

The Use of Sex Videos & DVDs in Britain

Summary of Findings of the BBFC Research

Murray Perkins & Pete Johnson

As part of a programme of on-going research to better inform the work of the British Board of Film Classification (the BBFC), the BBFC conducted research into the use of sex videos and DVDs. The purpose of the research was primarily to assist the BBFC in its understanding of the audience for the material. In addition, it was hoped that, by investigating in detail the viewing experience and its relation to viewers' own sexual activity, lessons would be learned regarding such practical classification issues as the relevance of dialogue and the likelihood of imitation of specific activities featured in the material. These issues play a significant part in the BBFC's assessment of the likelihood that a particular sex video/DVD may cause harm to potential viewers, or may cause harm to society through the actions of potential viewers, factors to which special regard is given in accordance with the terms of the Video Recordings Act 1984.

The results of the research have provided support for BBFC policy in a number of areas, especially those relating to adult performers acting as non-adults, the use of dangerous objects for penetration, violent or abusive activity and inherently dangerous practices such as asphyxiative sex play. The research has also highlighted the extent to which the use of sex videos reaches beyond the stereotype of solo male masturbation.

The research is part of a series of investigations into sex works and provided background for the recent 'BBFC Expert Consultation – Teen References in R18' study and a similar exercise currently being undertaken with regard to scenes in which performers appear to consent to significant abuse and discomfort (outside an established sado-masochistic role play context).

Methodology

Questionnaires, with a covering letter and reply paid envelopes, were distributed at two sexual health clinics in London, at St Thomas' Hospital and Guy's Hospital, with advice and support from Dr Cath Rodgers. Questionnaires were also distributed at the Erotica exhibition in Manchester. Distribution took place between December 2003 and March 2004. The BBFC specifically wanted respondents who were likely to be a) potential users of sex videos and DVDs and b) sexually active. The BBFC was also conscious of potential offence generated by the nature of the questionnaires and sought to distribute the questionnaires where the sexual nature of the research might be less likely to offend. It was not the intention of the research to know the attitudes to pornographic material in society generally, or to gain an idea of how many people in society use, or do not use, sex videos and DVDs. It was the intention of the research to know how those who do watch sex videos and DVDs, use the material.

Sex videos and DVDs were defined in the questionnaire as works which mainly focus on images of sex, real or simulated, or sexualised nudity.

Main Findings

574 questionnaires were returned to the Board. Of these 525 (91%) had seen a sex video or DVD at least once. All the responses in this summary are taken from the sample of 525 who had seen a sex video or DVD. Not all respondents answered every question.

GENDER

Male	263	(50%)
Female	251	(48%)

Not stated	11	(2%)
<u>AGE</u>		
18-34	328	(male41%, female57%)
35+	190	(male65%, female33%)
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>		
Heterosexual	340	(male46%, female53%)
Homosexual	101	(male78%, female19%)
Bisexual	56	(male36%, female61%)
<u>RELATIONSHIP STATUS</u>		
In a relationship with one person	271	(male48%, female50%)
Single and sexually active/In relationship with more than one person	154	(male53%, female45%)
<u>THOSE THAT HAVE CHILDREN</u>		
Yes	150	(male53%, female45%)
No	362	(male49%, female49%)
<u>OCCUPATION</u>		
Manual/Admin/Tech	169	(male49%, female49%)
Professional/Managerial	282	(male56%, female43%)

The breakdown of the sample does create some bias in the results:

1. The differences between the genders may partly reflect the higher proportion of homosexual males in the sample compared with homosexual females. 30% of males identified themselves as homosexual compared with 8% of females.
2. The differences between age groups, may partly reflect the fact that 57% of the 18-34 year olds were female, compared with only 33% of the over 35s. ie. if the females were less likely to do something, they skewed the younger group to be less likely to do something. Conversely the older group was predominantly male.
3. The differences between homosexual and heterosexual respondents may reflect the large proportion of males in the homosexual group.

AGE WHEN FIRST VIEWED A SEX VIDEO OR DVD

- 52% of respondents were under 18
- 32% of respondents were under 15

The young age at which a majority of people first watched a sex video or DVD has no strong impact on their use of, or attitudes toward, the material, compared with those who were over 18.

WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO YOUR FIRST SEX VIDEO OR DVD

- 49% of respondents were introduced to sex works by a sexual partner
- 25% of respondents acquired a sex work on their own initiative
- 15% of respondents were introduced to sex works by a friend

More than half of males 54% and almost half of females 46% were introduced to a sex work by a sexual partner. But males are twice as likely as females to get their first sex work on their own initiative (33% of males, 17% of females). Females are 5 times more likely than males to be introduced to sex works by a friend (26% of females, 5% of males).

