

you been with anyone else? Because if you have, maybe it's VD."

I could understand his asking me that; he felt he had to before he saw his doctor. But knowing that didn't make it hurt me any less. I hadn't touched another man since I'd met him, but he seemed to lack the confidence necessary to fully believe that. I swore that there had been no other man. The next day Joe saw his doctor. By that time, the burning sensation had been bothering him for almost three days, but it was beginning to lessen considerably. The doctor said he had probably caught a viral infection from me. Since it was already on the wane, the doctor thought it best to let Joe's body heal itself. In another day or so, Joe was completely well, but we decided to purchase condoms for him to wear when we made anal love, at least for the next few times. He disliked using them, and we soon abandoned them, but he has not contracted an infection since then.

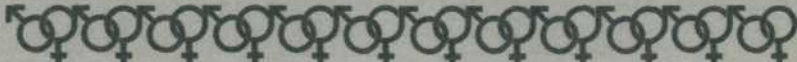
Joe and I got so much pleasure from anal intercourse *without* the help of any sex toys that I was a bit surprised when, one evening, he looked very conspiratorial and handed me a beautifully wrapped package. I opened it and found an enormous, white rubber vibrator shaped like a huge cock and equipped with batteries. Joe could hardly wait to try it. First we used it in my vagina which could admit only the first inch or two. Then we lubricated it with K-Y jelly and tried to insert in my anus. Despite our patience and determination, only the tip of this dildo could get past my sphincter muscles. But as I relaxed somewhat, I could begin to take in a little more of it. Then Joe turned on the vibrator. That was uncomfortable, so we washed it off completely and put it away. We played with it other times, however, just to see how much I could take, or to use inside my vagina when Joe was no longer hard enough to make me come "just once more." Most often, we use it on my clitoris when I am about to climax; it helps to push me over the

edge and prolong a powerful orgasm.

I had read in magazines of couples who had added anal intercourse to their lovemaking and, in preparation, had given each other enemas. (Or at least the man did this to the woman, so she would be clean when he entered her.) I broached this idea to Joe. He was adamant on the subject; no one was going to do that to *him!* He also found the notion of doing this to me distasteful. However, I continued to find the idea intriguing, so I brought it up on several subsequent occasions. Joe has come to accept the thought that we may do this together in the future. He doesn't love the idea of adding this to what he considers "our already perfect sex life," but he has almost become willing to reverse his earlier position to keep me happy. He knows there is virtually nothing I wouldn't do for him—in fact, there is very little we haven't done already! If either of us think of something to add to our sexual repertoire, the other will always try to go along with it. Our lines of communication are open to each other, which is why we find every day fulfilling and expect even better things to come. We have found that even the joys of anal sex can be improved on, and we are working on that together.

It is unfortunately true that however wonderful anal intercourse can be, many couples will never do it for any of several reasons. They feel it is morally wrong and perverted or that it would be too awkward or painful to accomplish. Some fear that a disease could be transmitted anally. Either partner may hesitate to say that he feels it might be a good addition to their sex life. Only if communication is truly open can anal sex become a reality for any couple. And because of the experience my lover and I have had with it, we think it is something everyone should try. □

*Daria Newman is a freelance writer who lives and works in New Jersey.*



# sexology today

## survey results


By John Townley

Earlier this year we polled you, our readers, about a wide variety of sexual subjects and concerns and were gratified to be flooded with hundreds of replies. Readers from all walks of life took the time to fill out and send in our questionnaire, and the results give an interesting picture of today's sexuality, at least as represented by *Sexology Today* readers.

Just who are the *Sexology Today* readers? By sex, 59 percent are male, 41 percent are female. The marital status is the norm for America today: 46 percent married, 7 percent living together, 28 percent single, 6 percent separated, 10 percent divorced, 2 percent widowed. By race, they conform closely to the national averages: 77 percent are white and 16 percent are black, with a scattering of other ethnic backgrounds. By religion, Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics more than two to one. This ratio is much greater than in the population as a whole, perhaps reflecting the greater conservatism of Catholics and the Catholic church toward sexual matters. As far as money and education goes, our readers are several notches above average—well over half are col-

lege graduates and over 40 percent earn \$20,000 or more. Those who make less are largely students or retired persons on fixed incomes. By profession, 27 percent are white collar and 18 percent are blue collar, with the rest scattered among the professions, the military, and students and the retired. They are workers all, with an unemployment rate of only 1.8 percent, far below the national average.

What were your opinions about sex? The responses were a kaleidoscope that range from the arch-conservative to the ultra-permissive. The general trend, however, was more conservative than one might expect from readers who have weathered the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies. More than half, for instance, were against abortion (53 percent), which perhaps lends greater credence to the pro-life movement than most press coverage suggests. Also scoring high in the "It's not O.K." column was homosexuality. Again, over half (55 percent) of our readers distinctly disapproved of it. Surprisingly, prostitution, normally thought to be widely condemned, got the cold shoulder from only 53 percent of our readership.



The biggest yes to all the topics we asked about was awarded to school sex education. A whooping 93 percent approved of it, so we must assume that the members of the vocal opposition to school sex education that has so effectively prevented its implementation across the country are not readers of *Sexology Today*.

The biggest no was given to bestiality (sex with animals). Virtually *everybody* disapproved of it—but oddly, it looks like a case of “don’t knock it until you’ve tried it.” Everybody who admitted to having actually done it approved of it, and we got a number of enthusiastic letters extolling its delights!

