found among middle-aged women in 1971, when two-thirds of them disapproved of sex in the absence of love.





In 2007, half of older women still felt this way, and they were the group with the most difficulty accepting loveless sex.

Sexual commitment as a prerequisite for having a sexual relationship continues to be a strongly religious value. This comes out in the finding that among people who considered religion very important in their own lives, 79 percent of men and 78 percent of women thought that sex without love was wrong. Among the least religious men and women, the corresponding figures were 15 and 14 percent. People with religious values still almost uniformly condemn sex between people who are not in love. The same is true of the short-term relationships discussed next. Most people with strong religious values did not see anything positive in them, although there was naturally a small amount of individual deviation.

Tolerance for sex without love can be compared to the results from the NEM surveys in Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Norway. In Finland, the question was worded somewhat differently than elsewhere (so that the results would be comparable with earlier Finnish data), but this does not represent a major problem for comparability.

Unlike in the case of sex between teenagers, Finland did not stand apart in this comparison. Finnish men were slightly above average in their tolerance for sex without love. Of middle-aged men in all the different countries, 50–70 percent approved of sex without love. Men in Switzerland and Portugal had somewhat greater reservations toward sexless love, compared with other men.

Among female respondents, two discrete groups emerged. Finland, Norway and Spain formed a group in which women were much more likely than in the other countries to approve of sex without love (an average of 50–60 percent tolerated it). Women's attitudes toward loveless sex in these countries did not significantly deviate from male attitudes in their countries, even though men were slightly more likely to tolerate loveless sex.

In Switzerland, Greece and Portugal, sex without love found acceptance among only approximately 30 percent of women, only about half of the corresponding rate for men. In these countries, disagreement between genders as to the acceptability of sex without love was quite marked. It seems to be connected to the pressure on women to behave modestly as instructed by the moral double standard that prevails in Southern European countries. Being modest entails only having sex while in love.

Although most Finns no longer found love to be a prerequisite for sex, short-term relationships had not gained similar acceptance in recent years, according to the FIN-SEX study. A major change was in the convergence of men's and women's attitudes toward the positive potential of short-term relationships. In 1971, 63 percent of men but only 42 percent of women thought it possible that short-term relationships could satisfy both partners. In 2007, the corresponding figures were 65 percent of men and 63 percent of women, with women catching up with men in support of this view.

Young adults had the most favourable attitudes toward short-term relationships. In 2007, 72 percent of young men and 69 percent of young women thought that they could satisfy both partners. Short-term liaisons received the least support among women in the older age group, of who only one in three valued them in the 2007 study.

The truth is, however, that both men and women felt more favourable toward short-term relationships in the early 1990s than in 2007. Short-term relationships did not enjoy the same increase in tolerance and appreciation as sex without love. As a value, commitment to a relationship remained and became stronger.

Advancements in women's sexual rights

Women's sexual rights have been the subject of avid debate as of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Since then, both the feminist and human rights movements have kept them in the spotlight. The ensuing conversations have carried over into the population as attitudinal changes.

Women have continually held more critical views of women's sexual initiative-taking than men, and women have also stipulated each other's sexual activity in stricter terms than men have tried to control one another's sexual activity. In many ways, women have controlled and labelled one another. The stricter, mutual moral code among women has also been utilized to prevent women from being the victims of sexual abuse.

When men are asked if they support women's full right to be proactive and initiate sex with men, hardly any young or middle-aged men have opposed this, either in the 1970s or since 2000. Only of older men, less than one-tenth expressed uncertainty about women's sexual initiative taking. Attitudinally men have unconditionally supported women's right to take the initiative in sex.

Young and middle-aged women in the 1990s and 2000s have presented a broad, united front in supporting women's right to be sexually proactive. A little earlier, in the 1970s, one-fifth of all women and up to a third of middle-aged women did not consider it seemly for women to initiate sex. The most suspicious attitudes toward women's sexual proactiveness were found among older women, of who one in four did not support women's right to initiate sex.

From an alternative moral standpoint on women's sexual rights comes this claim: "A proper woman does not openly express interest in sex". This claim was not yet offered to respondents in the 1971 study. The very presence of the claim is a measure of increased approval for women to express their sexual desire.

Only one in ten men and women agreed with the above claim about female propriety in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2007, four-fifths of both men and women disagreed with it. In other words, they considered someone to be a proper woman even if she showed interest in sex. The proportion of men and women with this view increased by several percentage points from the 1990s to 2007. The most reserved group in 2007 in terms of women openly showing sexual interest was found among older women, though even among them, two-thirds approved of women openly expressing their sexuality. This group of women changed the most in relative terms toward a greater acceptance of women's openly expressed sexual desire. In the 1990s, among older women only half thought that a woman who openly expressed sexual desire was still a "proper" woman.

Another survey statement connected to women's rights was one stating that men are naturally polygamous, while women are naturally monogamous. Agreeing with the claim would mean that men's many, sometimes parallel, relationships have a primarily biological basis and that men cannot help engaging in such behaviour. This view points also to the theory of evolution, of natural selection steering men to spread their seed as far and wide as possible, whereas women are supposed to focus on one man in order to ensure the care and safety of their offspring.

The claim regarding men's natural polygamy and women's monogamy received little support from either sex. In 2007, only 10 percent of men and 6 percent of women agreed with the claim. Among those who absolutely disagreed were 70 percent of men and 86 percent of women. Women continued to be more critical of the idea of men's polygamy, a view that has strengthened gradually from the 1970s until today. Respondents wanted to see the mating tendency of men and women as an equal process.

Men's "natural" polygamy received the strongest support from older men and women of whom approximately one-fifth considered men polygamous, perhaps in part on the basis of their own observations of male behaviour.

An essential issue in terms of women's rights is the right to decide whether to bear children and whether to terminate a pregnancy. This is still a subject of vigorous debate internationally. The issue is seen as one of human, sexual, reproductive, and family planning rights.

The reasoning behind this conflict-ridden issue is the same thing that is operative in the obligation of men to save their seed for the right purposes. Similarly, women should utilize all semen received from men (in many countries, any man whatsoever, including rapists) and if possible, give birth to a rear a child. Evading this duty by terminating the pregnancy is one of the most fiercely opposed sexuality-related issues of all time in Christian circles.

These views exist in Finland as well, though active debates about abortion have been long absent. Many in the church consider it important that women have the right to choose the number of children they want to have and whether to terminate their pregnancy. In Finland, abortion does not represent the hot-button issue of contemporary Christian sexual morality.

In this case too, justifications to suit the times have been sought to replace the original reason for opposing women's right to abortion. Opponents of abortion appeal to the rights of the unborn child. The debate has focused on the time that a child may be considered an individual human being, and whether this occurs already upon conception. In this way the Catholic Church in particular has been able to obscure and avoid having to admit that the essential consideration from their perspective is in fact that women should simply give birth to as many children as possible. The church sees women as instruments, as birthing machines. In the same spirit, the Catholic Church has banned the use of contraceptives, even condoms used in Africa, to prevent the spread of HIV. The duty to procreate is considered more important even than the risk of death.

In 1971, the FINSEX study did not include a question about abortion, at a time when the current abortion law had just come into effect. In 1992, respondents read the statement "I do not agree with freely available abortion (termination of pregnancy)?", and slightly more than half of men and women disagreed with the statement, in other words, found abortion acceptable. By 2007, a positive stance on abortion had increased among both sexes to two-thirds (men 65 %, women 64 %). Only one-fifth of men and women expressed support for the statement and opposed abortion. Among young and middle-aged respondents, approximately 70 percent supported the availability of abortion, while slightly more than half of respondents in the oldest age group supported it.

For the sake of simplicity, the question has a slightly more liberal formulation than what reflects current abortion law. In fact, abortion is not available in all situations

in Finland. It is possible, however, to obtain an abortion on the basis of social considerations with a statement of approval from two physicians.

Judging from the European NEM survey, Finns' attitudes toward abortion are rather liberal. Comparative data was available from Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Norway. In those countries, the surveys inquired about agreement with abortion in general, whereas in Finland respondents were asked for their opinion on freely available abortion. Finnish attitudes regarding abortion may have looked even more liberal had the survey not specifically addressed freely available abortion.

In countries with comparable data, 50–60 percent of men in all age groups approved of abortion, whereas in Finland approximately 70 percent did. In the other countries, 55–65 percent of women in all age groups supported abortion. In Finland and Norway, approximately 70 percent of female respondents supported abortion.

Attitudes toward pornographic images, nudity in advertising, and paid sex

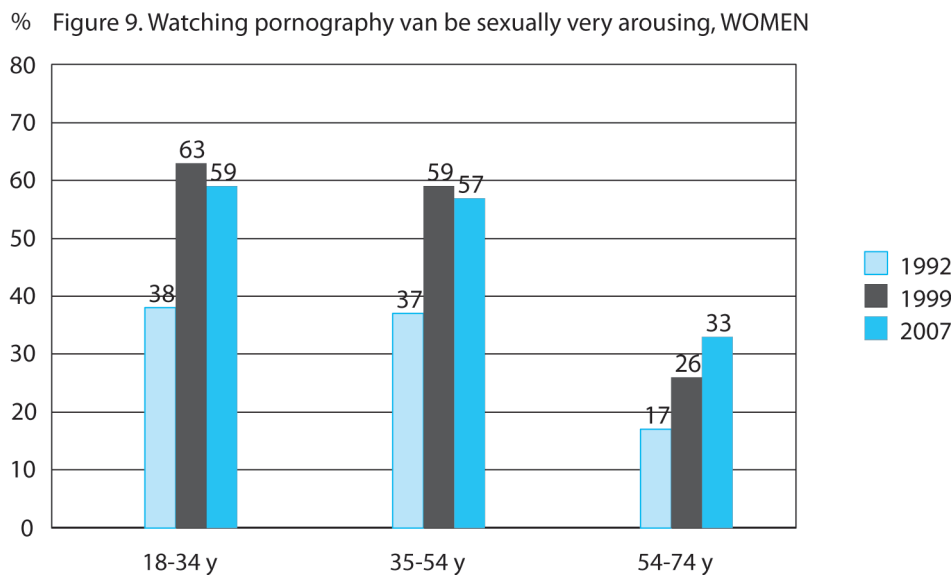
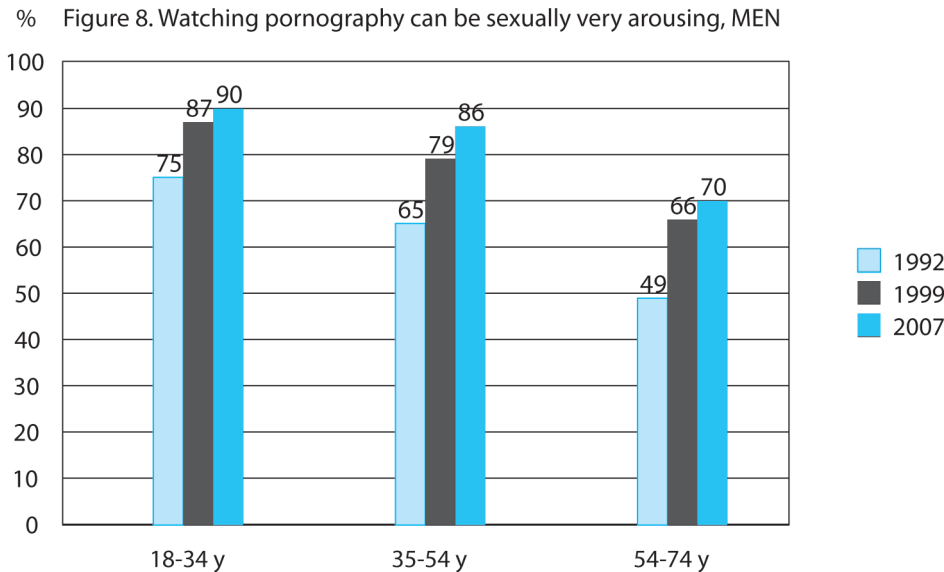
Pornography remains a subject of public debate, and its content and distribution are restricted. In following the debate, one might get the impression that this is a major social problem. Debaters frequently forget that pornography is in fact just one significant factor related to sexually stimulating materials, and that it aids arousal also for couples as well as in masturbation. In addition, pornography is often used as stimulus in sex therapy when looking for ways for couples to discover new sources of sexual arousal and pleasure.

Respondents in the FINSEX study read the statement “I find viewing pornography very arousing” in 1992, 1999, and 2007. In 2007, 82 percent of men and 49 percent of women found the use of pornographic imagery very arousing. The proportions are noticeably higher than they were in 1992, but at about the same level as in 1999. It is noteworthy that half of all women found pornography very arousing.

Young and middle-aged respondents were more likely than the oldest age group to find pornography very exciting, at a rate of approximately 90 percent among men and nearly 60 percent among women. Among the oldest age group, slightly more than two-thirds of men and a third of women found pornography arousing. This indicates that all ages and both men and women had found pornography to be a suitable stimulus. Not even religious convictions significantly affected this experience. Pornography was not seen as a moral issue. On an emotional level, however, the sexual feelings that arise from the use of pornographic materials can sometimes also be associated with feelings of shame and even distaste.

The 2007 survey was the first one to ask respondents for their opinion on the following statement: “The use of nudity in advertising is far too frequent these days”. In agree-

ment were 51 percent of men and 78 percent of women. Respondents in the oldest age group were somewhat more likely to view the use of nudity as problematic.



Since 1992, the FINSEX surveys have asked respondents about their views regarding the sale of sexual services. Two statements address this issue: “I have nothing against people making money by selling sexual services (i.e. practicing prostitution)” and “I support the establishment of brothels that are controlled by society”. Unfortunately, the survey has not specifically addressed the purchase of sexual services, a fashionable and passionately debated topic in recent times.

Attitudes regarding paid sex are clearly divided according to gender. In part, this has been linked to the different interest in the purchase of sexual services between women and men. Something that is not in one’s own interest is easy to reject and disapprove. Understanding and accepting the interest of the other gender requires comprehensive conversations about the topic and understanding the other’s perspective. This has occurred in the case of many interests and rights that are specific to women, for which men express equal support along with women. This kind of equal sympathy has not yet been extended very widely to interests that are more specific to men.

Earning money through the sale of sexual services was an idea that found acceptance among 54 percent of men and 17 percent of women in the 2007 survey. Thirty-four percent of men and 68 percent of women were opposed to the idea. The attitudes had remained pretty much the same as in 1992, but in 1999 the rate of acceptance for the sale of sexual services was slightly higher than in 2007. Attitudes had probably been somewhat affected by the wide-ranging public debates on the subject that pursued the criminalization of the purchase of sex through prostitution.

In 2007, 49 percent of men and 21 percent of women approved of the establishment of society-controlled brothels. The figures are very close to those regarding the sale of sexual services. In this case as well, the figures for respondents who supported such brothels were approximately the same as in 1992, but support was slightly higher in 1999. In other words, debating prostitution and prostitution clients had tempered views somewhat.

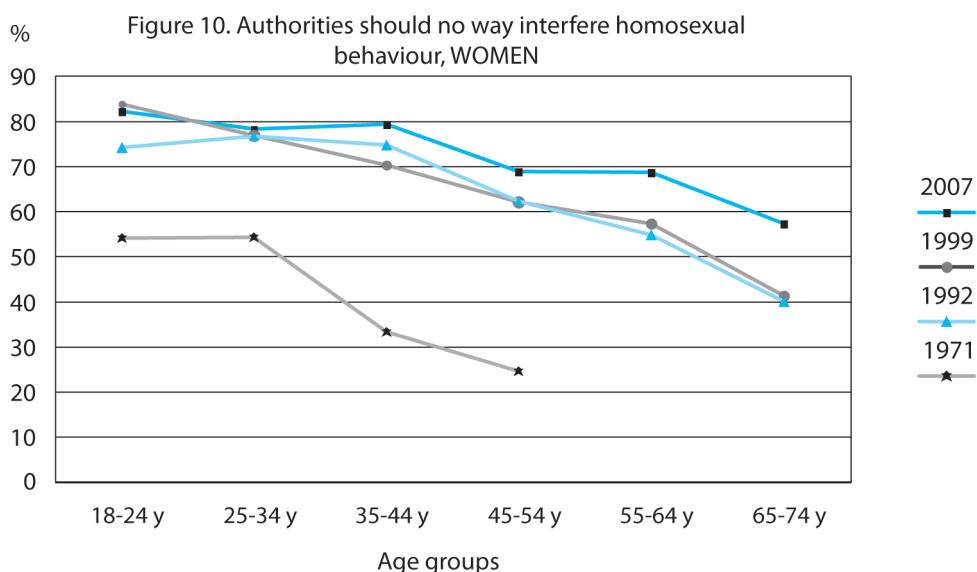
Increasing acceptance for homosexuality

Through history, homosexuality has elicited some of the harshest polemic in the area of sexual morality. The critical voices have been boosted by two of the central guiding lines of Christian morality: saving semen for reproductive purposes and the requirement of the marriage commitment. Because homosexuality sets these goals into question, the subject has become a particular moral problem for those who assign a high value on religion. Even today, religiosity is strongly correlated with negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

In each of the surveys, respondents have been asked to give their opinion regarding the following statement: “Homosexual behaviour between adults is a private matter with which the authorities and legislation should in no way interfere.” A second

question asked whether respondents thought that a sexual relationship between two adult men was acceptable. The first question addressed a general attitude in sexual politics and the second the moral acceptability of homosexual behaviour.

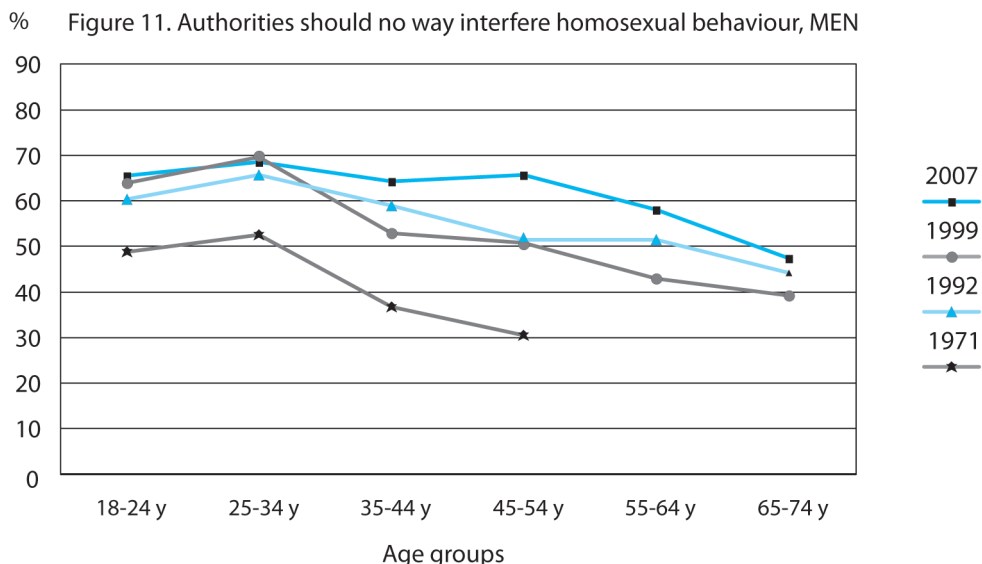
Among men, 44 percent in 1971 and 68 percent in 2007 said that they did not want society to interfere with homosexual behaviour between adults. From one decade to the next, fewer and fewer men wanted society-imposed restrictions on homosexuality. The views of women evolved similarly over time. In 1971, 45 percent and in 2007, already 77 percent of women supported the elimination of society-imposed restrictions on homosexuality. Views among women had changed from 1999 to 2007 by five percentage points and among men by ten percentage points toward the more positive. In relative terms, the greatest change toward open-mindedness occurred among middle-aged men and women.



A sexual relationship between two men was acceptable in 2007 to 36 percent of men and 56 percent of women. Among young men, 54 percent and among young women 75 percent accepted homosexual relationships. The oldest respondents had the hardest time accepting them. Attitudes toward the relationships between adult men became significantly more tolerant between 1999 and 2007.

Respondents found moral acceptance of homosexual relationships somewhat more challenging than approval of the principle that society should not interfere with homosexual relationships. A significant proportion of respondents, however, agreed with the elimination of societal controls of homosexuality and agreed with homosexual relationships in moral terms. In 1999, both views were supported by one in four men and in 2007 already by one in three men. Among women, in 1999, 40 percent agreed

with both views, and by 2007, half did. At least on these two levels the population has come to view homosexuality much more positively.



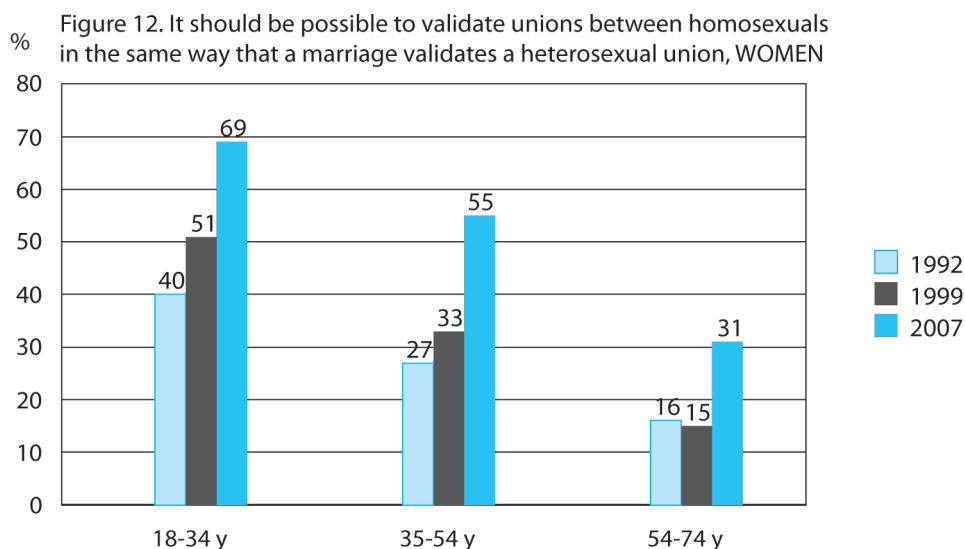
Attitudes toward a sexual relationship between two adult men can be compared by using the NEM surveys to attitudes in Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Norway. In terms of tolerance, Finland was among the leading countries. Only Spanish men were more accepting than other national groups, surpassing the tolerance felt by Finnish respondents. In nearly every country women were more likely than men to accept sexual relationships between two men. In Italy, there was almost no difference in the attitudes of men and women, and differences between men and women in Greece were also negligible. In Greece this was associated with the fact that only a tiny minority accepted sexual relations between men overall.

On the basis of women's responses, Finland is in the same attitudinal group as Spain, Switzerland, and Norway, in all of which 70–80 percent of women approved of sexual relationships between men. In Italy and Portugal approximately 50 percent of women and in Greece only 10–30 percent of women (of all ages) accepted them. Among European women, differences in attitudes toward homosexuality were colossal. Southern Europe, with the exception of Spain, was entirely in a class of its own.

Among male respondents Finland was in the same group as Switzerland, Italy as well as Norway, in which an average of 50 percent of all men felt tolerant toward sexual relations between men. Spain emerged as the most tolerant, with approximately 70 percent accepting sexual relations between men. Is it the case that Almodóvar's films have shaped attitudes to be more favourable toward homosexuality? In Portugal and Greece, conversely, only approximately 20 percent of men were able to tolerate sexual

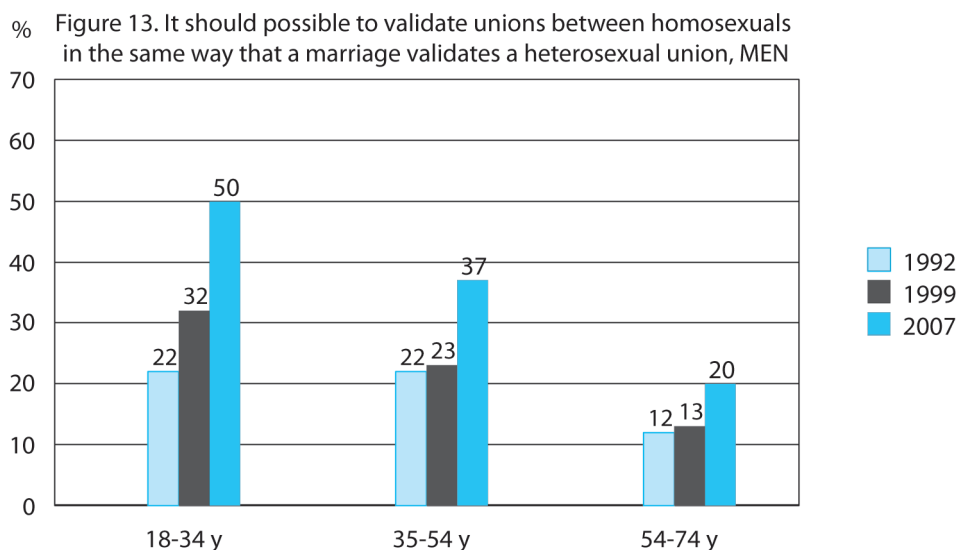
relationships between men. European men's attitudes, too, varied hugely. Part of the explanation lies in the macho culture that prevails in Southern Europe.

In a third question to address the same subject area in the FINSEX survey, respondents were asked to express their opinion regarding the following statement: "Unions between homosexual couples (male and female) should be legalized just like marriage." When this was asked for the first time in 1999, registered partnerships did not yet exist in Finland. In 2007, the wording of the question was retained for comparability's sake, even though registered partnerships were already a reality. The sentiment in the statement went beyond what the law on registered partnerships permitted. Registered partnerships are not yet fully equal with marriage.



Legalizing homosexual partnerships to be equal with marriage was supported by 36 percent of men and 52 percent of women in 2007. Support for such partnerships nearly doubled from 1992 and has continued to increase after 1999. Young respondents were approximately twice as likely compared with older respondents to support legalizing gay partnerships. Respondents with the strongest religious convictions had the most trouble accepting the legalization of gay unions. The current trend is that attitudes regarding the legalization of gay partnerships are becoming more positive with each generational shift.

In 2007, one-third of men and half of women were prepared to accept homosexuality, support the elimination of societal controls, and the legalization of gay partnerships to be equal with marriage. The proportion of people who supported this combination of views increased substantially over the the eight intervening years.



Yet another statement used in the surveys approached the issue of homosexuality: “Artificial insemination should also be available to single women.” The issue was debated widely particularly in terms of female couples as the Parliament was preparing and eventually voted on legislation governing fertility treatments. The new law, which also allows artificial insemination for single women, came into effect immediately prior to the survey was conducted in the spring of 2007. For the sake of comparison, the question was repeated using the same wording that had been used in the 1990s surveys.

Artificial insemination for single women was supported in 2007 also by slightly less than half of both men and women (men 42 %, women 47 %). This issue is interesting in that people’s attitudes regarding it changed in the direction of less permissiveness, unlike with other topics that were connected to homosexuality. In 1992, fertility treatments for single women were still supported by 62 percent of men and 53 percent of women. Especially men have re-evaluated their positions on the basis of public debate, with middle-aged and older men as well as older women exhibiting less permissive views than before.

In 2007, respondents were asked for the first time how acceptable they found sado-masochistic sex with mutual consent. Respondents were able to note if they did not know what sadomasochism meant. Of men, six percent and of women ten percent noted that they did not know what sadomasochism meant.

Sadomasochism was tolerated in 2007 by 42 percent of men and 38 percent of women. Tolerance for sadomasochism was 4–5 times greater among young people (men 65 %, women 58 %) compared with the oldest age group. Most non-religious respondents tolerated sadomasochism, while only one-tenth of those who considered religion important did. This is a sexual issue that will emerge more and more with generational shifts.

Increasingly disapproving attitudes toward infidelity

Marriage has been the only widely accepted institution of sexuality, a kind of moral icon. Almost everything has been permissible in marital sex, even though its fundamental purpose has been reproduction. Over time, sex in marriage has become an obligation of both partners toward one another. Without the commencement of sexual activity upon marriage, the union has been considered null and void. Later too, the lack of sex in marriage has been grounds for annulment. In marriage, spouses have had ownership over one another's sexuality and bodies. Marriage has granted each spouse exclusive sexual rights to the other. Offending this exclusive right by engaging in infidelity has been an issue of utmost seriousness. In many cultures, infidelity has been the only reason for which marriage could be annulled. Even stoning has been used as a punishment for being unfaithful.

The much-discussed sexual revolution attempted to radically revise this ownership view as well as the principal rules by which marriage operates. One of the central tenets of the 1960s sexual rights movement was that no-one can own another person. There was discussion of open marriages and relationships. The idea was to share everything with one's partner, including any potential sexual experiences that it was permissible to have with others. It was thought that open relationships would lead, through synergy effects, to more genuine and satisfying relationships. This new way of thinking spread particularly in student circles and among recent college graduates. The idea of a faithful marriage and owning one another seemed old-fashioned. More and more people started moving in together without getting married. Thus began the success story of cohabitation.

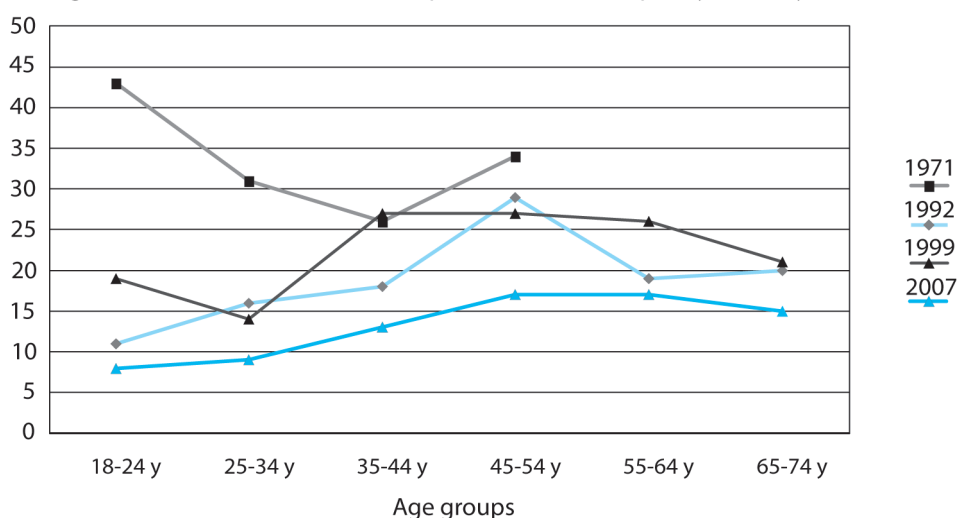
The debate concerning faithfulness in marriage being merely an aspect of bourgeois relic was already under way when the first Finnish sex study was conducted in 1971. The study included the following statements: "A temporary infidelity by a husband must be tolerated" and "A temporary infidelity by a wife must be tolerated." When changes in these attitudes have been tracked later, comparability has required that the same term, 'temporary infidelity', be used, even though certain other terms might be more suitable to our time.

Since the 1990s, the surveys use the term 'parallel relationship' instead of 'temporary infidelity'. Parallel relationships also encompass other sexual relationships that occur alongside an established relationship, beyond short-term temporary infidelity. 'Temporary infidelity' is particularly ill-suited to relationships where the affair continues and becomes so established that it sometimes even replaces the original relationship.

In 1971, 34 percent of men found a temporary infidelity on the part of a husband forgivable and 28 percent felt the same about a wife's infidelity. Among women, 31 percent thought that a husband's infidelity could be forgiven and 30 percent

thought that a wife's infidelity should be forgiven. A slight moral double standard was at work, then, among men in this rather fashionable phenomenon of the times. That this transition in attitudes was highly correlated with education was revealed clearly by the fact that approximately 40 percent of highly educated men and 50 percent of similar women tolerated infidelity. Tolerance of infidelity along with open relationships clearly represented the 1970s educational classes' rebellion against old Christian sexual morality. Many accepted infidelity even though they themselves did not go down that road and the sexual experimentation it entailed. At the time, however, it was a matter of honour to show support for the new values.

% Figure 14. One must be able to accept a husband's temporary infidelity, MEN

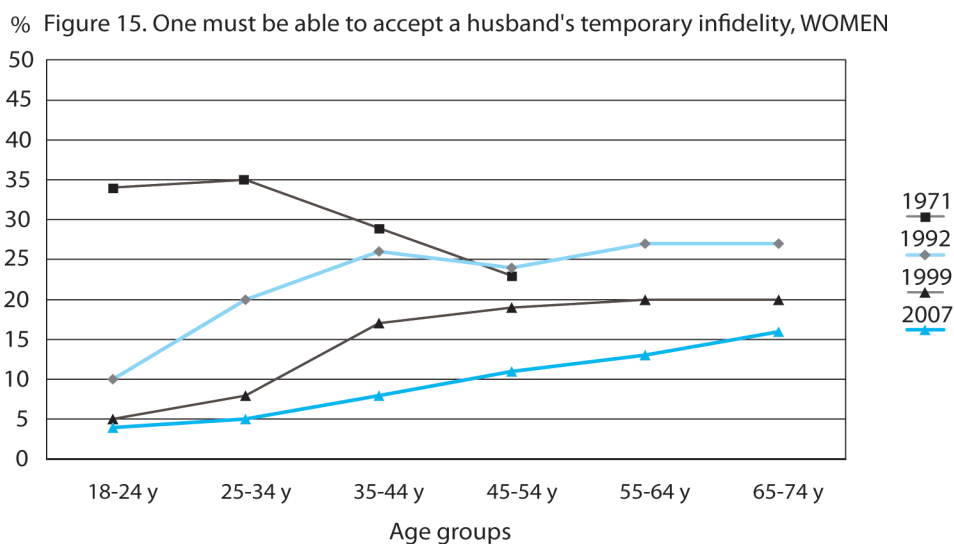


Twenty years later, in 1992, the tolerance for infidelity had suffered something of a setback. Among men, only 19 percent still tolerated male infidelity and 22 percent found a wife's infidelity acceptable. The figures for women were 21 and 23 percent, respectively. The moral double standard had vanished together with the popularity of infidelity.

The popularity of being unfaithful had declined at all education levels, but it is noteworthy that men with the highest education no longer differed from other men in their attitudes. The most highly educated women continued to pay some homage to the traditions of the 1970s. The idealism connected to relationships fell off, and the economic depression of the 1990s drove couples to seek safety in one another. Securing a livelihood became a serious, personal issue. Another new development was that divorce became much easier and common in the late 1980s, making the threat of divorce now greater. The acceptance of infidelity on the part of one's partner fit less and less well with the spirit of the times.

The 2007 study shed decisive light on how much tolerance for infidelity had declined in Finnish relationships. There is a terminological problem here, because for the sake

of comparison, survey questions continue to ask about unfaithfulness of a “husband” or “wife”, even though a large share of relationships today are cohabiting or living-apart (separate households) relationships. I would venture, though, that delineating between different relationship types would not have had a major impact on the results. People expect the same degree of faithfulness of a cohabiting or living-apart partner as they do of a spouse through marriage.



In the 1990s, men and women viewed infidelity and parallel relationships in approximately the same way, but by 2007, their views regarding tolerance for unfaithfulness had diverged somewhat. Thirteen percent of men accepted infidelity from a husband and 14 percent from a wife. In 1999, these figures were still 23 and 21 percent, respectively. In 2007, only 7 percent of women still accepted a husband's infidelity and 8 percent tolerated unfaithful wives. Women's attitudes had been trending this way already in 1999. It was clear that the effect of education had been wholly erased. The educated classes no longer stood apart with a more open-minded attitude toward a spouse's sexual conduct. In the face of a new kind of society and new life situation, new expectations were also imposed on relationships.

The evolution in attitudes toward sexuality has also ended up in an unusual situation of young people being the least tolerant of infidelity and the oldest generation the most tolerant. In practice, this change occurred already during the 1990s. In all other attitudes related to sexuality the situation was and remains reversed. Young people usually lead the way in adopting sexually liberal values. What story do these new values among young people convey? Or are the values new? A quick glance might make one suspect a neo-conservative thread; yet the issue is not as simple as that.

A fundamental explanation for this change comes from the changing motives for couple formation and relationship maintenance. Today, it is equally easy for women as men to earn an independent living. Fewer and fewer people seek relationships solely on the basis of livelihood. It is also no longer necessary to continue unwillingly in a relationship if life together turns sour. Parting is always hard, but it doesn't turn life upside down. What, then, is essential in today's relationships?

Not all relationships are the same, nor are they founded on the same motives. What does unite them is the expectation of a quality of life together that corresponds to one's desires. The emotional relationship between partners is a key factor in the quality of shared life. People expect a lot of their partners in this sense. Everything is going along fine, until one day, a suspicion enters that love has vanished from the relationship. There is always a risk that the partner will choose to commit emotionally to someone else.

As sexuality has emerged as a key relationship factor, every other sexual relationship represents the threat of a partner falling on love with someone else. Faithfulness is today an important indication of a partner's desire to continue the relationship. Relationships are increasingly built on love and sex. One's partner is expected to pay homage to these key relationship factors, for as long as he or she wants to continue the relationship. In spite of what is stated above, some people have been and probably will continue to be promiscuous. This means that they want to maintain more than one simultaneous sexual relationship, or have already done so. From 1992, the respondents of this study have been asked whether they could see themselves maintaining more than one sexual relationship at a time. Such parallel relationships usually entail infidelity toward at least one party. When one individual has promised to be faithful to another, veering from the promise constitutes unfaithfulness. When all parties concerned accept such relationships, they constitute parallel relationships without infidelity.

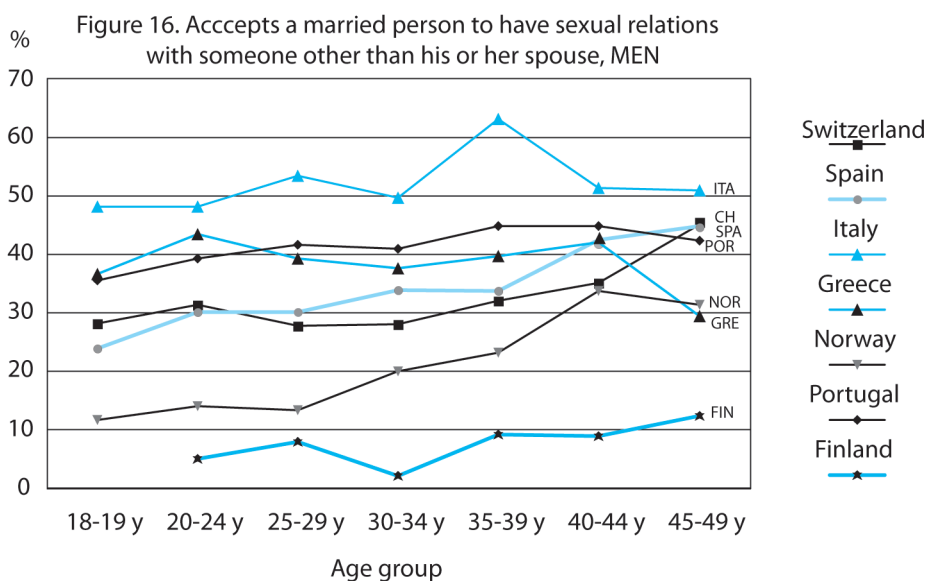
Men report wanting parallel relationships much more frequently than women. In previous studies, the differential was three-to-one, and in 2007 it was still two-to-one. Twenty-one percent of men and 10 percent of women dreamt of multiple, simultaneous relationships. In 2007, it was more common for both women and men to express a desire for parallel relationships, compared with 1992. The desire among men, though not women, to have multiple relationships was still more common in 1999 than in 2007. Young people were more likely than older people to show an interest in multiple parallel relationships.

Many respondents were consistent in the way they thought about multiple relationships. Of women, approximately 60 percent and of men, 50 percent would not have accepted infidelity on the part of a wife or husband, nor would they themselves have considered having more than one sexual relationship at a time. One in ten men and one in twenty women would have accepted or wanted to experience both situations. The remainder of respondents were in one way or another inconsistent in their views regarding infidelity.

Respondents faced a real challenge to their sense of consistency when asked whether they would tolerate extra-marital sexual relationships on the part of a married person. As a formulation, 'sexual relationships' was somewhat stronger than 'temporary infidelity'. Otherwise, the principle was very much the same.

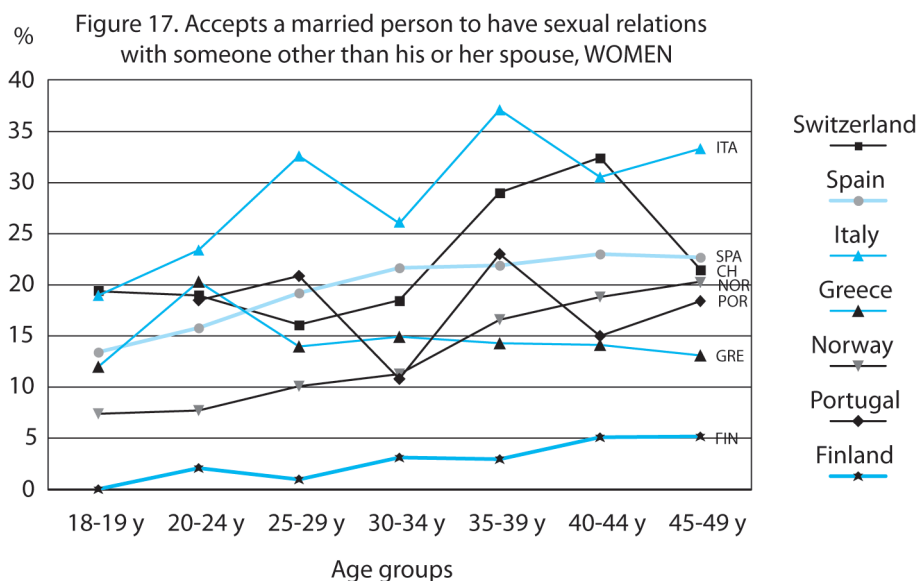
Slightly more than half of both men and women responded to these questions in exactly the same way, positive or negative. Of the rest, most were more favourable toward temporary infidelity. Of men, 11 percent and 3 percent of women would tolerate other relationships on the part of a married person. These figures were reduced by nearly half from 1999. The trend remained largely the same regardless of how the question was formulated.

There is interesting comparative data from other European countries with regard to attitudes toward fidelity, from the NEM surveys conducted in Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Norway. What is of particular interest is that in this, Finland formed a category all its own. From a European perspective, Finns absolutely do not approve of spouses' extra-marital sexual relationships, whereas in other countries they find much greater acceptance.



In the other European countries, men were more likely than women to tolerate extra-marital parallel relationships. Of men, 30–40 percent on average accepted them. Italian men deviated from this mainstream; approximately 50 percent tolerated extra-marital parallel relationships. In Finland, the same proportion among men hovered near ten percent. The only other country that even approached Finnish levels was Norway, where the proportion of men who found parallel relationships acceptable varied in different age groups from 10 to 30 percent, with the youngest respondents less likely to approve of such relationships. In Norway, then, a similar attitudinal shift

was taking place among the youngest age groups as in Finland, but the difference in the figures between the two countries was still clear.



Women's attitudes toward extra-marital relationships were more reserved than men's. The majority of countries had rates in the general neighbourhood of 15–20 percent. Parallel relationships received the most understanding from women in Italy, where approximately 30 percent found them acceptable. Middle-aged Swiss women were near the same level. Middle-aged Norwegian women were situated near the European average, but women in the category of 30 years and under showed a sizable decline in their acceptance of parallel relationships by married spouses. In this age group, only less than ten percent of Norwegian women accepted parallel sexual relationships.

In this comparison, Finland made up its own category, as only a few percent of women could tolerate parallel relationships on the part of married spouses. Of course, the result might have been slightly different, if respondents had been asked about relationship faithfulness in general, instead of just marital fidelity. Marriage, with its associated rules, still has a more magical fame than cohabitation and especially living-apart relationships. In Southern Europe, these relationship types are not yet as common as they are in Finland. These reservations do not change the basic fact that the Finnish attitude climate has evolved to become almost astonishingly strict with regard to infidelity. The issue will be further explored and illuminated in the chapter "Cheating is becoming harder".

A counter-thesis against sexual infidelity is that an established relationship offers the possibility for particularly satisfying sex. Getting to know one's partner more profoundly and being able to discuss sexual desires and feelings helps a couple discover ways to

invent unique and mutually satisfying experiences. We could assume that as the value of fidelity in relationships becomes so much higher, there will also be greater appreciation of and significance given to factors associated with sexuality in relationships.

Related to this idea is the following statement, presented to respondents: "The longer you know your partner, the better the sex." In 2007, two-thirds of men and three-quarters of women agreed with the statement. There were no differences between age groups in this view or experience. The figures were exactly the same as they had been in 1992, when the topic was previously addressed. The only change was the reinforced view among older women of the positive effects of a long-term relationship on the quality of sex.

Respondents' experience of the positive impact on quality of sex in long-term relationships had not changed over time. Hence, this issue did not help to explain why attitudes toward infidelity had become less hospitable.

The attitudes toward parallel relationships might look very different, if respondents were presented a scenario in which the existing relationship is unsatisfying and loveless, and one of the partners in it has set forth to look for a better mate. A study conducted in the United States indeed found that half of all women would find it acceptable for themselves to have other relationships, provided that they were in love with the new mate. Among women, attitudes toward parallel relationships had less to do with their overall sexual open-mindedness and more with their own assessment of the quality of the relationship in which the sex took place.

Love can sanctify infidelity. People are not only faithful to their partner; they are also faithful to the idea of romantic love, which may not translate to faithfulness to that partner. Many more would find parallel relationships acceptable for themselves if the reason for them were that sex was unsatisfying in their existing relationship. In our time, it is the personal benefit to an individual that drives this type of evaluation of the justifications for having parallel relationships. Before, the evaluation process involved traditional social controls and restrictions.

What do today's Finns consider sexual perversions?

Sexuality has so many dimensions that evoke strong emotions. Over time, it has been indoctrinated with powerful beliefs, claims, and prohibitions. Also legislation defines some of the boundaries for what people consider acceptable. A few decades ago, terms such as 'immodest' and 'immoral' peppered discussions of sex. Since then, medical categorizations of illness have stepped in to occupy the role of the gatekeeper. When we consider the line between normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable these days, we mostly use psychiatric classifications of disease.

If the subject at hand falls within a disease classification, it is named a problem – especially if some tendency or behaviour that is associated with it causes problems for the individual in question, or for his or her environment.

Such definitions and categorizations, and the public discourse around them, influence how people think. Everyone determines for themselves what to consider acceptable and draws the lines that they are unwilling to cross. Some of these judgments are based on personal experience, while others evolve as a result of the images that various issues and public debates evoke in people.

This study set out to analyze where people place the limits in their own lives for what is sexually acceptable. Because medicine is now responsible for safeguarding our morals, we approached this issue by asking people what they think constitutes perversion or sick sexual behaviour. These are the same issues that often elicit our moral condemnation.

In 1992, the issue was probed by asking Finnish respondents an open question, to which they could respond by writing in their opinion of what constitutes perverted or sick sexual behaviour. Approximately half of the respondents expressed some kind of opinion. Mostly they mentioned topics like sexual violence, sexual abuse of children, using animals for sexual ends, and among male respondents, homosexuality.

In the 2007 study, I used the responses to the open questions posed in the 1992 study, in order to create a list of sexual issues which I then asked respondents to evaluate for their possible perverted or sick nature. I identified 17 different behaviours, and I also added one blank line for entering an issue I had not thought to include. The behaviours were listed in a random order.

People's conceptions of what was perverted or sick behaviour varied widely. A basic difference between most older people and younger people was that the former were more likely to view all of the behaviours listed in this section as perversions. It seems that, when it comes to the limits of acceptability in sex, there continues to be a significant generational shift underway. The dividing line was not between the so-called generation of sexual revolution and the generations that preceded it. Rather, the revolution in sexual values marches on among the younger generation.

Gender was another major divider. In many areas of sexuality, men draw the line between sexually acceptable and non-perverted much more broadly than women. Based on numerous sources, it is also on average more common for men to be interested in so-called paraphilias (unusual sexual tendencies or preferences) and men also form the great majority of the individuals who are convicted of various sexual crimes. Men have a much greater inclination to push the envelope and defy both the boundaries that they themselves have set for their sexuality as well as those drawn by society.

A third fault line was found to traverse between an individual's general life values and what they viewed as sexual perversion. Education level is a significant factor with regard to attitudes toward sexual perversion. Highly educated people are more likely to accept a broader spectrum of sexual behaviour as normal. Here, I will focus on the impact religion has on an individual's views regarding sexual perversions. Religion has always defined the line between acceptable and unacceptable sexuality, and in practice it has also imposed punishments of shame on those who have trespassed. Religious reference groups process thoughts regarding sexuality and together they strive to influence the opinions of others.

Religious reference groups and the personal values associated with religion continued to have a powerful effect on the attitudes toward sexuality discussed in this chapter, for example regarding sex between adolescents, non-committed relationships, fidelity, fertility treatments for single women, acceptance of gay relationships or partnerships, abortion, and the sale of sexual services. Everything that has deviated from the norm of marital sex instituted at the appropriate age has been unacceptable when viewed through a strictly religious viewpoint. I will evaluate whether this observation applies to all sexual spheres discussed here.

There were several behaviours listed in the survey that were seen as perverted or sick behaviour by nearly all respondents (at least 90 percent). These included the use of sexual violence and force, sex with animals, sexual abuse of children, urination and defecation in sex, and infecting a sexual partner with a sexually transmitted disease. In addition, public exhibitionism was judged almost as harshly on the perversion-meter, though one in five respondents did not see it a perversion.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were things that hardly any respondent found perverted: pornography, oral sex, sexual aids and toys, and an age difference of at least 30 years between partners. One-third of respondents viewed the latter as perverted.

The only sexual behaviour that men considered a form of perversion more frequently than women was homosexuality and bisexuality, which almost half of all male respondents considered perversions. Sexual phenomena that were deemed perversions by women more frequently than men were group sex and partner swapping, sexual intercourse in a public place, a constant urge to have sex, free sex and, in part, pornography. The biggest gender difference (women 55 %, men 30 %) was in the constant urge to have sex. This theme seemed to go to the core of the gender difference. It represented a much bigger problem for women than for men.

