

THE RISK OF BEING RISQUE

PART THREE OF THE SERIES ON INFIDELITY LOOKS AT THE CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC OF VIEWING PORNOGRAPHY ON INTERNET SITES. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED BY WHAT STATISTICS REVEAL IN AUSTRALIA

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We're up to part three of the tribulations of infidelity. Many people ask me if pornography is a contributing cause and is it bad for relationships?

This is an extremely controversial topic and always will be. As a relationship therapist, I journey with clients without judgment and respect their opinions and values. With thanks to the contributions on this topic to clinical psychologist Dr Clare Rosoman.

Firstly, here are some interesting statistics from Pornhub. It is a pornographic video-sharing website and stated to be the largest pornography site but certainly not the only one on the internet.

The site attracted a total of 28.5 billion visitors in 2017 (around 81 million a day).

The United States was the top country by traffic. Australia maintained eighth place (in the face of adversity of our ridiculously slow internet speed).

The breakdown of age groups are:

- 18-24: 30 per cent
- 25-34: 28 per cent
- 35-44: 18 per cent
- 45-54: 13 per cent
- 55-64: 7 per cent
- 65-plus: 4 per cent

Female users make up 26 per cent of worldwide Pornhub traffic (Australian women make up 28 per cent of users.)

Most frequent time for viewing is between 10pm and 1am. The most popular day is Sunday and the least popular is Friday.

The average length of viewing time worldwide is about 10 minutes. However, this doesn't account for the number of times per day. It's a big profitable business. Overall revenue is thought to be \$13 billion. Australian revenue is estimated at \$2 billion.

Researchers Paul and Shim say the four main reasons for using such services are for:

Fantasy: sexual excitement, satisfaction, curiosity, exploration and anonymity
Mood management: emotional regulation, stress relief, escapism

Habitual use: habit and convenience

Relationship: enhancement, skills and novelty

Some of the common effects of pornography use for those in a relationship are:

- Feelings of internal conflict such as shame, depression, anxiety and irritability.
- Social withdrawal and guilt over the financial outlay

With frequency, pornography can normalise and desensitise associated

behaviours that lead to the pursuit of another person and possible affair. In my experience, the partner not involved in the pornography may view it as a betrayal to the relationship. Not only can the partner feel sexually inadequate and threatened by pornography use but also find certain new sexual activities objectionable. A new "sexual script" can be introduced and not welcomed.

Risque images can start as entertainment, may escalate to compulsions then distorted beliefs, expectations and addictions. The user faces difficulty becoming sexually aroused without pornography. They can lose interest and engage in fewer sexual experiences with their partner.

Emotional closeness wanes due to a decrease in trust and pornography can be associated with dishonesty.

Is there any benefit for relationships? Some studies say it is not harmful and positive, while others say it is detrimental. The difference lies in how the questions are asked and who you ask. For example, people in casual relationships are far less likely to have a problem with it than those in long-term relationships who have built a life together.

Research has found that mutual use of porn was related to lower levels of distress but unrelated to relationship satisfaction in women.

Some say that couples using porn together found it easier to discuss sexual wants and fantasies with their partners and had higher relationship satisfaction.

Not surprisingly, people who only viewed porn with their partner reported more dedication and higher sexual satisfaction than those who viewed it alone.

Consistent results across studies show the greater the discrepancy between partners in attitudes towards porn, the greater the negative impact on the relationship. Most discrepancies involve a male partner using more pornography than the female, which lowers her relationship satisfaction reduces positive communication and creates instability, more relational aggression and lower female sexual desire.

In summary, can it lead to affairs? Yes, but not always. Is it good for your relationship? Ask your partner.

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