Other views turned out to be more liberal, such as on the subject of premarital sex, which only one out of four people had any objection to. Even extramarital sex, thought to be generally although silently feared and condemned, found only half our readers disapproving.

Sexual variations were also approved of, as long as they were fairly tame. Foreplay, different intercourse positions, and, surprisingly, oral sex scored over 90 percent approval. When it came to actual participation, however, the scores were a bit lower, and in the case of oral sex it was decidedly better to receive than to give.

Straying any farther from customary sex practices was decidedly viewed askance. Nearly half actively disapproved of vibrators and sex toys and well over half disapproved of anal sex. Here again, however, those who disapproved in almost every case had never tried what they disapproved of. This seemed to have been a general trend, indicating that people disapproved of sex practices on moral grounds or perhaps because they were afraid of them, and almost never on practical grounds based on experience. The further from the mainstream of common sexual activity a practice was, the greater the disapproval among all but those who actually had some experience in the area. This applied to S/M, transvestitism, group sex, and

the like. Many expressed disapproval while also writing in on the margin that they weren't sure exactly what the practice was they were disapproving of.

We were particularly interested in finding out what subjects people would like to hear more about, since that is what we're here to provide. Here again, there were some surprises. The last few years have seen a flood of magazine articles on impotence and premature ejaculation, supposedly common problems among men. Well, barely a handful of people were interested in hearing more about them. Other super low scores were for fetishism, S/M, and homosexuality, all scoring around 15 percent.

There was considerable interest, however, in the history of sexuality, humor, and fantasy, perhaps demonstrating a desire to put sexuality into an intellectual perspective, where it can be viewed from all sides.

Most in demand, however, was information on sexual techniques, requested by fully three-quarters of those responding. High on the list of priorities were more readers' letters and questions and answers—basic human interest issues which may express and reflect the beliefs and problems we all share.

Perhaps most interesting—and most revealing—were the answers we got on the section of sex problems and concerns. The main problems are a failure to communicate and mismatched sex needs. Two-thirds of those polled felt their partner wants sex either too often or not often enough for their taste. Half also complained that their partner either can't or won't do what pleases them.

Over half the respondents said they had trouble asking for what they wanted in sex. And if you can't bring yourself to ask, how is your partner to know? The inhibitions about talking about sex are apparently still very much with us.

Since sex is such a basic need and function in life, why are people in this so-called liberated age so skittish about communicating about it? A clue may be found in another result of the survey. The

popular image of the anxious parent sitting down with his or her budding teenager to explain the “birds and bees” is apparently pretty much a myth. Only a scant 14 percent of our respondents learned the “facts of life” from their parents. Instead, over half of them report they learned about sex from their friends. But where did their friends learn it from? Not quite 30 percent report they learned about sex from books, but that still leaves a tremendous number of people, indeed the majority, who formed opinions about sex on nothing more than sheer rumor and hearsay. It is no wonder that 93 percent of our readers favor school sex education—they know the problem because they've been there!

Do these survey results tell us anything about what makes up a satisfying sex life? Indeed they do, and the implications may surprise some and comfort others. Throughout, the general belief seems to be that if you just do it well enough, skillfully enough, with enough variety, then sex would be all you ever dreamed of. This was borne out by a general report that those who participate in more sexual variety rated their sexual satisfaction higher.

But more important, those who rated themselves as definitely or at least somewhat religious also rated their sex lives as *four times happier* on the average than those who were not religious. It would appear that a solid religious belief system in some way defuses the anxieties which sex presents—either by simply determining a specific range of comfortable rules within which to play the game, eliminating risky or adventurous areas, or by providing a basic faith which allows the path of sex to be supported by love and inner security. One hopes it is the latter, but for most people it is probably a mixture of both. What is clear, however, is that your sex life is likely to be happier if you have a religion or belief system rather than not having one at all. From our survey results, at least, it would appear that those who list themselves as not religious, agnostic, or

atheist are, for whatever reason, a more sexually unhappy bunch.


The other ironic, although probably predictable, sure-fire indicator for sexual happiness we uncovered is wealth. Money may not be able to buy everything, love included, but it certainly looks like it goes a long way toward buying sexual contentment. The more money our readers made, the more sexual variety they experimented, and the better they related their sex lives. Obviously, when you don't have the pressure of the landlord or other creditors breathing down your neck and a family to support on a shoestring, you feel more relaxed in bed—and any other place, as well.

If it looks like you have to be a religious millionaire to have an ideal sex life, don't despair. As encouraging as the trends that developed were the exceptions to the rules. We heard from newly married paupers who rated their sex life as a ten, and we also got a few wealthy divorcees who were simply miserable. There were religious zealots who rated themselves at zero and seemed proud of it, and there were well-adjusted atheists who seemed to be doing just fine.

In the end, if there is any one firm conclusion the survey provided it was that the quality of your sex life lies primarily in the mind. Both the inner security that improves your sex life and the anxieties or illusions which may cripple it lie less in the circumstances that surround you than in the attitudes and propensities which you bring to those circumstances.

There is great hope in that. Many of our circumstances are forever beyond our abilities to control or even influence, but our minds—and our sex lives which grow out of them—are entirely our own to manage, if we so desire. □

*John Townley is a writer and personal counselor in New York City. Survey analysis was performed on an Apple II microcomputer by a program designed by Howard Sambol especially for Sexology Today.*



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