

WOMEN & PORNOGRAPHY

by Patrina Mosley

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I'm not being dramatic when I say that one wrong click changed my life...

...I was instantly taken to a world of seeing men and women treating each other like animals, depicting abusive sex. What I saw shocked me, but I couldn't bring myself to click away from the site because of how the images made me feel. I started going back to it again and again and it quickly started to twist my perception of what was supposed to be love. The images were burned into my mind and I couldn't get them out. Soon, it became a regular part of my daily life to watch and read pornography. Up until that point in my life, there was no void in my life that I felt I needed to fill. Until I found that website. Then it was like I was constantly trying to satisfy something I couldn't fill.

At the age of 15, I started to become scared of myself. I felt nothing; I felt like I couldn't fully care for people, for my body, for my mind, or for my heart. I just felt numb and hollow all the time. I viewed everyone around me, including myself, as objects. Nobody really mattered except for what I saw in porn...

...I just want to let anyone else who is struggling with porn to know that you don't have to cry because you failed last night or today. You don't have to feel alone in your weakest moments or empty at the end of each day. Find a group, find good friends, and find yourself. You can and will win the fight.

— *A female pornography addict from Alaska¹*

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Women and porn. These aren't words you often hear together because pornography has been viewed as primarily a "men's" issue for a long time. Unfortunately, times have changed. Today, more and more women are indulging in "adult" entertainment, unaware of the devastating damage that it does to mind, body, and soul. We hope that this information about the harms of porn will offer hope, help, and healing.

Prevalence

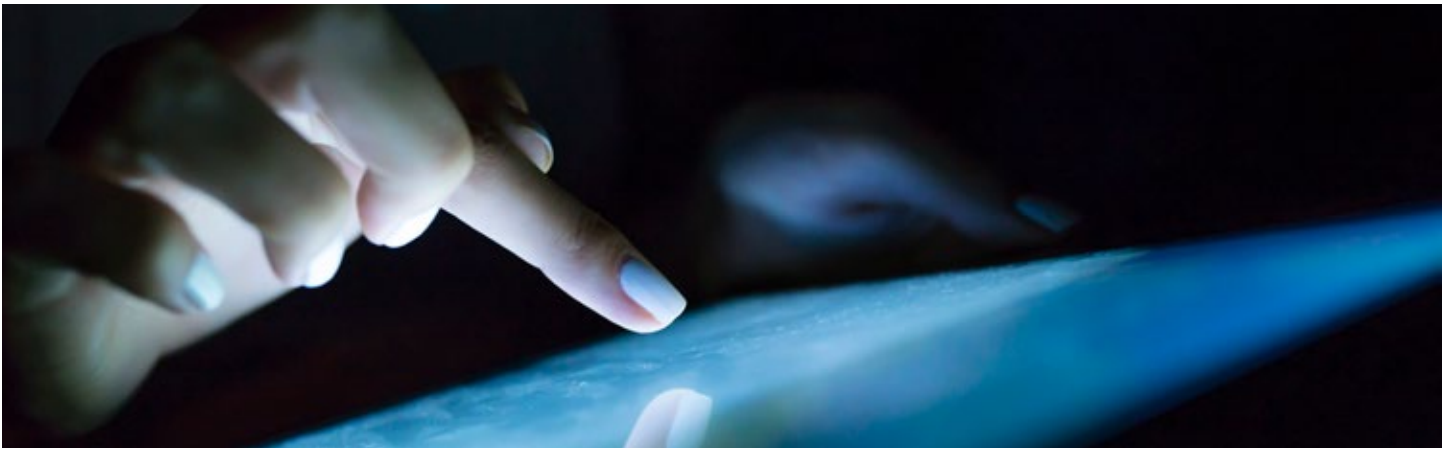
The influence of pornography is seemingly everywhere—in mainstream movies, music videos, TV shows, and many other forms of media. The speed with which this has occurred can largely be traced to one culprit: the internet. This omnipresent medium has enabled smut to go far beyond the pages of print magazines and straight to the screens of the phones in our hands. If you want it, you can obtain any variety of softcore, hardcore, and even child pornography in seconds.