HOW ARE SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs USUALLY ACQUIRED

- 56% of respondents buy sex videos or DVDs
- 9% of respondents rent sex videos or DVDs
- 54% of respondents borrow sex videos or DVDs

FROM WHERE ARE SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs ACQUIRED

- 51% of respondents get a new sex video or DVD from a friend or relative
- 41% of respondents get a new sex video or DVD from a licensed sex shop
- 36% of respondents get a new sex video or DVD direct (ie. mail order/internet)
- 15% of respondents get a new sex video or DVD from abroad

Males are much more likely to purchase a new sex work from a licensed sex shop (of those who purchase at licensed sex shops 64% are males, 34% are females). The same is true of those who purchase by mail order or the internet (62% males, 36% females) and from abroad (68% males, 26% females). Females are more likely to get a new sex work from a friend or relative (of those who do, 52% are females, 45% are males).

WHAT CATEGORY OF SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs ARE ACQUIRED

- 53% of respondents acquire BBFC 18 or R18 rated sex works
- 14% of respondents acquire sex works which have not been classified by the BBFC
- 34% of respondents didn't know, or didn't state, whether works were classified or not

Male respondents were much more likely to know the classification of a sex work (of those that did, 64% were males, 33% were females), or if it was unclassified (of those that knew, 78% were males, 19% were females).

WHY ACQUIRE UNCLASSIFIED WORKS

- 22% of respondents get unclassified sex works because of no access to a licensed sex shop
- 42% of respondents get unclassified material because it contains material not found in classified sex works

Of those seeking material not found in classified sex works, 17% want "gay/lesbian" works, 10% want "fisting", 7% want bondage, 7% condom free works, and 7% animals. The results reveal some misinterpretation of what is allowed in classified sex works, with the BBFC passing "gay/lesbian" works without discrimination, passing bondage fetish works (the BBFC does have constraints on what it will allow, and respondents may be seeking stronger fetish material), and most sex works which are submitted to, and passed by, the BBFC feature sex without condoms, which is the norm in sex works.

HOW MANY SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs DO YOU CURRENTLY OWN

- 10% of respondents own more than 25 sex videos/DVDs
- 14% of respondents own 10-24 sex videos/DVDs
- 48% of respondents own 1-9 sex videos/DVDs
- 25% of respondents own no sex videos/DVDs

Males are three times more likely to own more than 25 sex videos/DVDs (males 15%, females 5%). Males are twice as likely to have a collection of 10-24 videos/DVDs (males 19%, females 9%). The gender difference is much less for a collection of 1-9 videos/DVDs (males 53%, females 44%). Women are almost four times more likely to own no sex videos/DVDs (males 11%, females 39%).

HOW OFTEN DO YOU WATCH A SEX VIDEO OR DVD

- 45% of respondents watch a sex video or DVD less than once a month
- 50% of respondents watch a sex video or DVD more than once a month

Males watch sex videos or DVDs more often than females (66% of males watch more than once a month, 32% of females). 27% of respondents watch a sex work at least once a week. Only 3% watch a sex work daily.

WHY DO YOU WATCH SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs

- 60% of respondents view for personal stimulation
- 62% of respondents view to initiate sex with a partner
- 18% of respondents view as a social activity with friends

Males are twice as likely to view for personal stimulation (males 65%, females 33%). Females are more likely to view to initiate sex (females 51%, males 46%) and as a social activity with friends (females 55%, males 43%).

FREQUENCY OF USE FOR SEXUAL SATISFACTION

- 17% of respondents use sex videos or DVDs usually, or often
- 54% of respondents use sex videos or DVDs only sometimes

Males are in the majority of those who use sex videos or DVDs usually/often (males 70%, females 28%). It is more evenly spread among those who use sex videos or DVDs sometimes (males 53%, females 46%).

- 94% of respondents are not dependant on sex videos or DVDs for satisfaction

Only 3% said they were dependent on sex videos or DVDs for satisfaction. The figures vary little by gender, age or sexual orientation.

DO YOU ENGAGE IN SEX DURING OR AFTER VIEWING

- 81% of respondents engage in sex as part of their viewing experience
- 16% of respondents do not engage in sex as part of their viewing experience

Of those who engage in sexual activity as part of the viewing experience there is not a significant gender difference (males 84%, females 78%).