In nearly all cases, older respondents were more likely than younger people to see the sexual behaviours included in the list as perversions. The only exception was the issue of an age difference of at least 30 years between partners, which younger respondents (more than 40 %) were more likely than others to view as perverted.

Relatively speaking, the biggest age differences emerged in respondents' attitudes toward sexual intercourse in public places, group sex and partner swapping, and a constant urge to have sex. The oldest respondents differed from the rest in their attitudes toward homosexuality, bisexuality, and anal intercourse. Issues that were condemned particularly by older women were oral sex and pornography. The themes revealed through substantial age differences in opinion trends were also ones that were seen as signs of how much the world had changed from the youth of the oldest group. Back then, people did not discuss homosexuality, group sex, anal intercourse, or oral sex. Even pornography was a new thing and back then, not something that was suitable for women.

Respondents' religious convictions or values had a particular influence on how perverted they considered certain sexual behaviours, including homosexuality and bisexuality, free sex, and group sex and partner swapping. Opinions diverged similarly by religious conviction when asked to evaluate issues such as intercourse in public places, anal intercourse, a constant urge to have sex, and pornography.

In some cases though, religiosity had almost no impact on how perverted respondents thought some behaviours, including public exhibitionism, sadomasochism, sexual aids, oral sex, and urination or defecation in sex. Religious women were no more likely than others to see a substantial age difference as a problem. In these issues, people did not differ on the basis of religious sexual morality.

The use of sexual violence and force, sexual abuse of children, sex with animals, and infecting a partner with a sexually transmitted disease were behaviours that the most religious respondents were actually slightly less likely to name as perversions, compared with other respondents. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that even among religious respondents, approximately 90 percent generally viewed these behaviours as perversions.

4 YOU LEARN WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG

Where does sexuality begin? At least for some people, it begins in the womb. Studies have shown that some fetuses try out masturbation even before birth. After birth, sexuality emerges in individual ways. Some children are very interested in their sex organs and discover the experience of pleasure early on, through touching themselves. Children usually do not have a name for what they are doing, but they feel and experience much the same as adults.

Children usually encounter sexuality itself for the first time when parents react to something that they are doing. Parents introduce sexuality to children's play and self-exploration through their own interpretations and emotions. For many parents, the recognition of a child's sexuality is a confusing issue, which they try to deny and deflect – often with unhappy consequences.

Children's sexual games

Young people have not been asked in recent surveys whether they played various sexual games as children, together with others. When I researched this issue through the extensive KISS study on adolescents in the 1980s, one in two young people reported playing sex games as children. Half of them had done so numerous times. Sex play among children is presumably at least as common today. Much of the play consists of imitating adults. Through play, children act out communication skills necessary in adult interaction and test out emotions that are associated with different situations.

On the basis of what I and Elina Haavio-Mannila discovered in the 1990s in the sexual autobiographies we collected in Finland, childhood had been in many ways a sexually active time. As small children, people had enjoyed being in the nude and had viewed it casually. They only learned the accompanying social shame gradually, when older children or adults laughed at them or made fun of their nudity. Some respondents reported that their parents had been careful not to show their own sexual organs to children, even in the sauna.

Approximately one-third of all autobiography writers mentioned participating in sexual game playing as a child, with one or several children. Sometimes this had taken the shape of “playing doctor”, where children wanted to discover what the

other sex's genitals looked and felt like. Among the younger generation, sex-play had more frequently taken the form of actual sexual experiences, and a growing share occurred between girls.

The study categorized childhood sex-play into playing house, touching, playing doctor, playing at being animals, and actual sex play, closely resembling adult sexual experiences.

Children who had played house had practiced making and giving birth to children. In touching games, children had touched and caressed one another, in places like hay lofts, or under a blanket (including play that involves the anus). When playing doctor, children had shown each other their genitals, looking at and touching them, peeked into one another's pants, compared the ways in which they urinated, and stuck things inside their sexual organs. The young generation was most likely to describe such scenarios. Among that generation, playing doctor often took place in a group of girls.

Playing at being animals put to use lessons learned from the mating of cows in particular. Trying to emulate such images, children had tried to actually insert a penis, and many boys had experienced their first erection this way. This was only a short step away from actual sex play, where the goal was often real sexual gratification and experimenting with adult sexual patterns. For some, sex play had included oral sex and "real" intercourse. Children who had participated in this kind of play usually had fond recollections of it.

Sex play had also taken place between girls and between siblings. Play among girls was sometimes inspired by pornography, and some experienced their first orgasm in this kind of play. Some girls had not liked it when others had tried to draw them into these games. It was usually women who reported sexual play between siblings. This had taken the form of imaginary sex orgies, fondling a sibling's genitals (also oral sex), attempts at intercourse, and occasionally actually having intercourse. Most respondents did not view these experiences as problematic, with adult hindsight.

On the basis of this summary of sexual play among children, the majority had mostly positive memories of childhood sex games – except when being discovered by parents. The consequences included lectures, being told not to see a particular friend any longer, whippings, beatings, and forced medical examinations. Parents' angry and anxious reactions to children's sex play had transferred that anxiety to the children and had remained an oppressive memory in the children's minds all the way through adulthood. Parental anxiety in response to childish sex games was an expression of the parents' own inability to encounter their children's sexuality in a constructive manner.

Gagnon has argued that some parents are opposed to expressions of sexuality in children on principle. Perhaps they find it difficult to accept the idea of children and young people enjoying sex before "earning" those pleasures through hard work and a sufficient waiting period. This is associated with a general life stage thinking, in

which there is a time and place for everything – but only after all appropriate events have come first.

Adolescent sexuality

Though childhood too is a sexually active period, it is usually in adolescence that most individuals begin to possess their sexuality and begin to experiment, according to adult discourses. In studying the sexual development of adolescents, the main focus has been on the biological foundations of their physiological development. The age when menstruation begins, breasts begin to develop, and growth spurts occur are described in detail, as well as the effects these developments have on the social status and attractiveness of young people. Little attention has been paid to the developmental stages of sexual desire in young people.

For a long time it has been assumed that the development that takes place in the sex glands of 12–14-year-olds is the first time that the hormonal “switch” is turned on, instantly morphing asexual children into “little adults”. According to newer studies, the development of adrenaline-producing glands and the secretion of adrenaline that begin at around the age of ten seem to be associated with sexual interests, thoughts, and feelings that emerge at the same time and that children later combine with their cultural conceptions of sexuality. Crushes, falling in love, and dating already begin at the early stages of school.

Discussing and teaching about sex between parents and children has not advanced greatly in Finland over the recent decades. Minor gains have been made in the sense that in 2007, only approximately one half of both men and women still reported that their childhood home had been secretive in terms of sexual matters. In 1971, this proportion represented approximately three-quarters of respondents. Among the younger generation surveyed in 2007, only one in three described their childhood home as secretive with regard to sexuality.

After the early 1990s, discussions of sex in the home have evolved very slowly. More than one-tenth of respondents of both sexes and one-fifth of young men and women thought of their childhood home as at least somewhat open with regard to sexual matters. That isn’t much – and it isn’t enough of a foundation on which to build the sexual education and wellbeing of new generations.

The difficulty of discussions about sex at home is manifested in the fact that, of young male and female respondents who had lived in sexually secretive homes, half reported not even wanting to obtain their sexual education at home. If talking about the topic feels too difficult, it is easier to look for information through other sources, such as friends, newspapers and magazines, the Web, and school.

The development of school sex education appears to be more positive than what occurs at home between parents and children. Of all respondents, half of both men

and women reported receiving enough sex education in school. In the oldest generation, only one-tenth had had school sex education, but two-thirds of the youngest generation had received it sufficiently. A comparison of respondents of different ages indicated that the quality of school sex education has improved steadily from the 1960s to the early 2000s.

Approximately 40 percent of respondents in 1971 reported having school sex education, but only one in ten considered it sufficient. On the basis of early-1990s responses, nearly all respondents had received school sex education and almost half considered it sufficient. By the early 21st century, Finland had a situation where two-thirds of respondents considered the sex education they had received to be sufficient. The information received in school may actually improve further now that health education (and sex education as part of it) is once again a compulsory subject in upper-primary schools, a change that took place in the early 2000s. There is already some data that indicates such improvement.

Of the young people who reported not receiving enough sex education in school, one-third of young men and one-quarter of young women had been able to complement their knowledge through information received at home. One-quarter of young men and women felt that they had received enough sexual education both in school and at home. According to the most recent data from the present study, fully one-quarter of all young men and women had not received sufficient sex education at home or in school. These young people have had to look for the information elsewhere.

Early dating experiences

Young people experience many sexual feelings and crushes toward one another, leading to a desire to experience intimacy as well as sexual intercourse. According to my recent study on adolescents, nearly half of male and more than one-fifth of female 8th-graders (aged 14–15 years) already wanted to experience sexual intercourse. Interest in sex often awakens earlier in boys, even though girls are otherwise considered to develop earlier than boys both physiologically and socially. Men's greater sexual interest, compared with women's, already manifests as gender differences among adolescents.

Expressing the feeling of liking someone and receiving reciprocation is one of the seminal experience of youth. Two young people begin to spend time together within a group of friends and its social events, and they may begin to interpret this as steady dating. Later, dating only consists of relationships where two people spend a lot of time together, one on one.

The average age at which young people begin their first dating relationship has declined gradually. Middle-aged respondents in the 1971 survey reported that they had been approximately 19 years old when first beginning to date in their youth in

the 1940s and 1950s. People who were young in the 1960s and 1970s began dating on average at less than 18. In the 1980s, women's first dating relationships were starting before they turned 17, and in the 1990s, the average age was 16.8 years. According to the latest data, the average age for young women is now approaching 16, and for boys, less than 17.

The dating age has declined over the last several decades by approximately three years. For women, the change has been from 19 to approximately 16 and for men, from 20 to less than 17. It should be noted that 3–4 percent of men and women past middle age have not had a regular relationship in their lifetime, according to their own responses.

The average age when people begin to date does not reveal the large variation that is observable in real life. According to the results, the youngest to begin to date were approximately 11 years old, and approximately one-third of girls and boys had already had a dating relationship by the time they finished upper-primary school (less than 16 years of age). Three out of four young women and more than half of young men reported being in a dating relationship by the age of 18. One in ten women and one in four men were older than 20 when experiencing their first relationship. Recently, men have started dating later. Nearly all women had had dating relationships by the age of 30, and nearly all men by 40.

The sexual significance of dating has grown slowly over the decades. Previously, the common model was to date up to several years before having sex. This habit is increasingly rare. In 1971, three-quarters of women had started dating at a younger age (often with the same partner) than the age at which they had sexual intercourse for the first time. In 2007, 40 percent of women and one-third of men still reported having a steady dating relationship before actually starting sexual intercourse. In other words, young people were still fairly often dating with no hurry to have sexual intercourse.

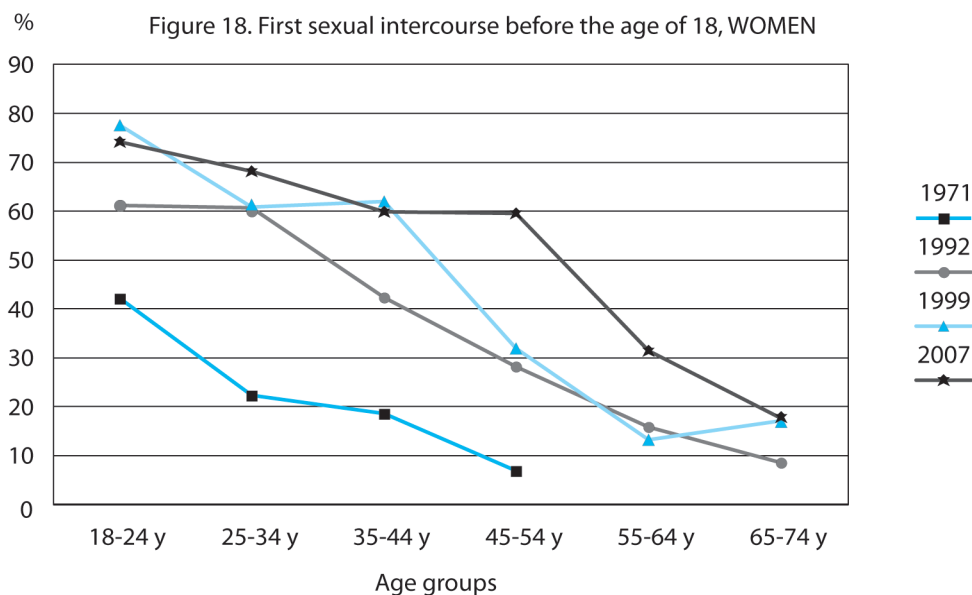
Another pattern gaining popularity is one in which a dating relationship offers the gateway to having sexual intercourse. Approximately 40 percent of both men and women report having sexual intercourse at the same age as when they started dating. The feelings associated with the dating relationship serve as motivation to experiment with sexual intimacy. In 1971, only a quarter of women and men had had sexual intercourse at the same age as they had started dating.

A third and final pattern that is becoming more common is to have sexual intercourse before experiencing a steady relationship. Earlier, in the era of the double standard, men reported having begun sexual intercourse at a younger age than women, many of them before having a steady relationship. Women rarely at least admitted to doing so. Subsequently, the incidence of pre-relationship sexual intercourse among men has declined and at the same time has become more common among women. In 2007, the figures for men and women were quite close. One-fourth of young men and one-fifth of young women had already sexual intercourse before going steady.

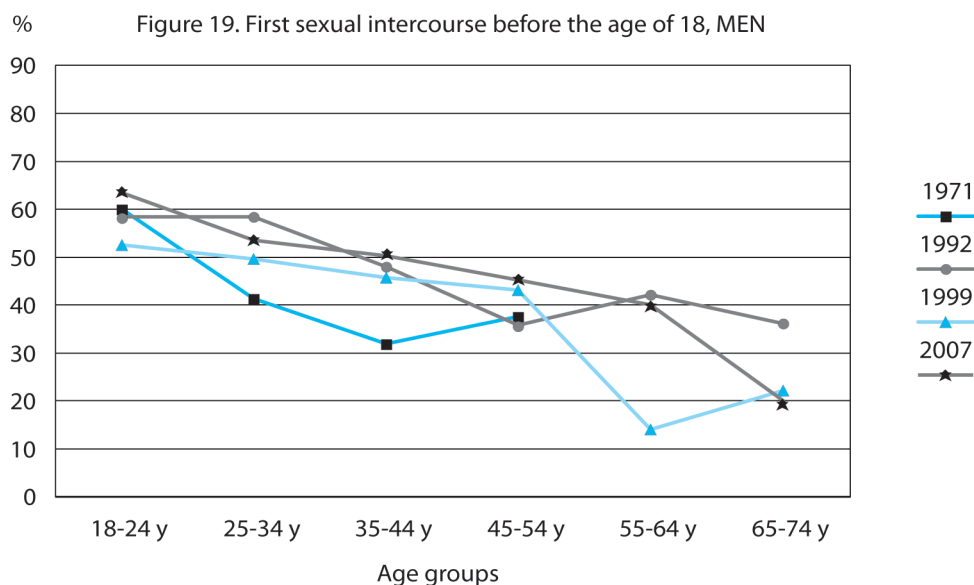
Sexual initiation

Sexuality in general, and the sexuality of young people, is made up of a lot of things beyond sexual intercourse. Many studies have found that a large proportion of young people have engaged in kissing and caressing, but also manual and oral stimulation, before having sexual intercourse. Nevertheless, sexual intercourse represents a special rite of passage that young people themselves use to evaluate and categorize the status of their own sexual experience.

In Finland, the age at first intercourse has declined over recent decades, in part as a result of a decline in the dating age. The change has also been influenced by transformations in the values and expectations that are associated with young people's sexuality. The same shift has been observed in nearly every European country: age at first intercourse has dropped by 2–3 years on average since the 1960s. In Finland, the most significant change has occurred among women.



Those women whose coming-of-age years coincided with the 1940s were on average over 20 years old when they had sexual intercourse for the first time, and men were approximately 19. The 1960s brought a change, and women's age at first intercourse dropped to 19 and men's to 18. Thereafter, the sexual initiation age for both genders found a temporary plateau at around age 18. Through the 1990s and after the year 2000, men's average initiation remained at slightly below 18, but among women, it declined further to about 17. This trend has been the same in all Nordic countries, where girls start having sexual intercourse at a younger age than boys. The main reason is that girls have dated boys older than themselves and sexual intercourse has been a common practise while dating.



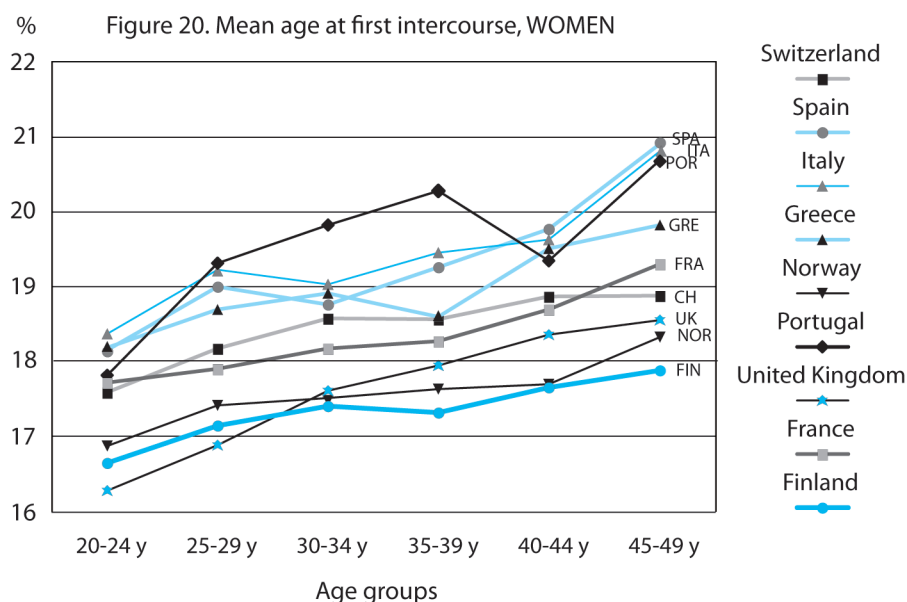
The youngest respondents in this survey to have experienced sexual intercourse had been 11 or 12. According to the latest data, 23 percent of young men and 28 percent of young women had already had intercourse by age 16. More than 70 percent of women and 57 percent of men had intercourse by age 18. For women, this proportion rose by approximately 10 percentage points over the last fifteen years, whereas the figure for men has remained fairly constant. One in five men and a little more than a tenth of women were past the age of 20 when they had intercourse for the first time. Some men and women experienced intercourse for the first time only by age 40, and some never did.

For decades, age at first intercourse has been associated with young people's educational goals and length of education. A shorter education has been correlated with starting sexual intercourse on average two years earlier compared with young people who are seeking a more extensive education. The age at first intercourse has declined at approximately the same ratio in all education groups. Today, girls seeking an academic education begin to have intercourse at approximately age 17.5, boys at approximately 18.5. Recent studies show that girls and boys seeking a vocational education begin intercourse approximately one year earlier than that.

Before, religious young people were older than others when first having intercourse. The approximately two-year difference vanished among religious boys almost entirely during the 1980s, with the exception of a few particularly religious individuals. Among religious girls, the later starting age remained in effect a little longer, because religiosity is much more common among girls than boys. For girls, the importance of religion in predicting when they start having sex has actually been highlighted as differences in girls' religiosity have grown.

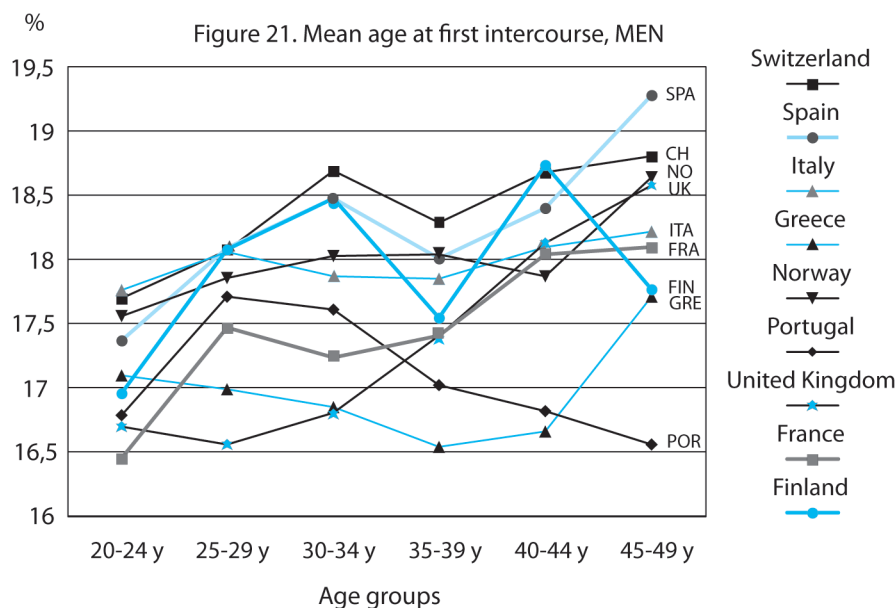
In the data for 2007, the age when girls in the younger generation began to have intercourse varied according to religiosity by up to three years on average. When religion still broadly dominated the way girls thought a few decades ago, the differences between girls were now rather small. Indeed, education differentiated girls more than religion did, and it has retained this position to this day. Religiosity and long-term educational goals also have a tendency to accrue somewhat.

Finnish respondents' age at first intercourse were compared to results from the NEM survey from eight different European countries for those aged 18–49. The countries are Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Norway, Portugal, England and France – a greater number than was included in the previous comparisons concerning attitudes.



This comparison reveals major differences in the age at first intercourse in different parts of Western Europe. When comparing, for example, how many men started having intercourse at age 18, the figures fluctuate from one country to the next, from approximately 40 to 70 percent. Finnish men were slightly below average in this comparison. In a European sense, their age at first intercourse was not very young.

It is worth noting that, in light of the above, men's age at first intercourse had hardly changed at all from the middle-aged generation to the generation of young adults. It remained at a plateau, meaning that men began to have sexual intercourse at the age of about 18, on average. Men's average age of sexual initiation was lowest in England and Greece, at approximately 17.



Women were divided into two groups, where England, Finland, and Norway made up one group where approximately 60–70 percent of women had engaged in sexual intercourse by age 18, whereas the figures were much lower in the rest of the countries. In England, Finland, and Norway, the average age at first intercourse for young women was approximately 17 years. Compared with middle-aged women in those countries, women's average age at first intercourse had declined by approximately a whole year. Unlike among men, women were having sex at an increasingly young age, continuing the trend that began with the respondents in the 1960s.

The remaining six countries in the comparison – Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and France – formed a group of their own. In them, 20–40 percent of women, on average, had had intercourse by age 18. In France and Switzerland, approximately half of young women had had intercourse by age 18 – also the average age in general for starting intercourse in those countries. In Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal, only up to about 30 percent of young women had had intercourse before the age of 18. Even though the age of sexual initiation in these countries had fallen by approximately one year compared with the middle-aged generation, the average age for the youngest women was nevertheless 19 years.

The results mean that in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy, men's reported age at first intercourse was about one year younger than of women. In Finland and Norway, women have recently reported starting ages that are approximately one year earlier than those of young men. This highlights an essential difference in gender equality between Northern and Southern Europe. In the Southern European culture of machismo, men are supposed to become sexually experienced early on, or at least assert

that they are. In the Nordic countries, girls start having sex when they are younger simply because their partners are typically several years older. Girls and young women also no longer need to hide their sexual experience in the Nordic countries. In many reference groups of girls, losing one's virginity can be a matter of honour.

In Southern Europe, women's sexual experience is not valued in the same way and is indeed often viewed negatively. For this reason, young women may not dare to divulge, even in a scientific study, all of their earliest experiences. An indication of this is that in Spain, Portugal, and Italy, approximately 30 percent of women reported that their first sexual partner in intercourse was at least five years older than they were. This proportion was higher than it was in Finland. In addition, at least in Spain, young women reported first intercourse with a steady partner at a rate that was even higher than in Finland. Because women frequently have sex for the first time with an older, steady dating partner, it might be expected that the age at which they first have sex is at least not higher than that of men.

If young men and women in Southern Europe have indeed been honest in reporting their age at first intercourse, the earlier starting age for young men can only be explained by the possibility that a significant portion of them have acquired their first sexual experiences with women older than themselves, and for the most part also more experienced. This includes the use of prostitution services that are popular among young men in some Southern European countries as an initiation rite into adulthood.

First sexual partner

For women, the first sexual partner as reported in the FINSEX study was typically a 19-year-old young man, and for men, it was a 17-year-old young woman. Men reported that their first sexual partner was typically either the same age as them (one-third) or younger (40 percent). Among women, their first sexual partner was mostly older than themselves (three-quarters). Only 15 percent of women had had a first sexual partner of the same age. Nearly half of women's first sexual partners (one in ten for boys) had been at least three years older. Approximately five percent had a first partner, who was at least ten years older. Among boys, three percent first had sex with a partner at least ten years their senior. For an adolescent, this represents a substantial age difference.

The first time people have intercourse has gradually come to be less engaged in the idea of commitment. In 2007, more than half of men and 60 percent of women reported having first-time sex with a steady partner. For three percent, the partner had been a fiancé or spouse. Less than one-third of men and more than one-quarter of women first had sexual intercourse with a short-term partner. The proportion of short-term partners had climbed over time among women, at the same time as that of regular partners had declined. Among men, this trend was exactly the reverse. For one in ten men and women, the first sexual partner had been a friend or good acquaintance.

Of people who had begun dating regularly first, and had intercourse later, close to 30 percent ended up not having intercourse with that first steady partner. Approximately six percent of them (2 % out of everyone) had waited until marriage to have sex. Even of the people who started having sex at the same age as they began dating, approximately one-fifth had sought out a different partner for that purpose, instead of their first dating partner. For people who had intercourse before they dated, the first sex partner was usually a temporary partner.

More and more young people reported very much looking forward to their first time. They had wanted it more than “somewhat” and had not succumbed to the idea bowing to pressure or persuasion. Even among men, the proportion of those who had very much wanted to have intercourse had climbed slightly and was 78 percent in the youngest age group. The proportion among women was 51 percent, whereas in 1999, it was 42 percent and, in 1992, only 33 percent. Of women, 92 percent in 2007 desired their first-time sexual intercourse, and of men, 97 percent. The rest had agreed to it, usually after being persuaded. According to the 2007 data, for one percent of women, their first time had consisted of rape. The partners had been temporary ones.

For the sake of comparison, 18 percent of women in the oldest age group in the 2007 survey had eagerly awaited their first time, and 73 percent said they had at least been willing. The willingness of men in the oldest age group, on the other hand, was almost as high as the results for young adults in 2007. The paradigm shift in the degree of desire only applied to women.

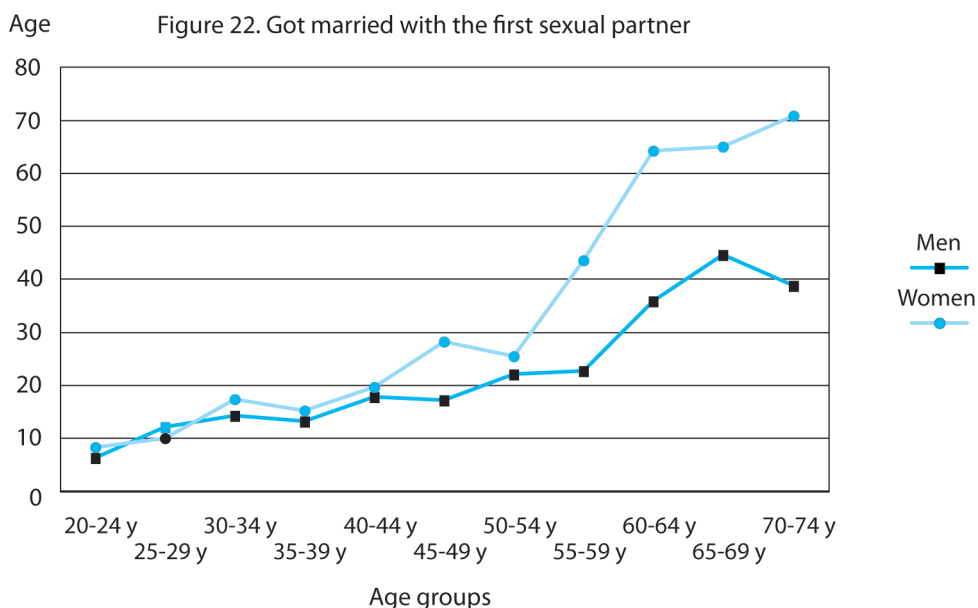
Of the youngest men and women, approximately one half had fallen in love with their first sexual partner. The situation among men has not changed remarkably in the last few decades, but the proportion of women who were in love with their first-time sexual partner has dropped significantly. Of women who experienced sexual intercourse for the first time in the 1960s, four out of five still reported being in love with their partner. In the 1990s, only about half of women had been in love.

Three-quarters of men and women who experienced sex for the first time with a regular partner had been in love with that partner. The few who had waited until marriage to have intercourse had all been in love. In addition, close to about one-tenth of men and 15 percent of women had been in love with the short-term partner or friend with whom they had first-time sex. Being in love, then, did not only apply to regular dating partners.

According to the FINSEX study, approximately one in ten men and women later married their first sexual partner. Of men and women who had been in love with the first sexual partner, nearly one-fifth later married this partner. In the older generations, women had frequently married their first partner, even when they hadn't been in love. This no longer happened among the younger generation.

In the oldest age group, two-thirds of women and half of men married their first sexual partner. In Finland, young women accrue ten years of sexual experience on average before marrying or having their first child. Even women who end up cohabiting have five years of sexual experience on average before that. In other Nordic countries, the difference between age at first intercourse and couple formation or child birth is approximately the same as in Finland. This assigns a wholly different meaning to youth and sexuality, allowing people to make sexual choices and to consider what they want out of their lives in a sexual sense.

partner, when they had a steady dating relationship with this partner. According to 1971 survey data, three-quarters of women in the 1940s, whose first-time sexual intercourse took place with a steady partner, also married this partner. Of all women in this generation, two-thirds married their first sexual partner (vs. one-quarter of men).



In the 1990s, the proportion of respondents who married their first sexual partner was only about ten percent for both sexes. Intention to marry was only rarely part of people's first-time intercourse, and fewer and fewer people even had the experience for the sake of love. Sexual intercourse had increasingly become a rite of passage into adulthood and of claiming ownership of one's sexuality. For a large proportion of young people, the experience had already been preceded by masturbation. Through intercourse, sexuality came to have a new, interactive and relationship significance.

Internationally speaking Finland is an unusual country with regard to marriage to the first sexual partner. Particularly in Africa, East Asia, and Latin America, women continue frequently to marry their first sexual partner.

In many countries youthful sexual experiences do not exist prior to marriage. The age of marriage determines decisively the age of first intercourse. For example, in China, Thailand, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe, the average age of women upon marriage and first sexual intercourse is one and the same. In addition, women usually give birth to their first child very soon following marriage.

5

TAKING HAPPINESS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

Today, masturbation is recommended as a tool for practicing and expressing one's own sexuality and the ability to experience pleasure, and as part of therapy in treating various sexual problems. Masturbation is a key means to experience and express sexuality, alone, or together with a partner. In the latter case, especially if one is the object of such stimulation, the term is manual stimulation. Manual stimulation is an essential part of a wide array of lovemaking techniques.

A short history of masturbation

The Latin root of the word 'masturbation' is *manus stuprare*, meaning self-abuse or self-defilement by one's own hand. It has also been claimed that the word's origin lies in the more neutral *manus turbare*, which means to agitate or disturb by hand. All over the world, apart from the word masturbation, the activity has been given modern names such as self-loving, self-caressing, self-fondling, self-pleasuring, and self-stimulating. Particularly the area of medicine has used rather reluctant formulations when discussing masturbation, allowing the speaker to take a comfortable distance from an awkward topic, preferring to sound more scientific. Clearly, there is no harm in speaking about masturbation in plain terms.

Historically, masturbation signifies the most private, secret, and undervalued sexual practice of all. In spite of its private, hidden character, various communities have tried to control and label masturbation as something negative. The source of the plethora of prejudice directed at masturbation is, again, the theory or teaching that sperm is to be conserved. "Wasting" the seed for purposes other than reproductive activity has been said to result in weakness and illness. The solution offered has been to save the seed.

The Western tradition has examples of real panic with regard to masturbation. One of the oldest written documents revealing such alarm comes from Jean Gerson, who lived in the 14th century and portrayed masturbation as a disgusting and terrible sin. He recommended recipes for resisting it, including cold baths, whipping, abstaining from alcohol, prayer, and good company. In dormitories, the lights had to be left on all night, one's hands had to be kept outside the covers, and boys were asked to report on those who had behaved "badly".

Masturbation has been the ideal target for the self-control taught within Christianity and Judaism as part of the regulation of everyday life. Male sexual purity was considered a basic social virtue. The idea was in “civilizing the beast” within. Through sexual purity, states could ensure that it had a sufficient supply of healthy men to serve in their mass armies. It was said that pleasure was really Satan in disguise, trying to tempt people. Because sex was the most seductive activity, it was also deemed the most dangerous. And because it (including masturbation) was immoral, it followed that it had to be unhealthy.

Weapons to combat masturbation included religious and medical argumentation. In the 18th century it was said that masturbation caused mental illness, which was a prelude to the eternal punishment that would ensue. In texts published by Simon André Tissot in 1758, masturbation was thoroughly medicalized. Tissot set particular focus on the effects of masturbation on the neurological system. He claimed that masturbation resulted in excessive blood flow to the brain, which could cause impotence or insanity.

In the 19th century, John Harvey Kellogg’s “treatment” for chronic masturbation was to insert a silver thread into the foreskin, causing sufficient pain to prevent masturbation, or in the case of women, to burn the clitoris with carbolic acid. All means were allowed in the war against masturbation. Originally, even male circumcision was first initiated in hopes that it would prevent people from masturbating. The original justification has been forgotten, and new justifications have emerged in support of the now-established custom of circumcision.

It used to be said that women who engaged in masturbation would develop an unnaturally large, penis-like clitoris, or that they would lose their attractiveness. According to the neurosis hypothesis of masturbation, it was claimed that excessive masturbation caused the draining of sexual energy, further leading to weak nerves and neurosis. In addition, the damages caused by masturbation were said to render the masturbator incapable of fulfilling the requirements of marriage sexually and of having children. These fabricated dangers were meant to curb masturbation through fear and guilt. All in all, the guilt that was associated with masturbation also formed a central aspect of the overall dread that people felt toward sexual relationships.

Havelock Ellis’ “Studies in the Psychology of Sex” (1899) was the first work to attempt to abolish some of the prejudices related to masturbation. According to Ellis, only perpetual, constant masturbation could be harmful. In the United States, enlightened medical professionals launched a full-fledged offensive in the 1920s and 1930s against the myth that masturbation caused insanity. It took an entire generation until the public at large internalized this knowledge.

In the West, the myths associated with masturbation were finally challenged and questioned thoroughly in connection with the 1960s sexual revolution. New sources of information became available, and sexual matters and the values attached to them

underwent a process of re-evaluation. Sexual research evolved. Masturbation was not only acceptable, but recommended as an important exercise as part of sexual therapy. Instead of viewing it as a dangerous sin, masturbation was established as a virtue that could help people promote their own wellbeing and hone their sexual skills. The assumption has been that the new trend initially affected the masturbation habits of more highly educated people, who had access to the new information.

New knowledge regarding masturbation spread particularly slowly in the area of the former Soviet Union. As late as the 1990s, there were influential Russian authorities who still viewed masturbation as psychologically damaging and conducive to illness and mortality. Similar warnings were also still heard in the 1990s in Estonian medical schools. It can be assumed that views like these have continued to affect the masturbation habits of even the younger generation.

Unfounded fears attached to masturbation

The belief that masturbation (which has been called by many different names over time, and still is) was dangerous persisted even in the Finnish medical establishment through the 1950s, when health education textbooks still contained serious warnings about its risks. Moral education warned of masturbation. The warnings endured, and they still do among the people, in a way that resembles urban legends. There are still many people who needlessly worry about whether masturbation is harmful or not.

Sexual autobiographies collected from average people show that fears regarding the negative effects of masturbation have been common in Finland, Estonia, and St. Petersburg. Many writers were frightened of harmful effects, which they had read about in various publications, or heard about from other people. The fear of going crazy and the guilt induced by masturbation were quite common especially before the 1970s. Many people described their attempts to stop masturbating, usually without success.

In the last three surveys respondents have been asked to respond to the following statement: “Masturbation is not harmful to health.” The responses of different generations indicate that masturbation-related fears are slowly dissipating. In 2007, approximately 90 percent of young and middle-aged men and women knew or presumed that masturbation was not harmful to health. Among the oldest generation, 80 percent of men and 70 percent of women felt the same. Of the youngest generation, approximately four-fifths strongly agreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 2–5 percent of respondents of various ages continued to believe in masturbation’s negative effects on health.

The generation who came of age following World War II had been much more insecure about the effects of masturbation. Fifteen years ago, only slightly more than half of men and women in that age group believed masturbation was not harmful. At the time, there was a lot of uncertainty. As time has passed, conceptions among

the older generation have gradually evolved so that fewer now view masturbation with such distrust. At the same time, by an increase of approximately ten percentage points, the younger and middle-aged generations have also shown growing faith in the harmlessness of masturbation.

Orgasms in masturbation

With greater awareness of the safety of masturbation, the proportion of people who have also experienced orgasms over and beyond intercourse, or exclusively through masturbation, has grown. Among young and middle-aged men, only a few percent had not experienced orgasm through masturbation by 2007. Close to 90 percent of men in the oldest age group had experienced orgasms through masturbation. Of young and middle-aged women, more than 80 percent had experienced orgasms through masturbation, but only less than 60 percent of women in the older age group had.

This question was presented to respondents only in 1999 and 2007. In the eight intervening years the proportion of those who had experienced orgasms from masturbating increased in all age groups. This means that many had experimented with it for the first time only in later adulthood. Among older women, for example, the proportion of those who had experienced an orgasm through masturbation increased from 44 to 59 percent, and among men in the same age group, from 74 to 88 percent. Part of this change can be attributed to the fact that younger women and men who had more experience with masturbation now became part of this generation. In spite of bigger numbers, however, women's orgasms from masturbation were still clearly lagging behind men's masturbation activity.

The age when respondents first experienced an orgasm through masturbation varied widely for both women and men. Many had had their first masturbation-orgasm before school age. Thirteen percent of boys and 9 percent of girls had experienced their first orgasm by age ten. More than half of boys and nearly a third of girls had their first masturbatory orgasm before upper-primary school, before the age of 13. When masturbation is first mentioned in school health education classes (if it is mentioned at all), most young people already have personal experience of it.

The average age of young men experiencing their first orgasm through masturbation was 13, and 15 for young women. These averages had fallen by almost two years among boys and by three and a half years among girls when compared with the oldest age group. Younger adults had taken charge of their sexuality particularly through masturbation at a progressively younger age.

The timing of the first experiences of masturbation among men and women have differed significantly in that only a few percent of men had been 20 years old by the time of their first experience, whereas it was much more common among women. In the middle-aged group, one-fifth of women and in the oldest age group, approxi-

mately 40 percent only discovered masturbation after the age of 20. Many had not experienced it until their 40s and 50s. The oldest reported age of a first-time masturbation experience was 67 years. Among men, too, there were individual cases where respondents had been past the age of 25 when first experimenting with masturbation. The oldest reported starting age for men was 60 years.

Enormous increase in masturbation activity

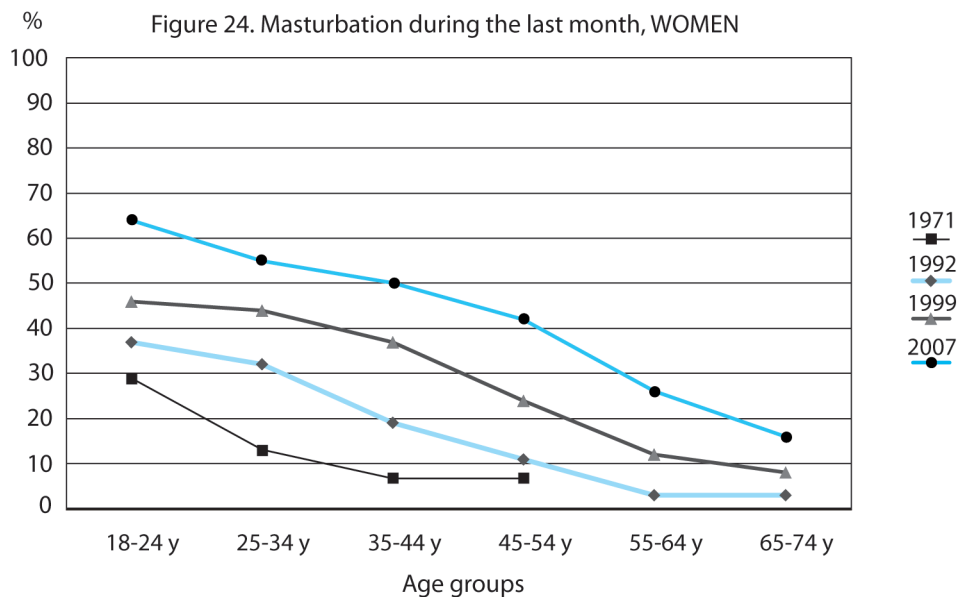
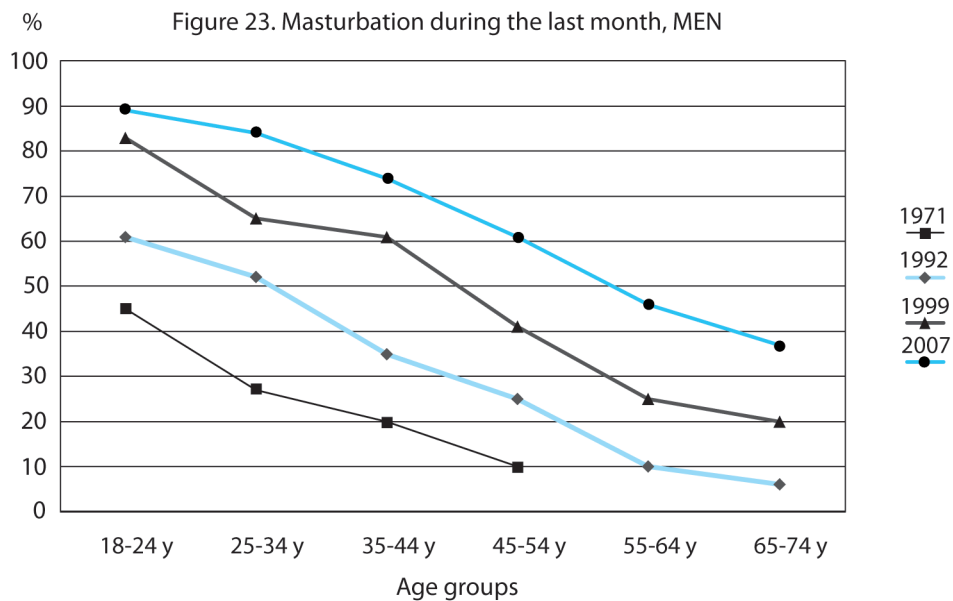
Over the last decades, the rate of Finnish people who masturbate has truly exploded. The proportion of male respondents jumped from 74 to 97 percent, and of women, from 51 percent to a whopping 93 percent. The figures for the youngest respondents are actually somewhat higher. In 1971, only approximately 60 percent of middle-aged men and approximately 30 percent of middle-aged women had occasionally experimented with masturbation. Thereafter the experimentation and practice of masturbation has progressed rapidly from one generation to the next.

Masturbation frequency is still substantially higher among men than women. The latest research has found that, in the group of young adults, 70 percent of men and 33 percent of women had masturbated in the week preceding the survey. The figures for the preceding month were 85 percent and 59 percent. Among the middle-aged, nearly half of men and more than one-fifth of women had masturbated in the course of the preceding one-week period. The figures for the last one-month period were two-thirds of men and half of women. In the oldest age group, the figures for the past week were one-fifth for men and less than one-tenth for women, and for the past month, half of men and one-fifth of women.

When comparing the masturbation frequency of men and women of different ages, women lag approximately 20 years behind men's curve in the growth of masturbation activity. The issue is, therefore, above all about the timing of the change. It is entirely possible that gender differences will disappear completely in the future.

Gender differences in the timing of the growth in masturbation activity in Finland approximate differences found between Finland and Estonia as well as Finland and Russia. Because of strict public policies that oppose sexual education and different manifestations of sexuality in the former Soviet areas, similar changes in the growth of masturbation activity have occurred two or three decades later than in Finland.

Masturbation frequency increased substantially with each survey. For example, the proportion of respondents in the youngest age group who had masturbated during the preceding month grew between 1971 and 2007 from 36 to 85 percent for young men and from 21 to 59 percent for young women. Of those who had masturbated in the last 24-hour period, the proportion of young men had jumped from 4 to 29 percent. Among young women the same figure only climbed from 2 percent to 7 percent. The latest figures still showed a marked gender difference.



An example of the scale of the change is that in 1971, according to middle-aged women, two-thirds had never practiced masturbation. In 2007, 92 percent of women in this age group reported having masturbated. Two-thirds had done so during the last year and nearly half had masturbated during the last month.

An important factor contributing to this seismic shift is that people have maintained the masturbation habits adopted in youth. In other words, masturbation does not constitute youthful experimentation that gradually gets left behind as people mature and marry.

As people's experiences of what type of touching best arouses them have become increasingly refined over the last decades, even the last few years, it may be assumed that they are more likely to utilize this experience with sexual partners. Men and women can tell one how they want to be touched and, conversely, ask what feels best for a partner. All of this should have a beneficial effect on the quality of sexual wellbeing and pleasure in relationships.

Who are the people who masturbate actively?

Men and women who started masturbating earlier have also practiced it more actively in all age groups. The differences are substantial. The frequency of masturbation fluctuates according to the age when it was begun, from approximately several times a week to several times a month. The people who started masturbating younger were least worried about any unsalutary effects.

Respondents who began to masturbate younger also had sexual intercourse at a significantly younger age. Among men, the average difference compared with other people has been as high as three years, one and a half years among women. For men, the difference held in all age groups, but there was no difference for women who had come of age in the 1950s and 1960s. Among them, masturbation was scarce and sexual intercourse was regulated much more strictly than today.

Men who had started masturbating earlier than others continued to exhibit a more frequent desire for sex as adults. The average difference varied from wanting sex once every day to wanting it a couple of times a week. The difference was less noticeable among women, among whom the difference fluctuated according to the age of starting masturbation, from wanting sex nearly every day on average to wanting it a couple of times a week, and among young women, from desiring sex every day to several times a week.

The highly educated practiced masturbation more regularly and more actively than others throughout the study's time span. The critical factor in this had been that immediately upon the sexual revolution of the 1960s, respondents with the highest education were getting more recent and better information about masturbation. This information encouraged them to be the first to see what it was all about. The proportion of highly educated people who had never tried masturbation declined quickly and was much smaller than among people with less education. Gradually, following this period of experimentation, masturbation became actively practiced among those who had discovered it. Recently, however, the predictive value of education in terms of masturbation frequency has declined.

A clear-cut correlation between high masturbation frequencies was being someone who experienced sexual desire frequently. This correlation was not as strong, however, among people who would have strongly preferred to have more frequent sexual intercourse in their current relationship.

The association between frequency of sexual intercourse and masturbation frequency was slightly curvilinear. Respondents who had the least or most frequent sexual intercourse also practiced masturbation somewhat more actively than others. Having less frequent intercourse than other people was no longer an effective predictor of masturbation frequency. A much more significant predictor associated with this life situation was the desire for more frequent intercourse. On the other hand, for people who would have preferred more frequent intercourse, masturbation represented an alternative practice to experience pleasure beyond an active sex life. The two do not exclude, but complement each other. As a matter of fact, the women and the young men who considered sex important for the happiness of their relationship were also the ones to most actively masturbate.

A new trend was that among young women, those who experienced vaginal orgasms fairly rarely at most were markedly more active in masturbating, compared to women who experienced orgasms through intercourse more regularly. The same trend is also observable among middle-aged women. A higher masturbation frequency among women, then, may just as well be connected to unrealized wishes for sexual intercourse, as it can to sexual intercourse that too often ends without an orgasm.

Some of the most active masturbators sought stimulation from pornography. Men who masturbated particularly actively were more likely than others to make use of sex magazines, videos or DVDs and online porn. This was most obvious among middle-aged and older men. A new phenomenon was that many young women who masturbated actively also used porn, including online porn. Middle-aged and even older men and women who masturbated more actively also frequented sex shops more actively.

Masturbation frequency was not associated with dissatisfaction with the quality of sex or intercourse. Rather, respondents' own assessment of how satisfying their sex life was as a whole was linked to masturbation frequency in a significant way. This had to do with dissatisfaction with the frequency of sex. Wanting sex much more often than actually having it had led respondents to view their sex life as not particularly satisfying.

A general trend was that over recent decades, people masturbated much more frequently regardless of how satisfied they were with their sex life. Masturbation was not a particular purview of those who were unsatisfied with the rest of their sex life.

The changes in masturbation frequency in relation to sexual satisfaction were noteworthy. For example, in 1971, only slightly more than one-tenth of men and only a few percent of women who found their sex lives satisfying had engaged in mastur-

bation in the week prior. In 2007, the same figures had ballooned to two-thirds and more than one-third. Active masturbation had become a vibrant part of the sexual practices of people with satisfying sex lives.

The fundamental situation was, though, that men and women who were less satisfied with their sex lives masturbated more actively. In part, masturbation was compensation for the unmet portion of their sexual desire. For example, of young men who were dissatisfied with their sex lives, in excess of four-fifths had masturbated in the week prior. Among middle-aged men the same proportion was nearly three-fourths. Of young women who were not satisfied with their sex lives, two-thirds, and of middle-aged women, more than half had practiced masturbation within the preceding month. The strongest increase, though, had occurred among women who were satisfied with their sex lives.