- “**30 percent** of all data transferred across the Internet is porn.”²
- The porn industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, with a net worth of \$97 billion, with the U.S. coming in at over \$10 billion.³
- Porn sites get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter **combined**.⁴
- “**76%** of 18 to 30-year-old American women report that they watch porn at least once a month.”⁵
- Three percent of all women say they either thought they might be addicted or are unsure if they are addicted to pornography. This equates to three million women.⁶

“The reality is, we are the first generation in the history of the world to be dealing with this on such a huge scale,” says Fight the New Drug.⁷ The accessibility of pornography in our hypersexualized culture has trapped many in addiction. Today, viewing pornography is increasingly losing some of its gender-based associations and should no longer be just considered a men's issue. Porn's easy accessibility and cultural acceptance has lured women into its poisonous clutches.

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Porn Use Among Women is Growing

It is now no longer uncommon for women to say they started watching pornography to please their boyfriend or husband, thinking that this would enhance their romantic life. Women have also said that they use porn to fill periods of loneliness with sexual fantasies, or seek it out simply out of sexual curiosity, with the impression that this behavior is sexually empowering because it doesn't require the natural presence of a male.

- “According to a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Research*, about half (**49 percent**) of young adult women agree that viewing pornography is an acceptable way of expressing one's sexuality.”⁸

Generally, “erotica” (commonly defined as sexually explicit literature intended to arouse sexual desire) is geared toward women and “pornography” (commonly defined as sexually explicit imagery designed for sexual arousal) is geared toward men, but erotica has proven to be a gateway to more “hardcore” content, which has led to a rise in women watching pornography.

- In 2008, the erotica genre generated **\$1.37 billion** in sales, making it the “the single largest share of the fiction market,” with over 90 percent of the consumers being women. The female-targeted erotica novel series turned movies, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, grossed over \$1.3 billion alone.¹⁰
- In a recent *Marie Claire* survey of 3,000 women who sought out internet porn, **40 percent** said they used erotic stories.¹¹
- According to a 2017 report from a popular porn site, the number one search was “Porn for Women” – “a term that saw **359 percent growth** among female users between 2016 and 2017.”¹²
- This porn site also reported that females accounted for **26 percent** of visitors to the site.¹³
- The most specifically searched for content on the site was “lesbian.”¹⁴
- **More than half** of women 25 and under seek out porn and one-third seek it out at least monthly.¹⁵
- “About 1 in 5 women use the Internet for sexual purposes habitually—*every week*.”¹⁶
- **25 percent of married women** say they watch porn at least once a month.¹⁷
- A survey of more than 11,000 college-age women revealed that more than half were exposed to sexually explicit material by the age of 14.¹⁸
- According to one study, 15 percent of **Christian women** view pornography at least once a month, which is about one-half of the national average.¹⁹

