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Pornhub's 2019 Year in Review

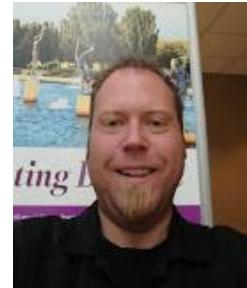
By David Prescott, LISCW & Kieran McCartan, Ph.D.

Not many professionals are aware that the world's largest adult pornography site, Pornhub, publishes [annual statistics](#) about its use and users. Obviously, readers will want to be judicious in how they read the report (in the language of porn, the website itself is NSFW or "not suitable for work"), although the findings themselves are presented in a provocative but not necessarily offensive manner. Each reader's opinions will vary.

What have we learned about Pornhub this year? Once again, the numbers are vast: In 2019 alone, there were 42 billion visits to the site (averaging 115 million per day), 39 billion searches performed, and 6.83 million uploads. For just the videos uploaded in 2019, if one were to watch them all in sequence, beginning in 1850, they would still be watching today. Reading such statistics as "6597 petabytes of data transferred" is a little bit like trying to come to terms with the national debts of nations; it can be nearly impossible to comprehend.

Beyond this, the statistics track, to the best of their abilities, who the most popular stars are, what people search for, what they actually watch, for how long, and where. They also report on the age and gender of their viewers, leading to questions of how they are able to divine this information (and is there a bias in the direction of attracting advertisers). Nonetheless, the data is remarkable.

Digging a little deeper, however, it seems that there is much we can learn about sex and sexuality that can inform our understanding of clients in assessment and treatment situations. First, of course, is obvious: Porn is ubiquitous. Even the best available research does not show it to be a risk factor for re-offense, as this [earlier blog](#) describes. Pornography continues to be [controversial](#), with some politicians declaring it a public health crisis despite the [most recent scientific findings](#). To our minds, the most interesting and concerning questions have to



Kieran McCartan, PhD
Chief Blogger



David Prescott, LISCW
Associate Blogger

SAJRT Bloggers' Profile
We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.

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do with the effects of pornography on children, adolescents, and other vulnerable people. The reality is that porn without context, as ill-informed sexual education, lays problematic, difficult and unrealistic notions of sex and sexuality; as indicated in a recent [BBC poll](#) suggesting that women's exposure to violent sex and violence during sex is on the increase. Hence, we need sex education, informed debate and realistic relationship expectations in modern society.

Questions arise: These findings show that what people search for is not necessarily what they end up watching. Further, as the authors of the report note, there is a trend in the direction of real people and not simply actors. "Amateur" was amongst the most frequent search terms, leading to questions about to what extent viewers are looking for the most authentic or genuine experience (as opposed to the gymnastics of many of the more commercially produced videos). At the same time, however, animated pornography is also at the top of the list, speaking to the role of novelty and fantasy for many viewers. These trends raise questions for how we understand our clients in treatment as well as those on other problematic pathways. As the [Internet Watch Foundation](#) points out child sexual abuse material, and related content, is often viewed on Facebook, Twitter, and other legally accessible internet sites, not purely on the dark web. Most of this accessible material is homemade, not "produced" which is in line with trends in mainstream porn.

Many more questions follow regarding what people watch. There is plenty to be offended by and concerned by. The prevalence of incest themes (mothers, fathers, stepmothers, stepsisters, "Daddy" etc.) can and should raise any number of questions for those understanding the sexuality of clients in treatment. On one hand, many professionals working with adolescents who have sexually abused report seeing cases in which these themes were used in the service of abusing within families. On the other hand, one wonders about the underlying allure of the relational aspects. As repulsive as incest is to society, do these videos also, however strange it may seem, provide a sense of connection to viewers? What is clear is that, as we have argued in the past, viewing porn through the lens of our [own individual sense of morality](#) is not a tenable approach to understanding or treating people who have abused.

In the end, the statistics provide more questions than answers. What do we really know about the sexual interests of viewers? 32% of visitors were female, indicating that it's not as simple as men wanting to look at naked women. What will be the long-term effects on young people who grow up porn-educated and without funding for meaningful sex education in schools? And ultimately, what are people really looking for when they enter the search terms that they do?