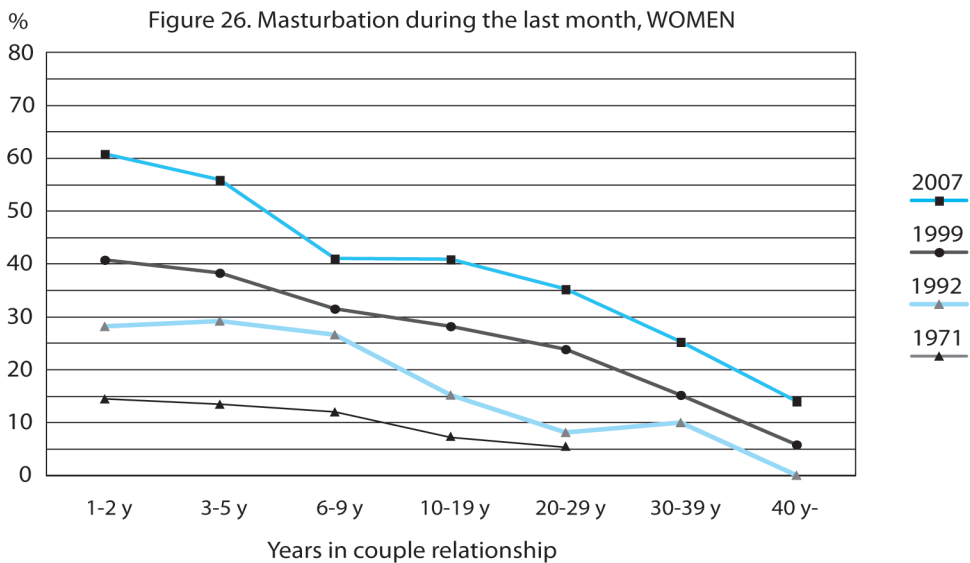
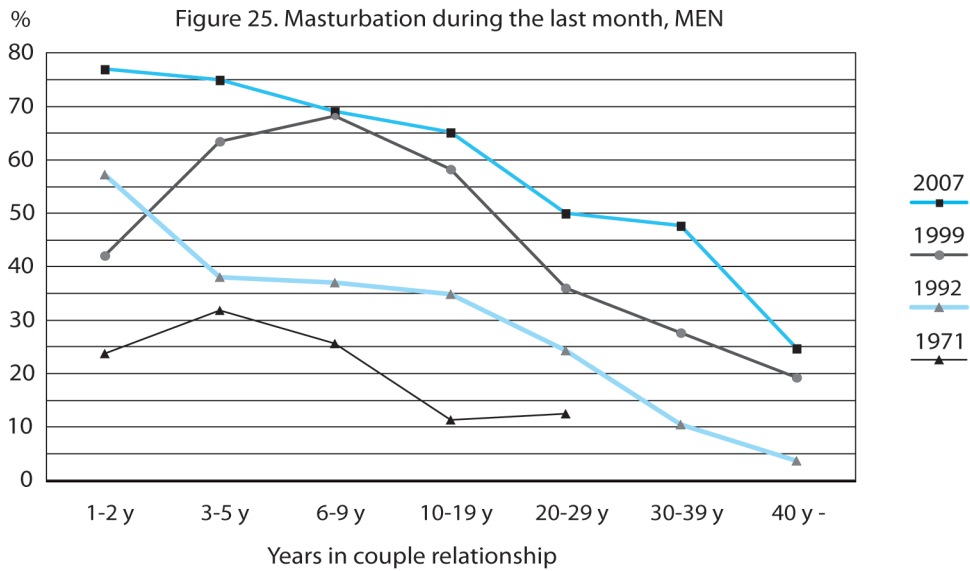
Masturbation is increasing in relationships

One of the biggest transformations in the sexual lives of Finns in recent years has been the robust escalation of masturbation in daily life, mostly regardless of people's relationship situation. Although single people and those who live alone have masturbated more actively in the absence of a partner, as would be expected, masturbation rates have intensified rapidly also among people who are in various types of relationships. Young adults have been more active masturbators regardless of relationship type, and men have been more active than women in all eventualities.

Four in five single men had masturbated within the last week. The increase from eight years before was 24 percentage points. Masturbation was equally active and had increased similarly among young men in living-apart relationships. Comparable increases had occurred among young married men. In 2007, 61 percent had masturbated in the last week. The same level of activity was found among cohabiting men. In the space of fifteen years, the figures for men had nearly doubled in all relationship types.

Also among middle-aged men masturbation rates had doubled or tripled in different relationship types during a fifteen-year period. The same increases also applied to older men who lived alone or were married.

The proportion of women who masturbate has also grown drastically. Over the last eight years, masturbation grew more popular among young women in all relationship types by approximately 15 percentage points. Among young women in living-apart relationships, more than two-thirds and of married and cohabiting young women, half had masturbated in the last month. In fifteen years, these figures have doubled among young adults and tripled among middle-aged women. For married women and women in living-apart relationships, the figures had increased six-fold. Even among the oldest women, relative increases particularly in terms of masturbating in the past month approximated those of other women, though the levels were lower.



All of this change and the increased popularity of masturbation have blown a new sexual wind into all relationship types. It speaks of a growing eagerness to seek sexual gratification, but also of possible problems in finding enough satisfaction from intercourse in relationships.

In 2007, among young women and men, the percentage of respondents who practiced masturbation did not vary much by length of relationship. In other words, people did not masturbate more actively in the beginning of a relationship, compared with relationships lasting more than ten years. Among middle-aged respondents, however, masturbation was somewhat more active in relationships exceeding six years. In relationships of 20 or more, the difference was no longer visible. Among women, differences only emerged in relationships lasting past the 20-year mark, which featured less masturbation. These women are part of the older generation, which had not learned to masturbate very actively.

People in relationships who would have preferred to be having more sex were more active in masturbating. In those cases, masturbation to some extent functioned as a substitute for sexual intercourse. Among men, this link was very strong, but also noticeable among women. The masturbation activity of respondents who had a strong desire for more frequent sexual intercourse in their relationship was equal to that of people living alone. In fact, among the oldest women, those who longed for more sex in their relationship actually masturbated twice as actively as older women who lived alone.

6

PLENTY OF FISH IN THE SEA VS. THE ONE AND ONLY

The focus of this chapter is to evaluate how strong the tendency among Finns still is to form only one, lifelong relationship. We will also take a look at the number of sexual partners that those who enter relationships without being in love have had. In addition, we will discuss same-sex sexual experiences and analyze what unites those who have had numerous sexual relationships.

The meaning of sexuality in relationships

The longing for union formation with another person is one of the most fundamental needs humans have. The media ascribes people's entire life happiness to finding the right relationship. Finland is an exception when compared to most other countries in the world in that young people frequently have relationships with multiple dating partners before deciding to live with a spouse. Especially in developing countries, women usually marry their first partner and become pregnant very soon following marriage. In Finland, young people generally live together for several years before having children, and they have accrued sexual experiences over about ten years on average, before having their first child. Internationally speaking, Finnish attitudes regarding union formation are exceptionally liberal.

Earlier in history, being in a relationship was almost essential even in terms of ensuring livelihoods. Today's relationships set more stock in feelings and caring, emotional support and sexual enjoyment. Both men and women now want greater freedom in determining their own personal lives and their pursuit of happiness. No doubt this stems from our relatively new and emotion-laden conception of marriage and family. People want relationships that are emotionally satisfying.

Whether people view marriage as a permanent or temporary relationship depends on their understanding of the meaning of intimacy, sexuality, and commitment. In the romantic view, marriage is based on sexual and emotional intimacy. The partners are lovers at the same time as they are parents and joint partners in managing household and finances. As marital intimacy wanes, the whole union may begin to feel wrong, or a failure.

For those who observe collectivist or communitarian values, the romantic approach is impossible, because the basic values that are intrinsic to it can nullify the permanent

bind of marriage because of children. The essential difference in these two viewpoints is in how important they consider emotional intimacy from the standpoint of having a good life. There is also the question of what determines how various issues are evaluated: the common as well as separate good of the two, or the greatest benefit to the couple's children.

An intimate relationship means sharing things with another person that we may not express or experience with anyone else. This entails trusting that the other person knows us in a way that no-one else does. In an intimate relationship, we find the kind of caring and closeness that is missing in other relationships. Intimate relationships demand an intense sharing of emotions, caring, reinforcement and support, as well as desire and sexual gratification. These experiences are unique also in the sense that we feel safe in them. Experiences of this calibre assign a special meaning to life and are also important in developing our identities.

Sexuality and union formation go together inseparably. Especially now, sexuality is the lead motive in starting a relationship, and most sexual experiences occur between long-term or short-term partners. The nature of the relationship and the characteristics of the partner have a major influence on the types of sexual experiences people accumulate. The choice of sexual partner is a very important one. That choice and the ways in which we act out our sexual desires and tendencies are regulated and enabled by large social institutions, values, and customs.

Recently in the West, there has been a lot of discussion about relationships having moved into a phase where feelings, also sexual feelings, are the only force that now keep couples together, replacing earlier motives and compelling forces, such as securing a livelihood, reproduction, and respectability. The new order has added new requirements for relationships and has made them increasingly vulnerable. If a relationship is not in a good place emotionally, it is at considerable risk of divorce. The growing significance of feelings has brought us to a place where how well the relationship functions sexually has become the measure of its value and quality overall.

Sexual activity is ever-more important in union formation. Packaged into a love relationship, sexual interaction has evolved into the main force that keeps the relationship going. Instead of the social institution of marriage, we now have a new, subjective definition of relationships that has shoved their sexual dimension to the forefront.

Today, a couple that is not sexually active is no longer a credible couple. Previously, the biggest problem was a marriage that was sexually non-actualized and childless, in other words, that did not fulfil its social function. In the current subjective view, lack of sexual activity is a sign of marital problems and a predictor of divorce.

The ideal of “the one and only”

According to Christian values and ideals, people were supposed to retain their sexual chastity until marriage. Sexual innocence was a kind of article of exchange that was used in negotiating the conditions of marriage. Even the formula for the Christian marriage ceremony makes mention of remaining faithful to the spouse. Those who have genuinely implemented these ideals have had only one sexual partner in their lifetime. There are many who still continue to live out this ideal and to whom the world has changed only in so far as when they are looking for the right spouse, love plays a more important role than it would have previously. Love provides the feeling that people are freely choosing their spouse and allows the romantic belief in a lifelong relationship.

The ideal of one lifelong sexual relationship was not at all equitable to men and women. Women, much more than men, were expected and required to remain untouched, and it was generally women who lived out this ideal in practice. Of the female respondents who had come of age before and during the 1950s, almost half had never had another sexual relationship besides their husband. Of them, 90 percent were still married to this one life-long companion at the time when the survey was conducted.

The one-man women had had no other sexual experiences prior to the relationship with or marriage to the husband. An official engagement was a kind of unofficial permission to have sex, because it constituted a relatively binding commitment to marry. These one-man women also had no extra-marital or parallel relationships during marriage, and many had even remained faithful to their deceased husbands once widowed. In the lives of these women, sex took place only within the confines of marriage vows and only with one partner. It was characteristic of their time and lifestyle that these women rarely practiced masturbation.

The same degree of sexual innocence and chastity was not expected of the men as of the women of that era. Men went so far as to boast about how many women they had had, and sought partners in “loose” women as well as those who took money for sex. “Respectable” women were treated differently, and in their company, a man would try to avoid seeming too much of a ladies’ man. One-fifth of the men who came of age in the 1950s spent their entire life with only the one woman they had been with, usually a wife. Of these men, approximately 90 percent had married. They had competed with other men to prove their sexual prowess with women. Then there were the shy men and the poor men who had almost no chance in the marriage market. They often became the village bachelors, living with parents or a brother.

With secularization in the 1960s, the norms stipulating marriage began to loosen. There was talk of women’s right to sexual pleasure, and at the same time, modern contraceptives came on the market and removed almost entirely the concern about unwanted pregnancy and the social consequences that accompanied it. Women were

beginning to use the opportunity to try out different candidates for marriage before making a final commitment. These developments reduced the numbers of women who had only experienced one man in their lives to approximately one-third. The change was swift and it was historic.

It was the start of a new era for women's sexuality and relationships. Women could now compare several partners before committing to one person, encouraging them to focus not only on their marital obligations but also on their own enjoyment. Sexual enjoyment became a possible and desirable life project, also opening new doors in the sexual lives of couples.

For men, the 1960s and the 1970s did not translate to major changes in the ideal of one, lifelong sexual relationship. Approximately 15 percent of men had experienced sexual fulfilment with only one sexual partner. Ninety percent of these men married that same partner. For men, the greater change in practical terms was that men now had to be prepared for a future wife who had already had sexual experiences with someone else. The result was that men now had to compete with the sexual images that a wife brought with her from previous partners. On the other hand, some men may have felt a sense of uniqueness, because a woman had chosen them over the "competition".

Relationships of one, lifelong love became increasingly rare in the 1980s and 1990s. First, the proportion of women who had had sex with one person only fell to one-fifth, and then dropped down to about 15 percent. In the 1990s, only about one in ten men had had just one lifelong monogamous relationship. In the 2007 survey, these people still made up sizable proportions of men and women of the oldest age group, because so much time had elapsed from the youth that had shaped their lifestyle. People have shown very little inclination to change the ways in which they form relationships or sexual unions over a lifetime. Those who initially choose a monogamous lifestyle rarely turn into sexual adventurers who swap partners frequently.

Among the Finnish population, there is really nothing now that would force or compel people to live with one and the same partner all their life. Even highly regarded religious values no longer steer or force people into it in any particular way. On the other hand, ideal love and a romantic lifestyle may make the possibility of sharing sex with just one person very alluring. This youthful idealism may become the habit on which the relationship rests and moves forward. But sometimes when relationships are formed at a very young age, people may find in middle age that they feel as if they have not fully lived their life. This can seriously threaten a relationship. Those who survive this trial often forge ahead even stronger and more united.

The ideal of one lifelong sexual relationship is linked to lifelong love. This linkage has made Finnish respondents rather sparing in their love, if not downright stingy. People have given little of themselves in terms of love. Finnish culture requires that love must be controlled so that it does not attract us inconveniently to potential new relationships. Love is a risk that must be avoided.

In love, men and women have been equal in the sense that approximately one-third of each reported falling in love only once in their lives. These numbers have changed very little for either gender since the 1970s. Falling in love when young seems to have dominated love, since the number of times people report falling in love differs very little from the old to the young. In practical terms, this means that very few people have permitted themselves to fall in love again after first falling in love when young. Some did experience several loves in youth, but nothing indicates that they have found many more later on.

Although women have many more lovers in a lifetime than before, they are no more eager to fall in love now than several decades ago. Love is a more serious issue than sex. People do not experiment with love. It is indeed worth noting that a greater number of women reported having had one, lifelong *sexual* partner than the number of reported having just one *love*. In other words, love used to be felt more freely than engaging in sex, whereas now, people engage in sex more freely than in love. In this way, culture shapes people's values and opportunities regarding the formation of relationships.

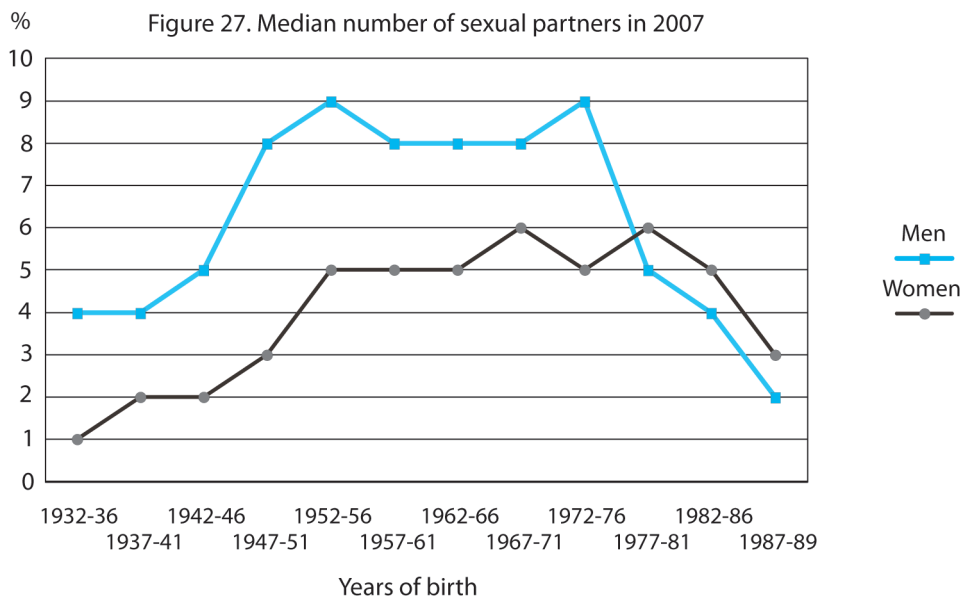
More and more people see plenty of fish in the sea

Back in the day, the story's ending was that the man and the woman got married and had many children. This scenario has been replaced with a series of various relationship types, sometimes occurring simultaneously. Most of the time, moving in together is preceded by a number of relationships, and if one relationship is not working, people look for a new one. Many young people feel that they want to first date someone else before looking for Mr. or Mrs. Right in earnest. The current ideal is that people want to experience a high-quality relationship, and to stay in it only for as long as it feels good. The ideal, in other words, is about the quality, not the position of the relationship in the sequence of all lifetime relationships.

A practical illustration of the seismic change that has taken place in the sexual lives of women can be seen by looking back: in the 1970s, when a young bride walked up to the altar flanked by her groom, she was typically standing next to her first sexual partner. The average number of sexual partners of young brides then was two. In 2007, the typical lifetime number of sexual partners of a woman standing in the same situation was seven, and the average woman has had 12 men in her lifetime.

Although this group also includes a fair number of women with very few sexual partners, men now must assume that their brides have already "test-driven" a number of men, also sexually. This is in part why women now know better what they want from a man and how to get it. There is reason to believe, and to hope, that practice makes perfect in this arena as well.

Men find themselves in a situation that has changed somewhat less, as men were already involving themselves with a sequence of sexual partners before settling down. In 1971, men who had recently entered into a relationship had had a median of five partners and an average of 12 by the time they settled down. In 2007, the same figures were 8 and 16. Men were still reporting somewhat more extensive sexual experience, as measured by number of sexual partners, but the gap between men and women had shrunk to a point where it was now minimal. In this sense, gender equality has already been achieved. By gender, the expectations and requirements concerning level of sexual experience no longer diverge for the men and women who decide to move in together.

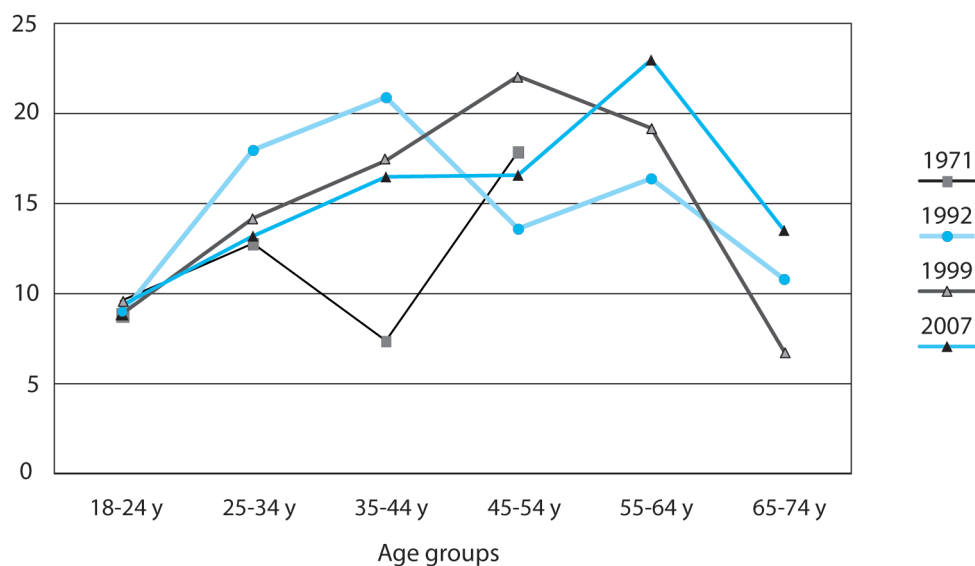


The narrative of the sexual experience of young couples illustrates aptly the broader transformation that has affected the sexual relationships of recent generations in Finland. Women have come to be considerably more active in seeking out different sexual relationships than they used to be. The average number of lifetime sexual partners for women has jumped from 2.6 in 1971 to 10.4 in 2007. In 1971, the median figure among women of all ages was between one and two, but by 2007, it was five. Half of all women had had five or fewer sexual partners, and the other half had had more.

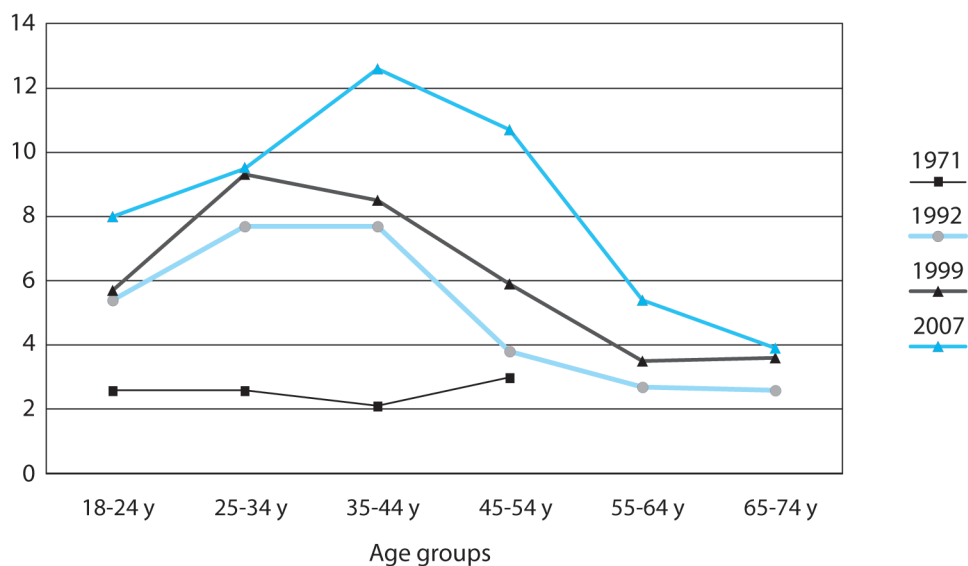
The upsurge in the number of sexual partners continued between 1999 and 2007. In 1999, women reported an average of 7.4 and a median of four sexual partners. Some of this change had to do with women with few sexual partners in their youth being moved out of the comparison age group, but nevertheless, the averages increased in all age groups.

Among men too, the number of sexual partners grew between 1971 and 2007, though much less in relative terms. The average number of partners increased from 11.4 to 14.7, and the median from five to seven. Compared with 1999 and 1992, the average figures for men's sexual partners have actually declined by approximately two partners. In 1999, men's average was 16.6 and the median was seven, the same as in 2007. The changes were small, but the fact that men have not increased their number sexual partners in any age group indicates that the trend has stalled.

Partners Figure 28. Mean number of sexual partners in lifetime, MEN



Partners Figure 29. Mean number of sexual partners in lifetime, WOMEN



After the most recent changes, women and men in the 2007 survey reported nearly the same number of sexual partners, closer than ever before. Among women under 25, the 2007 median was actually higher than among men. This trend suggests that in decades to come, men and women will most likely report similar numbers of lifetime sexual partners. This trend was, for the time being, found only in Finland.

The women who began to collect sexual partners in the manner of men were of a generation that was approximately 30 years old at the time of the 1992 survey. In the latest study, these women were now 40–50 years old. In the intervening eight years, they continued to accumulate a substantial number of sexual partners. Simultaneously, figures showed that young men were forming fewer sexual relationships than previously. This trend was manifested in the responses of men aged approximately 30 years and younger. They had committed to longer-term sexual relationships that the generations of men who preceded them.

Median figures and particularly averages can easily make it look like all men and women have multiple sexual partners in their lifetime. But a previous discussion made it clear that many people have had just one sexual partner in their entire life. To this can be added that based on the latest data, approximately one-third of women and a quarter of men have had at most three sexual partners in their lifetime. These people were clearly not pursuing a life of sexual adventure.

The opposite is true for respondents who accumulated a large number of sexual relationships. Looking at how many people had had more than at least 20 sexual relationships in their lifetime, the proportion of such men in 2007 was approximately 30 percent and of women, 20 percent. Here, too, the figures for men and women are trending toward one another. For example, in 1992, one-third of men but only one-tenth of women had had at least 20 sexual partners. Earlier, in 1971, only two percent of women had had that many sexual partners. Women's growing numbers of sexual partners is not merely the result of youthful sexual experimentation, but has to do with the fact that more and more adult women are forming sexual relationships with men in the manner that sexually active men have been doing for many decades.

The highest reported number of sexual partners in this study reached hundreds. Eleven individual men reported having at least 200 partners in their lifetime. One man had had more than 1,000 sexual partners. Three women reported at least 200 partners.

Previous international studies on sexuality have clearly and consistently shown that men in all countries report a significantly higher number of lifetime sexual partners than women. The studies have been criticized for this, because statistically speaking the number of partners for men and women should be very similar. Logically, same-sex relationships and sex with prostitutes are main contributing factors, the latter possibly affecting a relative minority of women who amass numerous partners. Apparently, research does not capture these women. Apart from the reasons above, a lot of consideration has been given to how much it is possible to rely on people's responses.

The number of reported sexual partners has shown itself to be one of the last bastions where masculinity and femininity have not yet merged. Divulging the number of sexual partners has been the domain of men and downplaying the realm of women. The latest figures suggest that, brick by brick, also this gendered bastion is coming down.

Sexual relationships in recent years

The impact of dating relationships and sexual experimentation in youth is substantial when calculating lifetime totals of sexual partners at different stages of adulthood. A better gauge of the changes that are taking place in the formation of sexual relationships in adulthood is the number of sexual partners respondents have had in recent years. These figures show how strongly, in practice, the sexual lives of Finnish people involve just one established partner during a lifecourse. The study contains data concerning the number sexual partners in the last five-year and one-year period before the survey.

Sexual relationships in the last five years

The number of sexual partners over the last five years is an illustrative representation of the age at which Finns are particularly likely to settle into a more established relationship. At around age 20, slightly more than one-fifth of men and less than one-third of women had been committed to just one sexual partner in the last five years. At around age 30, about half of both men and women had spent the last five years with one established partner. Approximately two-thirds of both women and men around the age of 40 had been with one partner for the last five years. The figures gradually rise so that by approximately age 70, four-fifths of men and nine women in ten (whose partner was still alive) had been with just one partner in the last five years.

The proportion of people who had spent the last five years with the same partner increased for both men and women in the eight years between 1999 and 2007. Respondents showed increased commitment to their “one and only”, which, at this stage in the relationship, they also at last found to be the right one for them.

Young people were more likely to start new relationships. Younger men and women had had a median of two and an average of five sexual partners in the last five years. There was no difference between women and men. Among middle-aged men and women, the median figure was one, but the average for men was three and for women, two. In the oldest age group, the average for men was 3 and for women 1.4. Viewed through the five-year lens, after their youth most people made a strong commitment to one partner, and even the rest stopped accruing extensive sexual experiences with other or different kinds of sexual partners.

Experimenting with different sexual partners was most active among those under the age of 25. In that group, 40 percent of women and 31 percent of men had had a minimum of five sexual partners within the last five years. For men, this more active phase carried

on approximately through age 30, but for women it was already waning somewhat by that time. After this age, close to one-fifth had had at least five partners within the last five years. Among middle-aged women this figure was only approximately 10 percent. Most Finns had not actively sought new sexual partners in the last five years.

The European NEM survey did not include comparative data for lifetime sexual partners, but it did ask about the number of sexual partners in the last five years. In addition to Finland, data was available from Spain, Greece, Norway, Portugal, and France. In this comparison, Finns proved to have relatively many sexual partners.

Men in Finland and Spain had had the most sexual partners and men in Norway the fewest. Men in the 25–29-year age group had had relatively the highest number of partners on average over five years. The figures were 4–5 partners for men in Spain, Finland, Greece, and France. In Norway and Portugal the average was approximately two partners.

In the women's comparison, Finnish women had a clear margin over all other countries in terms of number of sexual partners in all age groups. In the 25–29-year age group, respondents in the other countries had had an average of 1.5–2.5 sexual partners over five years, but in Finland the figure was four. With age, these proportions declined as people settled down, but Finland still deviated from other countries in that Finnish women showed a greater tendency to form sexual relationships with multiple partners than did women in these other countries.

Some of the sexual relationships during the five-year period had occurred simultaneously. When a respondent who was already in a relationship with someone engaged in another relationship, this constituted a parallel relationship. This item was included in the NEM surveys of Greece, Norway, Portugal, and France. In Finland, the question only applied to the previous one-year period, and thus it is not possible to make direct comparisons with these figures.

In the above four countries, 15–25 percent of men had maintained two simultaneous sexual relationships at some point in the last five-year period. The variation among women in the different countries was sizable, ranging between 5 and 20 percent. In Portugal, it was only a few percent. Two simultaneous sexual relationships were most common in Norway. When contrasting the one-year figures for Finland to the five-year figures for other countries, it is likely that Finnish results for the last five years would have been comparable to the Norwegian figures. During the last year, 12 percent of Finnish men and 7 percent of women had had at least two simultaneous sexual relationships. Over eight years, simultaneous sexual relationships declined among young and middle-aged men and among middle-aged women.

Sexual relationships within the last year

In the FINSEX survey, in the last one-year period, approximately 80 percent of men and nearly 90 percent of women had engaged in sexual intercourse exclusively with one regular sexual partner. The only exception to this was people under 25, of whom only about two-thirds had engaged in sexual intercourse exclusively with one regular sexual partner within the last year. The proportion of Finns who had only been in one sexual relationship in the last year had increased noticeably from 1999. People stayed in relationships for longer and remained more faithful once in them.

Over the last year, one-fifth of young men and women had had a minimum of three sexual partners. Among men older than that, one in ten, and among women, 6 percent had had at least three sexual partners. These were obviously people who were more active seekers of sexual relationships.

The number of sexual partners over the last one-year period in Finland was contrasted to results of the NEM survey in England, Spain, Norway, Portugal, and France. In all of them, respondents in the younger-than-25 age group had had on average at least two sexual partners. In all of the countries, including Finland, 30–40 percent of men in this age group had had a minimum of two sexual partners within the last year. Women in Finland, England, and Norway showed similar figures.

After youth, only 10–20 percent of men had had more than one sexual partner within the last year. The share of women with more than one sexual partner in the last year fell below 10 percent. The lowest figures were found, perhaps surprisingly, in Italy. According to these figures, Italian men were least likely to have sexual escapades in adulthood. This does not correspond to Italy's reputation as the promised land of Don Juans.

Sexual desire and same-sex experiences

In relation to the opposite or to one's own sex, an individual's sexual interest and level of experience are evolving concepts. These issues are not straightforward, nor can they be easily measured or defined. The issue is usually approached simultaneously through sexual identity, sexual interest/desire, and sexual experience. They are often not overlapping considerations, meaning that a particular person's sexual identity and level of sexual experience with the same sex may not be completely consistent. Someone can have a homosexual or bisexual identity without having had the attendant sexual experiences, and vice versa.

Sexual identity

This study approached the issue of sexual identity by asking respondents to identify from among five different alternatives whether they were at the present time sexually interested in the same or the opposite sex, or both. The study did not use terms like 'homosexuality' or 'lesbianism' when asking about sexual identity and behaviour.

Among men in the time period spanning 1971–2007, 92–93 percent had been consistently and exclusively sexually interested in women. No changes had occurred in this sexual identity over the last decades, even though public discourse on the subject had turned substantially more positive. In 2007, two percent of men reported being interested in their own sex and half a percent in both sexes (bisexuality).

Among women too, the proportion who expressed an exclusive interest in men was consistently in the range of 92–94 percent in 1971–1999. The year 2007 brought about a change: the percentage dropped to 89 percent. In other words, women displayed a growing interest in their own sex. Among women below the age of 35, almost one in four reported at least some sexual attraction to women. In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, a new trend was underway among young women, with bisexuality gaining a much stronger foothold.

In terms of sexual identity, however, the growing interest among women toward their own sex was manifested through a stated identity for only 0.6 percent of women, less commonly than among men. Expressed interest in both sexes, i.e. bisexuality, accounted for 1.3 percent of women. Women stood clearly apart from men in terms of the larger proportion of those who were mostly interested in the opposite sex (compared to men who reported being mostly interested in women).

Same-sex sexual experiences

Sexual experiences with the same sex have been tracked in this study since 1992 with this question: “Have you had sexual experiences (arousing caresses or sexual contact) with someone of the same sex?” In the different surveys, men have reported having such experiences at a rate of 4–6 percent and women at 5–8 percent. The figures for 2007 were 6 percent for men and 8 percent for women. In representative surveys elsewhere in Europe, those figures were somewhat lower, ranging from three to five percent.

Young men were more likely than other groups to have had same-sex experiences, at a rate of 8 percent. Half of those 8 percent had had those experiences within the last year. Two-thirds of those who reported same-sex experiences had only had one same-sex partner.

Of women under the age of 35, 14 percent had at some point had a sexual experience with another woman. Contrary to the experiences of men, most of women’s encounters were fairly dated; only 15 percent of those 14 percent (two percent of all women in this age group) had had same-sex experiences within the last year. Typically, women’s same-sex experiences had taken place just before or after the age of 20. Two-thirds of these women had only had one female partner and four-fifths had had two partners at most. It is noteworthy that one half of the young women who reported having a sexual experience with another woman also reported being exclusively interested in men.

Among men who were sexually interested in women only, four percent had had a sexual experience with another man. Of men who reported being sexually interested in men as well, one-third had had same-sex experiences.

If women who were sexually interested in men only, five percent had had a sexual experience with another woman. The women who also stated an interest in women, approximately one-third had had a sexual experience with a woman. When women's interest in both sexes was equally strong, two-thirds had acquired same-sex experiences. Some women enjoyed sex with other women, because they were not as goal-oriented sexually as men.

Not all of the reported same-sex experiences had been one-on-one experiences, in accordance with the traditional male-female model. Some same-sex sexual experiences among young had occurred in a situation where also a member or members of the other sex participated actively. In Norway, for example, 13 percent of young adults aged 18–24 reported sometimes participating in group sex with at least three participants.

As expected, positive attitudes toward homosexuality were correlated with a greater likelihood of having same-sex sexual experiences. Many respondents were not, however, consistent in this regard. Of the men and women who thought society should intervene in homosexual behaviour four percent had nevertheless had a same-sex sexual experience. Among men who opposed societal intervention, the proportion was eight percent, and ten percent among women. Three percent of men and women who opposed a sexual relationship between two men had themselves had a sexual relationship with a member of their own sex, while 13 percent of those who accepted homosexual relationships between men had also had a same-sex experience.

Two-thirds of men who had had sex with a member of their own sex and four-fifths of women were in a couple relationship at the time of the 2007 survey. Slightly more than one-third of both men and women were married. Among the women who expressed at least some sexual interest in other women, four-fifths were in a relationship and one-third were married.

What does young women's growing interest in their own sex tell us?

Young women's interest in their own sex is growing. The same is true of the sexual experiences with other women that they are reporting. What does this trend tell us? Is it possible that the lively public discourse on gay and lesbian issues of the last several years has inspired young women to explore their bisexuality, or is it about a fashionable trend? Or could it be that our conceptions of sexuality are becoming broader?

According to the present study, those who are sexually attracted to or fantasize about their own sex are sexually more active and willing to experiment than other people.

In this study, the women in question had had triple the number of sexual partners than other women, and the men twice as many sexual partners than other men. Experiencing a daily desire for sex was two or three times more common among them compared with others, and they masturbated weekly at approximately twice the rate of other people. Corresponding differences in level of sexual activity have been found in Norway, for example, in comparing bisexuals to other subjects. The people in question had also experienced sexual intercourse at an earlier age and employed greater variation in intercourse practices. For these women in particular, same-sex sexual experiences were often incorporated into a rich spectrum of sexual experimentation.

The greater interest found among women toward having sex with another woman, compared with men's interest in sex with another man, may also be associated with the observation to emerge in several studies from other countries that women fantasize about sex with their own sex at a rate that is up to four times higher than among men. The fantasies explore the possibility of being aroused by another woman and becoming attracted to a woman. Women have been no more likely to act out these fantasies than men, however, and for the most part they have been buried. It has been shown that women are more likely to be inhibited vis à vis acting out their fantasies.

Hegna's and Larsen's finding in their recent Norwegian study supported the observation, above, in a study of 17–18-year-old students. Researchers found that sexual experiences with the same sex among girls or boys were not correlated or associated with any perceived attraction to the same sex. Young women, however, were more likely than boys to report sexual experiences with their own sex, especially kissing and caressing above the waist. One in four young women had “made out” with another woman. Particularly more sexually experienced girls had accumulated these experiences.

The interview study found that such kissing and fondling among young people usually did not take place in private, but publicly, at parties with alcohol. The kissing happened in sight of other young people and the purpose was to have fun. The non-intimate nature of these experiences and the stories related by the interviewees revealed that the point of the same-sex contact was to arouse the attention of boys. Girls thought that the displays appealed to boys and seemed to arouse them. Young men, on the other hand, were not able to behave similarly. If two boys were seen embracing in public, they were not viewed as sexually attractive, and they risked being labelled homosexuals.

The purpose of sexual experiences between girls was to present them on the sexual stage and make them attractive to boys. It also afforded girls the opportunity to assume a sexually free-spirited and rebellious role without being labelled loose. This afforded young women the opportunity to put their own sexual feelings toward other girls to the test without being labelled lesbians. The Norwegian researchers posed a justifiable question of whether, rather than constituting sex, the experiences of young women perhaps amounted to playing games or experimenting.

Studies on adults from other countries have found that men are more willing to accept same-sex experiences for a female partner or wife than for themselves. In Sweden, this tolerance gap was four-fold, and as high as six-fold in Norway. In part it has to do with male fantasies of sexual experimentation, where they viewed sex between two women. In men's minds, the situation in no way threatened their virility nor constituted infidelity on the part of a spouse. Women, on the other hand, showed little interest in this type of role. However, they often made use of secret fantasies about women to become aroused when making love with a male partner.

Who are the people with numerous sexual partners?

Some people have a tendency, attraction, or capacity to form a large number of sexual relationships in a lifetime. The tendency has a touch of rebelliousness, as both culture and education have built-in values that steer us toward a respectable, risk-averse life. We are supposed to carefully consider who to have sex with and in what kind of circumstances. There is special disdain for relationships that are formed exclusively for the sake of enjoyment, without being in love, and perhaps with no heed to the risks of pregnancy or diseases.

For many, the barriers to having a relationship that are formed by external conditions and restrictions are so hard to overcome that these people never enter into a sexual relationship in their life. Approximately two percent of all women and men had never had a sexual relationship. Apart from being highly principled, other contributing factors to such a degree of abstention include lack of opportunity or courage.

The study's findings indicate that the following factors have a particular impact on the tendency of some individuals to form numerous sexual relationships:

1. Manner of sexual initiation
2. Value system associated with relationship formation
3. Frequency of sexual desire
4. Tendency to seek pleasure in life in general
5. Sexual self-esteem

People who began having sex and sexual experiences at a young age, experienced their first orgasm and masturbated earlier than other people, and whose first sexual partner was a short-term partner or someone with whom they were not in love had a tendency to enter into numerous sexual relationships.

The people in question seemed to have a greater tendency to continue forming these types of relationships later in life, looking for unions that were founded more on feeling than reflection. If the partner and the timing were tempting enough, they gave little thought to the potential repercussions of the liaison, allowing themselves

to be stormed by a momentary flood of emotion. Women who had formed a large number of sexual relationships were also more active in responding to the sexual overtures of a current spouse.

The set of values associated with entering relationships in this case refers to becoming secularized from a religious value system, sexual liberation, and assigning a value to sexual relationships that are not aimed at a long-term commitment. These individuals are likely to find sex without love acceptable and may even tolerate parallel sexual relationships. Their stated relationship ideal often involved either being uncommitted and able to form relationships or being in a relationship that occasionally permitted other, parallel relationships.

Being a pleasure-seeker refers to people who may be attracted to various types of pleasure, including drinking to intoxication, use of pornography, and masturbation (particularly among women). People who had had numerous sexual liaisons were active in the above. They were more likely to have visited a sex shop or to watch sex videos or DVDs as well as porn on the Web. Another sign pointing to this type of hedonism was that such people had consumed medications to treat erectile dysfunction fairly often, even though they claimed not to have experienced erectile problems. The medications were used to prolong sexual intercourse.

It probably seems understandable that women and men who experience sexual desire more frequently also have a greater number of partners in their lifetime. Sexual desire provides the motivation to make use of opportunities that arise. Another group of people who had more sexual partners than most were women who would have liked more frequent intercourse in their current relationship.

Sexual self-esteem, as measured at the time of the study, was also associated with having more lifetime sexual relationships. Respondents who had sought a large number of sexual partners not only viewed themselves as more sexually active than other people but also as more sexually skilful and attractive. Numerous experiences increased these individuals' sexual self-confidence, and the courage served by that confidence led them to initiate sex with potential partners and gain even more sexual experience. Feeling sexually skillful helps one market oneself more bravely in encounters with potential partners.

We will also take a brief look at several other issues not associated with the number of sexual liaisons in a lifetime. The most important of these perhaps is the frequency of sexual intercourse. The frequency of intercourse was not higher among people who'd had multiple sexual partners. Even though many of those relationships had afforded opportunities for sexual intercourse, many of them had been so short that they could yield frequent intercourse.

Other issues not correlated with a large number of sexual partners included educational attainment, economic status, body mass index (BMI), and psychological

symptoms. So-called social background had no other correlation with number of sexual partners except that the richest men had had more sexual partners than other men and the heaviest women were more likely than others to have spent their whole life with one partner. Nor had psychological pressures had an effect on the tendency to enter into multiple sexual relationships.

Difficulty discussing sex with one's current partner was not associated with number of lifetime sexual partners. Nor was the ease or difficulty of achieving orgasm among women associated with the number of partners they had had. The desire to experience orgasms, then, had not constituted a particular motivation for entering into multiple relationships, nor had difficulty achieving orgasm robbed women of the motive to have sex with new partners.

Earlier chapters touched on the theory of evolution, which posits among other things that natural selection favours men who have sex with numerous women. Men like this potentially accumulate more offspring as well as more genes that support this behaviour. If the theory is correct, we should assume that men who have had more sexual partners also have more children than other people, even in this era of reliable contraceptive methods.

In fact, the results of our study showed the opposite correlation between number of sexual partners and number of offspring, contrary to what the theory of evolution would have us believe. The men as well as the women with the greatest number of sexual partners had fewer children than other people. Multiple sexual partners did not produce a better outcome, then, from an evolutionary standpoint. In part, this is an indication of the effectiveness of contraceptive methods. But if reproductive aspiration were the motivator for seeking multiple sexual partners, the result should be more children. It does not look like this is the motive that drives people to have sex with many different partners.

7

15 MINUTES OF HAPPINESS

In this chapter we will analyze who people have sex with, how often, what it has been like, how long they have had it, and how much sex is enough to be satisfied according to respondents. To begin with, however, a brief look at why people want to have sex in the first place.

Why do people want sex?

In analyzing the reasons for why people have a desire for sex, the most simple, basic assumption has been that we want sex in order to feel sexual pleasure, relieve sexual tension, or to have children. A more nuanced list of the reasons we engage in sex includes the following: wanting to express pure enjoyment, to express emotional intimacy, to reproduce, have it because one's partner wants it, to please one's partner, to make a conquest, and to relieve sexual tension.

Hill and Preston found in their study that eight reasons for having sex included the following:

1. To feel valued by a partner
2. Expressing value for a partner
3. Obtaining relieve from stress
4. Nurturing one's partner
5. Enhancing feelings of personal power
6. Experiencing a partner's power
7. Experiencing pleasure
8. Procreating

The reasons we have sex may be different in short-term, long-term and parallel relationships. They may include the desire to experience something sexually different or to improve one's sexual skills. Sex may also be used to reward a partner or as an item offered in exchange for something else. It may also be used to punish a partner. Sex can be traded in for services, special privileges, a coveted job, money, or any other resource.

Having sex with a high-status individual may elevate one's own status within a group. In certain groups, an individual's status or reputation may be augmented by having

numerous sexual partners, whereas in other groups the effect may be the opposite. Some people also have sex for purely social reasons (for example, in an arranged marriage) without any of the goals normally associated with a personal, intimate relationship.

In long-term relationships, sex may be used to bolster the relationship, to deepen its level of commitment or to take a short-term relationship to the next level, and to make it long term. Some women and men may engage in sex in order to attain some kind of side “by-product”. These include emotional intimacy, communion, commitment, love, affection, acceptance, tolerance, and closeness. Sex may also occur to keep watch over a partner, and keep the partner satisfied in order to prevent him or her from seeking sexual fulfilment elsewhere. It may also be used to redirect potential rivals away from one’s partner, to go and try to seduce someone else.

Some sexual motives no doubt originate far back in our history and have contributed to the survival and reproduction of the human species on earth. It may be that our ancestors, who took longer to achieve sexual release and ejaculation, felt a greater pleasure in prolonged sexual contact and, as a result, engaged in sex more often and produced a greater number of offspring. It has also been claimed that the size of the penis has developed through natural selection. According to some sources, human males have in relative terms the largest penis among mammals. This is presumed to increase women’s enjoyment and thereby their desire to have sex. Men, on the other hand, have used sex to prove their potency, virility, and masculinity.

Sexual motivation is more than merely the immediate response to observed stimuli. Sexual partners must also cognitively recognize that a particular situation offers sexually interesting opportunities. Normally, the sexual activity that results employs a sexual model that suits the situation but also leaves some room for improvisation.

In any case, sex is situational, and the given frame of reference changes the interpretations assigned to it. There is routine, weekly sex, weekend sex, vacation sex, spontaneous sex, make-up sex, sex to reward one’s partner, sex as an expression of love, sex to meet colossal sexual need, sex for fun, clandestine sex, etc.

The declining frequency of intercourse in Finland

Most of the sex in Finland takes place with a familiar, steady sexual partner. Among men, 82 percent and among women, 86 percent reported that their most recent sexual partner was a spouse or steady partner. The women’s numbers were the same as in the 1990s, but men’s were now slightly higher than in the 1990s. In 2000, sex in Finland was characterized by being established a little more than before.

Thirteen percent of men and 10 percent of women last had sex with an available single person. Four percent of women and three percent of men last had sex with someone else’s spouse. In addition, one percent of men last had sex with a prostitute.

Young, single adults were particularly likely to have most recently had sex with another single person. They were also more likely than other people to have last engaged in sex with someone else's partner or a prostitute. Cohabiting or married respondents had fairly rarely had sex with someone besides their own partner. Men who last had sex with someone besides their partner accounted for four percent and women for three percent of respondents.

Of all men, 61 percent and of all women, 53 percent had had sex within the last week. The gender difference here stems from the greater number of ageing female widows who no longer had the opportunity or desire for a sexual relationship. Compared with figures from 1999, the numbers had declined by several percentage points, and compared with the early 1990s and 1970s, the decline was about 10 percentage points. In other words, fewer Finnish people reported that they had had sex within the last week.

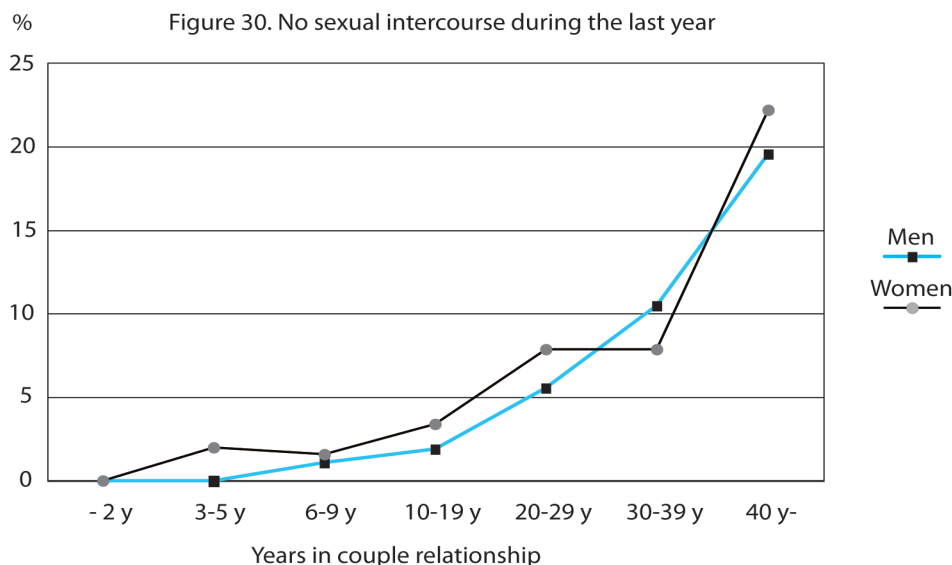
Sixty-six percent of young men and 62 percent of young women had had sex during the last week. Among middle-aged respondents the proportions were 65 and 60 percent, respectively, and among the oldest age group, 53 and 35 percent, respectively. Thus, with the exception of the oldest group, approximately two in three Finnish people had had sex at least once the week before. The numbers for middle-aged respondents had fallen by nearly 10 percent from the 1999 results and approximately 15 percent from 1992. The decline of sexual intercourse was rather significant among middle-aged respondents.

Twelve percent of men and 9 percent of women reported having sex within the last 24-hours. Activity was highest among people in living-apart relationships.

On the basis of responses of both men and women, compared with marriage, people were having more regular sex in living-apart and cohabiting relationships. Part of this stems from the novelty of those relationships and the passion that permeates the early stages of a relationship. More than half of the LAT and cohabiting relationships had lasted five years at most, whereas fewer than 10 percent of marriages were that new.

A whole year or more had passed since the last time that 10 percent of men and 14 percent of women had had sex. Among the oldest age group, the figures were 17 and 32 percent, respectively. These people were usually single-dwellers or single, of whom two-thirds of men and half of women had been without sexual intercourse for more than one year. At the same time, there were also marriages where factors like illness or injury had caused the cessation of sex. Of married men and women, eight percent had had no sex in the last year.

