

# Trojan/SIECCAN Sexual Health of Canadian University Students Study: Report on Masturbation and Self-Pleasure

Robin Milhausen (University of Guelph) and Alex McKay  
(Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN))

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This report is based on the February 2019 Trojan/SIECCAN study of the sexual health of 1,500 Canadian university students who completed a 64-item online survey administered by the Leger polling firm. In the following analyses we compare different groups, looking at the percentages of people who responded in a certain way (e.g., the percentage of people who said “yes” or “no” when asked if they had an orgasm at their last sexual encounter) and whether those people differ depending on another variable (e.g., whether they consumed cannabis prior to having sex). To do this, we used chi-square analyses to determine whether there were significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level. In the text below, when we report that one group was “more/less likely” to report a behaviour or outcome, that groups “did/did not differ”, or that there was “an association” we are referring to statistically significant differences and associations. Statistics which may be of particular interest are bolded. Key messages are summarized below.

- Consistent with past research, in this study, men masturbated more frequently on average than women. Men were almost 2 times more likely to report masturbating at least once a week than were women (64.9% vs 34.8%). Nonetheless, many women do masturbate, with more than one-third of women reporting masturbation once per week or more often.
- Despite the fact that most men masturbate more often, women were more likely than men (38.3% vs 28.8%) to report that the last time they masturbated it was very pleasurable.
  - Men may be masturbating as a substitute for partnered sexual activity, and for this reason find it less pleasurable. The men who found masturbating the most pleasurable were those who were the most emotionally and sexually satisfied in their current relationships and happy with their sexual lives, masturbating as one component of an active sexual life. For women as well, happiness with sexual life was associated with pleasure during last masturbation.
- Among both genders, those who masturbated more frequently were more likely to report that the last experience was very pleasurable.
- Most men and women who masturbated more frequently also reported watching pornography online (at least once per week) and often reported watching online pornography while masturbating to increase their pleasure

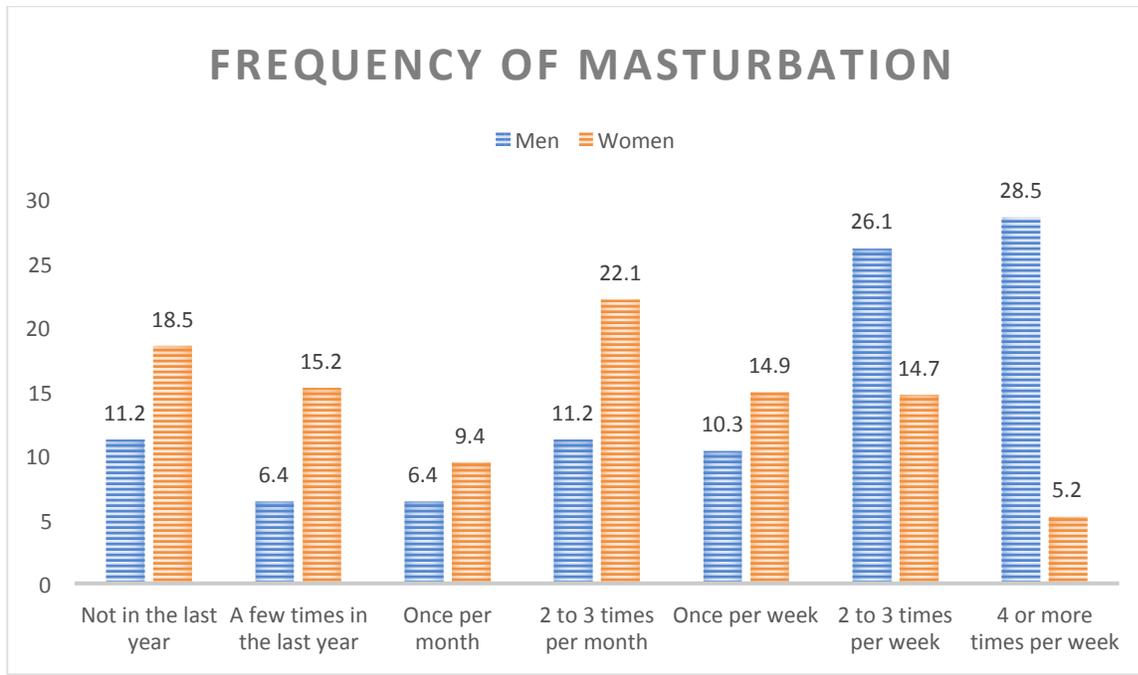
- Women who masturbated more frequently reported using a vibrator during masturbation more than women who masturbated less frequently – and women who used a vibrator at last masturbation were more likely to report that masturbation was very pleasurable.
- Men and women who masturbated more frequently were less likely to report that they were very happy with their sexual lives.
  - It is unlikely that frequency of masturbation causes people to be less happy. There are several possible reasons for this finding. It may be that because people who masturbate frequently watch more pornography, they may have a higher standard for indicating that they are very happy in their sexual lives. People who masturbate less often may be less sexually oriented in general.
- Frequency of masturbation is not related to relationship status, number of sexual partners, experience of sexual problems, or emotional or satisfaction in relationships. This means men and women are not masturbating more often to make up for dissatisfaction in their partnered relationships.
- Pornography viewing was the most common activity reported by men and women to enhance pleasure during masturbation (60.2% men and 46.2% women). Almost one-third of women (28.9%) reported vibrator use. Lubricant use was reported by 17% of men and 10.2% of women.