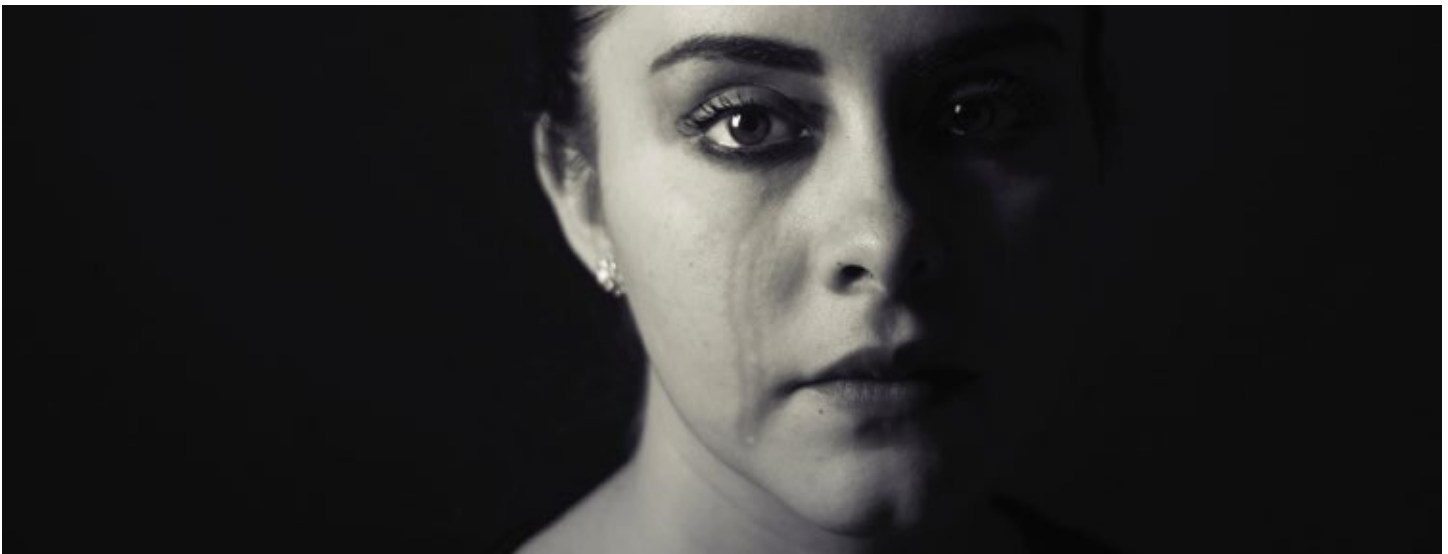
Porn's Impact on the Brain

Significant scientific research has shown that addictions, chemical and natural, create anatomical and pathological changes in the frontal lobe of the brain. “A 2014 study of the brain scans of 64 pornography users found that increased pornography use is linked to decreased brain matter in the areas of the brain associated with motivation and decision-making, and contributed to impaired impulse control and desensitization to sexual reward.”²⁰



Other psychological and physical effects of porn include:

- **Decreased Sexual Satisfaction:** In a cross-sectional study of 200 sexually active married women, women who did not watch soft core pornography were more satisfied with their sexual life when compared to their counterparts. Researchers also found that soft core pornography affects the sex lives of females by “increasing sexual boredom in both men and women, causing relational difficulties.”²¹
- **Lower Self-Esteem:** According to Gail Dines of Wheelock College, “Research from the American Psychological Association informs us that women who internalize the messages of the hypersexualized popular culture tend to have more depression, anxiety, lower self-esteem, eating disorders, and risky sexual behavior.”²²
- **Increased Female Sexual Victimization:** “A study of 14- to 19-year-olds found that females who watched pornographic videos were at significantly greater likelihood of being victims of sexual harassment or sexual assault.”²³ Pornography clearly plays a role in shaping how we think women should be treated.



Porn's Exploitation and Abuse of Women

As we have written previously in “The Link Between Pornography, Sex Trafficking, and Abortion”:²⁴

“Pornography fuels the sex trafficking industry. Each click of pornography creates a demand for more pornography and brings in a profit to the industry. The demand causes traffickers, pimps, and those involved in the sex industry to abuse their victims by filming them in sex acts. Victims of sex trafficking have had to bear the trauma of sexual abuse, physical abuse, drug abuse, coercion, and oftentimes abortion...”