The frequency of sexual intercourse in Finland can be compared to the frequency in other European countries using, once again, the NEM surveys. Comparative data exists from Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Norway. I will analyze the proportion of people aged 18–49 years in these countries, who reported having sexual intercourse at least once a week over the last month. The best comparison could be run in the 25–44 age group.

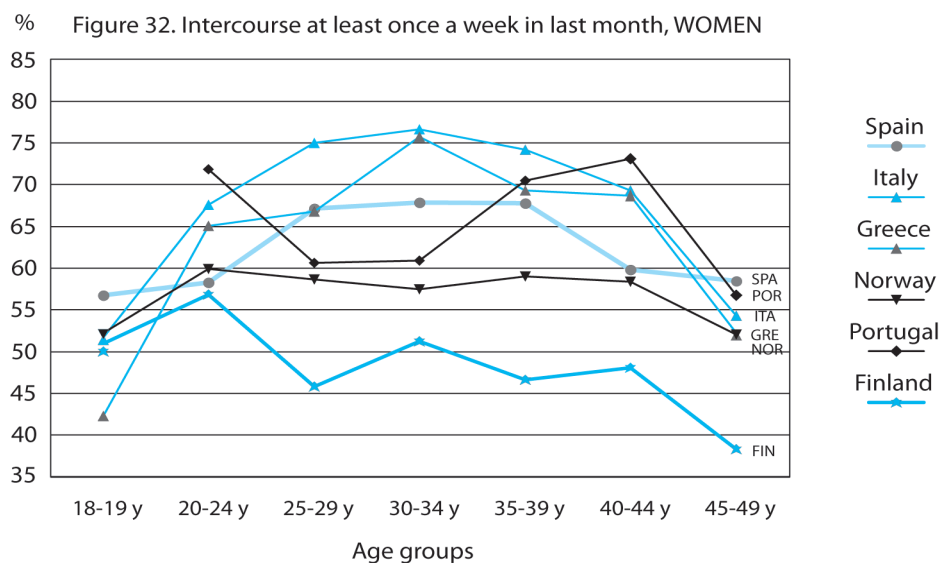
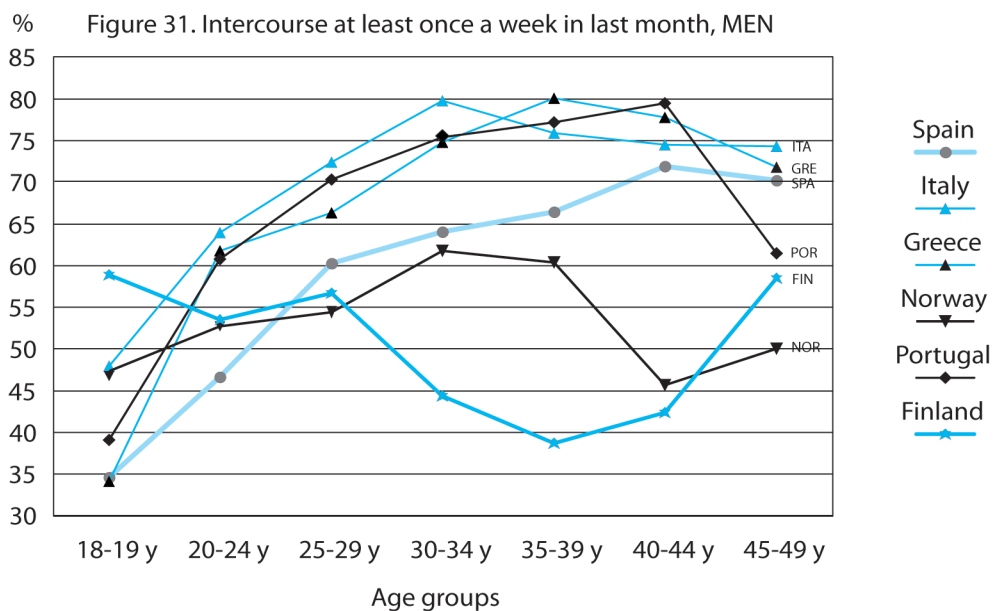


In the European comparison, Finns turned out to be rather passive in terms of intercourse frequency. Men in different age groups in Greece, Italy, and Portugal reported having sex at least once a week at a rate of approximately 70–80 percent. In Spain, the figure was 60–70 percent, and in Norway, 50–60 percent. Finland was at the tail end in this comparison, with approximately 50 percent. Only half of Finnish middle-aged men had had intercourse on a weekly basis. The slightly higher Finnish figures, above, concerned the time that had elapsed from the last time that respondents had had sex, not the monthly frequency of sexual intercourse, as in this comparison.

A comparison among women produced similar results. Of women of different ages in Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, approximately 70–80 percent had had sex at least once a week in the last month. In Norway, their proportion was approximately 60 percent, but only approximately 50 percent in Finland. These responses correspond quite well with the frequency of sexual intercourse reported by men in those countries.

The differences between the countries in terms of frequency of sexual intercourse did not only apply to once-weekly intercourse frequency, but also to, for example, thrice-weekly intercourse. In Finland, overall intercourse frequency was lower than in other countries included in the comparison.

Aside from lower intercourse frequency in Finland, the comparison also shows that the frequency was only nominally higher in Norway. In conjunction with the previous 1999 study, when Finnish results were compared with Swedish data, it emerged that the time elapsed from the last time respondents had sex was fairly similar in the two countries. This may represent a more general Nordic trend, where sexual desire increasingly finds other outlets of release besides intercourse. The results may also point to an increase in lack of sexual desire, as has already emerged in Finnish findings.

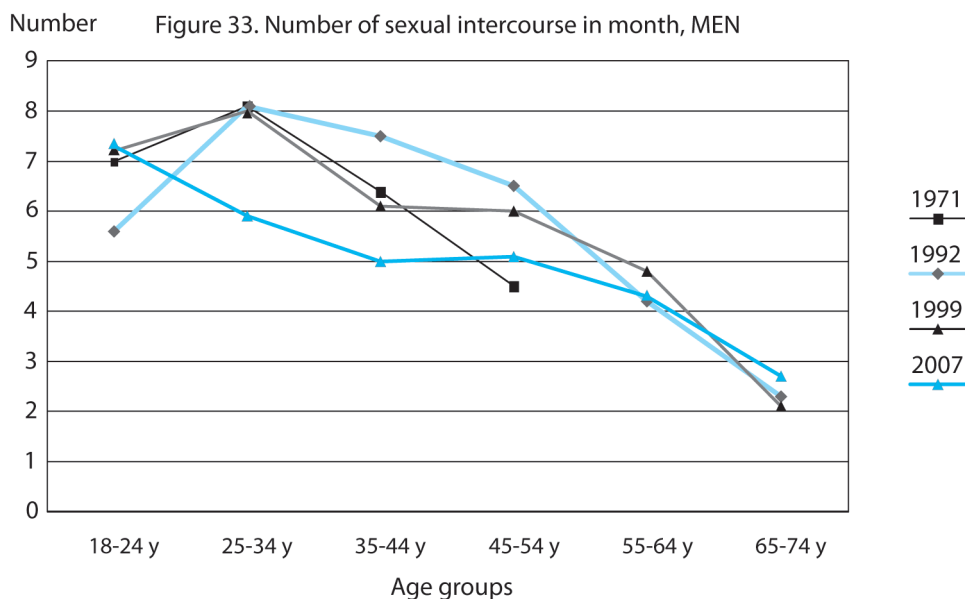


Monthly frequency of sexual intercourse

When the frequency of intercourse reported by Finns is converted into numbers, it turns out that the average man was having sexual intercourse 4.8 times per month, the average woman 4.3 times per month. When also taking into account the median frequency of sexual intercourse, it is further revealed that half of all men and women had sexual intercourse at most once every two weeks. Based on this, Finnish people do not have very active sex lives.

Young men had had intercourse 6.3 and young women 5.8 times per month. The figures for middle-aged respondents were 5.0 and 4.7, and for older respondents, 3.7 and 2.5, respectively. Young people had had sex approximately 1.5 times per week and middle-aged respondents a little more than once a week. The median number for middle-aged men was 2.5 and for women 1. On the basis of this, men in the oldest age group were having sexual intercourse 2–3 times per month and women in the same age group 1–2 times per month. This gender difference stems from the many widowed women who had not entered into a new sexual relationship.

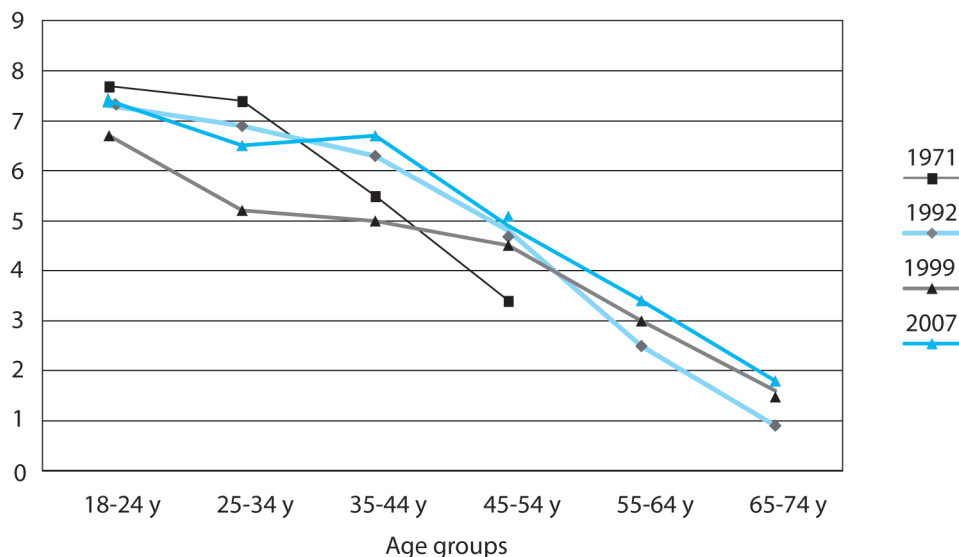
The changes in frequency of sexual intercourse over the eight years are thought-provoking. In 2007, both men and women were having less sexual intercourse by an average of once per month than in 1999. Put another way, the frequency of sexual intercourse among Finns had declined by approximately 20 percent. Frequencies were down for young and middle-aged people compared with all previous years. Only among the oldest age group did the frequency rise from 1992 (no data is available for 1971), but even those levels declined again after 1999.



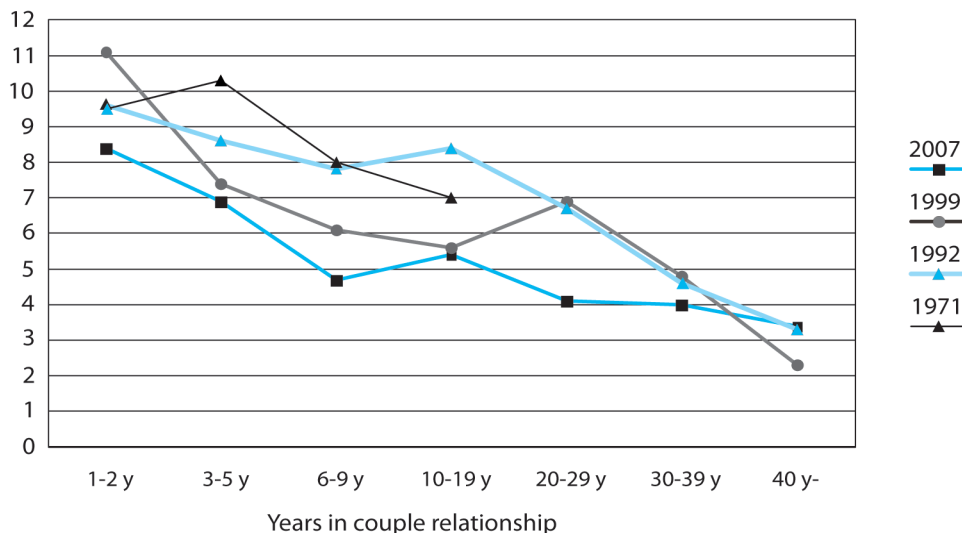
The frequency of intercourse declined in all relationship types. In 2007, married men were having sexual intercourse 4.6 and women 4.3 times per month. This amounts to a decrease of one session of intercourse per month. Cohabiting respondents were having sexual intercourse approximately six times per month, a veritable crash from previous figures; a 25 percent drop, translated to two events of sexual intercourse. Living-together relationships had the highest frequency of intercourse, more than seven times per month, or nearly twice per week. Even this figure had declined by one. The frequency among single people was very irregular and averaged less than

once a month. Even that represents a slight drop. The decrease in intercourse frequency has affected every category of relationship in Finland.

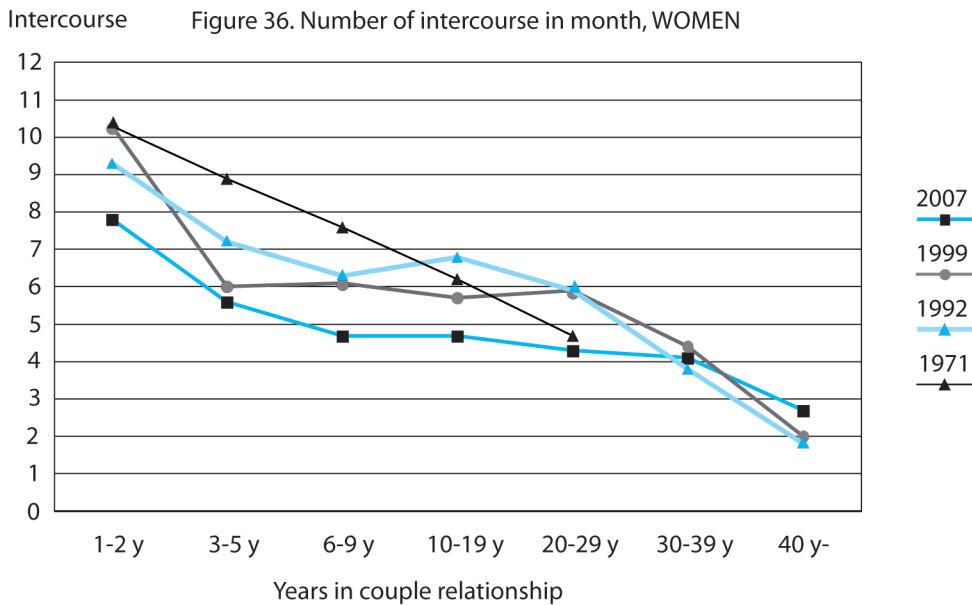
Number Figure 34. Number of sexual intercourse in month, WOMEN



Intercourse Figure 35. Number of intercourse in month, MEN



What factors influence high or low intercourse frequency? Important predictors include feeling sexual desire regularly, preferred frequency of sexual intercourse per month, libido loss, years in the relationship, considering sex an important part in the happiness of the relationship, the ease of discussing sex with one's partner, communication problems, and the overall assessment of how satisfying one's sex life is.



Men and women who had sexual intercourse more frequently than others were more likely to:

- Experience frequent sexual desire
- Want to have intercourse more often than other people
- Rarely experience lack of desire
- Have a newer relationship
- Consider sex important for the happiness of their relationship
- Find it easy to discuss sex with their partner
- Be a woman who experienced orgasms more regularly and viewed porn more frequently.

People like the above also regarded their sex lives as a whole as very satisfying. That assessment was strongly correlated with the frequency of sexual intercourse.

Intercourse frequency is not associated with education, economic situation, number of children, psychological symptoms, masturbation, or lifetime number of sexual partners. Religious people engaged in sexual intercourse slightly less frequently than other people, and those who drank to intoxication had intercourse slightly more often than other people. People on the lower end of the body mass index had sexual intercourse slightly more frequently. Other people who had sexual intercourse somewhat more frequently included those who had longer-lasting intercourse and who were more receptive to sexual initiations.

A substantial proportion of Finnish sex is probably somewhat routine, in the midst of busy week schedules. Working overtime robs people of private time, and many evening activities take up time and energy. Toward the end of the evening, the

temptation of television tires out many people who had perhaps entertained visions of sex during the day.

The frequency of sexual intercourse in a relationship was shown to be linked to how much effort partners had put into shared sexual exploration. Time spent on intense sex removes a couple from their environment and from previous relationships, and promotes the establishment of a new kind of togetherness. In this way, sexual desire is strongly tied to the emotional bond between two partners. Sex becomes a shared ritual that reaffirms their commitment.

How much sex is enough?

What amount of sex makes people happy? We can analyze this by looking at how often people would prefer to have sexual intercourse as well as how many times people who are satisfied with their intercourse frequency have had sex per month.

Preferred frequency of sexual intercourse

Respondents were asked how often they would prefer to have sexual intercourse, if they could decide. Comparable data only exists from 1971. Four-fifths of men and two-thirds of women wanted to have intercourse at least twice a week. The proportion of men who expressed this preference increased from the 1970s by about 10 percentage points and by several percentage points among women. Nearly one in five men and one in ten women would have wanted to have sex nearly daily. Based on this, it is not declining desire that explains the decrease in intercourse frequency in Finland from the 1970s to the 2000s.

Nearly all young men wanted sexual intercourse at least twice a week, and more than half of them at least 3–4 times a week. Two-thirds of young women wanted sex at least twice a week and one-third 3–4 times a week. Thus, there were approximately 20 percent more men than women wanting sex this frequently. Men reported increased desire while women's levels remained the same as in 1971.

Nine in ten middle-aged men wanted sexual intercourse at least once every week and approximately 40 percent at least 3–4 times a week. About three-quarters of middle-aged women wanted it at least once a week and one-fifth at least 3–4 times a week. In this age group too, the proportion of men who wanted more frequent intercourse was more than 20 percentage points higher than that of women. The desire for more frequent intercourse had increased for both sexes compared with 1971.

In the oldest age group, three-quarters of men wanted sex at least once a week and nearly half at least twice a week. Among older women, approximately 40 percent wanted sex at least once a week and one in five at least twice a week. In this age group there were approximately 30 percent more men, compared with women, who wanted more frequent sex.

Four-fifths of men who were married, cohabiting or in a living-apart relationship wanted at least twice-weekly sex. Older men in long-lasting marriages formed an exception with their lesser expectations. Women in living-apart relationships were nearly at the same level as men in their stated optimal intercourse frequency. One in two married women and 60 percent of cohabiting women would have wanted sexual intercourse at least twice a week. Married women's desire for a minimum of twice-weekly intercourse was approximately 30 percentage points lower than men's.

The longer the relationship, the more its sexual intensity inevitably waned, and with it, people's desire for intercourse. This study tracked the change in relationships lasting 1–2 years, 10–19 years and 30–39 years.

In relationships that had lasted one or two years, nearly all of the men and four-fifths of women wanted intercourse at least twice a week. More frequent intercourse, 3–4 times a week, would have been preferred by approximately 60 percent of men and approximately half of women. Men's eagerness for intercourse in the early stage of a relationship had increased from 1971 and remained the same among women.

In relationships of 10–20 years (two-thirds of them marriages), four-fifths of men and half of women wanted sexual intercourse at least twice a week. Thirty-eight percent of men and 14 percent of women wanted it at least 3–4 times a week. The level of desire at this later stage of the relationship had also increased among men compared to 1971, while women's levels matched 1971 levels.

In relationships that had lasted between 30 and 40 years (nearly all of them marriages), half of men and one-quarter of women continued to desire intercourse at least twice a week. At this stage of the relationship, one in five men and one in ten women still wanted to have sex at least 3–4 times a week. This speaks to significant individual differences. In relationships longer than 30 years, four-fifths of men and half of women wanted sex at least once a week. In practice, a relationship's long duration had halved the level of desire for intercourse, from twice-weekly to once-weekly.

Meeting intercourse needs

How well had these preferences – which differed quite significantly between men and women – been met in the real lives of our respondents? Were either men or women better able to satisfy their desires?

I will begin with people whose optimal intercourse frequency was lowest. Some women in the oldest age group reported not wishing to have sexual intercourse at all. This wish had been met successfully, with the reported intercourse frequency among this group of women near zero per month.

Some men and women preferred sexual intercourse only once a month or less frequently. In this case too the wish was often granted, and women in this group were

experiencing an average of one sexual intercourse per month and the men even fewer. A minor exception was young women who expressed a desire for infrequent intercourse but who in reality were having sex twice a month.

Women who wanted intercourse two to three times per month had also had their desires met. These women, in all age groups, had had exactly two events of sexual intercourse per month. Men in the same group, on the other hand, had to make do with having intercourse just over once a month, i.e. not quite what they would have considered optimal.

For women who wanted to have intercourse once a month actual frequency of sexual intercourse had been on average 3.5 times per month, i.e. very close to their expressed wishes. The frequency of 2.5 among men was falling short by two in relation to their stated wishes.

Women who would have preferred to have sex a couple of times a week had in actuality had intercourse five times per month, a deficit of three times per month. Women's opportunities to fulfil their wishes had declined from the early 1970s, when women in this group were still having intercourse more than seven times per month, close to the desired amount. Men in the same group were having sex four times a month, only half of what they would have wanted.

The median intercourse frequency per month for women who said they would have preferred to have sex 3–4 times per week was 11 – relatively close to what they wanted. Actual intercourse frequency among men was slightly smaller, but not too far from their stated wish.

Women wanting sexual intercourse 5–6 times a week or more often had in actuality had sex on average 12–13 times a month. Their wishes were being unmet in a substantial way. An even greater deficit could be found among men with the same expectations, who had had sexual intercourse only approximately 9 times a month, or an average of twice a week.

The figures above speak clearly about how well women's desires were being met in real life. The only women who had been disappointed were those who would have wanted to have sex almost every day. Men faced such disappointment more widely, and their opportunities to fulfil their wishes had been met less successfully than women's. This reveals something fundamental about which gender in the relationship generally decides whether or not to have intercourse as well as the conditions related to having it.

How much sex satisfies?

Next, I will analyze the frequency of intercourse among people who were satisfied with the amount of sex they were having. For young men in 2007, the frequency that satisfied was 10.5 times per month (12.8 in 1999). For young women, it was 8.6 times per month (9.9. in 1999).

Middle-aged men were satisfied with 8.0 times per month (8.8. in 1999). Middle-aged women found satisfaction with 6.9 times per month (8.0 in 1999).

For men in the oldest age group, having intercourse 5.4 times per month made them content (5.6 in 1999), and 4.2 times did the same for women (4.3 in 1999).

In other words, young and middle-aged respondents were satisfied with having sexual intercourse approximately twice a week, and older respondents with once a week. In 2007, younger and middle-aged respondents were satisfied with a lower frequency of sexual intercourse than in 1999. For the oldest generation, the situation remained the same.

Contrasting desired frequency of intercourse to actual frequency, young people would have wanted to have sex 3–4 times more every month in order to be satisfied. For middle-aged people, this figure was 2–3, and older adults would have had to have sex two more times per month to be satisfied. Men and women of all ages were living in some degree of sexual deficit.

For approximately three percent of women of all ages a frequency of intercourse of 5–6 times per month would have been a little too often. The oldest group of women also included six percent who would have preferred to have intercourse significantly fewer times, even though the frequency at which they were having sex was only 1.5 times per month on average.

These frequencies appear rather high in fact, when viewed from an African perspective. In many countries of Southern and Central Africa, only three-quarters of married women under the age of 50 had sexual intercourse in the last month. Of all adult women, only half had sexual intercourse in the last month.

In Finland, figures like this would be interpreted as a sign of serious trouble in a marriage or relationship, and population-wide figures as a sign that women's right to sexual pleasure is not being met. In Africa, people are already accustomed to these patterns.

Sexual patterns in Finland?

Each time people make love or have sex arises out of a particular situation, initiation, or familiar habit. Single people may be inspired by a party or a night out, for living-apart couples it may be the mere agreement to meet that already contains the assumption that the evening will end up in bed. Living together, daily life does not necessarily feature such highpoints, and love-making may arise out of a familiar routine, perhaps at a particular time of the week, such as during the weekend, after the sauna. Both partners know what to expect, and neither needs to especially initiate the love-making.

Initiating sex

More than 40 percent of love-making had been initiated jointly. This is probably about a couple's regular daily or weekly rhythm, where love-making has its special time of which both partners are aware, and neither needs to specifically initiate sex. Initiating sex may also be so subtle or unconscious that it may seem like a mutual decision even though one person may have made the first move or let his or her amorousness be known to the other with some small gesture.

In couples, men were still taking care of a large portion of initiating sex, about 40 percent of it – the same proportion that accounted for mutually initiated sex. Partly this is because, on average, men are more likely to experience sexual desire more frequently and to express it more. They would also prefer to have sexual intercourse more often than women, and so it is natural for them to initiate sex more often. Moreover, it is an expectation of masculinity that men initiate sex – “men know what they want and they take it”.

In terms of a couple's sexual activity, the unfortunate aspect of men initiating is that it is substantially less likely to lead to intercourse than when both partners feel that the idea to have sex was mutual, or that the woman initiated it. Marriages where the male partner last initiated sex contained 1–2 fewer intercourse sessions than other relationships.

In some degree, a lot of initiating by the male partner indicated a lesser interest in sex on the part of women, at least in those situations. Exceptions to this were couples who were living apart, among whom greater initiative on the part of the man was not correlated with lower intercourse frequency. This is probably because in living-apart relationships, the couple makes love nearly every time they meet, and women are prepared for the sex, even if it is initiated by the man.

From one survey to the next, women's initiating activity gradually increased, but did not exceed about 15 percent. Among young people, women were responsible for one-fifth of initiating, but in the oldest age group for only about one-tenth. As previously mentioned, attitudes toward women initiating sex and expressing sexual desire have become more favourable. It is nevertheless a slow process and entails finding new roles for sexual interaction between women and men. In the present study, when women initiated sex, the couple had had noticeably more of it, as opposed to

when it had been initiated by the man. It was frequently the woman who had craved more sexual intercourse than her male partner. This too had served as a motivation and encouragement to the woman to take charge more.

Partners in living-apart relationships were more likely to report mutual initiating, more than half of the time. It is noteworthy that in both marriages and cohabiting relationships, the proportion of what respondents viewed as mutual initiating fell over eight years, making up only a little more than one-third. This may indicate that it has been increasingly difficult to find time for love-making in everyday life. This may have contributed to the decline in intercourse frequency.

For the first time, the survey conducted in 2007 inquired how often respondents agreed to sex initiated by their partner, and how often they rejected it. Thirty-eight percent of men and 11 percent of women reported always gladly agreeing to sex. The proportions of those who generally (but not always) gladly agreed to the sex were 90 percent among men and 58 percent among women.

Of women approximately one-third reported sometimes turning down sex initiated by the man. Among men, only less than one-tenth reported turning it down. Four percent of women said that they turned down sex at least fairly often. This was rare among men. There was a significant gender difference in responding to sex initiated by the partner. Surprisingly, age played almost no role in this phenomenon; men and women young and old responded to a partner's propositioning with very similar levels of eagerness or indifference.

How long does love-making last?

The title, "15 minutes of happiness", refers to the average time Finns spend on intercourse according to this study's responses. This is new data, as the question was included for the first time in 2007. The exact question was: "How long does intercourse usually last from the beginning to the possible release of you or your partner?" It is difficult to say what people assess as the 'beginning', or whether or not respondents included foreplay. The responses clustered together, however, and were consistent with international findings regarding the duration of intercourse.

Both men and women reported that on average, intercourse lasted about 15 minutes. For about one-third of men and women, intercourse lasted 10 minutes at most, on average. In the oldest age group, one in two respondents reported intercourse lasting at most 10 minutes. Four-fifths of men and women said that intercourse had lasted 20 minutes at most. The responses were very similar among women and men. The concept of duration in love-making was interpreted not at all differently on the basis of gender.

About one in ten of all respondents reported that sexual intercourse lasted 5 minutes at most. In such cases half of the women felt that their partner frequently ejaculated too quickly, i.e. suffered from premature ejaculation. Slightly more than one-quarter of women also considered intercourse lasting less than 10 minutes to be too quick.

Stories and recollections of the magic moments of sex often bring up love-making that lasted for a long time, even an entire, glorious, unbelievable night. The present research indicates that this is almost mythically rare. Only about eight percent of men and women reported having sexual intercourse for more than half an hour at a time. Only 1–2 percent of both sexes said that sexual intercourse generally lasted for more than an hour. The phrasing of the question in the present study may of course exclude notable exceptions.

There is little variation in the duration of sexual intercourse in different relationship types. Sex in living-apart relationship lasted a little longer than in other relationship types, and marital intercourse was shortest. Two-thirds of married men and women reported that sexual intercourse lasted 15 minutes at most.

The duration of sexual intercourse shrank slightly in longer relationships. In the first few years only one-quarter of respondents experienced intercourse lasting less than 10 minutes. In relationships exceeding 20 years, it occurred among one-third, and in unions lasting more than 40 years, it affected approximately two-thirds. At the same time, the proportion of people having intercourse that lasted a minimum of half an hour was reduced to a tiny group of people. In this, men's and women's experiences were well corroborated by one another.

One clear-cut linkage discovered on the basis of the study's results was that respondents whose intercourse sessions lasted longer also had sex more often. People who generally had sexual intercourse for less than 10 minutes had sex 3–4 times per month. Those whose intercourse lasted in excess of 15 minutes had sex approximately 5 times per month, and in the group of 30-minute sex and beyond, intercourse took place 7–8 times per month. In this regard, longer intercourse is a sign of sexual skill. People who engaged in longer love-making also employed a richer repertoire of sexual positions.

Long-lasting intercourse had also produced especially pleasurable experiences. The proportion of people who found the last time they had intercourse very pleasurable approximately doubled with the time it took to have sexual intercourse increasing from five minutes to more than half an hour.

Sexual positions

The sexual positions people in Finland use have evolved greatly since the 1970s. Based on the responses of women, the proportion of face-to-face, man-on-top sex has dropped from two-thirds to one-third. The popularity of the missionary position as the only position out there continued to decline somewhat over eight years. At the same time, the greatest increase in popularity has occurred in using two or more positions in one sexual session, now making up approximately one-third of all reported intercourse. About one-tenth of the time the woman was on top, and the same was true of sideways sex. The popularity of these positions has remained relatively steady.

Young people reported using two or three sexual positions during intercourse half of the time. The man-on-top position was only used one-quarter of the time. In the oldest age group, on the other hand, half of all intercourse took place in the missionary position while one-fifth had featured more than one position.

Among married respondents, the missionary position continued to enjoy far greater popularity than the use of more varied positions. The ratio of missionary versus varied was one to one in marriage, whereas those in living-apart relationships had used varied positions much more frequently, half of the time.

Relationships of different durations served as a kind of mirror of changing sexual customs. Newer relationships featured more “modern” behaviour: in their last intercourse, one half of respondents had used several positions and only one in four had used only the missionary position. One in ten relationships (marriages) lasting more than 40 years had used several positions and two-thirds had used the man-on-top position. Other differences included the slightly increased popularity of woman-on-top in newer relationships and the growing popularity of sideways sex in more long-term relationships.

Manual stimulation for the partner

Formerly, Finnish sex was all too dominated by “penis in the vagina”, manifested among other things in the staggering popularity of man-on-top. Subsequently people have learned that there are many other satisfying ways to have sex. A man can use his hands and his mouth to stimulate a woman’s clitoris and her other body parts. Instead of sexual intercourse, the woman too can caress the body and penis of the man using her hands or mouth. These activities had become increasingly common over the last several decades, in part inspired by pornography. They had also had a positive effect on the quality of sexual intercourse, with people finding it increasingly satisfying.

The 1971 survey did not yet address the issue of manual or oral stimulation. It is possible, however, to draw indirect conclusions from pre-1990s changes from responses given by the oldest age group. We should especially note the proportion of respondents who had never engaged in the afore-mentioned sexual practices.

Among the oldest age group in the 1992 survey half of women and one-third of men had never stimulated their partner by caressing or massaging their genitals manually. This was the generation that came of age in the 1940s and 1950s, when no other roads to sexual pleasure besides traditional intercourse were known or at least publicly acknowledged. Later, many people had acquired updated information about sex, but had found it difficult to change ingrained habits.

Even 1960s youth had often never ventured to stimulate their partner manually; according to the 1992 survey, approximately 40 percent of women and 30 percent of men had never tried it. Among people who came of age in the 1970s, the proportion of those who had never tried manual stimulation fell to one-fifth among women

and one-tenth among men. Thereafter, manual sex has been used by all but about one-tenth of respondents.

When asked about stimulating their partner manually in the last week, approximately one-third of young and middle-aged men reported doing so. Among women, only one-fifth of young women and approximately 15 percent of middle-aged women had used manual stimulation on their partner during the last week, and one-half and one-third, respectively, had used it in the last month. About 60 percent of young men had stimulated their partner manually over the last month, and more than half of middle-aged men. For the last month, one-third of older men and one-fifth of older women reported using hand stimulation. The popularity of manual stimulation increased somewhat over eight years in men and women of all age groups.

In the oldest age group, half of the men and two-thirds of women had not used manual stimulation on their partner during the last year. One-fifth of middle-aged men and more than one-third of women had not manually stimulated their partner over the last year. Even among young men and women, about a fifth had not employed this technique to please their partner.

Nearly half of men and one-third of women had stimulated their partner manually in the last month. One-third of men and about 40 percent of women had left their partners without manual stimulation during the last year. In cohabiting and living-apart relationships, approximately two-thirds of men and half of women had used manual stimulation on their partners over the last month.

The active use of manual stimulation among the young was manifested in the fact that three-quarters of men in relationships lasting only several years had manually stimulated their partner during the last month and approximately 40 percent had done so during the last week. Slightly more than half of women had used manual stimulation on their partner during the last month and more than a quarter had done so during the last week.

In relationships lasting 30+ years, only about 40 percent of men and one-third of women had offered hand sex to their partner. In relationships of 40 years and beyond, the figures dropped to one-fifth. This generation contained a large proportion of people who had never stimulated their partner by hand. The current levels of manual stimulation were established among people who started their relationships in the 1990s.

The popularity of oral sex

An even greater transformation over the last 50 years has taken place in oral sex. For the generation of women who were young in the 1940s and 1950s, oral sex represented such a taboo that by the early 1990s, four in five women of this generation had both never received it or administered it.

This is when the popularity of oral sex began to grow slowly, taking decades but increasing from one generation to the next. Half of the respondents who came of age during the 1960s had, by retirement age, received and offered oral sex with a partner. Only one-fifth of respondents who grew up in the 1980s had not experienced oral sex. Thereafter, the proportion of people who have not had oral sex is just above one-tenth among young and middle-aged respondents. It is in the last five decades that oral sex really arrived.

A substantive proportion of the oldest age group was resistant to adopting this new habit. Nearly half of the women in this generation and approximately one-third of men had either never received or administered oral sex. In approximately one-third of the couples neither men nor women had received it. This is one illustration of how strongly ingrained the sexual customs adopted in youth are, even in a world that sometimes changes very rapidly.

The popular invasion of oral sex has continued after the beginning of the 21st century. Using our scale, we can say that approximately half of all men and women orally stimulated their partner at least on occasion. Approximately one-fifth did so most of the time, men somewhat more frequently than women. Among young men and women, two-thirds reported getting oral stimulation from their partner at least occasionally, and one-third of women and one-quarter of men said that they got it most of the time. Among the middle-aged, figures were only slightly lower, but in the oldest age group substantially so. Less than one-third of men in the oldest age group and one-quarter of women reported occasionally getting oral stimulation. Even though the technique was increasingly common, only one-tenth practiced it most of the time.

Married respondents had been the recipients of oral sex much less frequently than people in cohabiting or living-apart relationships. About 40 percent of married men reported occasionally receiving oral sex from their partner, as did two-thirds of cohabiting men and over two-thirds of men in living-apart relationships. Women's figures were otherwise similar except for married women, of whom about half reported receiving oral sex from their husbands.

Around two-thirds of men and women in newer relationships received oral sex most times they made love and over two-thirds received it at least occasionally. In relationships of over 10 years the situation differed only in that oral sex became less regular. Half of women in relationships lasting over 30 years were still receiving oral sex from their partners, but only one-third of men were. In relationships of 40 years and more, half of all men and women were going entirely without oral sex.

Anal intercourse

Recent decades and years have been a time of experimenting with new and different sexual techniques. Some of them continue to be seen as perverted, as we already saw in the chapter on acceptable sexual habits. Some of these behaviours can be titillatingly exotic and fashionable in certain circles, and may confer credibility on an individual as a member of a particular group.

Of the sexual habits included in this study, anal intercourse has a long history of opposition and denunciation. A concrete illustration of its taboo nature is that it took until the 1990s for it to become permissible to depict anal intercourse in Finnish porn. In addition to the unpleasant images associated with anal intercourse, it has been viewed as unnecessary, since it cannot lead to pregnancy.

The proportion of people who have experienced anal intercourse has been growing gradually in recent decades, although two-thirds of adult men and women said they had never experienced it. Its increasing rates are attested to by the fact that, in that in the early 1990s, the proportion of the anally uninitiated was still approximately four-fifths of all respondents. Not even the animated debates of the 1980s and early 1990s regarding anal intercourse and the risk of HIV infection has stalled the technique's growing popularity.

Approximately half of both men and women in the younger generation had experienced anal intercourse at least once. A third of men and a quarter of women had engaged in it several times. The level of anal experience among the middle aged was somewhat lower; nearly half had experienced anal intercourse at some point.

The situation in the oldest generation was radically different. The idea of anal intercourse as a taboo was deeply ingrained. Only one in five respondents in this age group, male or female, had ever experimented with anal intercourse. About five percent had had it several times.

Over half of the men and women in newer relationships had had anal intercourse once and one-third had engaged in it several times. In relationships lasting ten years, nearly half had tried it once and one-fifth more frequently. In relationships of 30 years or more, only one-quarter had any experience of anal intercourse.

An important factor contributing to the growing popularity of anal sex was the frequency of experiencing sexual desire. Those who desired sex often had significantly more experience with anal intercourse. The difference was visible in the young and middle-aged generations, but less so in the older generation. In this oldest and socially cohesive age group, cultural norms had been so powerfully set against anal intercourse that people either could not or did not want to try it.

Anal intercourse was a somewhat more common, or commonly experimented, behaviour among more educated people. Religious values also played a part; the

secularized had been quicker to adopt anal experimentation than those who were more religious. The dividing power of religion had actually increased in this regard in the present decade.

Bondage and sadomasochism

Other examples of now popular sexual techniques that were previously considered perverted are bondage and sadomasochism. Bondage has become in some ways trendy and is also used as a way of creating variation and enhancing arousal in intercourse. With their memorable depictions of bondage, many films especially have provided inspiration for this sexual play. Bondage games have opened the door to various arousing fantasies. They are probably not suitable for everyone, though; if being tied up feels oppressive instead of exciting, this defeats the purpose. In general, bondage has been the particular domain of established couples, because it requires an absolute trust in the other person.

In the images and experiences of many people, bondage has nothing to do with sadomasochism, even though bondage and chains are often part of sadomasochism. Sadomasochism was much discussed in the 1990s through the public display of those selling sadomasochistic services.

There are probably widely varying conceptions of sadomasochism. In the present study, some of this is partly manifested in the nearly ten percent of respondents who admitted to not even knowing what the word sadomasochism means. Such admissions were especially common in the oldest age group. Another factor that may have affected respondents' willingness to answer questions regarding sadomasochism-related personal experience may be that only approximately one-third of men and women considered sadomasochism acceptable – this in spite of the fact that sadomasochism involves mutual consent to engage in a game of power in which the seemingly submissive partner is in actuality the one who sets the game's rules and limits.

Bondage and sadomasochism have been rather unknown and untested in the oldest age group. Awareness and experience of them have increased particularly over the last twenty years. In 2007, the age group of 40 and under stood distinctly apart from the over-40 generation – the younger the respondents, the more experience they'd had with bondage and sadomasochism.

This represents a trend that will obviously continue and become more common in the population as a whole in the course of emerging generations. The transition runs somewhat parallel with the previously discussed rise in masturbation. The scale of this particular trend, however, is so far much less dramatic.

Bondage was most common among respondents aged 40 and under, of whom approximately one-fifth had experience of it. Of women aged 20 and over, approximately 30 percent had tried it. Only a few percent of respondents in the oldest age group had ever tried it.

The proportion of respondents with experience with bondage more than doubled in many age groups over eight years, with the exception of the oldest age group. It was most familiar to couples who had been in a relationship for several years already. Of them, one in four had experimented with bondage. It was also more common among couples who had been together less than 20 years.

Substantially fewer had experiences of sadomasochism than of bondage. All in all, only approximately three percent had tried it. The popularity of sadomasochism had grown especially among young women. Of young men and women, 5–6 percent had experimented with something sadomasochism-related.

Bondage and to some extent also sadomasochism were associated with a broader interest in anything sexually innovative. Some people wish to experiment with all kinds of new sexual trends and techniques. They may look for sexual innovation in places like sex shops and pornography. It is no wonder that people who reported more frequent use of such services and products also had more experience with bondage and sadomasochism. Forty percent of women who had used the services of sex shops and 30 percent of similar men had engaged in bondage. Indeed, one of the most popular items sold in sex shops is handcuffs. Ten percent of customers of sex shops had also experimented with sadomasochism.

Among women in particular, various sexual experimentation and use of pornography were correlated. One-third of women who had used Web porn or had looked at sex magazines in the last year had also engaged in bondage. Among men too, more frequent perusal of sex magazines was connected to more likely experience with bondage.

Sex in older age

Matters of sexuality in the oldest age group have already been discussed and will continue to be presented throughout this book. Therefore it is not necessary to compile a comprehensive summary on the subject here, but it is instead in order to offer an itemization of some perspectives that are of particular significance for relationships, sexuality, and ageing.

Gerontologists and other medical specialists agree that continuing to engage in sexual activity into old age may carry therapeutic benefits to both men and women. Sexual activity represents an important way of expressing love and caring for another person. Sexual issues are gradually coming to play an ever greater role in the promotion of health and wellbeing of older people as well as in the experiences of their daily lives.

Ageing critically defines the social role of human beings. Some of the change is attributable to changes in a person's resources and ability to function, while others ensue from expectations on the part of the surrounding community and culture regarding the behaviour of persons of a particular age and status. Many people ponder, for instance,

whether having a longed-for relationship or experience would be seen as acceptable behaviour for someone “their age”. The desire to keep appearing outwardly respectable may torpedo potential sexual temptations. Nevertheless, powered by love or an especially enticing situation, new and unexpected relationships may commence.

Women are less likely than men to remarry following the death of a spouse. In part this is a result of a shortage of men of the appropriate age, but also of old moral rules that state that it is unseemly for women to remarry. The requirement to stay faithful extends beyond the grave. Living single may also stem from a lesser willingness among the ageing to take social risks. People may be more passive than before with regard to finding someone new, and more easily accepting of a life without sex. This situation will see a transition at the latest when the baby-boom generation retires. For them, sex is an integral part of life, regardless of age.

People in long-term relationships may experience such a high degree of emotional unification and dependency that sexual desire disappears altogether. On the other hand, partners who are emotionally distant from one another may begin to take the other person for granted to such an extent that they no longer feel like investing in the relationship. The optimal balance in a relationship is when partners are intimate but their identities are mutually independent.

Older women who have a close and important person in their life with whom to enjoy intimacy have been shown to have better mental health than other women without such a partner. For most older people, sexual activity remains an important conduit for expressing love and caring.

The sexual life of an ageing couple is usually weighted down by a relationship that has often lasted for decades. Long-term companionship and intimate sharing may eventually produce monotonous and predictable interaction between partners, diluting any sexual desire for the partner. The mystery and capriciousness of a new relationship may yield a passion that is inevitably missing in more long-lasting relationships. People often confuse the boredom of a long relationship with the effects of ageing on sexual desire and activity.

The greatest source of concern for ageing men is maintaining the ability to have erections, and for women, it is marital problems. The ability to get an erection has a substantial effect on men’s body image, sexual self-esteem, and sexual desire. Men are supposed to be able to perform sexual intercourse. Ageing and the ensuing illnesses threaten men’s sexual performance.

Weakening erections make it necessary to employ various new techniques in the pursuit of sexual arousal and orgasms. Disrupting regular routines helps a lot. Switching the times and places where sexual activity occurs may enhance desire. Massage and baths, and manual and oral stimulation bring physical closeness without the fear of

failure. Ageing men generally require stronger stimulation in order to become erect. For some men, however, sexual performance improves in old age, curbing premature ejaculation and prolonging their erections.

Ageing women retain their ability to experience multiple, consecutive orgasms, but reaching orgasm may take longer. For some, the duration and intensity of orgasms may decline. Women may begin to crave longer periods of caressing and new, less painful positions. The use of various lubricants increases. Many women also undergo hormone treatments.

Medications for different conditions may cause libido loss. For example, many psychiatric medications interfere with the sex lives of older people. Tranquilizers slow down response and impede women's ability to orgasm. The main side effect of depression medications for women has been shown to be the inability to orgasm.

In older age, the importance of relationships becomes emphasized following the relatively independent life stage of middle age. People who continue to be in a relationship in old age and who manage to stay healthy have the necessary requirements for drawing enjoyment from their social wellbeing. Approximately 70 percent of retirement-age relationships contained mutual love, and four-fifths of older respondents considered their relationship at least relatively happy. In spite of the problems that are associated with ageing, many relationships can stay happy long into old age even when they have lasted more than 40 years and even though some of the sexual activity may have already faded.

There is no upper age limit to feeling sexual desire. On the basis of analyses conducted on the FINSEX data, ageing by itself does not reduce sexual desire, as long as the person has a partner and he or she stays relatively healthy and functional. Having a satisfying sex life long into old age is also correlated with an appreciation of sexual matters, good sexual self-esteem, and a sexually skilled partner. When these things are in place, ageing need not result in any major changes in the sexual life of a relationship.

Ageing may also introduce a new flourishing of sexuality. Ageing people no longer need worry about pregnancy prevention, and children no longer get in the way. Many people shed feelings of guilt that have plagued their sexuality, and some may even experience their first orgasm after retirement. The ageing also have much more time than previously to enjoy the private moments that are now no longer tied to a particular time or place. Regular sex may be therapeutic and prevent some of the negative physiological effects of ageing.

8

FROM INFIDELITY TO A RENAISSANCE
OF ROMANTICISM

The majority of sexual experiences occur within the framework of established relationships. Even though the sexual experiences in them play the most critical role from the standpoint of individual sexual wellbeing, it is clear that in terms of public discourse, these relationships are not particularly interesting.

It is the secret relationships of people who are already engaged provide fodder for the gossip press, for literature, and for mass-distribution films. People are guaranteed to be highly interested in these kinds of intrigues. It is symptomatic that when I asked Finnish people in the 1990s to write their own sexual autobiographies, each writer's current, long-term relationship frequently received little attention, whereas various parallel relationships that had occurred at different stages of the writers' lives were depicted in great detail and with feeling. These were relationships that had brought something unforgettable, something magical to the writers.

In an earlier chapter describing a transformation in sexual attitudes, it was said that Finnish attitudes toward parallel relationships had become noticeably less tolerant in the early years of our new century, to the point that they are at times the least accepting perhaps in all of Europe. This social atmosphere has lent a new meaning to parallel relationships.

Variable concepts and considerations of infidelity

The other sexual relationships of people who are already in established relationships have often been referred to with moral condemnation, as cheating and unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness means engaging in a sexual relationship without one's partner's knowledge or approval after promising or even swearing to remain sexually faithful. Some of these extra relationships have not constituted cheating or unfaithfulness in the sense that the established partner may have been aware of or even condoned the liaison.

Before, people spoke of extra-marital relationships. Nowadays relationship types have evolved so much that an examination of sexual relationships within the sole framework of marriage is no longer sufficient. The 'extra' in 'extra-marital' is

misleading also because the new relationship may become a vital player if both established partners in the relationship are aware of it. The new relationship and the way it is handled may become an integral social part of the original relationship. Beyond that, the “extra” relationship is in no way an outside relationship to the third party, from whose perspective it is the old partner of this new love they have found who is in fact “the fifth wheel” of this new relationship.

The questions used to map out attitudes use the term ‘temporary infidelity’, which is inherited from the 1971 study. In order to continue comparing data, it has not been possible to change the wording or terminology of the survey questions. The wording clearly depicts something that is unimportant and temporary. That is not necessarily the case in all such relationships. On occasion, they may become more valuable than life itself.

I myself have generally used the term ‘parallel relationship’ to refer to the other relationships that people have beyond an established relationship. It describes both short- and long-term sexual relationships that take place in addition to an established relationship, and of which one’s regular partner may or may not be aware. Some people may have their partner’s permission to have such a relationship. From the perspective of the third party, it is his or her new companion’s previous and often long-term relationship that is now the parallel relationship of this new relationship. As a concept, the term parallel relationship does not confer a moral judgment. Some parallel relationships may mark the beginning of a new long-term relationship.

Especially the discourse in the press on the subject frequently uses terms such as unfaithful and dishonest. The use of terms like these may be tempting when the target is a public figure and when there is a desire to label their behaviour in a particularly negative way. The behaviour is labelled socially unacceptable, especially in light of the irreproachableness that a person in a public role is supposed to occupy. The moral condemnation is not only a justification for publishing the story but also for breaching the privacy barrier.

The boundaries of cheating and infidelity are often quite subjective and may also vary between men and women. Different people rarely share exactly the same view of what constitutes infidelity or dishonesty in a particular situation. This is a sign of how personally and emotionally we approach this subject.

Parallel relationships in Finland

Lifetime parallel relationships in Finland were mapped out by asking: “How many outside (parallel) sexual relationships have you had while in a steady relationship with your current or a past partner?” Respondents were asked to include all previous couple relationships and the outside (parallel) relationships that occurred simultaneously.

The question and several subsequent questions were probably among the most sensitive in nature in the entire survey. Particularly married and cohabiting people have had to risk a partner accidentally seeing or asking to see their response. In these cases, respondents probably did not have the courage to report the other relationships. As attitudes toward parallel relationships become increasingly judgmental, disclosing information about them becomes harder and harder. Thus, it may be assumed that the data regarding the prevalence of parallel relationships presented in the following represent an underestimation.

In the 2007 survey, 42 percent of men and 32 percent of women reported having a parallel relationship at some point in life. Men's figures corresponded with what they had reported eight years before, and among women, were only one percent higher. The figure for men was up to ten percent lower than in 1992, but a few percent higher among women. No comparison can be made with 1971, as that survey did not yet include a question about parallel relationships in a lifetime.