## **Frequency of Masturbation**

Most participants reported masturbating at least a few times over the past year. However, there were large gender differences in terms of frequency of masturbation. Men were almost 2 times more likely to report masturbating at least once a week than were women (64.9% vs 34.8%). Men were 5 times more likely to report masturbating 4 times a week or more often than were women (28.5% vs 5%).

More than one-half of men (54.6%) reported masturbating 2 or 3 times a week or more often. In contrast, 1 in 5 women (19.9%) reported masturbating 2 or 3 times a week or more often.

The most common frequencies for masturbation among men were 2 or 3 times a week or 4 or more times a week. The most common frequencies reported by women were 2 to 3 times a month (22.1%), not in the past year (18.5%), or a few times in the past year (15.2%).



## **Predictors of Frequent Masturbation**

Because men and women engaged in masturbation at different frequencies, analyses of predictors of masturbation were conducted separately for men and women. For the purposes of these analyses, men who masturbated 2 or 3 times a week or more often were considered frequent masturbators. 54.6% of men were considered more frequent masturbators. Women who masturbated 2 or 3 times a month or more often were considered frequent masturbators. 56.9% of women were considered more frequent masturbators.

## **Associations with Frequent Masturbation among Men**

Masturbating more frequently was associated with:

- Pleasure during last masturbation (33.4% of men who masturbated more frequently reported their last masturbation was very pleasurable compared to 21.5% of men who masturbated less frequently)
- Frequency of pornography viewing (86.4% of men who masturbated more frequently reported watching pornography once per week or more often compared to 19.0% of men who masturbated less frequently)
- Watching pornography to enhance their pleasure during their last masturbation (67.2% of men who masturbated more frequently reported watching pornography to increase their pleasure the last time they masturbated compared to 49.2% of men who masturbated less frequently)

- Happiness with sexual life (21.9% of men who masturbated more frequently reported that they were very happy with the sexual aspects of their lives compared to 36.4% of men who masturbated less frequently)

Frequency of masturbation was NOT associated with:

- Lubricant use to enhance pleasure at last masturbation
- Cannabis use to increase pleasure at last masturbation
- Alcohol use to increase pleasure at last masturbation
- Having a partner present who watched or helped them masturbate
- Reporting their last penis/vagina intercourse was very pleasurable
- Relationship status (being single, seriously dating, or cohabitating)
- Emotional satisfaction in current relationship
- Sexual satisfaction in current relationship
- Experiencing an orgasm in the last penis/vagina intercourse
- Frequency of communication of sexual likes and dislikes
- Perceived sexual health
- Experiencing sexual problems over the past 6 months (problems with desire, orgasm, erection, or ejaculation)
- The number of sexual partners reported over the past year

## **Associations with Frequent Masturbation among Women**

Masturbating more frequently was associated with:

- Pleasure during last masturbation (43.2% of women who masturbated more frequently reported their last masturbation was very pleasurable compared to 26.9% of women who masturbated less frequently)
- Frequency of pornography viewing (37.4% of women who masturbated more frequently reported watching pornography once per week or more often compared to 3.0% of women who masturbated less frequently)
- Watching pornography to enhance their pleasure during their last masturbation (53.1% of women who masturbated more frequently reported watching pornography to increase their pleasure the last time they masturbated compared to 30.1% of women who masturbated less frequently)
- Vibrator use to enhance pleasure during last masturbation (31.7% of women who masturbated more frequently reported using a vibrator to increase their pleasure the last time they masturbated compared to 22.3% of women who masturbated less frequently)
- Cannabis use to enhance pleasure during last masturbation (6.4% of women who masturbated more frequently reported using cannabis to increase their pleasure the last time they masturbated compared to 2.6% of women who masturbated less frequently – *though it should be noted that few women overall used cannabis to enhance pleasure 5.3%*)