WHAT KIND OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS ENGAGED IN DURING OR AFTER VIEWING

- 60% of those who engage in sex masturbate alone
- 56% of those who engage in sex masturbate/engage in foreplay with a partner
- 73% of those who engage in sex have penetrative sex with a partner

The gender splits reveal that for women, sex with a partner/s is almost twice as likely as masturbation alone, whereas masturbation alone is more common among men. But while masturbation alone is more common, a significant number of men also engage in sex with a partner/s. 77% of males engage in masturbation alone, compared with 44% of females. 83% of females engage in penetrative sex with a partner/s, compared with 63% of males. 55% of males engage in masturbation/foreplay with a partner/s, compared with 56% of females. Age has little influence on these numbers. Heterosexual users are more likely than homosexual users to engage in penetrative sex (77% heterosexuals engage in penetrative sex, 55% of homosexuals engage in penetrative sex), and less likely to engage in solo masturbation (54% heterosexuals engage in solo masturbation, 72% homosexuals engage in solo masturbation). Frequent users are more likely to use porn for solo masturbation than infrequent users (73% compared to 43%).

DO YOU VIEW WITH OTHERS

- 49% of respondents view alone
- 58% of respondents view with one other person
- 13% of respondents view in a group

Males are more than twice as likely to view alone (males 68%, females 31%), females are more likely to view with one other person (females 59%, males 38%), with group viewing almost equal between the sexes (females 49%, males 48%). Single sex group viewing is rare (all male groups 28%, all female groups 13%). Most group viewing is mixed sex (64%). This may reflect the proportion of heterosexual respondents, only 3 of 156 heterosexual male respondents viewed in an all male group.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A NEW SEX VIDEO OR DVD

- 42% of respondents focus on a specific sexual activity
- 30% base their choice on a recommendation
- 27% will take whatever is available
- 22% make a choice based on a recognised production house
- 12% make a choice based on a recognised personality

Of those who cite a recognized personality, 94% named a female personality and only 6% named a male personality. Jenna Jameson was the most popular performer. Seymour Butts was the only male in the top 10.

IF THE CHOICE OF A NEW SEX VIDEO OR DVD IS BASED ON SPECIFIC SEX ACTS

- 20% of all respondents want group sex in a new sex video or DVD
- 15% of all respondents want fetish/BDSM in a new sex video or DVD

- 14% of all respondents want lesbian/girl on girl sex in a new sex video or DVD
- 10% of all respondents want anal sex in a new sex video

More males than females look for group sex in a new sex video/DVD (males 21%, females 18%). Males only slightly outnumber females looking for fetish/BDSM (males 15%, females 14%). But more females than males cite girl/girl sex as a basis of choice (24% females, 9% males). It is not suggested this is influenced by homosexual respondents, but it is likely to be heavily influenced by bi-sexual respondents who equally favour group and lesbian sex, with 34% each. Anal sex is sought by more males than females (males 11%, females 8%). Of those looking for anal sex in a new sex video/DVD, 13% are heterosexual and 7% are homosexual.

WHEN VIEWING A NEW SEX VIDEO OR DVD FOR THE FIRST TIME

- 59% of all respondents always view a new sex video or DVD at normal speed
- 18% fast forward to any sex
- 16% fast forward to a specific sexual activity

More females than males will view a sex video/DVD at normal speed when viewing for the first time (females 66%, males 53%). Homosexual respondents are more likely to forward to specific sex (27%), rather than any sex (21%). More regular viewers are slightly more inclined to fast forward than less frequent viewers. Viewers of unclassified material are also more likely to fast forward than viewers of classified 18/R18 material. Those viewing in a group context or for sex with another person are more likely to watch at normal speed than those viewing alone for personal stimulation.

ARE SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs FANTASY OR REALITY

- 45% of respondents feel that sex videos and DVDs are pure fantasy
- 4% of respondents feel that sex videos and DVDs are a reflection of sex in real life
- 45% of respondents feel that sex videos and DVDs are a mix of fantasy and reality

There are no notable difference in these views between males and females. Age has little impact, although a small minority of those aged under 35 believe it reflects a mixture, with a small majority of those aged over 35 seeing it as fantasy.

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED SOMETHING NEW AFTER VIEWING

- 35% of respondents have never tried something seen in a sex video or DVD
- 51% of respondents have tried something once
- 5% of respondents have sometimes tried things
- 5% of respondents often try new things

A slight majority of males have copied an activity once (males 55%, females 47%). Age, sex and sexual orientation have no substantial bearing on this. Those who believe sex is a mix of fantasy and reality are more likely to copy acts than those who see sex works as pure fantasy. 59% of those copying an activity once see sex works as a mix of fantasy and reality 45% of those copying acts see sex works as pure fantasy. Of those who have tried things, the most common thing learnt from sex videos or DVDs is new positions, 23% of respondents (males 25%, females 23%). Anal sex is the next most likely to be copied, 7% of respondents (males 10%, females 5%, heterosexual 10%, homosexual 3%). Bondage is third most popular, 6% of respondents (males 9%, females 2%).