The changes over time have evolved logically in that the figures for men and women reported parallel relationships have been converging. The same development could be seen in the lifetime number of reported sexual partners.

Men and women diverged in terms of parallel relationships in that of men who had at some point entered into a parallel relationship, a significantly higher proportion than of similar women reported having several such relationships. Twenty-nine percent of all men had formed more than one parallel relationship, compared with 14 percent of women. Six percent of men had had at least ten parallel relationships in their life, as opposed to only one percent of women. The figures for both genders have declined slightly since 1999.

The proportion of people who at some point had a parallel relationship grows with age, as more opportunities present themselves and new motives emerge as a result of changes that take place in one's relationship and life. Half of all men in the oldest age group had had a parallel relationship, 40 percent of middle-aged men and 30 percent of young men. For women, the figures were one-quarter, 40 percent and 30 percent, respectively. This reveals that men and women differed from each other only in the oldest age group, where women reported significantly fewer parallel relationships than men. For this generation of women, it was not really appropriate to form only sexually motivated relationships.

In 2007, young and middle-aged men reported fewer parallel relationships than in the two surveys conducted in the 1990s. From the early 1990s, the changes were up to almost 20 percentage points. Parallel relationships declined somewhat among young women as well, but increased by several percentage points for middle-aged women. In addition to real change, this development may also reflect a gender-related change in the honesty with which people report their sexual behaviour. Perhaps men no longer

have to exaggerate their experiences, or women hide theirs. The more the responses of men and women converge (as they now do), the more reliable are the findings.

At the time of the latest survey, of men in living-apart relationships half, and 40 percent of married or cohabiting men, had at some point had a parallel relationship. More than 40 percent of single men had had a parallel relationship at some point. Over one-third of cohabiting, living-apart, and single women had had a parallel relationship at some time. The figure for married women was lower, over one-quarter.

The greatest gender difference was found among married respondents, of whom men were much more likely than women to report parallel relationships. A change from 1999 was that both cohabiting men and women reported fewer parallel relationships in 2007, whereas more and more single men and women had experienced a parallel relationship. For some, it may have been the very fact of a parallel relationship that led to separation from a previous partner and their currently single status.

People who had had more than one established relationship in their life were more likely to have also experienced a parallel relationship. Of men and women who had cohabited or been married to only one partner, approximately 40 percent and one in four, respectively, had had a parallel relationship. In practical terms, this was the only significant difference between men and women. Of men and women who had cohabited or married twice, half had engaged in a parallel relationship. Those who had had three or more unions, nearly three-quarters of men and two-thirds of women had had a parallel relationship at some point. This relationship may occasionally have turned into a new, established couple relationship.

Men's experiences with parallel relationships did not vary depending on the number of years their current relationship had lasted. The highest relative prevalence of parallel relationships among women had occurred in relationships that had only lasted a few years. The birth of children and parallel relationships did not have much of an effect on each other. Among men of different ages, there was no difference in terms of parallel relationships whether they had had children of their own or not. Middle-aged and older women had slightly fewer parallel relationships when they had children of their own. The existence of children, however, did not have a significant impact on their decision to enter into a parallel relationship.

Logically, it follows that people who are accepting of the other sexual relationship of those in established relationships are also more likely themselves to have had a similar relationship. Three-quarters of men and two-thirds of women who said that they would accept a temporary infidelity of a husband or wife had had such a relationship themselves. Respondents who said that they found the extra-marital relationship of a married person acceptable were even more consistent in this. It was, however, contradictory that one-fifth of the men and women who judged temporary infidelity and other sexual relationship with a third party most harshly had nonetheless engaged

in a parallel relationship. They had acted against their own values, and a tempting situation had weighed more than the principles they held dear.

According to this survey, unfaithfulness, or parallel relationships, accumulated and became gradually more common as people aged. As expected, they occurred mostly to people who actively frequented bars. Some of the women had been compelled by opportunities to take advantage of them. The same people also reported a higher number of sexual partners and put a high value on sex in their relationships. The same characteristics were also typical of the men and women whose partners had been unfaithful to them more often than other people.

Parallel relationships in the present relationship

The second survey question to address parallel relationships was formulated as follows: “Have you had other sexual relationships during your present cohabiting relationship or marriage?” This excluded living-apart relationships, because the current formulation made it possible to compare the responses with the 1971 survey. A follow-up question asked whether the relationships had been short-term or steady, or possibly both.

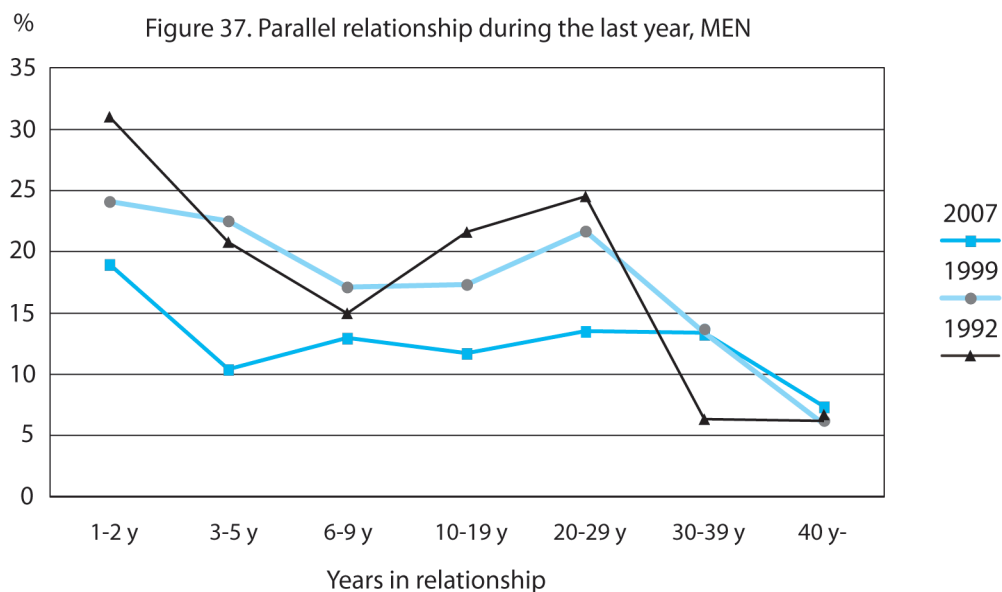
In the course of a present cohabitation or marriage, 27 percent of men and 13 percent of women admitted to having a parallel relationship. The difference between men and women was nearly two-fold. Parallel relationships declined for both genders by 2–3 percent compared with the previous study. Among men, 25 percent and 12 percent of women had had a short-term parallel relationship. Here, women have probably hidden some of their experiences. Six percent of men and four percent of women had had a steady, long-term parallel relationship that constituted having an actual lover.

Among men, parallel relationships during the present union increased from less than one-fifth in 1971 to one-third in 1992. Thereafter, they have declined to the current level of one-quarter. Some of the change no doubt reflects the marked shift in attitudes that was mentioned earlier. Development among women has been different, because their starting point was different. In 1971, only eight percent of women admitted to having been unfaithful. By 1992, parallel relationships among women had increased by up to three percentage points, compared to the level in 2007. No major changes have taken place among women thereafter, not even in the proportions of long-term and short-term relationships.

One-fifth of men in the younger generation who were cohabiting or married had had a parallel relationship during their current union. This was exactly the same proportion as eight years earlier, but up to nine percent lower than in 1992. The figure was only slightly higher among middle-aged men and only close to half of what it had been eight years before. In the oldest group of men such relationships had occurred among one in three, 12 percentage points more than in previous years surveyed.

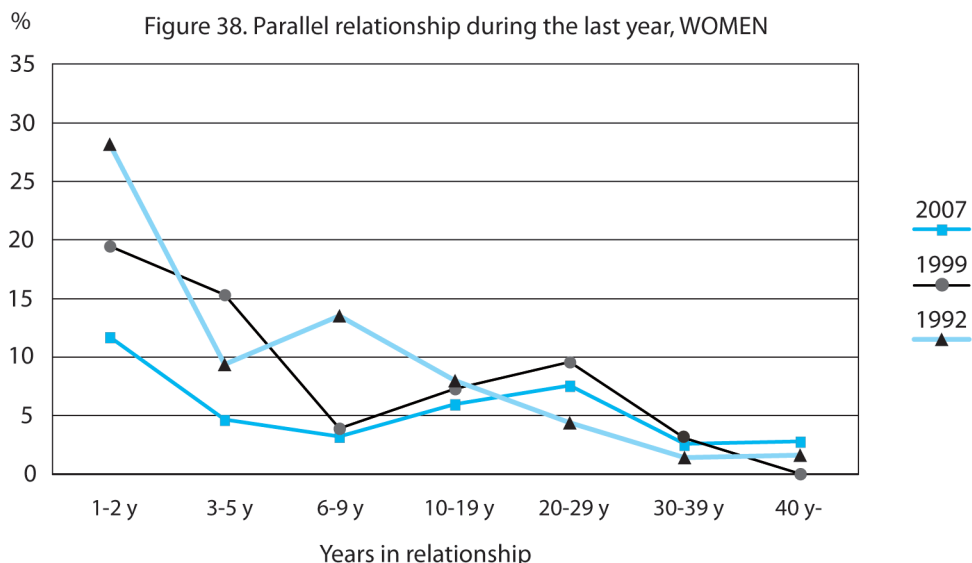
Eight percent of young married or cohabiting women had had a parallel relationship during their current relationship, as had 17 percent of middle-aged women. Among the oldest group of women the proportion was 14 percent. The figures for young and middle-aged women were about five percentage points lower than eight years before. In other words, the sexual faithfulness of these women as well as middle-aged men had greatly strengthened.

Men accrued more parallel relationships as their primary relationship lasted longer. In relationships of only several years, one in ten had had a parallel relationship, more than one-fifth in relationships lasting 10 years, 30 percent in relationships of 20 years or more, and approximately 40 percent in those lasting 40 years or more. The figures were somewhat lower than the corresponding figures from the 1990s surveys.



Among women parallel relationships became more common in the same way as with men, as relationships got longer, but the proportions were lower. It is true, however, that approximately one in ten women had had a parallel relationship in the beginning of her current relationship, but one-fifth of women who had been in the same relationship for more than 20 or 30 years had had a parallel relationship.

On the basis of age group comparisons, women who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s had been particularly active in forming parallel relationships. They also expressed the most tolerant attitudes regarding them. Among men, there was an increase in parallel relationships among those who had come of age in the 1960s. Male and female respondents whose youth coincided with the 1990s had in part lived in keeping with their stated attitudes and had entered into fewer parallel relationships, compared with the same age groups in previous surveys.



Among newly married or cohabiting partners, love and passion often still run rampant. It might be assumed that at this stage in the relationship, people have no reason or desire to enter into other relationships. The truth does not bear out this supposition. The early stage of a relationship is when people are most likely to have affairs; one in five men and one in ten women report having them. The explanation for these parallel relationships is probably that before settling down, people may have had one or more consecutive relationships of which they have not completely let go yet, keeping the other relationship going in case the newly formed union does not work out.

Another culmination point in the occurrence of parallel relationships was relationships that had lasted over 20 years. At that point, parallel relationships become just as common again as they were in the early years of relationships. People sought confirmation for their desirability as men or women, or a different kind of experience to compensate for the feeling that they weren't living out their life in full. Some parallel relationships occurred in unions of all durations. Their incidence declined over eight years, however, in all relationships regardless of duration. The proportion of men who had entered into a parallel relationship in the last year declined from 20 percent in 1999 to 13 percent in 2007, and among women from 11 percent in 1999 to six percent in 2007. These changes in the relationships of Finnish people are very significant.

Three in four men and half of women who had formed a parallel relationship reported having more than just one such affair during their present union. One in five men who had entered into a parallel relationship had had affairs with at least ten women. Among female spouses, only three percent had had this many parallel relationships during their

present established relationship. Men had a substantially higher number of parallel partners compared with women. These numbers had not changed since the early 1990s, whereas among women the number of parallel partners had declined somewhat.

One-third of men's most recent parallel partners was, as far as they knew, married or cohabiting. Married men were somewhat more likely to have these relationships than cohabiting men. More than half of women had their most recent affair with the spouse of another woman, among married women this was true of up to 70 percent. Married women, then, were particularly tempted by men who were already taken. These figures have remained approximately the same since the early 1990s for both men and women.

More than two-thirds of men as well as women reported that their spouse had remained unaware of their parallel relationship, or relationships. There was no change in this compared with the early 1990s. The married and the cohabiting had been equally successful in keeping their affairs secret.

Interestingly, men and women had managed to keep the affairs concealed from their partners equally well, regardless of how many affairs they were involved in. The "cheaters" had learned to cover their tracks and find credible explanations for their absences. Of course, they may have been deceived in believing that their partner did not know of their affairs. It is possible that not every spouse had always reacted particularly, and had hid whatever suspicions he or she had had from the respondent.

Of the approximately one-third parallel relationships that had come to the attention of spouses, the latter had reacted in a number of different ways. One in three of the spouses of men had been either tolerant or indifferent. Jealousy was nevertheless the most common response. One in ten women who discovered a spouse's affair wanted to end her relationship with the offender. The ways in which people responded had not changed much from the early 1990s.

Nearly half of the men who discovered a female spouse having an affair were either tolerant or indifferent. Approximately the same proportion of men, one-third, who had found a female partner having a parallel relationship, had been jealous and about one-third had been tolerant. Fewer men than women considered ending the relationship because of the spouse's cheating. As reported by female respondents, jealous reactions on the part of men who were faced with a spouse's infidelity had declined over eight years.

Of those men and women who had been discovered having an affair, and whose spouses had shown tolerance for the parallel relationship, over half would themselves have been tolerant of their spouse's similar relationship, according to their responses to survey questions asking about attitudes. The data indicate that these open relationships make up approximately two percent of all relationships in recent years.

The renaissance of romanticism reduces the popularity of parallel relationships

The chapter “What constitutes ‘acceptable’ or ‘perverted’ sex?”, above, described the increasingly disapproving attitudes Finns harboured toward parallel relationships. Their attitudes also turned out to be rather intolerant in a European comparison. By adding to this the present study’s finding that fewer parallel relationships were being reported, even among the youngest generation, all of this together represents a remarkable shift toward more faithful relationships. Here, I will look for reasons and background factors contributing to this change. The immediate impression might be one of increasing conservatism, but this notion is too simplistic and also apparently incorrect.

Committing to someone, being “taken”, implies that one has signed away exclusive rights to one’s sexuality to one partner. This idea is at the core of couple relationships, even more than the idea of love itself. It contains the paradox that in order to promote one’s own sexual wellbeing, people must first discover and possess their sexuality, and once discovering it, deny it in relation to all other people besides the partner.

History has shown us that women can effectively monopolize a spouse’s resources by controlling his sexuality. On the other hand, men have controlled their spouses’ sexuality after providing resources to them. The sexual control of one’s partner has been an important factor and skill needed to ensure subsistence and safety.

The consequence of public discourse about sexuality is that society now places greater expectations on sexual happiness. This fits in with the social exchange theory, which claims that people seek relationships in order to gain benefits and rewards. Hurlbert argues that the relationship is maintained for as long as it rewards more than it demands. People today increasingly look not only for happiness, but also for individual rewards and high-quality relationships.

Couple relationships are less and less founded on external, formal sanctions concerning togetherness, and they are increasingly based on mutual love and trust, which are more about feelings and sexuality than previously. Both men and women are expected to express love through sexuality. Women have a tendency to emotionalize their sexuality, and convert their sexual feelings into verbal communication. Men are expected to sexualize their feelings, and sexuality becomes the channel through which men communicate a host of emotions such as stress, excitement, anger, frustration, and love.

It has emerged in the sexual surveys of some other countries as well that parallel relationships are now less tolerated than they were several decades ago. The new trend may reflect a renaissance of romanticism in an otherwise increasingly individualistic era. It may also be an expression of faithfulness not to one person, but to the romance and emotion afforded by a particular situation – “you are where your heart is.”

There are many reasons why love and romance are so frequently emphasized these days. Bulcroft has said that in a more rational and impersonal world such as ours, the human need for social bonds is increasingly important. For this reason, people today are more concerned with "irrational" love unions and they value the ideals of romantic love, such as spontaneity, strength of feeling, and duration of the relationship. In this private world and its intimate attachments people are able to express and experience elements of their subjective selves for which the public sphere permits no outlet.

The romantic script is one of the few still-vital incentives to the institution of marriage, especially because incentives connected to economics or child-birth and -rearing have diminished over time. Romance has come to represent the epitome of individualism and self-actualization. Our individual, true selves are more and more defined through our intimate and emotionally driven commitments. In a social system in which all other aspects of social life are based on rationality and bureaucracy, one's emotional life has become important in a whole new way.

The romantic renaissance is connected to people's greater need to find a faithful partner. The desire to exclude other relationship is a normal, natural emotion, as we enclose ourselves in the birthing pains of passionate, romantic love. Finnish sociologist Riitta Jallinoja has argued that in the West, the partners' mutual independence has shifted the boundaries of love with the limits of the relationship. With an independent partner, you can never be sure of their love. Hence, the relationship is a constant object of internal speculation and assessment.

Forming a union, or maintaining an existing one, is an investment based on the hope of becoming happier. The interdependence theory and investment model, presented by Rusbult, proposes that the more investments that are made in the relationship (for example, children, shared property, years spent together), the greater its durability. For women, the investments made by a partner are exceedingly important, because it has been estimated that women's success in gaining these investments maximizes the survival of her offspring.

Because love is expressed through sexuality, a partner's faithfulness proves that he or she continues to want to invest in the relationship and that there is no serious risk of a competing relationship. Being forced to end a relationship would entail a lot of time spent as well as having to make new investments. The investments made into the previous relationship would then, at least in part, be lost.

In Anthony Giddens' analysis, a "pure" relationship is ideally based purely on feelings and happiness. This type of relationship may not last long because feelings change from one moment to the next and passions may wane. This is no problem, if no major investments have been made in the relationship, but if the partners already share property and children, and possibly even an exceptionally good love relationship, they generally want to continue the relationship. The partner's faithfulness may offer added security for the relationship.

Nowadays feelings often play a larger role in wanting to continue a relationship than does the fear of losing the investments that have been made. Being together for a long time or having children together no longer prevents people from ending a marriage as effectively as before.

Even though, when asked about their attitudes, young people today value faithfulness, they are having shorter relationships than previous generations. Their conception of fidelity nevertheless differs so much from that of their grandparents that it is impossible to call them more traditional. In a “pure” relationship, the reason for mutual faithfulness does not come from the marriage institution or even the other person, but stems from the feelings toward the partner. Partners are expected to commit to being sexually faithful only for as long as they view the relationship as satisfying and whole.

The increased commitment of women to the labour market seems to have increased the special value of mutual spousal commitment. Individualism has made divorce more acceptable. This has reinforced attitudes that reflect a desire to restrict marital infidelities.

Respondents who had had parallel relationships and who also viewed such relations with tolerance had usually had intercourse at an early age, had more numerous sexual partners, and a higher socio-economic status. This group is often not particularly happy in their relationships and would prefer to have sexual intercourse with their partner more often. They have sought new experiences and partners, even though their regular relationship is a long-term one. As individuals, sex for them is so rewarding that it is worth taking risks for.

Financial independence has brought many new ways of having a satisfying life, but it has had other effects that may increase feelings of insecurity in people’s private lives. With a partner who is independent of oneself, their love cannot be taken for granted. This results in pressure to stay young and attractive and to live an exciting life – things that would entice a partner. It is particularly threatening to one’s sense of safety when a partner has a sexual escapade with someone else. One never knows how fantastic that other person is, especially in bed.

People who have seriously invested in their present relationship and consider it a happy one do not want to lose it. A partner’s faithfulness is therefore tremendously important for maintaining the image of a relationship’s uniqueness, of it having been worth all the effort and investment.

Investments that people make in relationships and marriages do not always seem to prevent infidelity. Getting married, being together for a long time, having several children together – none of it prevents infidelity to the same extent that it often acts as a barrier against divorce. The quality of the relationship is a better predictor of unfaithfulness than the investments people have made in the relationship. This supports the idea that it is the emotional bonds in a relationship that are critical from

the standpoint of infidelity, rather than any investments. Moreover, people seem to be placing an ever-growing importance on emotional bonds.

The growing expectation of fidelity in an era when individuality is in other ways increasing translates to a renaissance of romanticism. Sex is now part of the romantic script, with a high value on sex. Individual pleasures are connected to romantic relationships. Yet romanticism does not mean committing to one's partner at whatever price. The traditional romantic ideals valued greatly in female culture have been converted into an appreciation of the relationship between two partners. This is especially true for the youngest generation.

The renaissance of romanticism may either be traditional or pleasure-seeking. Traditional romanticism is closely related to the traditional family values that still prevailed in Western countries fifty years ago. Women married young, had many children, and were financially dependent on their spouses. These women invested their resources into marriage.

Today, the women who represent this type of romanticism are more often less educated, working-class women. In their relationship, they look for safety and they invest a lot into it to find happiness. Interestingly enough, this choice of lifestyle seems today more typical of men than of women. A lower-status man has a much lower chance than a woman of finding a new partner in the event that he loses his partner as a result of her infidelity.

In pleasure-seeking romanticism, family formation occurs later and more time is spent looking for the right partner. Romantic hedonists are frequently more highly educated and also high earners. They expect that their partner is a good lover and able to give them sexual pleasure. And part of being a good lover is, of course, to desire only that one person. Pleasure-seeking romantics are looking for a quality relationship that offers intimacy and pleasure. For these people, sex symbolizes the merging of two partners.

9

SEX AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EXCHANGE,
AND COMMERCIAL SEX

Baumeister and Vohs argue that because of the interactive nature of sexuality, sex is always a form of trading. Even in its most limited forms, people are trading touching and some degree of sexual pleasure. For the most part, various feelings and wanting to give pleasure to the partner are also part of the exchange. The exchange is of a different nature if sex is used as an item to trade for some other type of benefit or for actual compensation. This is the case in commercial and paid sex. Pornography is included in this same chapter because of the economic values associated with it.

Sex as an instrument of exchange

Recently, commercial sex and economic benefits derived from sex have been hotly debated. From a broader perspective, sex is also an instrument of social exchange that brings certain desired and desirable aspects to intimate relationships, too. Sexual interaction can be viewed thus through the perspective of social exchange theory or sexual economics. This type of analysis was inspired in particular by the Nobel Prize-winning Gary Becker, who has researched the economic foundations of human behaviour. Roy Baumeister in particular has applied social exchange theory in his research on sexual exchange.

The social exchange theory presents a view of how the sexual negotiations and actions that occur in relationships are organized and linked together in a social system. In social exchange theory, people's choices are affected by the costs and benefits they entail. In social interaction, everyone gives something and receives something in return. In this kind of exchange, people try to maximize the benefits for themselves. Social interaction is usually maintained only when all parties are getting more out of the deal than they are losing. Often, sexual services are exchanged for other services, such as gifts or money. Men may also reward women for sex by offering other commodities, caring and appreciation, or by committing to the relationship that the woman wants.

In social interaction, female sexuality has a significant value, whereas male sexuality has been seen as relatively worthless from the standpoint of social exchange. In the case of women, virginity, innocence, a chaste reputation, and other similar

characteristics have been imbued with positive values that are entirely missing from for men. The terminology of economic exchange is particularly apparent in instances where a woman's virginity is called the "gift" that she can confer on a man. Female sexuality has an exceptionally large exchange value in countries and cultures where women have few other opportunities for acquiring substantive resources. One manifestation is the payment of large dowries to a man's family upon negotiations between the two families.

Female sexuality is most restricted in cultures where women are most dependent on the exchange value of sex. Sexual norms loosen when women have more available opportunities to acquire the economic resources they need.

Behind the social exchange theory is the theory of evolution, which defines sex as a particular resource of women. Sex is seen as a female resource especially because of the strategy for reproduction that it encompasses. The consequences of sex for women (pregnancy and the pain related to it) require paying a greater price than men have to. For women, the risk of high costs is significant, even though the sex itself may be enjoyable. For this reason women have been more passive than men in initiating sex.

When a man and a woman start having sex, according to the social exchange theory, the woman is giving the man something that he values. In exchange, the woman obtains commodities that she values. In most cases, men's sexual services cannot be traded in for other commodities. However, it should be noted that the world is changing in this regard as well. All sex that takes place in a community is some way associated with its market for sexual exchange. Sex, then, is not just a private transaction between two people.

According to the social exchange theory, the party in the relationship who is the least interested in sex obtains more power. The person who is more in love and wants more sex is more prepared to make compromises and offer various enticements to get what he or she wants. Because the findings of this study clearly show that, on average, men experience more sexual desire than women, the consequence of this is a sexual power imbalance in Finland, with women ending up with greater power resources than men in their relationships.

In a marriage, economic resources are shared, and men therefore only have limited possibilities of offering women something additional (in cohabiting unions and especially in living-apart relationships this can occur without the marital obligation). It is not possible to negotiate social exchange in the same way as when first starting the relationship. In addition, sexual attraction diminishes in long-term relationships, while the faithfulness required of the relationship (sexual monopoly) prevents alternative ways of seeking sex. The risk that a relationship will end as a result of lack of sex experienced by one partner is lowered. Usually, too, the couple has removed themselves from the market of sexual exchange, where the value of sex is actually determined.

The price of getting sex may vary greatly. For a man, starting a sexual relationship with a particular woman may require taking her out for a wonderful meal, or showering her with compliments, or spending something like a month by giving her attention, or a promise to share with her all earnings and property through life. The price of sex is decided in negotiations between the two people. Community sexual norms also partly determine how the price of sex is formed.

In many sexual relationships women are seen as victims and men as exploiters, as if the mere fact of having sex would rob women of something valuable. In cultures and ideologies that emphasize sexual exchange value, girls are seen as needing protection so that their valuable resource is not threatened or destroyed. Men, on the hand, do not need this kind of protection, because their sexuality does not contain a comparable exchange value.

In a sexually competitive situation a woman may set too high a price for sex, for example, marriage. The pursuer may then turn to another woman who is not asking as high a price for sex. The value of sex declines in situations where there are more women than men, and similarly increases, if there are more men than women.

The low price of sex favours men, while higher prices are rewarding for women. Partly for this reason the ideology of free love has gained greater popularity among men than women. Also the sexual revolution often mentioned in this book was more welcomed by men, because it decreased the price they had to pay for sex. For women, it has been more useful to support values that promote obtaining sex in an acceptable way only through faithful marriage. If women manage to pressure one another into embracing sexual repression, it brings up the price of sex. The attitude and value differences proposed in this hypothesis have also been observed in the present study, even though they are fading.

Some women set a higher price for their sexual services than other women. The higher the demand for a particular woman is, the higher the price she can ask. It is possible to increase sexual demand through dress, make-up, weight loss, and other appearance-boosting methods. Attractiveness can also be enhanced through flirtation, sexy clothes, and giving the impression that sex with this particular woman would be especially enjoyable. The woman must simultaneously give the impression that she is very selective as to her partners.

Studies show that people generally do not start having sex until the woman has expressed a desire for it. A man's desire has had little importance. Women decide when sex starts and it has been left to the man to invest in the woman until she is satisfied. Women have not valued sex as highly as men because it has been more readily available to them. It is, however, true that this study found that it is no longer as easy for women to get the amount of sex that they want, even though it continues to be much easier for women than for men. Men may find it particularly irritating

when some women have first accepted the resources men have invested, and then not offered sex in exchange.

Seduction is a process during which men often persuade women to have sex with him. A man may invest both social and material resources into the woman, including buying gifts, paying for food and entertainment, spending time with her, and making it clear to her that he wants a long-term relationship. A woman frequently abstains from sex until the man has invested in her sufficiently.

Men are generally required to provide a larger economic investment in the relationship than women. For this reason, men with a lower social status have a hard time finding partners. Low-income men, particularly middle-aged men, encompass many more single dwellers than wealthier men. High-status women have the same problem having difficulty finding partners. Mere sexual services from a man have not been enough of an enticement for such women.

When a woman has a higher status than a man, the value of the sex he has to offer may grow. In this case, abstaining from sex may benefit a man economically. There are already signs of this in Finland, as women's education levels surpass men's and relationships in which women have more economic resources than men proliferate. It is symptomatic that women are increasingly complaining of lack of desire on the part of men. This amounts to a determination of the value of the sex that men have to offer.

Women who experience only a little sexual desire consider the price of sex to be high. Women who have a higher level of sexual desire, on the other hand, do not expect as much compensation for sex. Sexual decision-making is more complicated for women than it is for men. Men can make the decision to have sex sooner and more easily, and more frequently regardless of whether the woman they're presently having sex with is the special object of their desire. In this sense, having sex has often been easier for men, though, naturally, not all men.

In their research related to the theory of evolution, Schmidt and Buss have claimed that the most effective method for a woman to obtain the man of another woman is to underscore her attractiveness, put down the appearance of her competitor, and make suggestions about having sex and to actually have sex with the competitor's man. For a man, offering sex to the female partner of another man is not similarly effective. It is more useful for a man to present his resources, grant them to the woman, and form an emotional relationship to her (another resource women desire).

In the market for prostitution and pornography sex has a low price compared to the high stakes that a regular relationship requires. Therefore this market is of interest to men. Women on the other hand oppose it, because it threatens to lower the price of sex. If pornography satisfies part of the sexual desire men feel, their willingness to invest resources toward getting sex from women is reduced. In addition, some women may feel bad for other women who, they think, have sold themselves at too

low a price into pornography. They fear that this may eat away at the exchange price of the sex they themselves have to offer.

Good porn, bad porn

The definition of what constitutes porn or pornography is a deeply personal issue and one connected to a particular moment in history. Originally, pornography referred to writings about prostitutes. Today's porn is more about imagination and fantasy than about people's real sexual lives. The central thrust is the pursuit of sexual arousal through the use of porn. Many consider the sexual expression in porn to be a separate and independent form, a value in itself. For others, it represents a substitute for a missing sex life.

Throughout history, a substantial part of pornography, if not all of it, has been forbidden, restricted or at least labelled indecent or immoral. Today, people who oppose porn seek to justify their bias by making reference to porn's presumed dangerousness to the development of children, its role as a model for sexual violence, and the abuse of the people who appear in porn. In spite of this criticism, run-of-the-mill porn with pictures of sexual intercourse is now marketed completely legally in Finland. Only child porn, violent porn and pictures of sex with animals are criminalized. Pornography is no longer a legal as much as it is a moral question.

The situation as it stands has long been nearly the same: most people are very interested in porn at the same time as a minority that, for one reason or another, views porn with distaste. They have sought justifications for their opposition to it that best fit the time and context. Porn has divided people in two emotional camps a bit like the attitudes toward abortion. According to studies, opposition to pornography is correlated with generally conservative attitudes, whereas accepting it is associated with generally liberal attitudes. In pornography, people focus on such different issues and perspectives that it is difficult for them to understand others who view the issue differently.

Among opponents of porn, the conflict over it has, often unconsciously, relied on the concept of sexual desire as natural and true-to-nature, an idea that has been historically held up on a pedestal. The desire to have sexual intercourse with one's spouse was once interpreted as a healthy impulse, when it was based on natural desire that had not been artificially created or enhanced. Artificiality referred, for instance, to pictures or stories that are sexually stimulating. In this frame of reference, pornography paid too much attention to everyday bodily pleasures and it was therefore deemed dangerous.

Conceptions of pornography are often very personal. The way that people assess and interpret particular sexual materials and whether they are acceptable or indecent are strongly associated with the immediate positive or negative emotional reactions in the viewer or reader. Porn moves people to feel something, because it converts into something visible and public what is most private about a person's life.

These emotional reactions are shaped by how people have been socialized with regard to sexuality; it is common to feel shame upon the public display of sex. We are ashamed not only of the nudity, but also of the emotions that such images evoke within us. It would feel safer to be looking at pictures that do not move us this powerfully. The assessments people make regarding the harmfulness or usefulness of sexually explicit materials they are viewing are then used to justify and explain one's own personal, emotional reactions.

Edward Westermarck has made the claim that shame is a by-product of the disgust that people feel toward incest. According to the teachings of Moses, relatives and family members were under no circumstances allowed to see one another's genitals. The prohibition against incest was strongly associated with the modesty regarding nudity. Up to this day, these moral teachings are conveyed to us in part through the American film industry with its restraint in sexual matters and nudity. Culture does not see nudity as something natural, but as a kind of deviation from what is normal. One example of this cultural labelling of nudity comes from the media, where the slightest glimpse of a celebrity's breast is avidly reported. It is easy to fabricate the illusion of scandal through nudity.

In assessing the significance of pornography, the question is also about the kind of conception of humanity that we apply in making assumptions about how people's behaviour can be influenced. If we believe that people respond easily to external stimuli, we have reason to be concerned about the effects of pornography. If, on the other hand, we trust people's own logical (cognitive) ability to deduce and make decisions, we need not worry about porn's potentially negative consequences, because people can be expected to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Porn is about products that depict sexual acts and that have commercial significance. Parallels are often drawn between pornography and eroticism, which is a more widely accepted and frequently even idealized portrayal and commodification of human sexual interests. But the way that people interpret and define what is erotic depends fundamentally on the experience and emotions of individual viewers and readers.

A general interpretation has been that eroticism becomes porn when it causes sexual arousal or when a recipient, instead of feeling a more sensual pleasure, instead feels awkward or even anxious. Indeed, porn is characterized by the fact that depending on the recipient, it is seen either as arousing or out-and-out vulgar. It rarely leaves the recipient entirely indifferent. Its powerful effect as well as the pleasure that comes with it is what consumers of porn look for in the products. Many people, though, are content with the mere visual enjoyment that pornography may offer.

Pornography's use and motivation

We never get to see when other people make love. This is in part why the artificial world of pornography attracts so many viewers. It offers impressions of what it looks like to make love. Only the few people who have equipped their love nests with mirrors or cameras have ever seen themselves making love. In pornography, sexual stories and representations are produced which people may then apply in their own relationships if they so wish.

People who use pornography easily recognize its artificial nature. Some of this is due to materials that are cheaply produced, making it difficult to relate to. It feels about as real as science fiction to someone walking down an ordinary street. An entirely different matter is the various love-making scenes in mass-distributed movies that strive to create a sense of credibility and points of recognition that viewers can relate to. Many people use such scenes as models or at least dreams in their own life. Gorgeous, slow-motion sex scenes in movies may make one's own sex life seem rather humdrum. Pornography, on the other hand, is not capable of the same effect.

In addition to asking about people's use of pornography, the FINSEX survey also asked for the first time in 2007 whether respondents had ever visited a sex shop to buy sex toys or other materials. It was assumed that respondents would be familiar with the concept of a sex shop, and there was no further elaboration on the topic.

In relative terms, young men and women had been equally active users of sex shops. Of men, 55 percent and of women 46 percent had visited one at least at some point, and one in four young men and one in five young women had visited one in the last year. The most active sex shop customers were men aged 20–34 and women aged 20–29. About one in four respondents in these age groups had shopped at a sex boutique in the last year. Shopping there was much more frequent among young adults and the middle-aged compared with older respondents.

According to the FINSEX survey, middle-aged men were more likely to frequent sex shops than middle-aged women. Nearly half of the men had at some point visited a sex shop and 14 percent had done so within the last year. One-third of women had visited a sex shop at some point and seven percent had done so within the last year. In this age group men were almost twice as likely as women to have frequented a sex shop. Only one-quarter of older men and six percent of older women had at some point visited a sex shop. Within the last year, only seven percent of men and two percent of women had done so.

Use of pornography was addressed in one question only, asked already in 1971: "Within the last year, have you read or flipped through a magazine or book that in your view could be called pornographic?" The responses to this question in different years reveal the incidence of the use of this type of pornographic materials but also the changes that have taken place in what people consider and define as pornographic.

The issue would take shape even better had respondents in the 2007 survey been asked to evaluate whether what 1971 respondents had identified as porn still met that definition according to 2007 respondents. The hard-core porn of 1971 typically consisted of posed shots of nude women taken from afar. Today, they would be more likely to be considered art-house photographs. It may be that even back then it was possible to obtain isolated pictures of sexual intercourse from under the table, but images of intercourse were banned from publicly sold sex magazines until the 1980s. These days, a magazine without pictures of sexual intercourse could hardly be called a porn magazine.

Another change applies to written pornographic materials. Various types of pornographic literature were available in the early 1970s, having just been given permission to be distributed publicly. Many people read this kind of porn, because it was new and exciting. By now it is hard to come by erotic or pornographic texts, or they have become so common that we rarely pay attention to them. The moving image has monopolized porn and visual depictions of sex.

The structural changes in the market explain why both men and women in 1971 were more likely than later to report reading or looking at a porn magazine or book within the last year. Among men, the level of sex publication use dropped from the early 1970s to the early 1990s from approximately 80 percent to about 60 percent. Among women this change was from approximately 60 to a low of about 30 percent. Thereafter, the use of porn has remained approximately at the same level. In 2007, 58 percent of men and 26 percent of women reported reading or looking at pornographic materials. The use of porn among both genders was about as common in the young and middle-aged age groups. Use of porn among men in the oldest age group had increased, with nearly half using it at some point within the last year. Only one-tenth of women in this age group reported using it. That generation of women was taught that porn was not appropriate for women.

All types of pornography were more popular among men than women. In recent times, men and women converged most in their use of sex videos and DVDs, which had been used within the last year by 56 percent of men and 28 percent of women. Men's use of sex videos was higher in 2007 than eight years before. The proportion of men who viewed them repeatedly increased by five percentage points. Among women, the use of sex videos increased only slightly.

Seventy percent of young men and 62 percent of middle-aged men had used sex videos within the last year. The use of sex videos among young men had declined somewhat, but both the prevalence and frequency of sex video use increased among middle-aged and older men. Nearly half of the men in the oldest age group had also watched sex videos. More than half of young men, nearly half of middle-aged men, and one-third of older men had watched sex videos repeatedly. Men's interest toward sex videos was not affected by age. As the baby-boom generation approaches retirement age, the popularity of sex videos may increase even more significantly.

Among women the younger generation was clearly the most active user group for sex videos. Forty-three percent had used sex videos within the last year. The figure was one-quarter for middle-aged women and approximately 15 percent for older women. One-fifth of younger women reported repeated use of sex videos within the last year, and so did 14 percent of middle-aged women and eight percent of older women. The videos' popularity had increased somewhat over eight years. In the oldest age group, there was a significant gender gap in terms of how commonly men versus women watched sex videos.

The FINSEX survey pointed to a decrease in the use of sex magazines, which have been replaced by Web porn and sex videos. Relatively speaking, sex magazines were used mostly by men much more so than sex videos. One in two men had looked at sex magazines over the last year, compared to only 13 percent of women. One-third of men and five percent of women reported looking at sex magazines repeatedly. Their use had waned over eight years in all other groups except older men, whose use of sex magazines had actually increased. The biggest drop occurred among young men, of whom only one-third still used sex magazines. This is also the group in which the use of Internet sex simultaneously gained in popularity.

Four-fifths of young men had viewed free online porn within the last year. The gender difference here was huge: only one-fifth of young women had viewed free online porn. Women showed a far greater interest in sex videos than sex on the Internet. It is likely that the growing equality in the use of the Internet will bring these figures closer.

Half of middle-aged men and one in ten middle-aged women had used Internet porn within the last year. One in four men in the older age group, but only three percent of women, had viewed sex on the Internet.

Only four percent of men and one percent of women had visited fee-based online sex sites within the last year. Based on this, the commercial porn market seems rather meagre at this point. People are interested in sex in the Internet, but not paying for it. Only seven percent of men and five percent of women who had looked for and viewed sex on the Internet had been willing to pay for it.

Sex chatlines got new customers over the last eight years, although their popularity generally was in clear decline. Thirteen percent of men had called a chatline in previous years, but only two percent had made similar calls within the last year. The proportion of those who had called a chatline at some point previously increased by five percent, but the proportion of respondents who had called within the last year dropped by four percentage points. The popularity of phone sex has collapsed among the young and the middle-aged. In previous years, three percent of women reported calling a chatline, but only half a percent had done so within the last year.

Many of the writers of the sexual autobiographies collected in the 1990s described using pornography together with a partner, and being aroused and making exceptionally

satisfying love. Some people had borrowed new ideas from porn and adopted new sexual techniques. Sometimes porn also sowed disagreement and conflict in the relationship. Usually this was when a woman opposed or disapproved of the use of porn by a male partner, although in one autobiography the situation was reversed. In some cases, men had unsuccessfully tried to persuade their partners to use pornography together with them.

Pornography's influence on attitudes and love-making skills

For sexual activity to be satisfying and beneficial to health requires various types of information, an open mind, and skills accumulated through knowledge and experience. Both skills and knowledge are crucial in sex itself as well as in the interaction between partners.

The sex portrayed in film, video, and literature (including sex guides) is for most people the only tangible model for sexual behaviour. For children in particular it is difficult to observe adult sexual behaviour and form images or models to use in their own life. Erotic literature, sex magazines, and sex videos have therefore been the primary source of sexual information for young people regarding various types of sexual behaviours and activities. Nowadays also women's magazines feature stories about how to become an especially skilled lover.

There has been an assumption that the more public discourse there is around sex, and the greater the detail of that discourse, the easier it will be for people to accept the various manifestations of sexuality in their own lives. As a result of increased, more comprehensive discussions about sex and sex education, attitudes toward sexual matters have become more open-minded, meaning that people now accept an increasing variety of sexual relationships and experiences both for themselves and for others.

The assumption regarding the impact of the media on sexual behaviour correlates well with follow-up findings from the FINSEX survey, which point to a noticeable liberalization in people's opinions regarding sexual matters in the twenty years between the early 1970s and the early 1990s. These changes entailed a greater acceptance in most cases toward sexual intercourse between young people, rating temporary relationships as more satisfying than before, and often accepting sexual intercourse between people who were not necessarily in love.

The attitude changes were particularly remarkable in the age groups whose members were young adults in the early 1970s and thereafter. The more open public discussion of sex that began then made attitudes toward sex increasingly liberal among the respondents in this age group. People who came of age prior to the 1970s were significantly more conservative than subsequent generations. In their youth, media discussions of sexuality had been notably more limited, moralistic, and more tightly bound to the institution of marriage.

Having love-making and sex fantasies publicly displayed as well as seeing practical public advice on the subject widely available has clearly liberalized the sexual lives of the men and women who have been affected by these trends. Based on the FINSEX survey, respondents under the age of 35 were significantly more likely to report feeling that their sexual habits were versatile and satisfying, compared with older generations. Sexual methods became more varied, as people tried out what they had seen or read with a partner. The most important aspect of the dissemination of such inspirational materials was that they gave people permission to act out their sexual needs and desires in a more satisfying way and taught them to take into account the wishes and feelings of their partner better than before.

From the standpoint of the evolution of love-making skills among the general population, sex magazines and other pornographic materials have functioned as public educators in matters of sex. For decades, they have advised men in particular on becoming a better lover and shared much theoretical and practical knowledge about improving communication between partners and making their love lives more versatile. The pioneering work that they have undertaken has been continued in recent years by women's and health magazines. This kind of information dissemination has been made possible as sexual activity and masturbation have come to be understood as beneficial to human health. It had become an important value in women's lives, a value in itself, and not just something that is necessary from the standpoint of relationship formation and maintenance.

Pornography depicts sexual activities and tendencies. It is clear that the people most interested in porn are those with the greatest interest in and desire for sexual experiences. In France, for example, men who read pornographic texts reported more frequent and versatile sexual activities compared to other men. Their sexual habits were more varied; they had more sexual partners, masturbated more often, and experienced orgasms more frequently compared with others. Porn users also had more numerous sexual fantasies. In spite of these activities, they were less satisfied with their current sex lives than others. The dissatisfaction seems linked to their craving for sex, which was difficult or impossible to satisfy.

In Finland, too, it has been shown that the greater a person's sexual motivation, the more actively he or she has generally used pornographic products. On the other hand, also people with a lesser interest in sex have in many cases used porn. Interestingly enough, porn users in Finland have been shown to have better sexual self-esteem than other people. The users of porn are in no way a group of sexual loners, merely compensating for a lack of sex or partners by using porn.

Both men and women expressed a desire for more frequent and better sex to feel satisfied with their sex lives and relationships. Sex has a greater presence in mass media and people's minds than ever before, people are readier to engage in various kinds of sexual experimentation, and sexual fantasies have become more public and less inhibited.

With this trend, it is clear that the demand for pornography will continue to grow in the future. How this demand will be manifested will depend on the available forms of pornography and the quality at which it is marketed. Particular problems of the porn now available are its monotony and lack of imagination. Stories that repeat the same images and storylines have pushed people away from porn's sphere of influence.

Young people will always be the special target group for pornography. Young people long to get acquainted with the details of the naked body especially of the opposite sex and to be able to preview what different love-making techniques and positions look like in practice. This is important for young people's ability to take charge of their own sexuality. The demand for this type of knowledge will be met and fulfilled as long as it is not available, for example, through school sex education. Criticism directed at the use of pornography by young people is self-righteous, as long as educators are unwilling to offer young people the information they most want to discover about sexuality.

The sale and purchase of sexual services

Sex appears in its most naked form when it is a commodity in social or sexual exchange – in the sale or purchase of paid sexual services or prostitution. In this kind of activity, sex is assigned a definite price that may be negotiable, like the price of many other things that are traded. The price varies according to the estimated price for the object of the purchase or the price that he or she has set. People are willing to pay extremely high prices for the best and most desirable services. A price may be based on more than just the provision of sexual services, for example the exceptional quality of those services or the guaranteed trustworthiness of the service provider.

When talking about the purchase of sexual services, the focus is often on one question: why men (who make up the majority of buyers) want to pay for sex in the first place. Isn't it enough to have sex with a regular sex partner, if there is one? What is it that men expect to get from paying for sex? Another question is why women so rarely buy sexual services. Is it so easy for them to get sex that they do not have to resort to paying for it?

Numerous Nordic studies have examined men's motivation in furnishing the demand for the purchase of sexual services. Sven-Axel Månsson has compiled a summary of his own and other researchers' studies focusing on this issue. Emerging from the studies is a key cluster of five images or fantasies men harbour about prostitutes, of what they represent for men, and what men think they can get from them.

The “whore” fantasy

For many men, the fantasy of the “whore” is sexually arousing. This is in part associated with the contradictory nature of soliciting sex – it is unpleasant and tempting at the same time. The unpleasantness comes from the self-hatred that men feel toward their own secret, forbidden sexual impulses. Nevertheless, men are well aware that when this kind of secrecy is melded with sexual fantasy, the result is heightened arousal.

At the same time as many men profess contempt for “whores”, the concept also fascinates them. “Whores” are intimately close to men’s most private, masculine erotic dreams and fantasies. Many men are curious to see for themselves at least once what it would be like to be involved with a “whore”. It is a kind of male rite of initiation and a form of sexual experimentation. After an initial experience, many men continue to pay for sex. Also closely associated with the phenomenon is the idea of prostitutes as sexual guides who lead men into sexual adulthood and make men out of boys.

The sphere of life that prostitutes occupy also provokes curiosity and excitement in men. The milieu of red light districts or other areas where sex is sold serve as a kind of invitation to sex. This is underscored by the frequent proximity of sex clubs and porn shops. There is no other area of life where men can find women who openly display themselves sexually. The availability of the women as well as local conditions and situational factors seem to be important factors in the use of prostitution. Many men report not having been able to resist a woman who presented herself in a sexually provocative manner.

From the standpoint of the man’s decision, the most important contributing factor is the availability of the woman in combination with the man’s belief that he will be able to retain his anonymity. This also explains the use of such services via the Internet in particular.

A different kind of sex

In their fantasies of prostitutes men hope to encounter a sexually skilled, experienced woman. This woman is presumably willing to have some new or special kind of sex that they are for various reasons unable to engage in with a wife or regular partner. Pornography may have spurred these hopes. Men who purchase sex act out these hopes and fantasies with sex workers. In most cases, however, they request and receive sex that is not especially exotic compared with their experiences to date.

In paid sex it is noteworthy that some men use it to be able to assume a different, more submissive role than they normally occupy with a regular partner. Men are buying themselves the right to be passive, to experience being seduced by an active woman. No doubt men have had too few of these experiences with their usual partners, to the point that they are willing to pay for the experience.

Many men want to be orally stimulated by a woman. The next item on the list of the most popular requests is sexual intercourse with the woman on top. According to one study, up to one in two men wanted the sex worker to take all the initiative and take charge of everything that happened. This way the men could seek relief from the sexual demands directed at them. Some men pay for women to dominate them and force them to do things that in certain other contexts could be viewed as shameful, degrading, or even sexually abusive. This speaks to how complicated sexuality truly is from a psychological standpoint. Public discussions of the subject have been rather simplistic and shown a lack of understanding of many essential aspects of sexuality.

Sex as a commodity

Sex may also be experienced as just one more commercially available product among other products. For those who can afford it, buying sex is another way of consuming. Money can buy positive, enjoyable experiences, in this case, sex. The commercial transaction is relatively easy to arrange and does not require the contemplation of any moral questions. Money can buy a “product” matching one’s tastes whenever the time or need arises.

The idea of this type of consumption may have to do with a certain biological approach to the nature of sex. It is viewed as a kind of periodic need for sexual release that can in part be taken care of by paying for the appropriate service. This way the man need not invest his time or resources into his sexual needs in the rest of his life.

The image of a sympathetic comfort giver

Some of the customers of sex workers pay for sex to fulfil their general longing for a woman. They want to be close to a woman and are able to achieve it by paying a prostitute. These men are single dwellers who may have problems entering into relationships with women because of shyness, appearance, illness, disability, social status, or lifestyle. They may feel that they have no other way of being close to a woman.

In male illusions, a sex worker can make a man feel wanted and sexually accomplished for at least a moment, and at the same time feel like he is in control of his own life. The function of women in this case is to maintain and bolster men’s virility.

Fantasies about a different kind of woman

Men fantasize about what it would feel like to have sex with a woman who is different from and looks different than the woman they are currently with. A sex worker represents a different kind of woman already in the sense that she sells her services straightforwardly for money. In addition, she takes charge more, is more knowledgeable and more experienced in sexual matters. Cultural exoticism may offer an added bonus. Different skin colour and language and possibly an exotic

environment help create a particular sexual atmosphere. Various generalized sexual imagery and expectations are also associated with women who come from different cultural backgrounds.

