

More of us are logging on to get off, but how healthy is the habit for you—and your relationship? *WH* delves into the effects of rated X.

BY FAYE BRENNAN



EROTIC



WE LIKE >>>

>>> TO WATCH >>

WOMEN &

PORN

YOU SEARCH WHAT?

We had guys share their (hilariously clueless) reactions to women's most often searched terms on Pornhub.com.

LESBIAN

"Women have a tendency to be bisexual. I totally understand this."

"I'm shocked. My boys aren't doing the job."

GANGBANG

"They must picture themselves being the center of attention."

"A bit threatening. Having other guys with one woman is stressful."

BABYSITTER

"That is HOT! 'Honey, let's get a babysitter tonight!'"

"Maybe more women fantasize about catching their husbands with the babysitter than I suspected?"

TURN ME ON



DESIRE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE PRESS PLAY

A HEATED DISCUSSION WITH...

Gail Dines, Ph.D., anti-porn activist and professor of sociology and women's studies at Wheelock College

Megan Fleming, Ph.D., clinical psychologist and sex and relationship therapist in New York City

Cindy Gallop, sex-tech entrepreneur and founder of MakeLoveNotPorn.com in New York City

>> *WH*: Let's begin with a few numbers: Pornhub.com gets 60 million worldwide visits daily, and 24 percent of U.S. viewers are female. According to a 2015 study, 16 percent of women ages 18 to 39 view porn once a week, and the percentage who are willing to admit their habit to the Pew Research Center increased from 2 percent in 2010 to 8 percent in 2013. What's behind this uptick?

>> *Dines*: We live in a "porn culture." Porn is the wallpaper of our society, and both sexes are internalizing the notion that it's normal and legitimate, so more women are watching it.

>> *Fleming*: In my practice, a lot of women are struggling with their libidos. They are overworked, exhausted, and having trouble relaxing. So porn is a tool in a toolbox that helps them keep their sexual pilot light on. It also helps them explore their fantasies and discover what they'd like to experience with their partners.

>> *Gallop*: There are way more women watching porn than what those statistics represent. Of course women like watching people have sex because we're sexual beings and we're wired to enjoy it! We want to watch it to get turned on and masturbate, just like men do. That's why I hate the terms "porn for women" and "feminist porn" because they imply that we're only into white sheets fluttering in the breeze and loving that's soft. Absolutely *not* true. I like my porn pretty hard-core<sup>(1)</sup>.

>> *Dines*: But let's go to the empirical evidence and find out what happens when women look at porn. Specifically, [a new study] found that the more porn women watched, the more depressed and anxious they became, the less interested they were in having sex with people, and the more body-loathing they experienced<sup>(2)</sup>. Watching porn is not the issue—it's the effects of watching it.

>> *Fleming*: Well, having a doctorate, I value research, but I don't know of that particular paper. Yes, there can be some problematic behaviors that can lead to depression and anxiety. But what is making those women turn to porn? They may want to compare themselves, which of course isn't healthy. But I've also had clients who use it to discover their turn-ons. I think that's the reason lesbian and gay porn is some of the most viewed by women. There's this authenticity piece: There's no shame or guilt in expressing their sexuality or

using their bodies. I think women are also looking to see a connection [between two people] to feel a sense of intimacy and pleasure.

>> *Dines*: But if you're looking for [that], why don't you seek it out in your own life? You're not going to experience intimacy, empathy, and connection by watching other people have sex.

>> *Gallop*: That's what we're trying to solve at MakeLoveNotPorn. There is a total absence of an open conversation around sex in the real world. Because we as a society are so repressed about sex, we don't talk about it—or what we're watching. So porn exists in this shadowy underworld and therefore lacks socially acceptable curation. There is no Yelp for porn. And that's because it's not okay to come into the office, stand by the watercooler and ask, "I'm really bored with the porn I'm watching. Any suggestions?"<sup>(3)</sup>

>> *Fleming*: In my opinion, anything that couples can use to promote a frank and honest convo is a great tool to enhance their bond. For instance, BDSM can be erotic for some women, but for others, it's a turn-off. Anal? Clear turn-on or turn-off. This is empowering women to have a voice in their own sex lives and to know their "No"—as in, "No, that act doesn't speak to me," or "Yes, I'd like to try that." There's a whole range of sexuality, and it's not black-or-white or all-or-nothing. We know in our bodies when something feels good or bad.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Kink is in for many women: The top DVD purchased by females on AdultEmpire.com is The Submission of Emma Marx, a raunchy BDSM title.*

<sup>(2)</sup> *At press time, this study was not yet published. Previous research has found that watching porn is linked to better sex for women in committed relationships.*

<sup>(3)</sup> *Tumblr, Reddit, and 4chan are surprisingly popular online hot spots to stumble upon erotic images and videos that tickle your fancy, says Erika Lust, an erotic film director.*

Join the conversation! Watch more of this passionate debate and share your own thoughts at [WomensHealthMag.com/March](http://WomensHealthMag.com/March).

A STAR IS BORN PORN

Joanna Angel, an adult film actress and director and creator of porn site Burning Angel.com, reveals what drew her to the biz and what it's really like to eff on film.



**How she got into porn:** "I was very comfortable with my body, and I was driven and motivated to succeed: I wanted to become a household name and create a culture where people felt comfortable in their sexuality."



**The biggest myth about women in the adult industry:** "People think we're overpaid and underworked. No one makes millions from showing up and having sex on camera—some people still have other jobs, while other successful porn stars have multiple revenue streams from licensing or book deals and money from appearances. We work hard. For talent, a shooting day can be as long as 20 hours, and we're building our brand 365 days a year."



**The vibe on-set:** "In the few years that I worked for other companies, having sex on camera exhilarated me—I felt like I was a boring girl who stepped into a phone booth like Superman and became an alter ego of myself. On my company's sets now, there are a lot of laughs. We have to make a conscious effort to stop so the male talent can concentrate on getting their erections!" ■