“...Pornographers frequently use children and women who are forced, coerced, or fraudulently induced to be filmed or photographed engaging in sexual acts; this pornographic media is then sold for profit. Laura Lederer, JD stated her findings on Capitol Hill in which she recounted sex trafficking victims' experiences, revealing that

- **29.3 percent** had to recreate scenes from pornography and **17.1 percent** were forcibly recorded for pornographic purposes.²⁵
- Over **25 percent** of child traffickers in Lederer's study took pictures of the children they were exploiting.²⁶ Across all ages and in nine different countries, **49 percent** of rescued sex trafficking victims report they were forced to participate in the production of pornographic material.²⁷ Over half of U.S. women used in commercial sexual exploitation were either in pornographic material or threatened with the possibility.²⁸

Abuse of Women Working as Porn Performers

The pornography industry is highly unregulated, and often performers feel pressure to perform without condoms to remain employed, leaving them and others vulnerable to STD's and infections.²⁹

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation reports: “The actual making of pornography often involves violence and sexual assault. During the production of commercial pornography, performers are subjected to intense abuse and violence and are pressured to continue by their agent or director,” or pimp/trafficker.³⁰



- Porn actress Erin Moore admitted, “the drugs we binged on were Ecstasy, Cocaine, Marijuana, Xanax, Valium, Vicodin and alcohol.”³¹
- Another former porn actress, Tanya Burleson, stated: “Guys are punching you in the face. You get ripped. Your insides can come out of you. It's never ending. You're viewed as an object—not as a human with a spirit. People do drugs because they can't deal with the way they're being treated.”³²

Let's Reshape Our Culture

Porn is becoming the go-to source for learning about sex among young people. The distorted view of sex that porn portrays is leading viewers to adopt more and more deviant sexual behaviors and attitudes. The narcissistic pleasures that both men and women derive from porn are a perversion of the proper attitude towards sex. Tellingly, in a culture where the #MeToo movement has gained widespread success, 33 percent of women *still* say they watch porn with their partners.³³

As Christians, we are the community that can turn against the tide of pornography and renew our sexual culture. If you have allowed porn to become a part of your life, *today* can be the start of a new life—the day you decide to purify your heart and mind by refusing to watch another second of it. As more and more Christians are set free from porn and are transformed in our hearts and minds, the more we become a community that is able to set the standard for the culture at large. We have the power to determine whether or not pornography will have a market in our homes. If more and more people refuse to view porn, it will decrease the demand not only for pornography, but also for sex trafficking and prostitution. Let's continue to support efforts to heighten awareness of the societal and spiritual harms of pornography. Let's empower churches to appropriately address the problems with pornography in their communities.³⁴

Help and Resources

- **National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) (endsexualexploitation.org)** – The leading national organization exposing the links between all forms of sexual exploitation such as child sexual abuse, prostitution, sex trafficking and the public health crisis of pornography.
- **Fight the New Drug (fightthenewdrug.org)** – This organization “exists to provide individuals the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding pornography by raising awareness on its harmful effects using only science, facts, and personal accounts.”
- **Covenant Eyes (covenanteyes.com)** – Provides Internet Accountability software and family Internet filters, as well as free e-books, articles, and blogs on issues of pornography impacting men, women, marriage, children, the demand for sex trafficking, and ways to find regain integrity and find healing.
 - o **Resources for Women Who Struggle with Porn** – covenanteyes.com/2014/06/30/resources-women-struggle-porn/
 - o **Resources for Wives of Porn Addicts** – covenanteyes.com/2014/09/02/resources-wives-porn-addicts/
- **Beggar's Daughter (beggarsdaughter.com)** – Jessica Harris is a former porn addict whose blog covers topics such as pornography, lust, and addiction—all from a women's perspective. She is now a speaker and author of a devotional, *Love Done Right*, a collection of devotionals specifically written for Christian women struggling with lust.
- **Bethesda Workshops (bethesdaworkshops.org)** – The mission of Bethesda Workshops is to encourage sexual wholeness by ministering to men and women damaged by sexual sin and addiction, and those hurt by a spouse's sexual addiction. They offer intensive healing workshops in Nashville, Tenn. for both men and women.

Disclaimer: To the best of our knowledge, the information listed here does not conflict with Christian teaching, and was accurate at the time of publishing.

ENDNOTES

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