There are also men who pay for sex to look for a more traditional woman who would be suitable as a partner of a traditional man. A woman like this accentuates her femininity through her dress and manner of communication, and she seems to appreciate the manliness of her customers. To meet this need, many men seek spouses from exotic environments. A man may feel that such women can fulfil his longing to find a woman who knows how to give men what they need.

This kind of longing among men can be contrasted to women's longing for exotic men who are upfrontly, basically masculine, sexually virile, and "know how to treat a woman" as a real, traditional woman. Next to men like these, "well-educated" Finnish men may seem a little tame and too nice. A professional woman in a leading position may enjoy the change offered by a man who dominates at home.

Sex workers and sexual enjoyment

When sex workers and prostitutes are mentioned in public discourse, they are frequently spoken of dismissively as objects and victims who do not understand their own good. According to Finnish researcher Anna Kontula, this approach invalidates the Finnish sex workers' own experiences and their efforts to control their own lives. It also completely bypasses the issue of how successfully some sex workers are able to manage their lives, their customers, and even the enjoyment they derive out of selling their sexual services. There has been a desire to invalidate this perspective so that the carefully constructed image of a victim would not come into question.

Are sex workers really able to enjoy the sex they have with their clients? It seems to be so. A large part of the sex workers interviewed by Anna Kontula reported having orgasms in their work. Some sex workers reported feeling sexual pleasure in nearly all client encounters. Some women had simply decided to use their clients to satisfy themselves sexually and viewed clients as something that was there just to serve the prostitute's needs. Studies on male prostitutes also found that while some had sold sex purely for money, for others the primary motive was their own sexual enjoyment. Nonetheless, the most common word used to describe client encounters is probably "insignificant".

When sex work does not entail any enjoyment on the part of the sex worker, some of the background factors may include the same issues that hamper sexual pleasure in a dissatisfying regular relationship, for example lack of self-esteem, lack of skills in the partner, or the moment not being right for feeling enjoyment.

When sex workers become increasingly professional, however, as they gain more experience, this has often led to a distancing from one's own sexual needs. Sex workers may feel responsible for the sexual encounter and thus place the client's

enjoyment first. Professionalism in sex work means controlling the situation, maintaining a distance, and minimizing the amount of work one must do.

According to some sex workers, sex is better when they get paid for it, because men appreciate sex more when they have to pay for it. One woman said that at work, she was responsible for making sure the clients enjoyed themselves, but that in her private relationship she let the man serve her needs.

A good sex worker is cordial, friendly, and able to make the client (a man) feel like he is special, even when the worker herself is not having the best possible day. Professionalism means the ability to create for the client an emotional illusion. The customer receives a service that makes him feel like he is the only one, there is enough time, and there is no hurry. The professional ability to furnish a sufficiently intimate atmosphere with someone who is a stranger is key for the sex to even be possible.

The more solidly a sex worker feels professionally responsible for the experience that the client will have, the more likely she will push her own enjoyment to the background even when the moment and the partner tempt her to focus on herself. Sometimes orgasms happen regardless, without the sex worker being able to stop it. According to sex workers, many clients consider an orgasm (either a genuine or well-acted one) on the seller's part the criteria for successful sex.

In Finland, independent sex workers were found in Anna Kontula's study to have reasonably good opportunities for choosing their clients, decide on pricing, and influence their working conditions. According to sex workers, the Finnish sex market is typically overwhelmed by demand that is many times higher than supply, and is in this way a seller's market. Customers have to compete for appointments. A seller's market means that sex workers are able to choose their customers. Many workers feel that they have an equal right to choose their customers as their customers have to choose a sex worker.

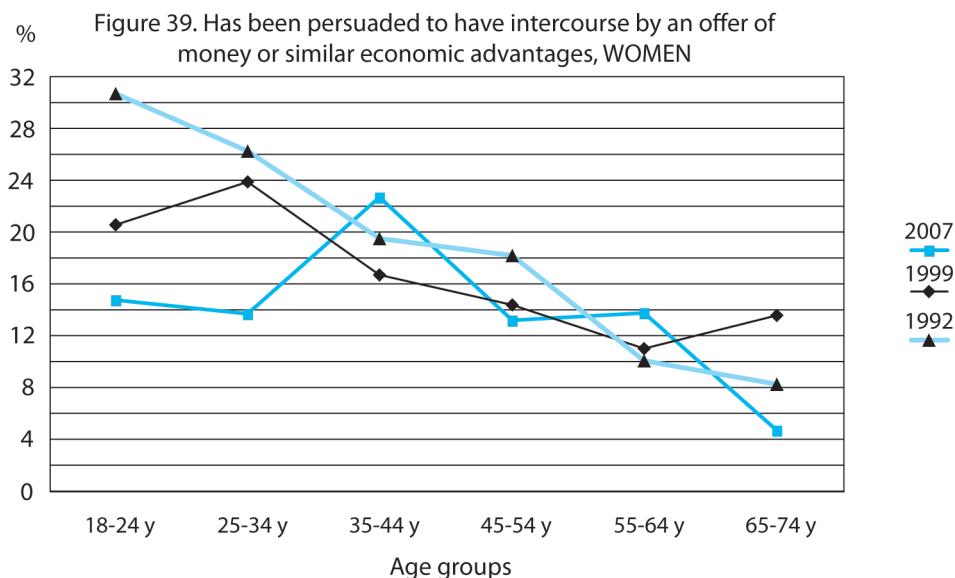
The market for paid sex in Finland

The market for paid sex can be divided into supply and demand. The present study addresses demand by asking, "Has anyone ever persuaded you to have sexual intercourse by offering money or similar economic incentives?" This question, or the one addressing the supply side, was not included in the 1971 study. There were, however, lively discussion in the early 1970s about the market for prostitution and male sex tourism. A lot of domestic prostitution was already available, although the marker for paid sex is of course much older than this in Finland. One illustration of this is that in the 19th century, authorities were already exercising oversight on the practice of prostitution through compulsory health check-ups and other measures.

The study's findings strongly suggest that the demand for prostitution in Finland has declined in recent years. Among all adult women, 14 percent reported that they had

been offered money or other economic incentives in exchange for sex. Nine in ten women had turned down the offers. In 2007, one percent of women said they had agreed to such a proposition one or more times, i.e. had sold sex.

When asking all adult women, demand for paid sex dropped over eight years by three percentage points and among young women, fell by as much as half, from 28 to 14 percent. The demand for sex reported by middle-aged and older women was around the same level as for young women, and also resembled the previous study's findings. The latest result is an indication of a new kind of interaction between young women and men, where the pursuit of paid sex occupies a much lesser role. In part, the lower demand for paid sex directed at young women may mean that young men channelled the demand out of the country or to foreigners working as prostitutes in Finland.



The survey showed that demand for paid sex was relatively often targeted at men as well. Six percent of men reported in 2007 that someone had offered them money or other incentives for having sex. Men of all ages were similarly likely to report being propositioned in this way. The proportion was lower than in the previous study. Two percent of men reported agreeing to the offer, a proportion that was higher than among women. Information regarding the extent to which the offers were made by women or other men is not available.

The other side of the demand reported by respondents is the proportion of men who reported offering women money for sex, and supply is reflected in the proportion of women who had accepted the offers. The issue was addressed by asking, "Have you ever offered money or similar economic incentives to anyone in exchange for sexual intercourse?" Respondents were also asked whether the propositioned person had accepted their offer.

Following the 1990s, demand among men for paid sex increased in part as a result of an increase in the supply of foreign prostitution in Finland. In 1992, 11 percent of all adult male respondents reported offering someone money for sex at some time. In 1999, the same proportion jumped to 19 percent. By 2007 the figure eased to 18 percent, because younger men were no longer offering women money for sex at earlier rates. The proportion of men propositioning women for paid sex fell in the space of eight years by several percentage points among young and middle-aged men. Men in the oldest age group were still more active in making offers of money-for-sex.

In 1999, two percent and in 2007, more than one percent of women reported offering someone money in exchange for sex. Most offers had found acceptance.

Based on 2007 data, nine in ten people offered money for sex by men had accepted the offers. Hence, the proportion of men who had at some point purchased sex was similar to the figures already presented above. There is a conflict between what men and women have reported in response to this question, with women claiming to have rejected most offers and men claiming most of their offers had been accepted. This gap probably ensues from women counting all such situations that had come up in their lives, whereas men had focused more exclusively on the bona fide market for paid sex.

In the early 1990s, 10 percent of men reported that they had bought sex at some point in their lives. By the end of the 90s the figure was already 18 percent, and in 2007, a slightly lower 17 percent. The drop is a result of a decline in the proportion of young men who had purchased sex, from 15 to 12 percent, and among the middle-aged from 23 to 18 percent. Among older men, conversely, experiences of paid sex increased from 15 to 19 percent. These figures match reporting by women indicating that the demand for paid sex was heading down among young adults. This is correlated by the study's finding that relationship faithfulness was on the rise.

Based on a comparison with the NEM results, buying sex was not very common in Finland. Countries of comparison were England, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Norway, Portugal, and France. Of them, only in England was the proportion of men who had paid for sex in the 18–49 age group lower than in Finland, where its highest proportion was among the middle-aged at approximately 15 percent. The largest proportion of sex buyers was in Greece, where figures were between 40 and 50 percent and in Italy with 30–40 percent. In the other countries figures hovered slightly above 20 percent. Norway's figures were very close to Finnish ones – in this sense, too, the Nordic countries looked similar.

Because the previous data from the FINSEX study are for respondents' entire lifespan, many of the experiences of paid sex were from much earlier in life. Approximately three percent of men had paid for sex within the last year in all three age groups.

In some other European countries participating in the NEM survey this figure was approximately five percent. In Finland, one-third of these men were single and the rest in a committed relationship. The proportion of single people had grown clearly over eight years. This, too, fit in with the increasing faithfulness of relationships.

There was a small decline in the proportion of young men who had purchased sex within the last year, and the figure for middle-aged men was down by as much as half at the end of the eight years compared with what it had been. An increase of one percentage point was found among older men. As a whole, the figures tell a story of a decline in the purchase of sex among men, and none of the age group data suggested that the trend would turn in the years to come.

Nearly all of the demand by men for paid sex was directed at women. Only two percent of men's latest paid-sex partner had been another man.

Based on the data for the past year and most recent paid-sex partner, three in four partners had been foreign women. Half of all experiences of paid sex took place abroad with a foreign woman. This was the typical prostitution-related experience among Finns. Sex services that were purchased in Finland were evenly distributed between Finnish and foreign sex providers. This finding is inconsistent with the previous, lively public debate that painted a picture of all prostitution occurring in Finland being in the hands of foreigners.

In a historical sense, the study's findings suggest a structural shift from when men in earlier decades bought the majority of sexual services from foreign women on their trips abroad. Print journalism featured stories of men who had travelled to the Reberbahn, Germany and to Tallinn, Estonia. Later, men headed much farther for such travel. The situation changed when the supply of sex services began to grow in Finland in the 1990s. There was a significant increase in sex purchased at home. The growth occurred at approximately the same ratio in services purchased from Finnish and foreign women. The proportion of sex services purchase abroad, though, still accounted for as much as the domestic market combined.

For sexual services purchased within the last year, nine in ten men reported using a condom. The use of condoms had increased by ten percentage points compared with 1999. Practically everyone engaging in sex with a foreign-born woman in Finland had used a condom. Finnish women had apparently seemed safer, because one in four men omitted the condom in sexual contact with them. Nine in ten men purchasing sex abroad from a foreign woman had used a condom. Based on this, men had successfully internalized the necessity of condom use in preventing infectious diseases entering Finland.

In the sexual autobiographies collected in the 1990s, men described the pressures connected to having paid sex with a prostitute. In some cases the event had been a kind of initiation rite and test of manhood that had earned them approval in certain

male groups. Chickening out, on the other hand, had been seen as shameful. A main worry among men was being able to perform. Many men had either experienced or feared experiencing the inability to achieve an erection in the crucial moment.

For some men, women purchased abroad represented the highpoint of the year, a refreshing change from numbing marital routine. As soon as the price had been negotiated, fear and tension had been key aspects of the experience. Especially abroad, men had feared being scammed or robbed. For many of them, a paid woman had apparently been more thrilling than sexually enjoyable.

Who buys sex in Finland?

Who are the Finnish men who have bought sex? The following offers a detailed list of the most commonly occurring characteristics in the men who were more likely to buy sexual services than other people, as reported in the FINSEX survey.

Social background:

- ☐ Secularized from religion (although a few percent of the most religious men had also purchased sexual services)
- ☐ Weekly use of alcohol, drinking to intoxication
- ☐ Unhappy in life
- ☐ Experiences of loneliness
- ☐ Experiences of several loves
- ☐ Significantly less likely to feel that anyone could love him
- ☐ High earners
- ☐ Being in an unhappy relationship
- ☐ Infidelity in the current relationship

The people who bought sex came from all relationship durations, but the highest concentration occurred among those who had been in the relationships slightly more or less than ten years. Education, present symptoms, children, difficulty finding a partner, and the number of relationships in a lifetime had no bearing on the purchase of sex.

Characteristics associated with paid sex:

- ☐ Numerous sexual partners in a lifetime, if more than 30 partners, 40 percent had purchased sex
- ☐ Craves several relationships instead of just one, one in two has paid for sex (however, one in ten of those who view faithfulness in marriage as the best alternative has purchased sexual services)
- ☐ Accepts the sale of sex and brothels
- ☐ Finds short-term relationships satisfying
- ☐ Has masturbated within the last week

- ☐ Is aroused by watching porn
- ☐ Has watched sex videos fairly often
- ☐ Experiences sexual desire more frequently
- ☐ Would prefer intercourse more often in his relationship
- ☐ Finds his sex life very unsatisfying

Lack of desire on the part of a partner was not correlated to paying for sex, nor were possible difficulties in discussing sex with one's partner, own assessment of one's sexual skills, or age at first intercourse (except in the case of buying sex within the last year).

10 THE ECSTASY OF AROUSAL... AND THE DIFFICULTIES

Sexual arousal is frequently interpreted to result from of the awareness of feeling sexual desire. It is not this simple, however, particularly among women. In any case, sexual arousal is a key factor in sexual function. We generally speak of sexual function or potency in connection with male erections, but women's vaginal lubrication is justifiably analogous. With the introduction of pharmaceutical solutions for erectile dysfunction, matters of sexual arousal are being discussed in a whole different and more comprehensive way.

The essence of sexual arousal

It is crucial to understand sexual arousal, because it can powerfully shape our hopes, pursuits, and behaviour. Arousal refers to an emotional and mental state that may significantly affect the decisions we make. It may also lure us to take risks that we would under no other circumstances take if the situation were different. At the same time, sexual arousal and arousability are concrete and unique measures of a particular person's sexual motivation and capacity.

The less stimulation someone needs to reach orgasm, the more easily he or she is able to become aroused, the greater capacity for becoming aroused. Some people need a lot of stimulation in order to be aroused and to experience the entire sexual process all the way to orgasm. For some people, the needed stimulation can be, for example, professions of love by a partner.

The current understanding is that human sexual behaviour is affected and regulated by a combination of hormones and environmental factors. Studies have evaluated arousal through analyzing external factors, such as expectations and conditioned or unconditioned stimuli. Capacity for arousal has been studied via internal factors, such as hormonal secretion and the nerve feedback received from the genitals. Arousal capacity may become conditioned to certain stimuli, for example as a result of the gratification produced by stimulating genitals.

The value of sexual stimuli may fluctuate depending on hormonal balance, environmental factors, sensory processes as well as the internal feedback produced by sexual stimulation, arousal and possibly anxiety. Sexually highly motivated people

have more sexual tensions and desires as well as a lower threshold for becoming sexually aroused, to have sexual intercourse and reach orgasm.

John Bancroft has approached sexuality as a psychosomatic circle. This circle is based on processes of the brain, including cognitive processes in the cortex that influence the emotional processes of the limbic-hypothalamic system. Cognition is connected to a number of conditioned responses, including cultural belief and attitudes, observation mechanisms, learned sexual stimuli, and learned mechanisms to block sexual responses. It is the brain that determines the basic conditions for arousal.

“Sexual appetite” encourages making contact and being aware of sexual stimuli. The events that ensue from encountering a stimulus instigate arousal and a desire to make physical contact. Sexual “shopping” is a direct pursuit of pleasure, also through masturbation. The way that the process of arousal advances is affected particularly by learning, context, prioritizations, and anticipated rewards.

Various models have been proposed for describing what happens during sexual arousal in humans, the most classic of which is the following:

Desire – Arousal – Orgasm – Resolution

Masters and Johnson described the sequence of events like this:

Excitement – Plateau – Orgasm – Resolution

Their model has since been employed widely in professional circles.

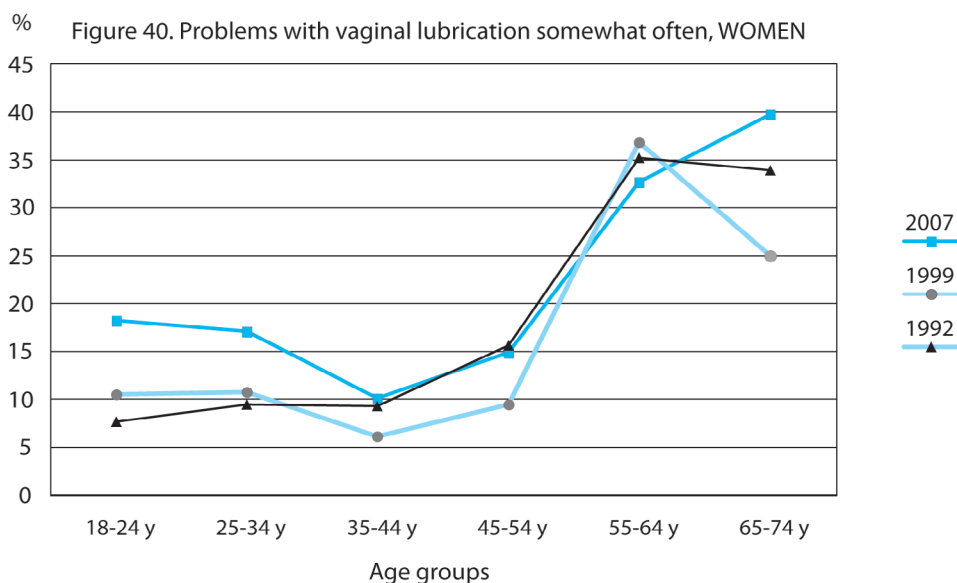
Studies have provided little explanation of the origins of innate sexual desire and arousal. The external sources of desire and arousal are either visual stimulation, stimulation of the body’s erogenous zones, or both together. Female genitalia are activated by rubbing, massaging, the application of pressure, or vibration. These can be provided by a penis, fingers, tongue, or vibrator. The stimulation of the genital region activates various sensory nerve endings. The brain is activated sexually by input signals received from the nervous system.

Problems with vaginal lubrication

Unlike in men, in women sexual responses do not necessarily rotate according to the basic model: desire, arousal, orgasm. Desire in particular does not necessarily precede arousal. Some women cannot or will not distinguish between sexual desire and sexual arousal.

Female sexual arousal is usually measured by how lubricated a woman is in preparation for sexual intercourse. Insufficient lubrication is somewhat more common than problems with arousal. Women’s arousal difficulties have been found in many international studies among 20–30 percent of subjects. Arousal difficulties have occurred, for example, in women with a highly conservative attitude toward sexuality. The present study supports this linkage.

Problems with vaginal lubrication were studied in the two surveys in the 1990s as well as the latest one in 2007. This question was addressed to both women themselves and to men concerning their partners: “It is not uncommon that sexual intercourse does not succeed because the woman’s vagina is not sufficiently lubricated. Have you experienced this problem in sexual intercourse within the last year?” Respondents could opt for one of six responses describing prevalence and frequency.



Problems with vaginal lubrication occurred most frequently among women in the oldest generation. One in three had encountered the problem fairly frequently. Only one in four reported no such problems. The frequency of problems with arousal in this age group has remained consistent since the early 1990s.

It appears that women have been able, in many cases, to conceal their lack of arousal from their partners, for example by using lubricants, judging from the fact that only one in five men in the oldest age group had perceived this problem in their partners frequently. The responses of one-quarter of men indicating that their partners had no issues with vaginal lubrication were consistent with women’s own responses.

Male and female responses were also matched in reports of young women experiencing more frequent difficulties with vaginal lubrication than middle-aged women. Nearly one-fifth of young women encountered vaginal lubrication problems fairly frequently. One in ten young men was cognizant of the problem. Only one-third of women had not had this problem at all, according to their own reporting.

Arousal difficulties have been growing rapidly; based on young women’s responses, frequent and repeated problems with vaginal lubrication had doubled, and in the

responses of young men they had tripled. The trend can be considered rather reliable in light of the more than 400 respondents in the 2007 study who were young women. The figures do not represent a mere coincidence.

Middle-aged women were clearly more easily excitable than younger or older women. Slightly more than ten percent of middle-aged women experienced fairly frequent difficulties with vaginal lubrication, but half of the women in this age group had experienced no such problems. In this age group, too, men were less likely than women to be aware of their female partner's repeated issues with vaginal lubrication. Conversely, women's responses were consistent with the one half of men who reported observing no difficulties with lubrication at all in their partner. No notable change had taken place among the middle-aged in the incidence of this arousal problem. The increase in vaginal lubrication difficulties had occurred mostly among young women.

By 2007, repeated problems with vaginal lubrication had become more common among women in marriages as well as cohabiting and living-apart relationships. Relatively speaking, the greatest increase was among cohabiting women. This finding corresponded well to the responses of men. In the early 1990s, significantly fewer cohabiting respondents had reported this problem compared with married respondents.

Even women in fairly new relationships had experienced difficulties with arousal. Nearly two-thirds of women had experienced temporary arousal difficulties during the first years of the relationship. Frequent, repeated problems had occurred among nearly one-fifth of women. Since the early 1990s, vaginal lubrication difficulties had become more common in all relationships lasting 30 years or less. The trend did not extend to relationships that had lasted longer than that.

Erectile dysfunction

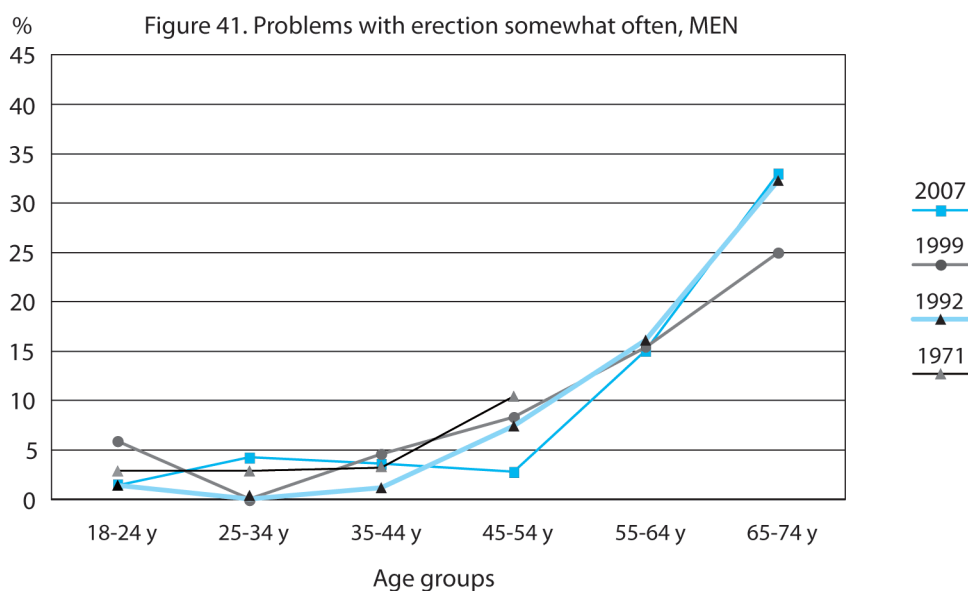
Men's problems with achieving an erection were examined in all surveys included in the study, including the 1971 survey. This question was addressed to men themselves as well as to women concerning their partners: "It is not uncommon for a man to be unable to have sexual intercourse because his penis does not become hard or goes soft immediately after starting intercourse. Have you/your partner experienced this within the last year?" Respondents were able to choose among six responses to describe the prevalence and frequency of the problem.

Unlike the vaginal lubrication difficulties that are a measure of women's arousal, male erectile dysfunction has not increased during the period being studied, from the early 1970s until the 2000s. In 2007, three percent of men reported fairly frequent difficulties achieving an erection. Seven percent of women reported having a partner with this problem. The difference in reporting between men and women applied only to frequent and repeated erectile problems. Half of all men and women

reported no erectile problems. Some men may have found it hard to admit to having such problems, even in an anonymous survey.

Men are not able to conceal the issue from their partner, and therefore women's reports of it may be considered fairly reliable. Presumably women would have no motive to over-report erectile dysfunction beyond what they have experienced in their own relationships.

There had been no change over the last several decades in the prevalence and incidence of erectile dysfunction among young men. Three percent had experienced it fairly frequently and approximately 60 percent never. These figures were consistent with the responses of women in the same age group in terms of their partners. Erectile dysfunction had become slightly less common among middle-aged men since the 1970s, and only three percent reported experiencing it fairly frequently. Ten percent of women in the same age group had noted it in their partners, but even women's reporting indicated no rise in erectile dysfunction during the period being studied.



One in five older men reported fairly frequent erectile problems, and so did one in three women in the same group with regard to their partners. In light of the responses of men, the numbers had not changed since the early 1990s, but women's reports of erectile dysfunction in their older male partners had increased slightly from the early 1990s.

It is also noteworthy that half of older men reported experiencing almost no erectile dysfunction over the last year, while 40 percent of women concurred. According to both men and women, one in five older men had had absolutely no problems related to erections. Quite often ageing did not bring erectile problems for men.

Viewed through the lens of relationship duration, erectile dysfunction became significantly more common after relationships had lasted at least 20–30 years. At that stage in the relationship, one-fifth of women reported repeated erectile problems in their male partners and slightly more than one-tenth of men reported experiencing them. Erectile dysfunction was most common in relationships lasting over 40 years. At that point approximately one-third of both men and women reported fairly frequent, repeated erectile problems. At this relationship stage approximately 15 percent of men had not encountered erectile dysfunction and approximately one-third hardly ever experienced it.

The figures reported here are fairly low when compared with some of the numbers that have been floated out in the media and at medical conferences. The differences arise from different ways of reporting and defining erectile dysfunction. The present study defined erectile dysfunction a problem if respondents experienced or observed problems with a penis becoming erect “fairly frequently within the last year”. Certain other surveys have included also temporary experiences of not being erect every single time a man may have wanted to be. This presents an exaggerated view of how common the problem is.

Men who described erectile dysfunction in their sexual autobiographies in the 1990s generally took their failure hard. Some could not venture to try having sexual intercourse again. A few had felt bitter, when, finally, a long-awaited opportunity had come, and they hadn’t been able to achieve an erection. Some had suffered from insomnia as a result. One man had even prayed to God to have erections again. Sometimes the difficulties were a consequence of a generally stressful life situation. A spouse’s negative attitude or heavy alcohol consumption had also contributed to making the situation worse.

The association between social and sexual life factors and arousal difficulties

When measuring arousal through erections in men and vaginal lubrication in women, the prevalence and incidence of arousal difficulties are not that different between middle-aged and older men and women. These problems were, however, up to four times more common among young women compared with young men. For women, arousal became easier in middle age, whereas for men, erectile problems gradually increased with age. For women as well as men, ageing introduced arousal difficulties in retirement age. Becoming aroused required that both parties were relatively healthy and in good physical condition. Even when desire is felt as strongly as ever on a psychological level, physiology gradually sets barriers for arousal, though this does not affect everyone equally.

Many studies have suggested that a number of women have trouble distinguishing between sexual desire and sexual arousal. They may interpret lack of arousal to

mean lack of sexual desire, and vice versa. In this study too, such basic problems of sexuality were found to occur for the same women. Of the women who had experienced problems with vaginal lubrication fairly frequently, three-quarters had also experienced lack of sexual desire fairly frequently. For women, lack of desire was more common than lack of arousal. Even among the women who had not experienced any vaginal lubrication difficulties within the last year, one in four had nonetheless experienced frequent and repeated lack of sexual desire.

Among men too, there was a convergence of frequent erectile problems and lack of sexual desire. Of the men who experienced erectile dysfunction fairly frequently, nearly half had also experienced fairly frequent lack of sexual desire. On the other hand, of men who reported no erectile problems within the last year, only four percent reported frequent and repeated lack of sexual desire. For men, it seems that only repeated, frustrating experiences with erectile uncertainty produced lack of desire.

In relationships sex takes the form of sexual interaction in which both partners may occasionally have trouble being aroused. It is in fact fairly unusual to have completely problem-free sexual interaction. In 2007, one in five men and women reported having no experiences of erectile dysfunction or difficulty with vaginal lubrication, even occasionally. The proportion of these no-problem couples decreased after the 1990s surveys, when one-third (1992 and 1999) of all couples were still counted among the group with no arousal problems at all.

Quite often arousal difficulties affected both partners in a relationship. One-third of the men who reported frequent and repeated erectile problems had a spouse who also experienced recurrent difficulties with vaginal lubrication. The same applies to women who reported having frequent trouble with vaginal lubrication – one-third of them had male partner who also had frequent erectile problems. The proportion was even higher among women who reported that their partner had frequent erectile problems; more than 40 percent of these women frequently had trouble getting sufficiently aroused and lubricated.

On the basis of women's responses in 2007, in six percent of all relationships both men and women experienced frequent arousal difficulties, a slight increase from the 1990s.

The people with the highest prevalence and incidence of sexual arousal difficulties were naturally often people with some illness that affected sexuality. Respondents were asked separately if they or a partner had experienced an illness within the last year that interfered with their sex life. More than half of the men who reported experiencing this type of illness within the last year were affected by frequent erectile dysfunction.

Similarly, one in two women had experienced frequent difficulties with vaginal lubrication if they had also suffered fairly frequent symptoms of an interfering illness in

the course of the year. One-third of women had had vaginal lubrication problems even when the illness had affected their partner, not the women themselves. Men's erectile dysfunction was not significantly affected by illness in their female partners.

About 85 percent of all respondents reported having no illnesses that would have affected their sex lives. Of them, one in two had not even had occasional erectile or lubrication difficulties. Four percent of men not suffering from an illness that affected their sexuality nevertheless had frequent erectile dysfunction, and 13 percent of women had difficulties with vaginal lubrication. As these figures indicate, a number of things beyond a person's physical condition contribute to sexual arousal.

Difficulties with arousal have various consequences for sex in a relationship. A primary effect is the lower frequency of sexual intercourse among those who have trouble getting aroused, compared with other people. This effect could be seen in all age groups. In relationships in which men experienced repeated erectile problems, based on what both men and women were reporting, couples had approximately half the frequency of sex that people in other relationships had. In the middle-aged and the oldest groups, if the erectile dysfunction was a recurring theme, couples were having intercourse approximately twice a month. People not affected by erectile dysfunction, on the other hand, were having intercourse 5–6 times per month.

A similar difference in a couple's frequency of sexual intercourse was also apparent when the female partner was experiencing recurrent difficulties with vaginal lubrication. The difference in the frequency of sexual intercourse was, however, slightly smaller than in the case of erectile dysfunction. It might be expected that the difference would be even smaller than it was found to be, since the availability of various lubricants would seem to make lack of lubrication irrelevant in terms of a couple's sexual activity. It is an entirely different matter when the issue is associated with lack of sexual desire, which is often the case.

Nine in ten men not affected by erectile dysfunction considered their relationship a happy one, while two-thirds of those who had suffered from recurrent erectile problems reported being happy in their relationship. Although in the majority of cases these sexual problems did not play a dramatic role in relationships, they did have many effects on the relationship as a whole as well as the emotions related to it.

Sexual potency drugs

Over the last ten years, orally administered medications have been available for the treatment of erectile dysfunction. This has revolutionized not only the treatment of the condition but also the discourse of erectile dysfunction in society. It could be said that erections and thereby sexual arousal have stepped out of the closet. Only a few decades ago it was almost entirely impossible to mention erections, even on the pages

of sex magazines. It was not considered appropriate to discuss erectile problems in public or in private. Now, our spam folders are brimming with competing offers of magic pills or penile enlargements, for the cheapest price.

The 2007 survey was the first to ask whether men had used physician-prescribed medications for erectile dysfunction that were available on the market, within the last year or at some earlier time. Fifteen percent of all men had used them sometimes and 10 percent within the last year. Men of all ages reported using them, but as expected, their use was most widespread among older men. One in four older men had sometimes used medication for erectile dysfunction, and nearly one in five had done so within the last year.

Men who suffered from erectile dysfunction more frequently were more likely to use medications for its treatment. One in two men who suffered from erectile problems fairly frequently had sometimes used such medication, and one in three had done so within the last year.

There were also many men who had no erectile dysfunction but who had nevertheless used medications intended for its treatment. A few percent of young men and the middle-aged men and seven percent of older men had tried them. When taking into account any previous use of such medications among these men, five percent of young and middle-aged men and 11 percent of older men had experience with medications for erectile dysfunction. For these men, the drugs were apparently taken for entertainment purposes, to boost and prolong erections.

11 IN SEARCH OF LOST ORGASMS

The physiological and psychological processes that are produced by sexual desire and arousal are aimed in our minds at sexual gratification and ultimately, orgasms. The pursuit of sexual pleasure is the key motivating factor in sexual activity. Experiencing pleasure as well as orgasms is not a given, and many things can stand in the way of sexual enjoyment, particularly among women. These are essential issues and questions of sexual wellbeing.

At the roots of sexual pleasure and orgasms

Sexual enjoyment is at the core of sexuality and particularly sexual intimacy. Enjoyment motivates people to share sexual intimacy, and lack thereof produces unhappiness, conflict and even the end of a relationship. Pleasure experienced together with a partner reinforces the desire to meld together and promotes feelings of love toward the partner. Shared pleasure is the highpoint of a relationship and the glue that holds it together.

Sexual enjoyment refers to the amount of pleasure a person derives from sexual activity. Sexual pleasure, on the other hand, is the combination of physical and subjective sensations and emotional experiences that result from the stimulation and arousal of genitalia, breasts, and other erogenous zones on the human body.

Archaeological and other historical finds have shown that sexuality and the pursuit of sexual enjoyment are nothing new in our world. Prehistoric and traditional cultures and early civilizations have left behind sexual artefacts and statues as well as visual art and texts that testify to the fact that masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, sex with animals, and the use of various toys and contraceptive methods in sex have been used for a long time. Sexual enjoyment has played a central role in our culture for a long time.

The well-known and still often used Kama Sutra introduces a wide array of skills of seduction and love-making. The internal instinct was activated, for example, by gazing at the loved one from afar, using various scents, approaching the loved one up-close through special ways of touching, or using various flavourings. The instinct could also be activated internally, perhaps through an erotic dream. The skills of seduction included experiences that enhanced sexual interest, for example through erotic

teasing. The intensity of desire could be increased through visual erotic stimulation, flavourings (including herbs), scents, touching, and even quarrels about love.

Ancient texts from numerous cultures distinguished in sexual behaviour the factors that preceded sexual intercourse and those that occurred during it. Usually they included instructions on how to attain and cultivate sexual enjoyment. Taoism underscored the balance between yin and yang. Lack of sex was thought to cause a weakening of the spirit. These teachings have been forgotten to a surprising degree in East Asia, the areas where Taoism originated, and where, when compared with Finland, sexual matters have become a true taboo.

This is a regional example of how sex has been alternatively cultivated and labelled shameful, even reprehensible, in the course of history. Sexuality and sexual knowledge are strongly subject to the prevailing culture and contemporary values and ideas. An example of this is the intentional concealment and suppression of knowledge related to classic methods of contraception starting in the late 17th century. The Roman Empire had tried to regulate the number of children in a single family to one or two by using various contraceptive techniques.

Beliefs associated with sexual enjoyment have fluctuated greatly throughout history based on Tolman and Diamond. In the 17th century, people still believed that conception could occur only if both the man and the woman were sexually aroused and enjoyed the sex act. Later, in the 19th century, female orgasm was no longer considered necessary for conception. There began to be debates over whether sexual desire in the normal sense even existed in women. Nymphomania was identified as a condition that women were particularly prone to. Its symptoms included infidelity, flirtation, divorce, and a desire to have sexual intercourse more frequently than one's husband. Any behaviour that exceeded past the bounds of female modesty could be interpreted as excessive and treated as nymphomania, sometimes even resulting in the removal of the clitoris.

The culmination and climax of sexual enjoyment is the orgasm. Until very recently, female orgasm was not considered an appropriate topic for discussion. Particularly in the Victorian era, it was thought that a fine lady did not even have any sexual desires, not to mention that she would openly admit to wanting to experience sexual pleasure. The tail-end of this tradition has extended all the way to the sexual autobiographies that were solicited in the 1990s and that revealed that only younger women admitted straight-out that they craved sexual pleasure. It was not appropriate for women to demand that they experience an orgasm. To address this "problem" it would be preferable to have a pill, taken in secret if possible, so that the whole thing would not need to be discussed with other people at all.

Orgasms are often spoken of through metaphors like "building" and "climbing". One of orgasm's characteristics is that it is the most intense moment in sexual arousal and may come associated with powerful physiological (breathing, circulation) states. It is the most profound ecstatic experience in human life. It is sometimes difficult,

however, to relate the subjective experience of one individual to the physiological signs produced by an orgasm. There is a parallel here to something discovered in a number of scientific studies – namely that it is difficult for many women to recognize on a psychological level that they are aroused, even as simultaneous physiological measures incontrovertibly point to that fact.

An orgasm may be a momentary peak during strongly experienced pleasure, producing an altered state of awareness in which the environment where the person finds her- or himself disappears altogether. The pinnacle of an orgasm usually involves involuntary, rhythmic muscle spasms and a subsequent feeling of gratification. A woman's orgasm may get started from sexual intercourse or clitoral stimulation, or from having her mouth, ears, anus or breasts, among other things caressed. There are women who may achieve orgasm by tensing their thighs or from imagining something sexual. The brain can produce an orgasm even without genital stimulation.

The orgasms experienced by women and the names they have been given vary depending on whether they are produced through clitoral or vaginal stimulation.

Clitoral orgasms: Rhythmic spasms of the vagina may be a result of clitoral or vaginal stimulation.

Uterine orgasms: No vaginal contractions, but stopping breathing and panting produced by sexual intercourse, resulting from contact between the penis and cervix.

Blended orgasms: Elements of both clitoral and uterine orgasm, activated by sexual intercourse. A pause in breathing may occur as a result.

In one study, female orgasms were divided into three groups by type:

- a) Women with regular, rhythmic contractions (an average of 13 seconds in all).
- b) Women with regular contractions, followed by irregular contractions (average duration of orgasm, 51 seconds)
- c) Women with no regular contractions during their orgasm (duration of orgasm, 24 seconds on average)

Although women have had more trouble than men in reaching orgasm, their subjective descriptions of the event do not differ much. The mental dimension of experiencing an orgasm seems very similar for both sexes. Women show a greater propensity than men, however, to experience multiple orgasms that occur at intervals as a result of sexual intercourse or other sexual stimulation. Some women are also more likely than men to have prolonged orgasms.

Sometimes a woman may experience the physiologically measurable manifestations of an orgasm even before recognizing and feeling an orgasm. Muscle contractions begin several seconds after a woman recognizes that she is having an orgasm, not the other way around. Different studies have measured the duration of the female orgasm to be on a range of 20–35 seconds.

When a male orgasm gets started, it proceeds automatically, in a manner of speaking, even if sexual stimulation is stopped. For women who find themselves suddenly deprived of stimulation, the orgasm is interrupted or stops. According to Masters and Johnson, it is possible to determine whether a woman is faking an orgasm by observing her vaginal contractions. Some later studies have shown that not all women who report having orgasms show vaginal contractions.

A female orgasm is generally produced through clitoral or vaginal stimulation, but women may also experience an orgasm through stimulation of the urethra or breasts, or sexual images or fantasies, even through hypnosis. Orgasms may also occur during sleep. In rare cases, spontaneous orgasms without any verifiable sexual stimulation have been observed. Some women may have a spontaneous orgasm when the head of a child passes through the vagina in childbirth.

Women generally find it easier to have an orgasm through masturbation than through sexual intercourse. Women have not been shown to experience the same kind of post-orgasmic latent state of arousal as men who have just ejaculated experience. This is probably connected to the different hormonal functions of men and women.

An orgasmic disorder means not having an orgasm at all following the normal stage of sexual arousal, or a long or persistent delay in having an orgasm. It is not, however, considered an orgasmic disorder if a woman can have an orgasm through manual stimulation but not through intercourse. Even though some women find sexual intercourse without orgasm to be frustrating, others place less emphasis on the orgasm and focus on the other forms of gratification that intercourse brings.

First orgasms from masturbation and sexual intercourse

Orgasm first brings to mind the enjoyment experienced in sexual intercourse or love-making. Orgasms are just as frequently experienced in connection with masturbation. Indeed, most people first discover through masturbation what it means and feels like to have an orgasm. Masturbation orgasms are the basic school of sexual pleasure. These orgasms feed expectations of how good love-making is supposed to feel.

When young people begin to have sex at an early age, people often blame their friends or the example of porn. There is little acknowledgement or discussion of the fact that young people actually want to experience the pleasure they have already discovered within their own body with someone else. They want to complete this experience through mutuality and the wealth of feelings that comes with it. One orgasm leads to another. Very often this experience creates a bond between the two people who share the experience.

People are experiencing their first orgasms at an increasingly young age. This is a result of starting to masturbate at a younger and younger age from one generation to the

next. The spectrum and variation in orgasms has expanded particularly among women, thanks to the experience they have acquired through masturbation. This change was discussed above in the chapter entitled “Taking happiness into your own hands”.

The same chapter also stated that it is not at all uncommon to experience one’s first orgasm already before school-age, or at least before upper-primary school. The average age of people’s first experience of masturbation fell among both men and women by several years. This means a significantly earlier introduction to sexual activity in newer generations, regardless of whether people form relationships that lead to sexual intercourse, or not. This perspective has been largely missing from discussions on youth and sexuality.

On the basis of the present study’s findings, four-fifths of men and one in two women had experienced orgasms for at least two years before having sexual intercourse for the first time. Among men this figure had increased from the oldest to the youngest generation by about ten percentage points. Eighty-four percent of young men had experienced an orgasm through masturbation at least two years prior to their first sexual intercourse, and one in two men at least four years prior.

The figures for women were lower, but they had grown more in relative terms. Only one-third of women in the oldest age group had experienced an orgasm through masturbation at least two years before the first time they had intercourse. The figure for young women was nearly two-thirds. Of young and middle-aged women, approximately 40 percent had already had an orgasm through masturbation at least four years before their first experience of sexual intercourse. In this sense, men and women were finding themselves side by side on the starting line, in preparation for their first experience of sexual intercourse. Their level of experience has no doubt played a part in the fact that an increasing proportion of young women was very much looking forward to their first experience of sexual intercourse.

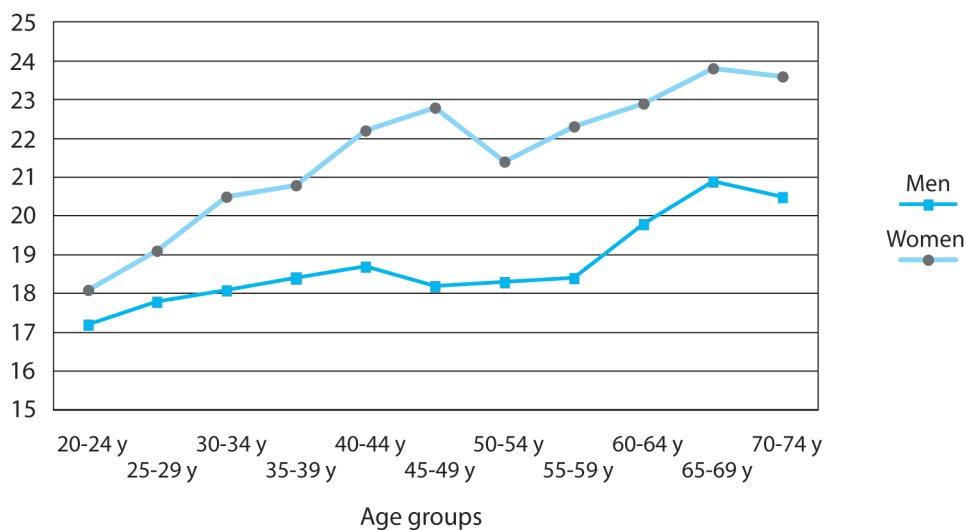
In recent years, relatively few respondents had experienced their first orgasm through masturbation at an age that came after the age at first intercourse. Their proportion among men was just a few percent and among women a little over ten percent. Then there were the people who had experienced sexual intercourse but who reported never practicing masturbation. They amounted to several percent of young people and the middle-aged, and slightly more than five percent of women in those age groups. Approximately five percent of men and one-fifth of all women had not experienced an orgasm prior to their first sexual intercourse.

It was relatively rare for someone to experience orgasms through intercourse and masturbation at the same age. Approximately five percent of men and women had been the same age when they experienced their first orgasm both through masturbation and sexual intercourse. This indicates that people’s first experiences of masturbation did not immediately entice them to have sexual intercourse, or vice versa. For many young people, they were two rather independent methods of sexual gratification.

Five percent of men and two percent of women reported experiencing an orgasm through sexual activity at an age that was younger than their first sexual intercourse. These respondents had understood ‘sexual activity’ as it was defined on the survey questionnaire. Sexual activity included sexual intercourse, oral sex, and manual stimulation. These percentages refer to respondents who experienced their first orgasm through oral sex or manual stimulation, before starting to engage in intercourse.

At first intercourse, men and women were rather unequal for a period of several years in terms of the timing of the orgasms experienced in intercourse. Approximately nine in ten men had their first orgasm through intercourse at the same age at which they started having intercourse. Usually this meant having their first orgasm specifically the first time they had intercourse. Only a few percent of men had experienced their first orgasm from sexual intercourse years after having sexual intercourse for the first time. Young men had an immediate experience of the pleasure of sexual intercourse. This motivated them to replicate the experience whenever possible.

Age Figure 42. The mean age when got the first orgasm in sexual intercourse



For women, the usual story was one of waiting for years until the first experience of orgasm from intercourse. Only one in four women had their first orgasm at the same age as they had their first sexual intercourse. Two-thirds of women had their first orgasm from intercourse no less than two years after first having intercourse. One in three women had their first orgasm from intercourse no less than three years following their first intercourse. For approximately one in ten women, it took at least ten years from when they first had sexual intercourse until they experienced an orgasm. The latest data suggests that this waiting period has been getting even longer. In addition, there are the approximately ten percent of young and middle-aged women who have never had an orgasm from intercourse.

Women's substantially longer waiting period between first intercourse and first intercourse-orgasm had the impact that men were younger than women when they first experienced an orgasm through intercourse, even though women have lately started having intercourse at a younger age than men. Three in four men and four-fifths of young men were younger than 20 when they first experienced an orgasm from intercourse. Half of all women had experienced an orgasm from intercourse by that age. No major changes had occurred in these figures since the early 1990s. Women were, however, younger now in terms of experiencing their first orgasm from intercourse when compared with the early 1970s. The turning point occurred in the 1980s, when women's initial sexual experiences began to take place earlier, and simultaneously a greater proportion of them – approximately a 15-percentage point change – experienced their first intercourse before the age of 20.

Based on the results over eight years, women have waited even longer for their first orgasm from intercourse. The proportion of women who had experienced it by age 20 dropped in the youngest age group by eight percentage points, to exactly 62 percent in 2007. The age at first intercourse had not increased, but having an orgasm for the first time during intercourse was becoming somewhat harder. On the basis of this, young people are at least not becoming more skilled sexually. This in itself is no miracle, as these skills are not being actually taught anywhere. Some young people try to learn skills and seek inspiration from pornography.

Frequency of orgasms in adulthood

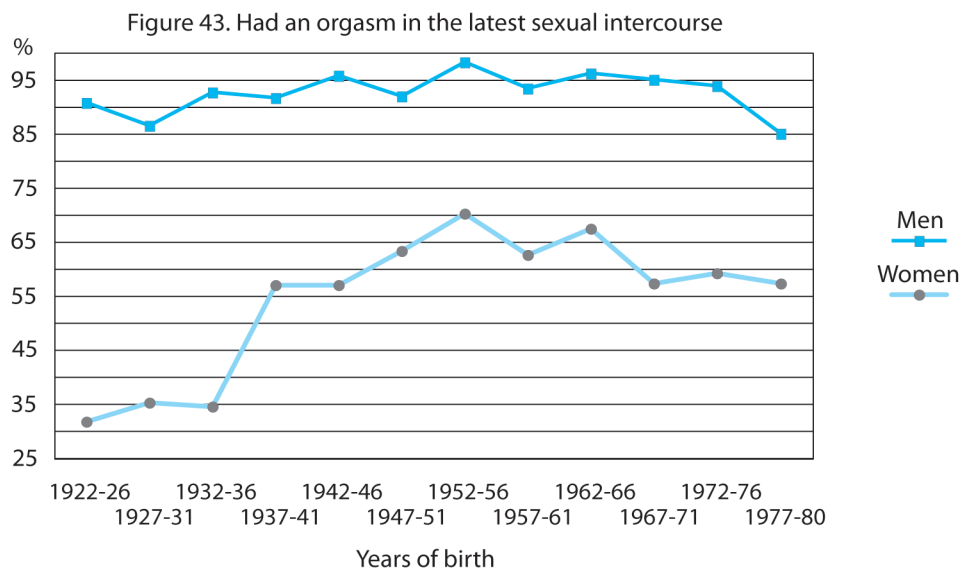
The inequality between men and women does not end at orgasms in youth, but continues in several significant ways throughout life. Men are more likely than women to experience orgasms from intercourse on a regular basis. This has certainly contributed to men's greater desire to have intercourse.

Ninety-four percent of men reported having an orgasm always or almost every time they had intercourse, and one in two reported having an orgasm every single time. Only five percent of men had difficulty having orgasms. A few percent rarely experienced an orgasm when having intercourse. Orgasms are not a given even to all men.