- Having a partner present who watched or helped them masturbate (10.4% of women masturbated frequently reported that their partner was present to watch or help them masturbate during their last masturbation, compared to 5.2% of women who masturbated less frequently)
- Happiness with sexual life (21.7% of women who masturbated more frequently reported that they were very happy with the sexual aspects of their lives compared to 32.1% of women who were less frequent masturbators)

Frequency of masturbation was NOT associated with:

- Lubricant use to enhance pleasure at last masturbation
- Alcohol use to increase pleasure at last masturbation
- Reporting their last penis/vagina intercourse was very pleasurable
- Relationship status (being single, seriously dating, or cohabitating)
- Emotional satisfaction in current relationship
- Sexual satisfaction in current relationship
- Experiencing an orgasm in the last penis/vagina intercourse
- Frequency of communication of sexual likes and dislikes
- Perceived sexual health
- Experiencing sexual problems over the past 6 months (problems with desire, orgasm, erection, or ejaculation)
- The number of sexual partners reported over the past year

## Use of Products During Masturbation

Participants reported the use of the following products to enhance pleasure the last time they masturbated (all gender differences significant except comparison about alcohol use during masturbation):

- Lubricant – 17% men and 10.2% women
- Vibrator or massager – 7.5% men and 28.9% women
- Male pleasure sleeve – 5.7% men
- Pornography – 60.2% men and 46.2% women
- Cannabis/Marijuana – 11.2% of men and 5.3% women
- Alcohol – 3.2% men and 2.8% women

About 1 in 12 participants (6.7% of men and 8.8% of women) indicated their partner watched or helped them masturbate.

## **Pleasure During Masturbation**

Interestingly, women were more likely than men to report that the last time they masturbated was very pleasurable (38.3% vs 28.8%). This was true among frequent and less frequent masturbators.

Participants who masturbated more often (more than once a week) were more likely to rate the last time they masturbated as very pleasurable than those who masturbated less often. This was true for men and for women. 45.8% of the women who masturbated more than once a week reported that the last time was very pleasurable (compared to 32.7% of those who masturbated less than once per week). 28.8% of men who masturbated more than once a week indicated that the last time was very pleasurable, compared to 22.2% of men who masturbated less than once per week.

### **Associations with Pleasure during Last Masturbation among Men**

Reporting the last episode of masturbation was very pleasurable was associated with:

- Emotional satisfaction in relationship (32.7% of men who were very emotionally satisfied indicated the last masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 20.9% of men who indicated that they were not very emotionally satisfied in their relationship)
- Sexual satisfaction in relationship (35.6% of men who were very sexually satisfied indicated the last masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 19.0% of men who indicated that they were not very sexually satisfied in their relationship)
- Satisfaction with overall sexual life (42.2% of men who were very happy with the sexual aspects of their life indicated the last masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 17.5% of men who indicated that they were not very happy with the sexual aspects of their lives)
- Reporting that their last encounter of penis/vagina intercourse was very pleasurable (34.4% of men who reported that their last encounter of PVI was very pleasurable reported that their last encounter of masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 12.2% of those who indicated that their last encounter of PVI was less than very pleasurable)
- Communication about sexual likes and dislikes (42.6% of those who frequently communicate their sexual likes and dislikes reported that their last encounter of masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 20.3% of those who less frequently discuss their sexual likes and dislikes)

Reporting the last episode of masturbation was very pleasurable was NOT associated with:

- Using lubricant to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using a vibrator to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using a male pleasure sleeve to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using pornography to enhance pleasure during masturbation

- Using cannabis to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using alcohol to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Having a partner present to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Being single, seriously dating, or cohabitating

### **Associations with Pleasure during Last Masturbation among Women**

Reporting the last episode of masturbation was very pleasurable was associated with:

- Vibrator use (46.5% of those who used a vibrator to enhance their pleasure during their last encounter of masturbation reported that it was very pleasurable, compared to 35.0% of women who did not use a vibrator)
- Satisfaction with overall sexual life (46.9% of women who were very happy with the sexual aspects of their life indicated the last masturbation was very pleasurable, compared to 36.0% of women who indicated that they were not very happy with the sexual aspects of their lives)

### **Variables NOT Associated with Pleasure during Last Masturbation among Women**

Reporting the last episode of masturbation was very pleasurable was NOT associated with:

- Using lubricant to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using pornography to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using cannabis to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Using alcohol to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Having a partner present to enhance pleasure during masturbation
- Emotional satisfaction in current relationship
- Sexual satisfaction in current relationship
- Pleasure experienced during last penis/vagina intercourse
- Being single, seriously dating, or cohabitating
- Communication of sexual likes and dislikes