For women, having an orgasm from intercourse was much less guaranteed than for men. Forty-six percent of women said that they always or nearly always had an orgasm when having intercourse, but only six percent always had one. Nearly one-fifth of women had an orgasm approximately half of the time and about one-third had one fairly infrequently at most.

In 2007, nine percent of women reported never having had an orgasm from intercourse. Difficulties experiencing orgasms affect a large proportion of women. In the earlier studies, the proportion of women who had never experienced an orgasm from sexual intercourse was five percent, lower than in 2007.

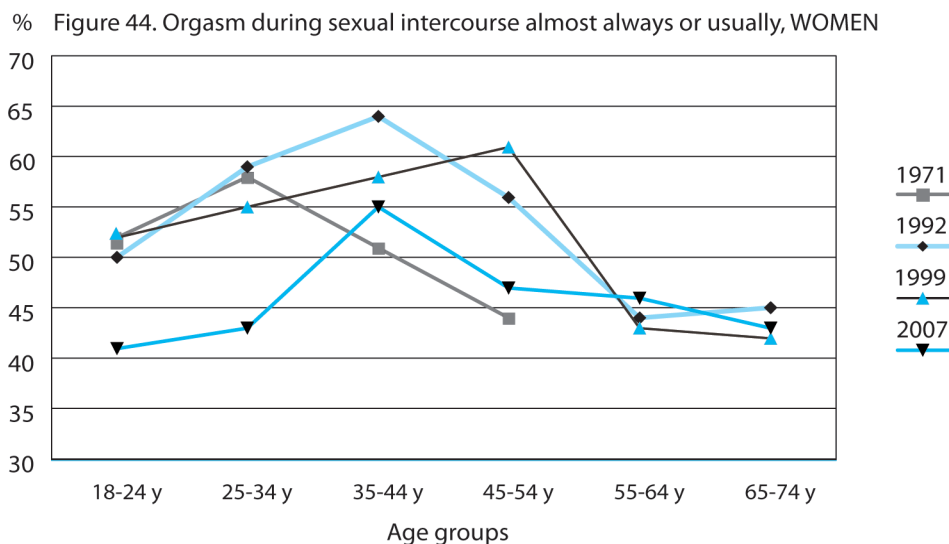
Based on the study's findings orgasmicity was unfortunately headed in a worse direction over the eight years following 1999. This applies to the responses of both men and women, young and middle aged. Older women reported a higher incidence of orgasms than previously, even somewhat higher than among younger women.



The change among young and middle-aged men focused on fewer of them reporting always having an orgasm during sexual intercourse, a drop of approximately 15 percentage points (40 % in 2007). This figure also fell by about 10 percentage points among older men. The proportion of young and middle-aged women who always or nearly always had an orgasm also fell by approximately 10 percentage points. Slightly fewer than half of all women had experienced orgasms on such a regular basis.

There is much to think about and wonder in only 42 percent of young women (53 % still in 1999) reporting that they usually had an orgasm during intercourse, whereas 40 percent said that they had them fairly infrequently at most. According to the 2007 findings, 13 percent of young women had never had an orgasm from intercourse. Fifty-one percent of middle-aged women usually had an orgasm during intercourse (60 % in 1999). One-third of middle-aged women and slightly more than one-third of older women had an orgasm fairly infrequently at most. Difficulties having an orgasm among middle-aged women had become as common as it had been in the early 1970s, after a period of temporary improvement. The situation among young women was clearly even worse than it had been in the early 1970s.

The most recent change erased the differences in terms of experiencing orgasms from intercourse between different relationship types. Earlier, cohabiting women had been more likely than other women to have regular orgasms. Now, only half of cohabiting women reported having an orgasm most of the time. This was a drop of



nearly 20 percentage points. The proportion was almost exactly the same as that of women who were married or living apart from their partner. One-third of women in all relationship types had orgasms fairly infrequently at most. This proportion had increased by several percentage points in all relationship types. In part, these changes stem from young women no longer being in a more advantageous situation from the standpoint of experiencing orgasms.

The sex lives of single women should receive particular attention, as certain television series may have presented a rather rosy picture of them. This study shows that they, in fact, have it worst in terms of sex. Only one-third of single women usually experienced orgasms from intercourse. Half of single women only fairly rarely experienced orgasms from intercourse. The sex lives of singles had been more enjoyable in the early 1970s, as well as the early 1990s.

Single men were just as likely as men in all relationship types to experience orgasms from intercourse. Approximately nine in ten had an orgasm nearly always or usually.

It may also come as a surprise that women and men who were in newer relationships of only a few years at most had actually experienced the greatest number of difficulties in having orgasms. The passion of the early stage had not helped them throw themselves into sexual pleasures, or many relationships had not featured passion even in the early stages. Only relationships that had lasted more than 40 years showed more problems with orgasms, and at that stage it was often various diseases that interfered with sexual enjoyment were to blame.

Orgasm in the most recent intercourse, and multiple orgasms

Orgasms and the associated gender differences were rendered tangible in a question that asked how many men and women had had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse. In 1971, only women were asked this question. The 1999 and 2007 surveys permitted a respondent to also report whether he or she had experienced two or more orgasms, i.e. whether they were capable of multiple orgasms.

The proportion of people who had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse was close to the proportion of those who said that they generally had an orgasm from intercourse. Of men, 92 percent and of women, 55 percent had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse. It speaks to the confusion surrounding the concept of 'orgasm' that nearly one in ten women was not able to say whether or not she had had an orgasm the last time she had intercourse. Nearly one in two of these women had apparently had trouble recalling the matter, since at least a year had elapsed since the last time they'd had intercourse. In addition, about half of these women had experienced orgasms from intercourse fairly infrequently at most.

Twelve percent of women and seven percent of men reported having multiple orgasms the last time they had sexual intercourse. This coincides with the earlier studies, which showed that although women in general find orgasms more difficult than men, they find it much easier to experience multiple orgasms compared with men. These multiple female orgasms often consist of sequential orgasms that occur following a brief plateau and whose intensity varies. There was no change over eight years in the occurrence of multiple orgasms.

Less is known about multiple orgasms in men. One basic form is when a man experiences an orgasm without ejaculating, an issue sometimes also discussed in sex guides. The erection will continue and thus, a second orgasm is possible. Instead of this phenomenon, men may also have reported consecutive intercourse, where following a brief rest and recovery phase, intercourse has been continued.

The data on multiple orgasms only applies to the most recent intercourse. The proportion of men and women who have at some time in their lives experienced multiple orgasms is no doubt larger than what is suggested here, and none of the studies have tried to establish figures for it.

Among men, the proportion of those who had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse had remained very similar to figures in the earlier studies, but among women, the numbers had dropped by approximately five percentage points. Even among men, eight percent had not had an orgasm. Among young women, the percentage of those who had an orgasm had fallen by ten percentage points – only one in two had had an orgasm. This figure was the same for women in the oldest age group, whereas about 60 percent of middle-aged women had climaxed.

The biggest changes in terms of orgasming during the latest intercourse had occurred in cohabiting relationships, where orgasticity had decreased by more than ten percentage points. Nearly 60 percent of married, cohabiting, or living-apart women had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse. Only one-third of singles reported having one. Multiple orgasms were still most common in cohabiting relationships, where 15 percent of women had experienced several orgasms the last time they had sexual intercourse. Consecutive orgasms were almost equally common among single men.

Perhaps contrary to expectation, there was no drop in orgasticity even in relationships of long duration. At least 90 percent of men had an orgasm the last time they had intercourse, regardless of how long they had been in the relationship. The only exception to this were women whose relationships had lasted at least 40 years, who were experiencing slightly fewer orgasms when reporting on the last time they had intercourse, compared with other women. This also applied to multiple orgasms. The greatest concentration of multiple orgasms occurred in relationships that had only lasted a few years. Nevertheless, it was the shorter relationships that had also featured more problems than other relationships with orgasms in general.

Even though there was a lot of variation in the circumstances of people's latest intercourse, the experience of the orgasm in it did not seem in any way coincidental. Rather, orgasms seemed to occur more to some people, and to evade others. Three in four women who did not have an orgasm the last time they had sex fairly rarely had one in general, and nearly one-fifth had never experienced an orgasm from intercourse. One-third of the men who did not have orgasms the last time they had sex rarely experienced them overall from intercourse. Nine in ten of the women who had experienced a multiple orgasm reported nearly always climaxing during intercourse. These women were among the privileged in sexual pleasure.

The findings indicate that women differ from one another greatly in terms of their tendency or capacity to experience orgasms. A significant portion of women experienced persistent problems having orgasms from intercourse, whereas many found it easy to have multiple orgasms. The inequality in sexual enjoyment among women was drastically greater than among men. It is intriguing why women are experiencing greater, not fewer, problems with orgasms, even though the opportunities for sexual enjoyment now seem better than ever.

Factors behind the differences in how people experience orgasms

Answers and solutions for people's difficulties with orgasms have been sought in biology, psychology, and social and interactive factors. In the following, I will look for explanations and linkages by using the data to map out factors that can promote female orgasms in intercourse and love-making. Difficulties with orgasms are so much rarer

among men that I will not here be concerned with looking for reasons or explanations for their problems or for the differences in how men experience orgasms.

Some international studies have set the figure for women who have never experienced orgasms from sexual intercourse at slightly below 20 percent, higher than the present study. Those who have difficulty having orgasms have accounted for 20–30 percent of people. Orgasm trouble has been linked to infrequent intercourse, conservative attitudes regarding sex, and diabetes. Difficulty orgasming has also been linked to more advanced age, unlubricated vagina, previous urinary infection, depression, and oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries). The connection between orgasms and the above conditions could not be analyzed in the present study.

To summarize a number of international studies, there is no strong indication that psychosocial factors alone can explain why certain women have trouble experiencing orgasms. A decline in sex-related guilt has been shown to improve the potential for having orgasms. Orgasm problems have often been associated with loss of a father in childhood or an otherwise distant father relationship. Research findings on the relationships between childhood sexual abuse and problems with having orgasms have been conflicting.

Most quantitative studies have explored whether people's social background affects their ability to have orgasms. In the United States, for example, less educated, low-income women are more likely to have trouble having orgasms from intercourse than other women. The present study, however, did not find that social background was significantly associated with the ability to experience orgasms. Women were having orgasms as frequently regardless of their education or income levels, nor did religious values or attitudes toward sex play a remarkable role in this regard.

Lifestyle or personal characteristics also did not seem to be linked to orgasms. These factors included exercise, BMI, psychological symptoms, smoking, and alcohol use. At least mild mental problems were not linked to problems having orgasms among Finns, unlike what certain international studies have suggested. In terms of life situation, it had no impact on orgasms whether women had children or were living with their children.

Another entity that did not seem connected to women's ability to have orgasms was their relationship and sexual partner history. Women's orgasm frequency did not vary according to the number of steady relationships that they had had, the number of times in life they had fallen in love, the number of sexual partners in recent years, or in their lifetime, or whether they had been unfaithful at some point in their current relationship. From the perspective of having orgasms, the variation in levels of experience among different women did not seem to spell out any learning that would have produced more favourable sexual interaction with the most recent partner.

There was also very little indication that whether and how often women had orgasms was connected to their individual sexual histories. The age at which women had begun to masturbate and have sexual intercourse had almost nothing to do with their recent

ability to have orgasms during sexual intercourse. For women who had experienced their first intercourse-related orgasm before age 20, however, experiencing orgasms recently had been easier and more frequent than for other women.

So far I have found few hints as to what could explain the differences between women's widely varying ability to have orgasms. The first factor that contributed to women's orgasms was current relationships status.

Women who reported considering sex crucial for relationship happiness and who found it easy to discuss sex with their partner were approximately twice as likely to have orgasms (70–40 percent) than women who responded differently to those two questions. Additional positive factors included experiencing a feeling of love, considering one's relationship very happy, as well as the feeling that sex was getting better and better, the longer one had known one's partner. A relationship that felt good and worked well emotionally, and where sex was approached openly and appreciatively, promoted orgasms.

A second contributing factor was made up of sexual desire and self-image. Women who felt sexual desire more frequently, wanted to have sexual intercourse more often, did not experience loss of desire, and considered themselves sexually active also had orgasms more regularly. In addition to wanting sex, these women also considered themselves rather skilled in sex. They were somewhat more active users of the services of sex shops and of pornography. Masturbation frequency, on the other hand, had no correlation with having orgasms from intercourse.

Sexual interaction was an essential and concrete factor in women's ability to experience orgasms. Women who had orgasms more often accepted their partners' sexual initiations with pleasure and, the last time they'd had sex, had felt that the sex had been mutually initiated. The women had had more frequent intercourse, and the sex they had also lasted longer, featured greater variety in terms of positions, or had the woman on top. Frequently, too, sexual intercourse had been complemented with oral and manual stimulation. The partner did not ejaculate prematurely or suffer from recurrent lack of sexual desire. Factors with little effect on the ability to have orgasms included problems with lack of vaginal lubrication or erectile problems.

Women who experienced more orgasms were overall very satisfied with their sexual experiences and their life in general. They had found the last time they had sex very enjoyable, generally found intercourse enjoyable, and considered their sex lives very satisfying. At the time of the survey, they were very happy with their lives as a whole. And, as noted earlier, they also considered their relationship happy.

Women who had many reasons to be happy also found it easier to have orgasms. Orgasms experienced together with a partner had a significant role in this, but more generally speaking, when a person's life and relationship were both in order, it was easier to focus on and throw oneself into sexual enjoyment.

Also of interest is to consider the sexual lives and interaction of the women who reported having at least two orgasms the last time they had sexual intercourse. This may offer hints for creating circumstances that encourage the positive development of sexual pleasure in a relationship.

Women who experienced more than one orgasm saw sex as a critical part of a happy relationship, and did view their own relationships as very happy. These women felt sexual desire at least several times a week and wanted to have sexual intercourse at least 3–4 times weekly. Many of them were under age 16 when they had sex for the first time and most had already had orgasms the first few times they had intercourse.

Compared with other women, those who experienced several orgasms were more likely to report a greater proportion of jointly-initiated sex (several times more per month) as well as particularly long-lasting intercourse (partner not too fast, intercourse lasting at least half an hour). The women and their partners had used a number of sexual positions, manual stimulation and especially frequently, mutual oral stimulation. Multi-orgasmic women were very aroused by porn and many had seen numerous sex videos within the last year. They viewed themselves as sexually active and skilled, their sex life very satisfying, and their life very happy.

In many respects, multi-orgasmic women displayed strong sexual interests and many objects thereof. This goes back to the question of whether strong sexual interests had resulted in these women being multi-orgasmic, or if it was a case of the fabulous sexual experiences encouraging their broad spectrum of sexual appetites. There is probably no definitive answer. The only thing that I can say is that strong sexual interest and sexual enjoyment often seem to be concentrated in the same women, and probably also comparable men.

Becoming more orgasmic

Difficulty having orgasms is not necessarily a result of having to conceal or deny their sexual desires. A more common problem is a lack of suitable or applicable models for behaviour, to help transform their orgasmic competence.

Sexual problems may be a matter of cognition (for example fantasies that produce feelings of guilt and anxiety), the relationship between cognition and function (fantasies that people try to act out when the partner is unwilling), or function itself. A stiffly conventional partner may stand in the way of the other partner's sexual enjoyment.

Attaining or improving the ability to have orgasms almost always requires a process of re-learning. No re-learning would be necessary unless there was a problem having orgasms. Learning is necessary also because our culture does not support taking charge of and cultivating one's sexuality. For example, young people are taught to withstand powerful psychological and physical arousal that it is considered inap-

propriate to release sexually. The more sexual experience young people have, the harder it will be for them to adapt to this type of expectation.

Petting or making out offers young people the opportunity to practice some of the issues and feelings that emerge in sexual intercourse, including the shared experience of taking clothes off, the social skills that are necessary to safeguard privacy, and the ability to focus on the other person's body. Petting instructs young people how to augment sexual pleasure.

Masters and Johnson have determined that the success of their method derives from releasing natural processes and reducing the anxiety and self-censorship that have been created by an environment which promotes sexual restraint. It could also be interpreted as sexual re-learning, a 'rewriting' of a particular skill in one's own mind – rendering old or new sexual behaviours acceptable, eroticizing relationships, and teaching skills and techniques that enable people to maintain sexual focus.

The new attitudes and ways to act are practiced by doing "homework", including practicing masturbation and using sexually stimulating materials (images and fantasies). This is done to open a chronic lock that may have led to avoiding the problem even in discussions between two partners. For example, difficulty having orgasms may become a characteristic that the couple shares and accepts as something that they cannot do anything about.

Western culture has not particularly supported the pursuit of becoming a sexual master. People with such pursuits have often been labelled nymphomaniacs or "Don Juans". Strong sexual urges are not viewed with much tolerance by the environment, except perhaps in the case of young people who have just met. Increasingly, sexuality is now manifested throughout the world in the form of fantasies instead of sexual activity. Also increasingly, the outlet for the fantasies is masturbation.

Gagnon argues that if the ability to have orgasms were a valued individual characteristic in society, people could be trained to develop their orgasmic skills. Masturbation practiced by men nowadays serves this purpose. Masturbation fantasies function as sexual scripts that feature the learned characteristics associated with sex and gender. New sexual elements are added and evaluated to discover what turns out to be arousing. Through this process, many men transform their ability to orgasm.

It is also necessary to learn the scripts for how to feel in and deal with different kinds of partners. For example, how does one behave with a partner when one or both partners are unfaithful? Previously learned skills get transferred to new context and concrete situations that are quite different from where the skills in question were first learned. Trying to have better orgasms or erections is akin to learning how to be a better chef: it is always possible to create something new and interesting out of sexuality.

Women writing sexual autobiographies in the 1990s often described the building blocks of good sexual self-esteem as well as their most earth-shattering sexual experiences from different life stages. These stories offered useful hints for how the gates of sexual pleasure may be opened and what types of experiences made the biggest impression and felt the best.

For women, a healthy sexual self-image came from the importance of appearance and dress, the impression of one's own sex appeal that experience had reinforced, the experience of having a major impact on the opposite sex, as well as positive feedback from sex partners.

The perception of being desirable which was reinforced by experience meant undergoing a kind of sexual training and thereby earning self-confidence, projecting a frank, female radiance and dressing accordingly, wearing sexy underwear, taking pleasure in being a woman, and the ease of picking up men. Women's experience of having a powerful impact on the opposite sex entailed the ability to pick and choose and conquer men as they pleased, to get men thoroughly dazed and confused, and knowing to trust their own ability to awaken desire in men, make them crazy with desire, and have them in one's power sexually. These things could make a woman feel like a goddess.

The stories of particularly satisfying sexual partners and experiences were divided into sexual game-playing or special sexual intercourse, spiritual experiences, long-lasting sexual intercourse, and the desire to keep getting more, several consecutive orgasms, having one's body shake to the core, as well as dream-like, cinematic love-making experiences.

Sexual play included erotic dress, sharing sexual imagery and erotic games, shaving, quickies, and making love in front of mirrors. The spiritual experiences refer to a passion that grows in the course of love-making, long-lasting caressing, or hours-long foreplay.

Prolonged intercourse and the desire to have more refer to love-making that lasted for hours, a desire that was impossible to quell, an ever-growing hunger, a deep, penetrating love-making, the roughest night of sex ever, and love-making that lasted all night long. Many consecutive orgasms and the experience of shaking uncontrollably created a feeling for some women that they were becoming enslaved, seized by an ecstatic fervour that shook them to the core, a passion that nearly killed, and strings of multiple orgasms that rivaled heaven. These descriptions reveal something fundamental about the nature of true passion.

Premature ejaculation

The timing of sexual release or orgasm in sexual interaction may be crucial from the standpoint of sexual satisfaction and gratification. Above, we noted that women's ability to have orgasms was greatly enhanced by a male partner not ejaculating too

soon from the woman's viewpoint. One of the thorniest issues for people's sexual relations is indeed the premature ejaculation of men. In the United States, for example, it has been shown to hamper nearly one-third of all men at some stage in life. In terms of the frequency of occurrence, then, it is comparable to the problems with orgasms that women experience.

It is a common misconception that men have an orgasm each time they ejaculate. In part, this is because thus far there has been little research into male ejaculation without an orgasm. In addition, some men experience secretion of semen without the normally associated ejaculation. Certain urological problems (prostate) or spinal core injuries are known to affect the ability to control ejaculation.

The threshold value of the start of ejaculation and release may be affected by a man's degree of psychological arousal. Conscious cognitive (ability to focus) and emotional (emotional arousal, for example) strategies also play a role, adding to or dampening arousal. Through them, it is possible to influence the threshold value of ejaculation. At a given point, signals from the brain overcome the barriers to sexual reflexes that commonly reside in the spinal core. Certain medications may be used to manipulate this process.

There is some justification proposing that biology has a major role to play in the "wired" nerve paths that are connected to the ejaculation reflex. Psychology has thus far been somewhat inexact in defining the concepts related to the processing of data in this process. These concepts include motivation, arousal, emotion, and cognition. Differentiation between psychological and biological factors in the central nervous system is often unclear. Sexual experience is a psychological construct that presents in the brain as a number of chemical processes. Not much is yet known about those processes.

Premature ejaculation is usually divided into primary (a lifelong condition) or secondary (occurs later, temporary), and is also defined on the basis of whether it affects a man's sexual life as a whole or occurs only in certain situations. Many researchers also note whether premature ejaculation is accompanied by erectile dysfunction.

According to Kaplan, men who experience anxiety are less aware of their sexual arousal and may therefore ejaculate more quickly than they anticipate. Men with primary premature ejaculation usually experience greater anxiety, whereas men with secondary premature ejaculation present with decreased sexual desire and arousal as well as a higher likelihood of accompanying erectile dysfunction. In the latter case, ejaculation may occur when the penis is flaccid or only half-erect.

In evaluating ejaculation speed, the key issue is the control a man himself is able to exert over the timing of ejaculation. Lack of this control indicates a problem. The effects extend beyond the man in question to whatever sexual relationship he is in at the time. Successful treatment of premature ejaculation also improves the ability of a female sexual partner to experience orgasms. Men whose response time to ejaculation is at least

several minutes need not worry about their ability to control the timing of ejaculating. Plus, men can continue intercourse by stimulating a woman manually or orally.

Premature ejaculation may be associated with hyper-sensitivity of the ejaculation reflex and to a kind of hyper-arousal. Men affected by premature ejaculation have been shown to respond more strongly to stimulation of their penis than other men. This strong reaction is nevertheless shorter than among men in a control group. Controlling ejaculation is particularly difficult when the penis is stimulated at the same time as the man is viewing something visually arousing.

Premature ejaculation was studied in this survey by asking women if their sexual partner had ejaculated too quickly within the last year. In 2007, 22 percent of women reported that this had happened at least fairly frequently and 5 percent said it had happened very often. The issue had arisen less frequently in nearly half of all relationships. One-third of all relationships had not been affected at all. The results were fairly similar in all age groups, not did relationship duration play a significant role. Women had not encountered premature ejaculation any more frequently in young men who were eager but inexperienced than in decades-long relationships.

Half of the relationships in which men had ejaculated too quickly on a very frequent basis, sexual intercourse generally lasted several minutes at most. When premature ejaculation occurred fairly frequently, in one-half of the relationships intercourse lasted a maximum of 10 minutes, and only a few minutes in one-fifth of relationships. In relationships where women did not report premature ejaculation by their male partners, only in a few percent had sexual intercourse lasted just a few minutes, and for less than one-quarter had it lasted less than ten minutes.

From women's standpoint premature ejaculation had declined by a few percentage points from the situation eight years before and had returned approximately to where it was in the early 1990s. Premature ejaculation had declined particularly among older men. Fairly frequent premature ejaculation (in 1999, 39 percent -> in 2007, 25 percent) had become only occasional. This created a better precondition for sexual pleasure for older women, which was apparent in their responses to questions regarding the quality of their sex life and the enjoyment it brought.

Women who themselves were experiencing recurrent lack of sexual desire were more likely than other women to report that their partner ejaculated too quickly. One-third of women reporting fairly frequent loss of their own desire said that their partner also ejaculated too quickly fairly frequently. Only slightly more than one-tenth of women who were not experiencing any loss of desire thought that their male partner ejaculated too quickly. It is possible that some women's lack of sexual desire had been affected specifically by the speedy ejaculation of their partner. When there wasn't enough time to enjoy intercourse, there was less reason to desire it.

Women's responses indicated that in some men, erectile problems and premature ejaculation went hand in hand. Of the men who women reported as having fairly frequent erectile dysfunction, nearly half were also affected by premature ejaculation. These men accounted for about five percent of all men. Their proportion was slightly lower compared with previous surveys.

Premature ejaculation can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The feeling of failure may turn into a process that contributes to more failure, and subsequent worry about it.

Sexual satisfaction

Earlier, there was a discussion of the various motivations that lead people to have sex. Key motives naturally include the pleasure and enjoyment that sex brings. People are sometimes willing to invest a lot of time, effort, and expenditure to obtain it. In this chapter, I will examine how satisfied people have been with their sexual experiences. I analyzed the quality of the sex they were having by asking about the last time they had sexual intercourse as well as their sexual experiences in general. In addition, respondents were asked to assess how satisfying their sex life was as a whole.

Overall, male and female respondents were rather satisfied with the quality of their sexual experiences. Nearly half of each found the last time they had intercourse very enjoyable, and 88 percent of men and 79 percent of women assessed it as at least fairly enjoyable. Only two percent of men and three percent of women felt that it had been unpleasant.

The proportion of women who found their last sexual intercourse very enjoyable was higher by several percentage points in 2007 and 1999, compared with the earlier studies. Among men, age had little impact on how enjoyable they found their most recent intercourse. Among women, on the other hand, older women were less likely than younger women to give glowing reviews of their latest intercourse. Four-fifths of young and middle-aged women found their latest sexual intercourse enjoyable.

Only two in three older women reported that their last sexual intercourse had been enjoyable. The difference between them and other women was still significant, even though the enjoyability of intercourse increased in this group in the course of eight years by five percentage points, and by 12 percentage points from the early 1990s. In relative terms, the quality of sexual experiences increased the most among older women.

Another noteworthy point was that the proportion of women who had found their latest sexual intercourse very enjoyable rose significantly from 1992 and 1971. In 1971, only one in four middle-aged women had found their latest intercourse very enjoyable, whereas in 2007, half did.

By relationship type, respondents with the most positive assessment of their latest sexual intercourse came from living-apart-together relationships, then cohabitation, and

last, marriage. The differences, however, were not definitive. The gap between people in any relationship type and singles was much greater, with both male and female singles clearly coming up short in terms of the quality of their last intercourse.

Respondents who had been in a relationship for a greater number of years rated their last sexual encounter a little less enjoyable than those in relationships that had only lasted several years. The proportion of men who had found their latest sexual intercourse very enjoyable fell from two-thirds during the first few years of a relationship to about one-third in relationships lasting 40 years or more. Among women, the figures for this shift in perspective were approximately 60 percent and about one-fifth, respectively. The change consisted in a weakening of positive assessments. The proportion of people who had considered intercourse unpleasant did not greatly increase by relationship duration.

Among women, the assessment of the enjoyability of their last sexual intercourse was significantly affected by whether they had an orgasm. Eighty-three percent of women who had experienced several orgasms and 56 percent of those who had experienced one reported that intercourse had been very enjoyable. Of those who did not have an orgasm only 21 percent rated it very enjoyable. This concretely illustrates the crucial role of orgasms in women's own assessments of the quality of the sex they are having.

Overall, people rated the sex they were having very positively. Nearly all of the men and nine in ten women considered the sexual intercourse they normally had fairly enjoyable for the most part. Almost none of the men and only one percent of women saw it as unpleasant. Over half all men and one-third of women rated the sexual intercourse they had as very enjoyable.

The trends diverged here; the proportion of men who found sexual intercourse very enjoyable grew over the eight-year period by seven percentage points, whereas it fell among women by four percentage points. Men's positive assessments increased in all age groups, but in relative terms, most notably among young men. Positive assessments declined among women specifically in the youngest age group. Nearly two-thirds of young men found sex very enjoyable, while only one-third of young women felt the same.

This change is significant, because only eight years ago there was little difference between men and women. The reasons include increasing difficulties experienced by young women in having orgasms. One in two women who usually had an orgasm from intercourse continued to view sex as very enjoyable. But only 15 percent of women who rarely had orgasms from intercourse rated sex highly enjoyable. In terms of sexual pleasure, gender equality was even more elusive than before as a result of women who were not experiencing orgasms.

Comparing respondents' overall assessments of how much they enjoyed sexual intercourse to their assessment of the last time they had intercourse, it appears that the quality of individual sessions of intercourse did not much deviate from the overall quality of sexual activity. Most of the respondents who generally found sex highly enjoyable felt the same way about the last time they had intercourse. Four-fifths of those who deemed their sexual activity as fairly enjoyable overall also rated their last intercourse at least as fairly enjoyable. It was more common for the assessment of the latest intercourse to exceed the overall assessment than to be less positive. Of the seven percent who neither viewed their sexual relations as pleasant or unpleasant, most were consistent in feeling the same way about the last time they had had sex.

The last measure of sexual satisfaction was an overall assessment of how satisfying a respondent's sex life was as a whole. This allowed respondents to evaluate their entire life and contextualize their experiences to their expectations. The emphasis went beyond the last instance of sex, or even sex in general.

The responses of men and women to this question resembled one another in that slightly more than 70 percent of both considered their sex lives at least fairly satisfying. Approximately 15 percent did not know whether to consider them satisfying or unsatisfying, and 13 percent found them unsatisfying. No gender differences emerged in any category. Close to one-quarter of respondents of both sexes considered their sex lives highly satisfying.

It is noteworthy that the overall assessment given by both men and women in 2007 regarding their satisfaction with their sex life was lower than in any previous survey. The Finns of 1971 had been happier with their sex lives than the Finns of 2007. Also the proportion of respondents who were dissatisfied with their sex lives had grown accordingly. Two factors in particular predicted this: the decline in the frequency of sexual intercourse for both sexes and the growing difficulties with orgasms especially among young women.

The proportion of young men who were dissatisfied with their sex lives grew, while the proportion of middle-aged men who found their sex lives fairly satisfying declined, and fewer and fewer older men were finding their sex lives highly satisfying. The proportion of women who found their sex lives highly satisfying fell in all age groups, along with a simultaneous rise in those who found their sex lives unsatisfying. The changes varied between several to up to ten percentage points.

For women, satisfaction with their sex life was largely predicted by the regularity and ease of having orgasms during intercourse. Approximately 40 percent of women who usually had orgasms considered their sex lives as a whole highly satisfying. On the other hand, of women who were experiencing orgasms fairly rarely at most, only one in ten thought her sex life was very satisfying and approximately one in five considered it downright unsatisfying.

People have shown a tendency to evaluate their sex life as a whole more critically than when rating the sex they are currently having. One example is that only half of those who said the sexual intercourse they were having was highly enjoyable also considered their sex life as a whole highly satisfying. One contributing factor in particular was actual sexual activity: if respondents were having significantly less sexual intercourse than they would have wanted, they were less likely to view their sex life as a whole highly satisfying.

Differences in sexual activity were illustrated in that women who considered their sex lives highly satisfying were having intercourse eight times per month, those who found it fairly satisfying four times per month, and those who had sex on average once a month considered their sex lives neither satisfying nor unsatisfying (neutral assessment). Women who rated their sex lives as unsatisfying were having sex on average once a month. For men, the figures for frequency of sexual intercourse in relation to overall satisfaction with sex life were almost identical.

Quantitative and qualitative issues come together in this context, with those having the most sex who also rated their intercourse highly enjoyable. Positive experiences encouraged people to have more sex, creating a positive, self-reinforcing cycle. Ungratifying experiences, on the other hand, had weakened people's interest in having sexual experiences.

The most important single predictor of sexual satisfaction for women is clearly the orgasm. Factors that help women achieve orgasms emerged as: love relationship with the sexual partner, good sexual self-esteem, frequency of sexual intercourse, and multiple intercourse techniques. Background factors for the preceding factors were: valuing sex, use of various sexual materials, liberal sexual attitudes, sexually liberal childhood home, and sexual initiation (intercourse) at a relatively early age.

For men, predictors of sexual satisfaction were very similar. A fundamental difference in determinants of sexual satisfaction was the lesser significance of orgasms, as so many men had regularly experienced orgasms. Another distinction was that valuing sex highly, not orgasms or intercourse frequency as among women, was a direct predictor of sexual satisfaction.

The ability to draw enjoyment from sex may make a particular person more sexually attractive to others. Natural selection has probably favoured those who experience more intense sexual pleasure, because they have had a tendency to spend more time and energy on pursuing sex. As a result, they have produced more offspring, of whom many have inherited their parents' pleasure-seeking genes.

According to this study as others, happy couples have significantly more sex than unhappy couples. Feeling happy in the relationship may trigger a desire for more sexual contact and the resulting, increased sexual activity feeds back into the couple's satisfaction with the relationship. This is another example of a positive cycle that leads to greater satisfaction with one's sex life.

12 DIFFERENCES IN MALE AND FEMALE SEXUALITY

The sexual differences and similarities of men and women are critical in the area of sexuality because most of sexual imagery and interaction takes place between women and men. The success of this interaction is absolutely crucial in the attainment of sexual enjoyment and satisfaction.

For the above reason, in the chapter at hand I will particularly investigate these gender differences in sex. I will start out by reviewing findings and conclusions from international literature and theories on the subject, and to follow, again take up the most important gender differences highlighted in the present study. The data will lead us to make conclusions in the book's final chapter about key challenges, mysteries, problems, and developmental needs arising in the field of sexuality.

Sex differences according to the theory of evolution

In recent years, reasons for male–female sexual differences have frequently been sought through the theory of evolution and biological differences between the sexes. According to Okami and Shackelford basic arguments of the theory of evolution include:

1. Women invest more in parenthood than men.

This affects the choice of mate and their (lesser) willingness to enter into short-term relationships and their (lesser) sexual desire and interest in changing partners.

2. Men have battled and competed for women through evolutionary history more than women for men.

In part, this has been because of the large number of communities that have allowed polygamy, but also of men's larger physical size and their greater strength and physical aggression.

3. As a result of the gender difference in investing in parenthood, women have on average been more cautious than men in entering into sexual relationships. It has been easier for women, compared with men, to find a ready and willing mate.

This has led to sexual interaction generally being launched whenever a woman has switched her negative attitude to a positive one (gatekeeper role).

4. Men have been unable to have complete certainty that their children are in fact genetically theirs. This has made it more important for men that women remain faithful, contributing also to their (greater) jealousy.
5. From an evolutionary perspective, observing and appreciating nudity has been more important for men than for women. If our ancestors had not been aroused by the sight of a young, naked woman, they would have missed out on numerous, rewarding opportunities for procreation. The arousal that occurs when watching contemporary pornography is no doubt a partial consequence of men adapting to feeling aroused upon seeing a naked woman.

In this frame of reference men are presumed to be more jealous over a partner's sexual infidelity, whereas women are seen as more jealous over emotional unfaithfulness (such as falling in love).

Numerous studies have tried to establish that these basic evolutionary claims are in fact functional. An American study conducted by Clark and Hatfield elaborated on the substantial differences between men and women in terms of sexual initiative-taking by assigning male students the task of asking passers-by, who were female students similar to them on a scale of attractiveness, whether they would come with a student to his apartment to have sex.

None of the women agreed to the proposition. But when women were assigned the same task, and presented the question to male passers-by, three in four men were ready to go to have sex with the woman. Even the rest were regretful and explained their refusal by saying that they were in a committed, monogamous relationships. None of the women expressed regret, or justified the rejection of the offer of sex.

Buss and Schmidt study presented similar findings. The task was to determine how long an acquaintanceship it required (seven alternatives, from one hour to five years) for men and women to be ready to have sex. In all sub-five-year alternatives, the men showed much greater willingness to have sex. It seems, then, that the bar for men is lower than it is for women, when it comes to having sex. The cause may not be evolution or biology, but men's stronger sexual desires or behaviour models that have been socially learned.

Men have shown greater interest than women in a diversity of sexual partners. One way this is illustrated is that, compared with women, men express a wish for three times the number of lifetime sex partners. Women may have different motives than men when entering into temporary relationships. In addition, they are more likely to feel used in short-term relationships, even when they cannot rationally explain why they feel that way. Men, on the other hand, usually feel no anxiety over even large numbers of short-term relationships.

Some of the differences in degree of sexual desire between men and women derive from the fact that the survey question inquiring about desire was not asked at the time of the month when women feel the most desirous. The intensity of women's sexual desire fluctuates during their menstrual cycle much more than men's. With this fluctuation changes also women's sexual preference or interest in men who look particularly masculine.

The theory of evolution makes strong propositions about the different impact evolution has had on mate selection in men and women. It posits that men value the mate's youth and physical appearance. Women value a man's social status, the resources he controls, and his willingness to share them with her.

In the United States, the men that women have chosen as partners earn on average 50 percent more than the men who were not chosen. In many countries, a husband who is not fiscally generous enough toward his wife has constituted grounds for divorce. There is no country in which it is grounds for divorce that a woman does not support her husband economically to a sufficient degree.

In choosing a mate, women exchange their attractiveness to resources. Waynforth reports of a study in which women who married men who were older and better educated than them had more children, were more satisfied with their marriages and were less likely to divorce their husbands than other women. As the women were trading in their attractiveness for the men's resources, the attractiveness of the man himself was less important than the attractiveness of the woman for the man.

According to one hypothesis, women select less attractive men as long-term partners because of the risk of being abandoned by a more handsome man. Women estimate that physically appealing men are more likely to betray them sexually or to abandon their spouses. Regardless of this, in a study touching on this subject, women did not show themselves averse to forming relationships with good-looking men.

In the United States, women who were presented photographs of men and asked to choose potential dating, sex, and marriage partners preferred men who wore Rolex watches on their wrists and designer suit jackets, even though these men were otherwise physically less attractive than men in the other photographs. Men, on the other hand, made their selections in the same test purely on the basis of a woman's physical looks. Even the way the women dressed had nothing to do with the men's choice.

Men's interest in women's physical attractiveness is connected to men's stronger tendency to be visually aroused. Anthropological studies have shown that all over the world, girls begin to be dressed at an earlier age than boys and are taught to sit in ways that avoid attracting the inappropriate attention of men and their subsequent arousal.

Gender differences in sexual cognitions

The differences between men and women may also derive from different cognitive processes regarding sexuality. Attitudes toward sex are cognitive in nature. In comparing men and women, men have been shown to be a little more liberal and open-minded than women. This is particularly true with regard to short-term relationships, sexual relationships between young people, parallel relationships, and masturbation.

Geer & Manguno-Mire argue that also arousal is a cognitive process on the grounds that it is significantly affected by, for instance, a mind occasionally wandering to other things. Arousal can be effectively maintained by thinking arousing thoughts and fantasizing. Fantasies reflect cognitive activity and are essential in terms of our sexual interests. One study found that 58 percent of men entertained sexual fantasies during masturbation, while the figure for women was only 12 percent. There is reason to assume that the content of the fantasies adopted during masturbation shape and develop an individual's sexual preferences and the ways in which they are implemented.

Male fantasies contained more actual sex, whereas women's fantasies were more likely than men's to feature affection and bonding. For women's fantasies, it was the context that counted, much more so than for men. Such situational factors include the emotional atmosphere (mood) and physical characteristics (dress, sounds, and smells).

Women have indicated that they focus on the partner's personality and emotional characteristics, and at the same time, on their own physical and emotional reactions. Men tend more to focus on a partner's physical characteristics and love-making itself. In addition, men are much more likely than women to focus on visual imagination, particularly the sexual characteristics of the imagined partner. Women say they focus more on emotions.

A review of literature suggests that men are more likely to use direct sexual terms than women and also more likely to find them arousing. Women are more likely to be receptive to romantic rather than sexual terminology. However, many women are aroused when a man talks "dirty".

Men report being motivated by direct sexual stimulation (female genitalia, naked women, other sexual images). Women say they are more excited by movies or literary material that is not explicitly sexual. Men have also been shown to use more pornographic materials of different kinds than women. Films that feature women or men masturbating excite women as much as men, however, though men are only aroused by seeing women masturbating.

Some studies do indicate that women, like men, are aroused by sexual imagery more than by imagery that depicts a couple's emotional relationship, but they still harbour less affection for sexual imagery. Women's cognitive interpretation of such

images has deviated from their physiological responses to the images in question. Numerous studies have shown that women's subjective reporting on their own state of mind is less consistent with their physiological responses (arousal), compared with men. At a cognitive level, women reject sexual stimulation which they consider (too) arousing on a physiological level. Women's cognitive assessments have favoured erotic over sexual imagery.

For men, the women who appear in erotic images or films are sex objects. In a way, men imagine removing the woman from the picture and having sex with her. Women, on the other hand, may be aroused by such images because they relate to the woman as the object to which the man is responding.

The process of sexual arousal (in which in-coming sexual information is processed and encoded) is affected by activating and inhibiting factors. An individual who suffers from anxiety is only prepared to receive the kind of stimulation that is relevant to his or her source of worry. When people do not pay close attention to sexual stimulation, sexual arousal does not occur.

The minds of men suffering from sexual dysfunctions are typically focused on non-sexual thoughts. In other words, they have directed their thoughts to other things, away from the sexual stimuli they encounter. This inability to concentrate disrupts the process of arousal and frequently introduces negative feedback that diminishes arousal.

It has been observed that women's decision-making processes are slower (the processing time is longer) in social situations than men's, if the messages contain sexual words, and also slower compared to when using romantic words. The same phenomenon as well as difference in decision-making was observed, when the sentence carrying the message was an erotic one. Women used significantly more time than men in cognitively processing sexual words.

Women hesitated with sexual material in order to respond to it appropriately. Women with erotophobia, in whom sexual matters instil anxiety, read sexual texts in general more slowly than other women. They have a method for processing sexual information, a method that strongly inhibits decision-making and arousal. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to recall a story they have been told if it contained sexual elements.

Erotic statements are more frequently linked to the parts of a sexual story that depict a couple's physical interaction. Romantic statements are considered those that describe caring, love and emotions. Men assess erotic statements more positively than women, and women tend more to assess romantic as well as neutral statements more positively than erotic statements.

Male and female sexual scripts

Since the 1970s, it has been said often that the differences in male and female sexuality amount to different roles and behaviour models that are shaped and transmitted by culture. The idea is that men and women adopt gender-specific models of behaviour as well as sexual scripts which they unconsciously attempt to apply in sexual situations. ‘Scripts’ refer to written and cultural – official and unofficial – instructions, models, and customs that teach us the particular expectations that govern our interactions that must be appropriate in terms of our status and role. In brief, they are internalized scripts that are applied to particular interactive situations.

These internalized models, or scripts, restrict our choices for behaviour, but at the same time, they offer hints and examples of the type of behaviour that may result in an outcome that matches our objectives and desires. The script theory does not claim that men are from Mars and women from Venus, but that the differences between men and women have been learned and can therefore be unlearned.

Wiederman presents that masculine gender roles teach boys to be independent and self-confident and to approach issues through investigation and assessment, whereas girls’ roles are based more on behaviour restrictions and internal control. In part, the difference in roles stems from women’s ability to become pregnant. Girls also often receive more sexual information in the home than boys. Much of this instruction takes the form of warnings and dangers. These teachings place women in the role of sexual gatekeeper in most male–female relations. Men are supposed to initiate and women are supposed to either reject or consent.

Early on, sexual scripts and their internalized models for interaction begin to shape boys’ and girls’ significant differences in attitudes toward sexual matters. Boys, for example, are taught how to hold their penis when urinating and washing it, whereas girls are rarely taught how to touch their clitoris. Boys learn that touching their genitals feels good, and girls learn that their genitals are “dirty” and should only be touched with certain precautions.

The models that boys are meant to emulate in their sexual responses and behaviour often view sexual arousal as mere physical enjoyment. As a result, young men’s sexual activity becomes goal oriented (pursuit of sexual pleasure and the goal of releasing pressure). For girls, contemplating sexual activity as purely bodily pleasure without any other meaning is a somewhat peculiar idea. Instead of the pursuit of pleasure, girls learn restraint and self-protection. Therefore, girls and young women generally need more incentives for sexual interaction than mere physical enjoyment.

Those young men who do not understand that their female compatriots have different sexual goals and behaviour models often feel awkward in situations where they need to interact with women. On the other hand, men may benefit from the competitiveness and achievement-orientedness ascribed to the masculine gender role. They are

a good match with the typical lesson that women have been taught, i.e. that men are supposed to win over their sexual resistance.

It is often the case that the sexual expectations and internal conditions learned by women prevent men from succeeding in attaining sexual interaction with them. This motivates men to value sexual interaction even more; they are prepared to go farther and farther to achieve their sexual goals.

The greater resistance to having sex with a new partner, regulated by female sexual scripts, makes success especially rewarding for men. It may even amplify their self-confidence as a man. For women, entering into a new relationship does not necessarily achieve the same thing. A woman's self-esteem may be boosted only if her male partner has a higher status than her previous partners, or if he seems particularly willing and able to invest in an emotional relationship with her.

The different male and female scripts for finding a new partner also help explain why men are more likely than women to arbitrarily round up the number of their past partners, while women consider the number more carefully or underestimate it. Many of the sexual relationships women have had either represent an independent deviation from the script or a failure in trying to apply it. Some women may later regret or be ashamed of deviating from the ideal female script.

Role and cultural models also put pressure on men. When a man does not express his sexual interest in a woman in relatively strong terms from the beginning of the relationship, his masculinity, sexual potency, and virility may be called into question. It may also make a woman feel like her sexual attractiveness is being called into doubt.

Both men and women are expected to make clear to one another that the other person represents something special. Men are expected to emphasize that sexual incentives are not the only reason they want to spend time with a particular woman, and women are expected to express interest in the relationship, which also entails a sexual relationship.

Part of the female role is to appear attractive and enticing and to create a mood that encourages the observation of these qualities. If a man faced with this type of situation appears more passive than the male sexual script suggests, a woman may feel anxious about trespassing past her usual role by feeling like she was an initiator. But if a woman takes responsibility for her own sexual satisfaction, a man may feel that he is left without a manly sexual role in the relationship. These interweaving sexual role models make the interaction of men and women rather challenging.

Research findings on differences between male and female sexuality

Explanations for the different approaches men and women have regarding sexual issues include, for example, that the environment and things like statements by the church have had a lesser impact on the sexual attitudes and behaviour of men than of women. Religious women are less likely than religious men to have sexually liberal attitudes, and less likely to practice masturbation. Similar differences between men and women have emerged in studying how upbringing, friends, and parents influence attitudes. Women seem more prone to adopting the requirements and models imposed by their environment regarding what is deemed sexually appropriate behaviour.

Research that was reviewed by Baumeister and Twenge found support for the theory of a particular sexual control exerted among and by women. Mothers and female friends teach girls and young women to exercise greater sexual restraint than men. The rite of passage into womanhood is still often via motherhood rather than any sexual performance. Even the custom of female genital mutilation has been upheld by women. It is the girls' boyfriends who try to encourage them to be more sexually active.

Even adult women receive more negative feedback from other women, not men, whenever they offend against sexual norms. Women are also more likely to support double standards by condemning the same sexual behaviour more harshly for women than for men. It is important for women to restrict the sexual activity of other women, so that they minimize their own risk of losing their man in the event that they do not measure up to the man's sexual expectations. It would be difficult for the man to find another woman in those circumstances. Both men and women want their spouses to remain faithful. Wives, however, have been more sexually possessive than husbands.

The legislation (created by men) that governs sexual behaviour primarily provides sexual restrictions directed at men. It is women who for the most part apply religious sexual norms into practice. Women are more likely than men to support norms that promote sexual restraint, whereas men are more likely than women to support a liberal approach to sexual matters. Justifications for this have included that women's mere sexual liberation without economic and political liberation may place women in an even more difficult situation.

Many women oppose alternative forms of sexual enjoyment for men, including prostitution and pornography. This opposition is consistent with the idea that women want to control men's opportunities for sexual enjoyment. This fits in with the sexual exchange theory presented in an earlier chapter on commercial sex, and with the idea that women have an interest in keeping the price of sex as high as possible.

In one study, young boys reported that their first sexual fantasies started from visual stimulation. Girls linked their first fantasies to an imaginary or real romantic situation. Boys often began fantasizing several years before girls, and their fantasies were more frequent and intense, distracted them from other issues, and were associated with more positive emotions than for girls. Forty-five percent of boys but only 6 percent of girls reported having several sexual fantasies every day.

Adult men too report thinking about sex more frequently than women. In the United States, for example, 54 percent of men but only 19 percent of women reported in a nation-wide study that they thought about sex every day. Men's fantasies were more explicitly sexual and focused on various parts of the body, whereas women's were focused on bonding and romance. Male fantasies also featured sex with several partners more frequently than women's imaginings. In addition, men were more likely to report that they switched their partner or partners in the course of the fantasy.

In the United States, Baumeister reviewed research findings that introduced differences between the strength of men's and women's sexual motivation. Researchers compiled a list of findings indicating that men's sexual motivation was stronger than women's. The findings concerned the occurrence of sexual thoughts and fantasies, spontaneous arousal, desired frequency of intercourse, frequency of masturbation, desired number of sexual partners, willingness to be the party in charge during sex, seeking out sex as opposed to avoiding it, taking sexual initiative versus refusing sex, enjoyment of an array of sexual methods, investment of resources toward having sex, favourable attitudes regarding sexual behaviour, incidence of sexual dependency, and respondents' own assessment of the intensity of their sexual desires.

Compared with men, women were less promiscuous, unfaithful, or interested in hard-core pornography. They masturbated less, were less likely to purchase sexual services, had fewer fetishes about the male body, and were more content with fewer sex partners in life, or even just one. Women generally indicated that they had not enjoyed sex without commitment, and even if they had fantasized about animals, they were less likely than men to approach them in a sexual way. Women almost never commit sexual murders and are less likely than men to abuse children sexually. Women also show less interest in certain paraphilias.

This review summary from the United States needs to be equipped with the note that most of the observed gender differences in sexual issues are rather minor. We should also not forget that some women are just as promiscuous as men. Women also experience far greater fluctuations in their sexual desires and experiences during their lifetime. A study that offers a cross section of a certain point in time is only able to show a narrow strip of the total landscape of female sexuality. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the evidence that on average, men's sexual desires are fairly convincingly stronger than women's.

The most significant gender differences in sexuality in Finland

In terms of gender differences in sexual issues in Finland, it has to be said right away that over the last decades and years, those differences have in many ways decreased and to some extent have even disappeared. Men and women share much in their goals and assessments, as well as the experiences and emotions they have regarding sex. They also report in very similar ways about most items to which men and women ought to respond similarly in this type of representative sample of the population. Issues like that include particularly sexual interaction in relationships.

One of the last bastions particularly separating men and women in their survey responses and pursuits is now in the process of coming down. By this, I mean the number of sexual partners. In the youngest generation, differences between men and women have all but vanished. Above all, this has occurred because young and also middle-aged women have been having more relationships than previously. On the other hand, especially young men, but also men in general, have been reporting fewer sexual relationships.

On the basis of their responses, however, there are still a host of issues in which men and women differ. Many of these issues were the same findings that were highlighted in studies conducted abroad and as described above. The present study presents a more detailed and in some ways different view.

The most fundamental difference between men and women in this study stems from the particular focus of this book, i.e. sexual desire. Men experienced sexual desire approximately twice as often as women, and the same gap also existed in preferred frequency of sexual intercourse. In the oldest age group, men reported wanting to have sex up to four times more often than women. Also in couple relationships men would have preferred to have sex twice as often as their partners. Add to this that women were experiencing fairly frequent loss of sexual desire at a rate three times higher than men, and the difference in the sexual desire experienced by men and women has been definitively verified. The finding is consistent with earlier studies from other countries.

This gender difference seems to hold steady even with women's increased tendency to enter into short-term relationships, which was something that men used to report more frequently than women. In addition, differences in the sexual desire that men and women feel have not diminished substantially. Not all of the measures of desire used in the study permitted an analysis of this change. It was possible to compare respondents' preferred frequency of sexual intercourse to figures from the early 1970s. This comparison mostly showed an increase in the sexual desire of men, not a decline in the gender difference.

Another measure that enables comparisons with the early 1990s was respondents' satisfaction with the frequency of sexual intercourse in their current relationship. In

this case, the increase in desire for more sex grew more among women than men in relative terms, but men were still expressing more of a wish for more frequent sex at a rate twice that of women. This measure does not allow making direct claims about changing trends in sexual desire, because the responses in this case relate to actual frequency of sexual intercourse. When desired intercourse frequency was contrasted with actual intercourse frequency, the result showed that women's desire for more frequent sex was indeed associated with a decline in intercourse frequency in relationships. Thus, the increase among women who wanted more sex in their relationships was not a sign of any significant shrinkage in the gender gap.

A third comparable measure similarly extends to the early 1990s and suggests that lack of sexual desire is becoming increasingly common among women. The gap between men and women grew even more in terms of sexual desire. The study as a whole does not support the assumption that the gender gap in sexual desire had been narrowing since the 1970s.

The differences between male and female desire have given rise to many other key issues and gender variations in the sexual lives of Finns. It emerges as soon as young people take their first steps in sexual activity. Boys are on average a couple of years younger than girls when they first start masturbating and experiencing orgasms. Boys also begin to desire sexual intercourse at an earlier age than girls, and experience more sexual desire the first time they have it. The gender difference in the level of desire experienced at first intercourse had, however, diminished as girls were expressing greater sexual desire.

Although boys wanted sex more, girls started having sex at an earlier age than boys, and their first partners were on average two years older than boys' first sexual partners. Girls and young women were much less likely, however, to have experienced orgasms the first time they had sex, and in spite of their younger initiation age, girls were significantly older than boys when they finally experienced an orgasm from intercourse. In addition, men reported much more frequently than women that they had experienced orgasms through masturbation several years before commencing sexual intercourse.

Differences in sexual desire were also reflected in masturbation. Even though masturbation was strongly increasing among women, men were much younger when starting it and practiced it in far greater numbers than women as adults. For example, approximately twice as many men as women had masturbated. Comparing the incidence of masturbation among men and women, women were consistently about 20 years behind in the changes that had occurred among men of the same age group.

Differences in sexual desire and masturbation also led to significant gender distinctions in the use of pornography and paid sex. Men were more likely than women to frequent sex shops and had watched and read more porn. Men were many times

more likely than women to use Internet porn. Men were also more active users of sexual services, offering and paying money in exchange for sex, whereas women were more likely than men to be the target of such monetary offers. Men's motivation to watch and experience sex was clearly higher than women's, even if they had to pay for it.

Differences in sexual desire were also apparent in that women were much less likely to initiate sex within the relationship and rejected moves made by their male partners at a rate twice that of men. In part this was associated with the greater incidence of loss of sexual desire among women. The biggest gender difference in this was between young women and men. Women did not become sexually motivated merely because a man proposed sex to them.

Behind such differences in desire was the ability to enjoy sexual relations and intercourse. The factor here was having orgasms. Women, much more than men, had trouble having orgasms during intercourse. The gender difference was nearly two-fold when comparing the number of respondents who always had an orgasm from intercourse and how many had had one the last time they had sex. Women also experienced fewer orgasms when masturbating. Instead, multiple orgasms were more common among women than men. Women's capacity for sexual enjoyment fluctuated much more than men's, from one woman to the next.

Women's difficulties with sexual enjoyment had an impact on their experiences of sexual pleasure and desire. Young men, for instance, were twice as likely as young women to feel that sexual intercourse was highly enjoyable. In this regard, the gender difference peaked strongly over the eight-year period.

Differences in sexual desire were partly associated with the different values and attitudes regarding sexual issues that men and women had. Men were more likely than women to accept sexual relationships between young people who were not dating as well as relationships between teenagers. Men also showed greater support for sexual relationships that did not involve love, as well as the sexual infidelity of husbands and wives and other extramarital relationships. More men than women also said that they could maintain a parallel sexual relationship, and men were more likely than women to believe that men are natural polygamists.

Women were more likely than men to consider as perversions group sex and partner swapping, having sex in public, wanting sex constantly, and free sex. Women were far less likely than men to tolerate prostitution or brothels. Women also felt more frequently than men that there was too much nudity in advertising and were less likely to think that porn was very stimulating.

Women were more likely than men to think that sex gets better, the longer the partners have known each other. Women were also more likely than men to accept a sexual relationship between two adult men as well as marriage between same-sex partners.

Women also displayed greater sexual interest in their own gender.

Differences in sexual desire and values came out in many ways also in the sexual experiences that men and women had had. Even though differences in the number of sexual partners had declined, men continued to report a greater number of sex partners in their lifetime as well as more partners within the last several years, compared with women. Men were also more likely to enter into parallel relationships alongside their current relationship, and had had more such relationships than women.

Based on the research, the greatest differences between men and women emerged in the following:

1. Sexual desire in general
2. Desire for first experiences and enjoyment thereof
3. Beginning and frequency of masturbation
4. Enjoyment and use of porn
5. Paying for sex
6. Initiating sex
7. Experiencing orgasms
8. Sexual relationships without commitment

All of the above were more characteristic of men, or else, men engaged in them more actively. In their own way, they reflect the interplay between masculine and feminine sex. Masculine-oriented sex, more often than feminine-oriented sex, focuses on the pursuit of physical pleasure through sex. Men set fewer conditions than women on when this pursuit of pleasure is appropriate or inappropriate. Sexual pleasure for men more often than for women is a value in itself.

13

FROM THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION TO A SHORTAGE OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AND ORGASMS

I have now thematically reviewed the key areas of sexuality, along with their most important characteristics and the changes that have taken place based on data from the FINSEX study. To provide background for the data and findings I have presented various theoretical frames of reference as well as findings from earlier international studies on a number of sexual subjects. In this final chapter, I will go into the issues and changes we have discussed in order to highlight the most important and the most mysterious. Many of the findings and changing trends entail challenges that I will attempt to address here.

One of the biggest mysteries is the substantial difference between men and women in the main theme of this book: sexual desire. Other mysteries in need of a solution include reasons for why sexual intercourse was decreasing in Finland, why there has been an increase in loss of female sexual desire, and why particularly young and middle-aged women are having a harder time experiencing orgasms from intercourse. Is sexual activity in Finland, and possibly in the West generally, decreasing? These are crucial issues for the sexual wellbeing of all couples.

Mystery of sexual desire

In the summary at the end of the previous chapter, on the main gender differences in sexual issues, it was established that sexual desire is a key factor distinguishing men from women. According to a number of measures, male sexual desire is manifested at least twice as often as female desire, and men would like to have sex twice as often as women. In every age group, the frequency of sexual intercourse that would have sufficed to satisfy male respondents was higher than for female respondents. An additional dimension comes from the repeated lack of sexual desire reported much more frequently by women than men. On the basis of available data it is not possible to make the claim that the gap between male and female desire is shrinking. All of these factors have naturally had practical consequences for sexual interaction between men and women.

A particular challenge lies in solving the problem of the significant increase in women's loss of sexual desire. It is not a case of decreasing desire in long-term relationships, of becoming fed up and bored. The issue of libido loss had also expanded

to the relationships of young adults as well as new relationships. Increasing loss of desire had disproportionately affected young women in the last eight years. Compared with the early 1990s, also middle-aged women were experiencing frequent lack of sexual desire, an increase of more than 60 percent. Only women in the oldest age group reported no increase in loss of desire.

When one in four women in relationships lasting no more than two years and one in two women in relationships of 10 or more years were experiencing recurrent problems with sexual desire, it is impossible to view Finnish relationships on average as particularly passionate. Loss of male desire in the above age groups remained below 10 percent. It should be added that both young and middle-aged women had experienced recurrent loss of sexual desire at a rate four times that of men in the same age groups. The desires of men and women seemed at times to be on different planets. One interesting observation was that the level of sexual desire in men was well matched with that of women who were 20 years their junior, and vice versa. This may be the reason why so many men seek out a significantly younger partner at some point in their lives.

One should note that there are indeed many relationships in which the woman is the partner who desires more sex in the relationship. Also, in relationships that were only a few years old women were almost as likely as men to express a desire for more sex in the relationship. It was not until relationships that had lasted 10 years or more that men's and women's desires for more intercourse diverged in a significant way. It is interesting to speculate why these newer relationships did not contain more sex, even though approximately half of both men and women expressed a desire for more of it.

The first thing that comes to mind is that these individuals have found themselves in a relationship in which their desired intercourse frequency has exceeded their partner's desired intercourse frequency. There is some evidence to back up this supposition, since nearly all men and half of all women who reported wanting a lot more sex in their relationship also reported recurrent lack of sexual desire in their partner. These figures, reported by those who would have preferred to have sex somewhat more often, were one-third and one-fifth, respectively.

For the most part, a partner's loss of sexual desire was the main reason for desiring more sex for respondents who reported that they wanted significantly more sex in their relationship, and even then, it mostly applied to men rather than women. This is, of course, consistent with the finding that loss of sexual desire affected women in far greater numbers than men.

There is an intriguing association behind loss of sexual desire. When the incidence of lack of desire was analyzed in the different surveys by actual frequency of sexual intercourse, it seems that lack of desire did not vary by frequency category. What does this mean? It means that if the actual frequency of sexual intercourse reported by women had not dropped so much in recent years, the incidence of lack of desire

among women apparently would not have been any greater than previously. Lack of intercourse decreases the desire to have intercourse. This suggests that female sexuality is much like an unused machine – it must first be oiled before it is functional again.

The findings in the “15 minutes of happiness” chapter reveal that women were able to fulfil their desires for sexual intercourse more successfully than men, having the frequency of sex in the relationship that they wanted. This suggests that women were more frequently gatekeepers and thus better able to decide when and how often the couple had sex. This role model continues to persist in Finnish relationships.

The desire for more intercourse in the relationship is of course associated with many other factors beyond lack of sexual desire in a partner. One example of this kind of complexity is that of the women who would have preferred much more sex in their relationships, one-third, and up to half of the women who would have preferred to have sex somewhat more often, had experienced fairly frequent lack of sexual desire. A large proportion of such women both wanted to have sex more often and experienced loss of desire. Among men, too, one in ten of those who expressed a wish for more sex were similarly conflicted. One wonders if this had to do with trying to grasp some type of ideal or ideal partner that was out of the reach of the respondents' capacity. The wish for more sex may also have been about a desire to please the partner, which had nevertheless to some extent failed.

What do the theories of sexuality discussed earlier say about gender differences and sexual desire? For the most part they attempt to justify why men want to have sex more often than women. The theory of evolution sees men's stronger sexual urges as a consequence of natural selection. Men with stronger sexual urges, the theory goes, have been more successful in reproducing compared with other men. Regarding this hypothesis, the men in this study who had had a large number of sexual partners had, on average, fewer children of their own than other men. Also men who wanted sex more often than other men were somewhat less likely than others to have several children. Of course, these observations do not exclude the possibility that nature, at some point in human history, selected the men with the strongest sexual urges.

If we are to believe the theory of evolution, sexual desire will be an issue that separates men and women for a long time to come. Evolution entails adapting to new situations, but the process is gradual and would take numerous generations even in the best of cases. The theory of evolution earns some points here in the sense that differences in men's and women's sexual desires have remained rather constant even though the social environment surrounding them and the related roles have changed quite a bit. Men and women have changed their behaviour and values in significant ways, but these changes have not affected gender differences in sexual desire.

A kind of counter theory to the theory of evolution is the theory of social constructionism, which posits that all of sexuality as well as our conceptions of it are products of

society and culture. The theory presumes that the essence of sexual desire is equally strong for both men and women. This is one of the key issues in feminist thinking. According to unconditional feminist interpretations, men's stronger sexual urges expose something that is not in fact sexual; for example, an attempt to exert power over women. According to these theories, the desire for sex in men represents a tool to achieve some different kind of aim.

In light of these results, an evolving society ought to have an effect on sexual desire itself and on gender differences in desire. This perspective into sexuality may be relevant in explaining changes in behaviour, but in terms of sexual desire it does not seem to coincide with the study's findings. Even though the meanings associated with sexuality have changed almost radically in Finland over recent decades, the changes have not extended to female and male desire.

The social exchange theory is better adapted to interpreting differences in sexual behaviour, more so than differences in desire. Within this theoretical framework, however, one could think that the greater rewards that men achieve from sexual interaction could explain their stronger sexual desires. This might make sense in that men experience orgasms so much more often and easily in intercourse compared with women. In other words, men might be more motivated to seek intercourse as something that offers them particular rewards. This viewpoint is supported also by the finding that women who would like to experience more orgasms from intercourse also reported desiring sex more frequently than other women. In addition, women who enjoyed sexual intercourse, and got more pleasure out of their sex lives than other women, were also less likely to experience lack of sexual desire.

This theory of "pursuing rewards" still does not explain the differences between men and women in a comprehensive way, because even women who always had orgasms during intercourse desired to have sex somewhat less frequently than similar men. This perspective nevertheless opens up the possibility of matching male and female desire to suit one another better. If women were to enjoy intercourse more and have orgasms more regularly, the desire gap between the genders should decline.

One alternative is that desire is born to a significant degree in interaction between people, where they in a sense learn situational scripts on how to express sexual desire in a particular situation. Part of this type of script could be, for example, that it is not appropriate in a given moment for a woman to want more than what she has already achieved in her sex life. Men, on the other hand, should fantasize about a more extravagant and plentiful sex life. Cognition plays an important role in fantasies and dreams, and if women simply think about sex less than men, they are less likely to desire it or be motivated to get it as frequently as men. Sexual cognitive processes, then, would produce sexual desire and arousal. We already discussed the importance of cognitive processes in sexual arousal and noted that sexual cognitive processes occurred more actively in men than women.

So why do women think about sex less often than men and fantasize about it less? Are sexual thoughts masculine, shaped by evolution, or is there less reason for women to spend time thinking about sex so intently, when sex offers women lesser rewards than for men? Or has culture taught women that sexual desire is exclusively a by-product of love, and that a proper woman should not desire sex, but only love? The study's findings regarding sexual desire inspire more questions than definitive answers.

The mystery of decreasing intercourse in Finland

A surprising and thought-provoking finding in the study is the decline in intercourse frequency in the 2000s. For example, from eight years before, there was a 10–15 percent drop in respondents of all ages who reported that they had had sex within the last week. Only 45 percent of men and 40 percent of women had had sexual intercourse in the last week. In terms of frequency figures, Finnish respondents had lost one session of sexual intercourse per month, or 20 percent, compared with figures eight years prior. Also compared to the early 1970s, people were having less sex now. Frequency of sexual intercourse declined most in the age group of 25–40-year-olds. The frequency had remained the same for people aged over 50. What could explain the change?

An especially interesting perspective when considering these findings comes from comparing weekly intercourse frequencies in Finland to those in four Southern European nations as well as Norway, which indicated clearly that Finns were the least active in terms of intercourse frequency. We should note that the surveys in the comparison countries were conducted nearly ten years prior to the most recent Finnish survey. If we use the Finnish results from 1999, the comparison changes so that respondents in Finland reported a similar intercourse frequency as in Norway, but still lower than in the Southern European countries in the comparison. Using the available data, it is not possible to predict whether respondents in the comparison countries were also having less intercourse in the 21st century. In any case, it seems that sexual activity in the Nordic countries takes other ways of implementation besides intercourse more often than in Southern Europe.

In the present decade, Finns reported having sex on average once or twice a week. Not even young adults reached a full two times a week any longer. The amount of sex declined in all relationship types, including singles, though the greatest drop occurred in cohabiting couples. The latter had lost their status as the relationship type most conducive to sex. Now, couples who were living apart were having sex more than any other relationship group, even though in practical terms their two separate addresses afforded the fewest opportunities for it. Respondents in LAT-relationships reported intercourse on average two additional times per month compared with married respondents, and one additional time compared with cohabiting respondents.

These figures suggest that people in living-apart relationships were richer in terms of sex than other relationships.

The most typical wish expressed by Finnish respondents was to have sexual intercourse twice a week. People who had achieved this rate were also generally happy with the amount of sex they were having. Most respondents came up short, having only half the sex they would have liked. For this reason, more and more Finns expressed dissatisfaction with their sex life as a whole. Quality was no substitute for quantity in this case. The study's results do not support the claim that the frequency of sexual intercourse is not important from the standpoint of sexual happiness. Certainly, there will be individual exceptions to this.

What, then, can be behind the decline in intercourse frequency in Finland? Earlier, I noted that greater intercourse activity was associated with having more sexual desire, desiring sex more frequently, and to fewer instances of loss of sexual desire. As stated above, the drop in intercourse frequency reported in the present study was not a result of people desiring sex less frequently or intensely.

Another possible explanation has to do with how well a relationship functions. Those who rated the importance of sex in their relationship happiness more highly than other people, and who found it easier to discuss sex with their partner, reported the highest frequency of sexual intercourse.

With regard to considering sex important for the relationship, there had been a change in that fewer young and the middle-aged men and women than in 1999 were now likely to say that sex was very important in their relationship. This might have explained some of the behavioural change, if it were not for the fact that the 1999 results largely mirrored those of 1992, when respondents reported a significantly higher frequency of sexual intercourse. Therefore, the predictive value of this particular change is rather insignificant.

In terms of communicating with one's partner about sex, there was no change that could explain the decline in sexual intercourse frequency. There was almost no change compared to 1999. It is true that in both 2007 and 1999 respondents reported greater difficulties discussing sex with their partner than in 1992. Over the long term, more problems were beginning to creep into couples' sexual interaction. If this had had a significant impact on intercourse frequency, it should have been reflected in the survey results already eight years before it emerged.

Other aspects of a well-functioning relationship could not account for the decline in the opportunities for having sexual intercourse. Twenty-first century men and women were reporting a level of relationship happiness that was at least as high as before. One perspective comes from the finding that in 2007, the number of people who considered their relationship very happy was significantly higher than in the early 1970s, but intercourse frequency was much lower than in the 1970s, particularly

among young adults. Respondents' reports of mutual love in their current relationship were on a par with earlier surveys. And in cohabiting couples, whom the decline in sexual intercourse had affected most in relative terms, there were greater mutual feelings of love than ever before.

This may give the impression that frequency of intercourse should not be held up as a particular measure of a well-functioning relationship. The truth is that those who were reportedly in very happy relationships were having sexual intercourse approximately twice as often as those in relationships that were neither happy nor unhappy. Also, the difference in intercourse frequency was substantial when comparing people who reported having a very happy versus a fairly happy relationship. How well a relationship is functioning will continue to be an especially important predictor of the two partners' motivation to have sexual intercourse.

In addition, respondents' satisfaction with their sex lives was critically dependent on intercourse frequency. The decline in the latter was associated with a simultaneous drop in levels of satisfaction with one's sex life, of approximately ten percentage points among both men and women.

Returning to the topic of looking for possible explanations for the decline in sexual intercourse in the latest study, among women, higher frequency of sexual intercourse was correlated with more regular orgasms and active watching of porn. The watching of porn had in fact increased somewhat, so that at least could not be the reason behind less intercourse. Young men were also watching porn so much more frequently now that, conceivably, it could be a response to the decline in intercourse. The shortage had been addressed by masturbating more frequently, with the help of visual aids. In terms of sexual attitudes, it was noteworthy that in spite of the at-times critical public debate concerning pornography, four-fifths of men and half of all women found it very arousing to watch porn.

Earlier it was noted that difficulty experiencing orgasms regularly is increasingly affecting young and middle-aged women. Among men, too, orgasms from sexual intercourse experienced a similar drop. This may explain some of the latest study's declines in sexual intercourse. With the pleasure derived from sexual intercourse being less certain, people may have found it harder to invest more in intercourse in their relationships.

The motivation to have sex was not affected by any deterioration in the quality of intercourse, except on the part of orgasms, and did not cause people to invest less in intercourse. In 2007, the same proportion of women as in earlier surveys had found their latest sexual intercourse very enjoyable, and the proportion of men who did had actually grown. In practice, Finnish intercourse was equal to "15 minutes of happiness". That was its average duration. The more frequently people had intercourse, the more time they spent each time. Unfortunately, the data does not permit comparing possible changes in time use, or its effect on the motivation to have sexual intercourse.

More recently, respondents have reported using different sexual positions and new techniques more than before. Also, the by-now more traditional manual and oral stimulation had gained even more ground. One would think that these changes had increased people's desire to have intercourse, but this had not occurred.

The decline in intercourse frequency that has taken place in Finland is not entirely unique. For example, researchers in the United States and Germany found already in the 1990s that when measured by intercourse frequency, people were not very sexually active. The finding conflicts with the media images that depict passionate, tempestuous sex lives, and the worry about the over-sexualisation of our lives. The sex lives of most real people are somewhat modest.

The image that emerges from this study may bring solace to many who can now see that numerous others are just as inactive in bed as themselves, and that the sex other people are having isn't that exotic. The label of postmodernism that accompanies sex in social discourse is absent in people's real, everyday lives.

The chasm between the sometimes offensive sex depicted in public discourse and ordinary people's sex lives can be almost grotesque. Human sex is now approach an ascetic dream: "We are transported to the sea of sex without the emotions that we used to call sexual passion, without any danger of indecency, and without having to do any real battle against temptation." And: "In a world of shameless nudity, naked bodies leave us cold." Public sexuality and the ever-present nudity in advertising, which many find excessive, do not lure people to have more sex, no matter how healthy it might be.

Masturbation saves the day in Finland

Slowly, people have begun to emancipate themselves from their feelings-based relationships, moving from shared sex toward a more individualistic experience of sexual pleasure – masturbation. Masturbation has its own justification, and it is increasingly practiced alongside established relationships. With its help, some people are able to escape the high demands imposed by our modern sexual etiquette, with its joint negotiations and situational considerations of the appropriateness of taking sexual initiative. For these people, masturbation is not a substitute for too little sex, but a different and easier form of sexual pleasure. To some extent, this is also a manifestation of a partial distancing between sex and love.

In this study as well as the previous ones, one of the major changes concerned the fast growth of masturbation that was taking off from the younger age groups. Each new generation has masturbated more actively than the last one and also maintained the habit actively into adulthood. In the 2000s, the age at which people began masturbating fell by up to several years.

What has been positive in this change is, for example, that earlier research has shown that people who masturbate more actively have less fear of intimacy with a

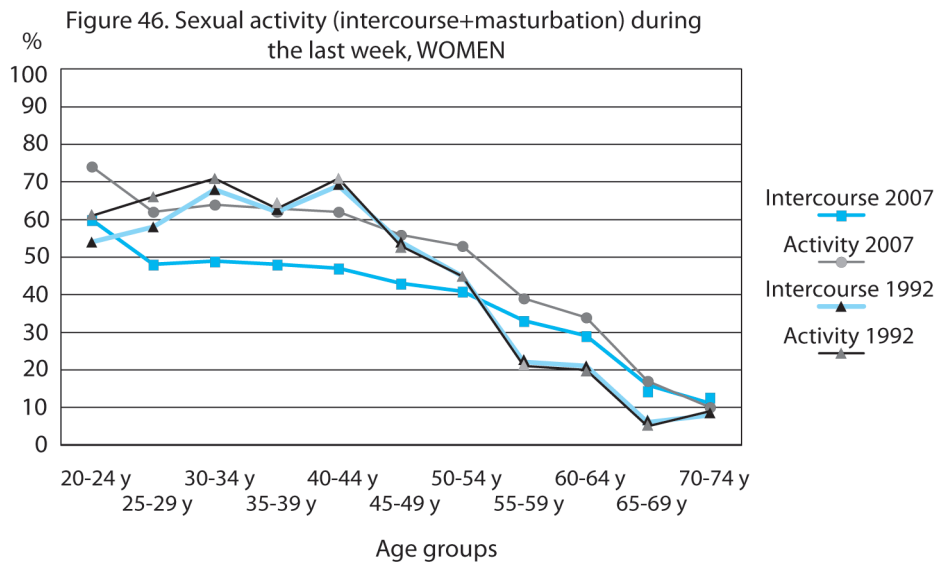
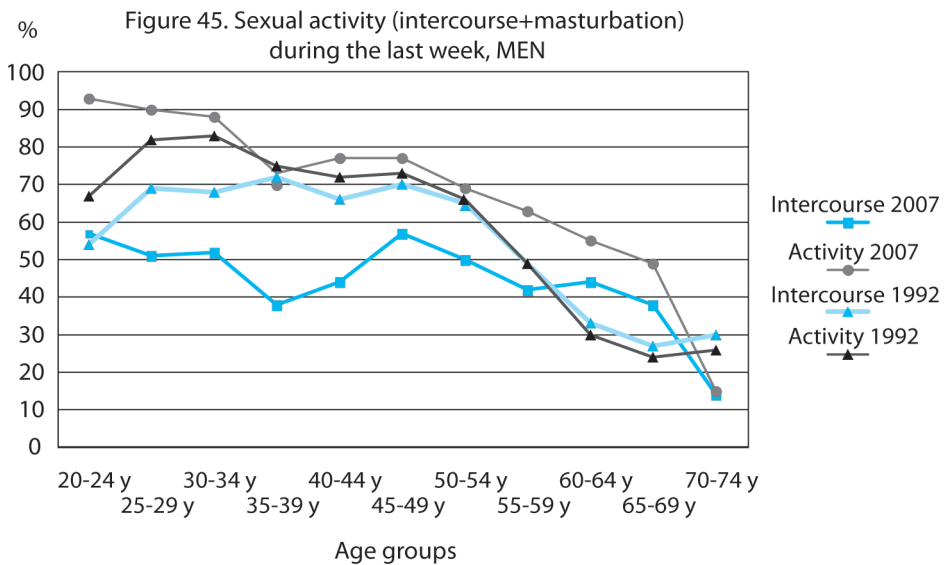
partner. From the standpoint of sexual technique, masturbation-related fears have no doubt inhibited people from using manual stimulation in sex with a regular partner. People who have not learned to properly stimulate their own genitals have also had difficulty stimulating a partner.

One of the most significant findings in the present study is that masturbation does not necessarily decrease in the course of the lifespan. It is not a youthful activity that is later forgotten. Decades later, masturbation remained at approximately the same levels in different birth-year cohorts in all four surveys that asked about masturbation. What you learn when you're young, you don't unlearn. And now people masturbate in the absence of unnecessary fear or anxiety. This finding also reflects the major and permanent impact that proper education and high-quality information can have on sexual matters.

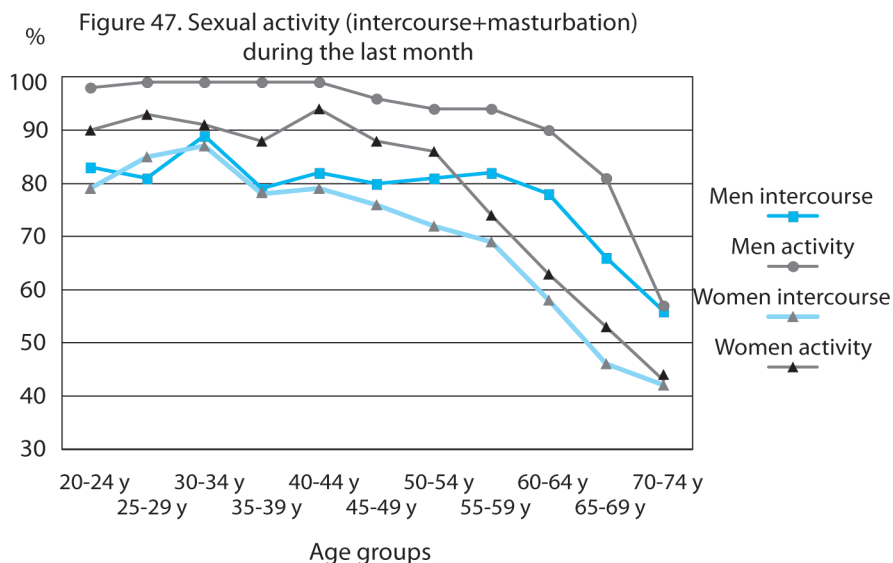
Another noteworthy aspect of masturbation was its rapid and sizable growth in couple relationships. The practice has doubled from the early 1990s, becoming an important part of a couple's sex life. Women, however, were lagging about 20 years behind men in this change. The difference was associated, among other things, with the increasing proportion of orgasms through masturbation in different age groups. A new observation was that masturbation had become increasingly common among women who reported having trouble with orgasms from intercourse. People considered the ability to experience sexual pleasure more and more important.

When measured through the frequency at which Finns had intercourse, their sex lives seemed on their way to growing passivity. The picture looked different when using another measure of sexual activity on a par with sexual intercourse – masturbation. When looking at how many men and women of various ages had been sexually active (sexual intercourse or masturbation) within the last week, it turned out that, in 2007, Finnish men and women were approximately as sexually active as they had been according to the two previous surveys conducted in the 1990s. Compared with middle-aged respondents in the 1970s, people were clearly even more sexually active. Further, respondents aged 55–74 years proved to be more sexually active in the last two surveys, compared with the early 1990s.

Approximately three in four young and middle-aged men had been sexually active within the last week. About two-thirds of women had been sexually active in the last week. The gender difference comes from the lower rate of masturbation among women, when not having sexual intercourse.



Nearly all young and middle-aged men and about 90 percent of women of the same age had been sexually active in the last month. Sexual activity among men aged 55 and over within the last month even reached record levels in 2007 when compared with the 1990s surveys. Among women of the same age sexual activity within the last month was at about the same level as in 1999, i.e. much more active than in the early 1990s.



Sexual activity among Finns remained largely stable in the 2000s thanks to those who had newly embraced masturbation to fill in for lack of sexual intercourse, say, within the last week. Among young men this “masturbation supplement” in relation to activity on the intercourse front represented up to about 40 percent of their sexual activity in the last week, approximately 30 percent among middle-aged men. Among women, “the supplement” was only about 15 percent in both age groups. Among men aged 60 and over, masturbation increased sexual activity in relation to intercourse by approximately 10 percent, but played only a minor role among older women.

The supplementation provided by masturbation to sexual activity within the last week has grown significantly among men in the 21st century. In 1999, instead of the 40 percent in 2007, it was approximately 15 percent and in 1992, it was only discovered among young men as a supplementation of about 10 percent. Among women, the activity edge brought on by masturbation within the last week was approximately 10 percent in 1999, and in 1992, only slightly affected respondents under the age of 30.

In relation to intercourse, sexual activity within the last month was boosted among young and middle-aged men by approximately 20 percent by masturbation. Among men older than that masturbation increased sexual activity by approximately 15 percent but only by about five percent for older women. For example, in the age group of slightly below 70, four-fifths of men and half of women had been sexually active in the last month. In the same age group, one in two men and one in five women had been sexually active within the last week.

One of the study’s key findings was that sexual activity among Finnish people was shifting to a significant degree from sexual intercourse to masturbation, also among

couples. Although the frequency of sexual intercourse has dropped, the increase in masturbation has stepped in to make up for the difference. Naturally, this invites questions as to why it has happened. Is there less intercourse because sexual gratification is more easily and conveniently achieved by masturbating? At least in those relationships where both partners are busy with work, possibly on different work schedules, this may be the case. In part, though, masturbation serves to compensate for the decrease in intercourse. The scope is not very broad, based on the finding that masturbation was already increasing fast at the time when the frequency of intercourse in relationships had not yet significantly changed.

There are those who see the proliferation of masturbation as a sign of sexual emancipation. Masturbation is autonomous sex and does not require a demanding level of interaction with a partner. It's easy and presents no performance anxiety. Masturbation is suited to busy lifestyles and a culture of interaction that demands ever higher levels of sexual performance. As sexual gratification is nevertheless becoming increasingly important to people, the role of masturbation inevitably grows, as indicated by the findings of this study.

The most commonly applied theories of sexuality offer very little in the way of tools for interpreting this change. The theory of evolution cannot respond effectively to why people are having less sex than before. We can speculate as to whether men and women who are highly sexually motivated have reproduced less in recent decades as a result of more effective contraception. In this case, the process of selection might have affected the new generation. The items available for measuring sexual desire do not, however, support such assumptions. It would be more consistent with evolutionary theory that people seek an alternative in masturbation for declining opportunities for intercourse. People's biological instincts, it could be said, are looking for a new outlet for release.

Within the framework of social constructivism it might be thought that the increase in masturbation as a supplement to sexual intercourse could be a consequence of public discourse in which masturbation and its importance for individual identity have been raised to a cult-like status. This may have an element of accuracy, since both sex therapy and feminism have provided a lot of support for masturbation among the public. Masturbation has been represented as the key to one's sexuality and as a way of claiming one's own body, as well as a kind of safe sex in an era of various health risks. Masturbation has also perhaps been marketed to women as a way of claiming ownership of their sexuality and emancipation from men. Masturbation may have been interpreted as an expression of self-care and self-love. There is now an almost romantic relationship with the self. In comparison, a strife-ridden sexual relationship with a partner may come in second.

Many people are anxious about how they are perceived in bed. Most long to hear an assessment of their prowess from a new sexual partner. The media and film industry

persist in creating role models for what is an ideal lover or an astounding love-making experience. Attaining such levels in everyday life may seem overwhelming. A reflection of this is that the proportion of respondents who considered themselves sexually skilled decreased over eight years among both sexes, more so among women. One tactic may have been to invest more in fewer occasions of sexual intercourse and obtain the remainder of sexual gratification by masturbating.

The social exchange theory evaluates sexual interaction through the costs and rewards associated with it. A comprehensive assessment of recent sexual intercourse does not indicate that people have been finding sex less satisfying, although it is true that women are experiencing greater difficulty having orgasms. Lack of sexual enjoyment on the part of a female partner may also lessen men's motivation to have intercourse. From the social exchange perspective, this may be associated with increased costs. Attaining sexual gratification may require a greater effort than before. Further, the significant differences in the levels of sexual desire between men and women may be creating more situations in which the partner who wants sex more often feels like he or she is using the other, less desirous partner. Masturbation, on the other hand, need cause no guilt feelings. It may even feel like a service to benefit the partner who is less eager to have sex.

Toward sexual relationships or romance?

At the core of sexuality naturally is sexual interaction with different partners. Major changes have occurred in relationships both in recent years and decades. A particularly strong transition has resulted among women who no longer retain their sexual inexperience for a future husband. It has been some time since virginity was a characteristic that had an especially positive exchange value when entering marriage. To the contrary, inexperience is now often seen as a negative feature, and a risk to the functioning of a new relationship. As the old saying goes, people no longer want to buy a horse without checking its teeth. People hope that and try to guess whether a partner has acquired the skills in previous relationships of how to be a satisfying lover.

The new criteria for sexual relations are manifested as particularly big changes in the number of sexual partners women today have. Thanks to this, the gap between men and women has shrunk considerably. In the early part of the 21st century, women's numbers of sexual partners were up to five times higher than what they had been in the 1970s. During the same time, men's number of sexual partners grew only slightly, but because of large differences at the starting line, men continued to report a greater number of sexual partners than women.

With regard to sex partners, the youngest cohort of women was exhibiting "man-like" behaviour. Sexual relationships by women that were not based on love have increased since the 1970s. The rise has been especially radical in recent years and the figures

are now approaching men's. Several decades ago women would frequently find themselves walking up to the altar with their first sexual partner. Now, the women at the altar have already "tested" a number of men. Young couples are now rather equal in this regard. In part, this is because young men are having fewer relationships even than they used to. As a result of this change, in a European-wide comparison of several countries Finnish women had the largest number of sexual partners.

It may seem paradoxical that at the same time as women in particular are going from one partner to the next and entering into sexual relationships with men whom they do not love, the demand for faithfulness in the relationship is increasingly essential, and monogamy has indeed mounted. The sexual relationships of the early 21st century are more established than before and the people in them have in fact had fewer parallel relationships than previously. Also, fewer and fewer respondents were engaging in relationships with entirely unknown partners. For women in relationships, the bar for entering into a new relationship purely for the sake of sexual desire, or even lack of sexual desire on the part of a partner, has been very high.

A partial explanation for this seemingly contradictory finding is that people have been forming more and more consecutive relationships. Serial monogamy developed into the typical relationship model among the younger generation. The relationships have been reportedly quite faithful, but more short-term than previously. If one relationship did not bring the desired emotional and sexual satisfaction, respondents moved onto the next one. When people are equal and independent, neither partner can pressure or extort the other for reasons such as earning a livelihood to remain in a relationship that does not satisfy.

There were signs of a certain renaissance of romanticism in the finding that attitudes toward infidelity and parallel relationships had become more restrictive. One of the key factors behind this shift has been that the highly educated, who were previously more tolerant than the population in general in their attitudes toward parallel relationships, had changed their minds. The significance of this change in attitude becomes highlighted in a comparison between Finland and six other European countries (Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Norway), where Finns' attitudes toward infidelity proved by far the most stringent. The requirement to remain faithful seems to be on its way to becoming the new Nordic relationship model, and Finland leads this development.

Surprisingly, Finns are also the least tolerant of sexual relationships among teenagers of 14–15 years. Finns were, though, more likely on average to accept sexual relations between adults who were not in love. Positive attitudes toward tolerance and official status for homosexual relationships had advanced most rapidly in the 2000s, in relative terms.

Beyond the renaissance of romanticism, described in greater detail above, the decline in the acceptance of parallel relationships may derive from a situation in which people

who are investing hard in their careers and are otherwise busy may have had less time to engage in parallel relationships. As expectations among both men and women regarding the quality of secret sexual liaisons and the sex therein have increased, fewer people have been able to engage in clandestine relationships that are satisfying enough as well as long-lasting. The need to make greater investments in such relationships may more easily turn them into a burden. In this context too, masturbation may seem like an easier and less risk-prone method for attaining sexual gratification.

The generous increase in masturbation may have played a role in a decline in the demand for paid sex directed at particularly young women. The demand fell by up to half in the course of the early 21st century. Simultaneously, the use of paid sex fell off among young and middle-aged men. Considering the wealth of public discourse on the subject, this may come as a surprise.

A new 21st century phenomenon is the major increase in young women's sexual interest in one another. Compared to women in other age groups, they were twice as likely to have experienced at a minimum some sexual caressing with another woman. This seems to suggest a new role-taking by these women on the sexual stage. Embracing and caressing other young women is fun and enjoyable, and at the same time, invites positive attention from young men. In this dual role, women have greater sexual freedom than men.

In earlier periods of history individuals were able to rely on familial relations and same-sex friends as a safeguard against loneliness. In today's society, these options are more limited. The result of a lack of a long-term romantic relationship is presumably loneliness. Lack of alternative targets of emotional expression and affection has raised the personal stakes for finding and choosing the kind of partner who offers the promise of continued emotional fulfilment. Forming and maintaining a high-quality relationship has been elevated into a singular life goal, along with the attendant consequences for individual identity. In this sense, romanticism is the sales agent of today's individuality.

Because of women's economic independence women now have the tools to work out and express their sexuality. Well-educated women have been able to make choices and rely on social services at times such as child rearing. Privacy has increased, offering the framework and the time to engage in sexual experimentation. Some women have felt proud of being able to enjoy sex.

The problem is the increasing competition for good sexual partners. Both men and women have had to make more of an effort to find a partner who fits their needs. People give serious consideration to whether the grass on the other side of the fence might indeed be greener.

Unravelling the difficulty of experiencing sexual pleasure

The goal of sexual activity is sexual pleasure. And thus, this book will conclude by examining pleasure and the issues that feed into it. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that an essential part of sexual health is the ability to enjoy sexual activity that is mutually satisfying. Many studies have confirmed that sexual activity and having orgasms have beneficial consequences for human health. The main findings of research on the health impacts of sexual activity were summarized in the first chapter of this book.

Social and public discourse on the subjects of gender and sexuality have for some time underscored women's right to sexual enjoyment. This enjoyment is often linked to the positive context of a couple relationship and the promotion of sexual wellbeing. At the same time, public discourse loads additional expectations on men to offer their female partners proper sexual fulfilment. Men's obligation to please their spouse is already paralleled by their earlier obligation to bear responsibility for the family's livelihood.

The great mystery of Finnish sexuality is why difficulty having orgasms has increased in the 21st century, at a time when information about how to better achieve orgasms proliferates. Women's and health magazines are full of instructions for the pursuit and cultivation of sexual pleasure.

The proportion of young and middle-aged women who had orgasms through sexual intercourse nearly always or most of the time had fallen by ten percentage points, and even among men, the proportion of men who always reach orgasm through intercourse had dropped by 15 percent. There was up to a 20 percent drop in cohabiting women who had orgasms through intercourse most of the time. In young women, this was associated with the clearly increasing difficulties of having orgasms in the first years of a relationship. Hence, fewer young women considered their sexual relations "highly enjoyable".

Among young women, 10 percent fewer than previously had an orgasm the last time they had sex. Orgasms have become an increasingly difficult issue for young women. The result is that up to one in two single women experienced orgasms through sexual intercourse fairly infrequently at most. Sex among singles was not nearly as marvelous as popular television shows would have us believe.

A new trend has been that women who more rarely have an orgasm during sexual intercourse began to masturbate more actively in the 21st century. In fact, both men and women who were otherwise unhappy with their sex lives had begun to masturbate more actively than before.

The growth trend in young women's problems with their sexuality was not limited to orgasms.

In the early 21st century, they were also experiencing arousal and lubrication problems at twice the earlier rates. Young women suffered from these issues more than middle-aged women. The problems were also affecting more and more new and cohabiting relationships. Arousal difficulties among women were twice as common as among men (male arousal problems refer to erectile problems).

What could be the reasons for women's growing problems particularly with orgasms? Sexual interaction with the partner has a crucial impact on the ability to have an orgasm. Because most such interaction occurs with an established partner, quality of the relationship is a key factor in creating the conditions that promote orgasms. If the relationship runs into problems, difficulty with orgasms may follow.

Men and women in all age groups evaluated their relationship happiness at least at the levels of previous surveys. No change had occurred either in the ease or difficulty of discussing sexual matters with a partner over the eight intervening years. Touching and physical intimacy were present in relationships at the same levels as before. These measures of relationship interaction offered no hint for understanding why orgasms had become harder to come by. Moreover, orgasm problems had also increased in relationships where partners experienced mutual love.

The only apparent change was that young and middle-aged women and men were slightly less likely than before to consider sex very important for the happiness of their relationship. It remains an open question whether this small shift in values has been reflected on sexual interaction in relationships, or whether the change derives from the decline in intercourse frequency and intercourse-orgasms, which happened for some other reason. People appreciate less the things they cannot attain.

In addition to relationship factors, other issues important for having orgasms are sexual desire and sexual self-image. The growing lack of sexual desire in young women has most certainly had an impact on how they experience orgasms. On the other hand, fewer orgasms may also impair the desire to have intercourse.

Sexual self-esteem does not explain the mystery of the missing orgasm. Women's assessment of their own attractiveness and activity has not really changed. Their evaluation of their own sexual skill had fallen somewhat, but nevertheless was better than it had been in the early 1990s, when women still experienced significantly more orgasms than in recent times.

For women, one recurrent reason for elusive orgasms in intercourse is premature ejaculation on the part of a male partner. This does not explain the growing problem with orgasms, because premature ejaculation actually decreased in the 21st century. For women to experience pleasure and to have orgasms, manual stimulation and

caressing as well as cunnilingus were also very essential. These methods of love-making have gained in popularity somewhat, and hence, as far as a partner's sexual repertoire and the development of his love-making techniques, one would expect that women's orgasmic opportunities would have been somewhat improved at this point. In practice, however, the reverse was true.

Women's responses indicated that they experienced more orgasms when they felt that the sex was initiated together with the partner. This may represent one key reason for why women are finding it more difficult to have orgasms. Among young women in particular, more and more felt that the latest sexual intercourse had not been initiated together, but that the impetus had come solely from the partner. Of course, this also speaks to the decline in the willingness of these women to initiate sex to their partner. Add to this young women's growing difficulties becoming aroused and the decline in the frequency of sexual intercourse, and we are approaching the core that reflects toward both sexual desire and the ability to have orgasms. When someone is not fully engaged in love-making, it is no surprise that the enjoyment it brings is not what it used to be.

Some women have compensated for their inability to have orgasms from intercourse or love-making by masturbating more; there is a better guarantee of sexual pleasure. The findings offer a frank prognosis that future generations will practice masturbation to a much greater extent even through older adulthood. They have come of age in a community in which masturbation represents a real option even among couples. The significance and role of masturbation will be emphasized greatly in the future also among older people who have been widowed and have trouble finding a new, steady partner.

Gradually, sexuality has changed shape in Finland, as Western individualistic values gain a greater foothold. These values focus on individual rights, personal goals, as well the right to happiness. As a consequence, the sexuality of women has emerged in recent decades from the protection of intimacy to a social and human rights issue, moulding people's conceptions of what is appropriate and inappropriate, desirable and to-be-avoided, as well as the meaning of sex in general in the life of a woman. Sexuality has come to occupy an essential part of a woman's role and identity, and an important source of her physical and spiritual wellbeing. It is regrettable that the findings of this study reveal growing problems in the pursuit of this wellbeing.

International discourse in particular increasingly makes mention of sexual rights. Sexual rights are divided into negative rights and positive rights. In light of public discourse it has been easier to define and advocate on behalf of negative rights, such as freedom from violence and abuse, compared with positive rights, including the right to be different and to express oneself sexually. It has been suggested that positive sexual rights enable the conditions necessary for sexual difference, wellbeing, and pleasure. Positive rights enable expression, and negative rights repair damage that

has been done. In Finnish discourse, the problem is the over-emphasis on negative rights in relation to positive rights.

Women have played an active role in public discourse about sexuality. Many of these activists have repeatedly brought up the risks and problems associated with sexual interaction. Some seem to have considered nearly every form of sex discussed in the public sphere as a problem. According to them, women must be careful at all times to protect themselves from various forms of abuse, rape, and various threats of infection.

The persistent risk discourse may have created a situation in which women increasingly view sexual interaction through a more rational lens, rather than casting themselves body and soul into enjoying sexual experiences with a partner and realizing their own desires. Excessive rationalism is the biggest enemy of orgasms. Simply put, thinking does alight desire, but orgasms come when thinking ceases. The inability to implement this formula may be a key cause for the trouble that young women especially are increasingly having with orgasms.

The so-called sexual revolution at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s introduced a drop of masculinity into the lives of women. Women were supposed to know what they wanted of sex, and they were to enjoy it as much as men had always enjoyed it. Many women learned to be sexually active and to initiate sexual intercourse and masturbation. For some women, sex became a particular area of personal validation. But for many women, the change has brought anxiety. New values and the permission to engage in a more open pursuit of sexual pleasure have not matched the image of femininity that they have adopted.

Up to this moment, some women have kept constructing their lives according to the so-called nice girl image, or even a true straitjacket of nicety. Through this, they have sought acceptance from their surroundings and attempted to avoid feelings of guilt. It hasn't been appropriate for nice girls to even really be aware of what sexually interests or arouses them. Acting out and expressing sexual desires has perhaps felt selfish, unfeminine, unseemly, and inappropriate for a decent woman.

A nice girl is permitted to express sexual desire only when she is madly in love and in the grips of passion toward a partner. Love and the right kind of romantic relationship have been and remain for many women the only gateway to sexual activity. Love frees a woman and allows her to be erotic. Combining sexual pleasure with love may spiritually take the edge off the guilt associated with sexual experiences.

A woman who is in the grips of the kind of passion that comes with love is helpless in the face of her feelings and unable to exert real control over what happens. For this reason it was thought that women could not be in charge of their sexual desire. The responsibility lay with her skilful lover (the man), who managed to awaken the burning desire within her. In fact, it was only the man who was sexual, not the woman herself. Behind the growing sexual problems that young women are experiencing

could be that they are only now increasingly taking sexual responsibility for their own sexual desire. Perhaps the responsibility weighs so much that it does not always permit one to be pulled into the throes of passion.

The greatest challenge for the future and an open question regarding female sexuality is its relationship, on the one hand, to the relationship model, and on the other hand, to the model of “just having fun”. In the relationship archetype, female sexuality continues to be submissive to the conditions of a faithful, monogamous relationship, whereas the “just have fun” ideal says that sex is stylish in itself, it’s a form of physical enjoyment, a tool in identity building, getting to know one’s body, a way to express yourself, and part of the pursuit of individual fulfilment. The experience of sex in the absence of all the demands associated with couple relationships helps to open the gates to the source of personal enjoyment.

Studies show that sexual desire, and particularly the feeling that one’s partner feels sexual desire, is at the core of relationship happiness. A journey into the key factors of your own desire is a great opportunity and a gateway to a happier life.

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