HAVE COPIED ACTIVITIES EVER RESULTED IN HARM

- 95% of respondents have experienced no harm as a result of copying activities from sex videos or DVDs
- 5% of respondents have been harmed by copying activities in sex videos or DVDs

Examples of harm cited by respondents included damaged rectum, cuts and bruises from bondage, torn vagina, bleeding after anal sex, object stuck up rectum, strangulation, and sleep deprivation.

DO YOU THINK SAFE SEX ADVERTISEMENTS ON SEX VIDEOS & DVDs ARE A GOOD IDEA

- 85% of respondents say yes
- 10% of respondents say no

Of respondents who believe safe sex advertisements are not a good idea, 71% believe they are simply ignored. Only 4% believe they are off-putting.

DO YOU THINK CONDOM USE IN SEX VIDEOS AND DVDs ARE A GOOD IDEA

- 75% of respondents say yes
- 18% of respondents say no

Of those that said no, 19% believe condom use detracts from the fantasy, 16% believe condoms look bad, 13% say it spoils the action, and 11% that condoms are off-putting. Of those that said yes, 68% were male, 83% female, 72% were heterosexual and 81% homosexual.

IS THERE ANYTHING WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE IN SEX VIDEOS OR DVDs

- 59% of respondents say yes
- 32% of respondents say no

Of those who said yes, 63% cited underage performers or characters pretending to be underage as unacceptable; 43% cited animals (bestiality) as unacceptable; 29% cited non-consensual or coercive sex, rape, and sexual abuse as unacceptable; and 28% cited violence, injury and pain as unacceptable. Only 4% cited urination as unacceptable.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- The largest age group among respondents was 25-34 year olds, who are equally divided between male and female (37% for each). In the 18-24 age group, 33% are female compared with only 14% of males. Although the number of respondents under the age of 18 is low, there was more than twice the number of female viewers aged below 18 compared with males. Only in the 35+ age group do men outnumber women, and only by a ratio greater than 2-1 in the 55+ range.
- Although the differences are not substantial, homosexual respondents are more likely to view alone for personal sexual stimulation than heterosexuals, who are more likely to view with one other person leading to sex.
 - Homosexual respondents 26% personal stimulation, 17% to initiate sex.
 - Heterosexual respondents 57% personal stimulation, 66% to initiate sex.

- Homosexual respondents 23% masturbation alone, 16% activity with another.
 - Heterosexual respondents 58% masturbation alone, 66% activity with another.
 - Homosexual respondents 27% view alone, 15% with one other person.
 - Heterosexual respondents 54% alone, 69% with one other person.
- Homosexual respondents are more likely to go to licensed sex shops. They make up 19% of the sample, but 29% of those who get sex works from sex shops. Heterosexual respondents are 65% of sample, but only 52% of those who get porn from sex shops.
 - Males are more likely to acquire a sex video or DVD based on defined choice, with a focus on specific sexual activity being the dominant factor at 53%, compared with 31% for females. When it comes to recommendations, males and females chose equally, 30% for females, 29% for males. Females are slightly more likely to take whatever is available, at 28% to males 26%, which reflects females acquiring sex works from sources like friends, opposed to males getting sex works from licensed sex shops. Males are almost three times more likely to recognise production houses, with 32% of males noting this is a basis of choice compared with 12% of females. 19% of males and 14% of females use packaging; 17% of males and 7% of females note a recognised personality; 15% of males and 7% of females take run time into account; 13% of males and 8% of females are concerned with the country of origin. Attractiveness of actors/actresses, plot and storyline, reviews and price are not strong factors in the choice of a new sex work. Only one female and no males indicated that a woman's viewpoint, or material made by a woman, was a factor in choosing a new sex work.
 - Homosexual respondents are much more likely to focus choice on specific sexual activity, 57% compared with 36% of heterosexual respondents. Homosexual respondents are also more likely to recognise production house or personalities, 34% in relation to production house compared with 19% of heterosexual respondents and 15% for personalities compared with 11% of heterosexual respondents.
 - Private is the most popular production house with 22% of males and 31% of females noting that this is a basis for choosing a new sex work. Cazzo is the most popular production house for homosexual product, with 24% of homosexual respondents noting it. Falcon and Bel Ami are the 2nd and third most popular with homosexual respondents with 15% and 12% respectively. Ben Dover is the 2nd most popular production house for heterosexual product, with 10% of females and 5% of males.
 - Private dominates "couple" viewing with 35% of viewers viewing with one other person compared with 14% viewing alone.
 - Those favouring the dominant homosexual production houses are less likely to view sex works often to achieve sexual satisfaction, than those favouring heterosexual material. 11% use Cazzo sometimes, but none often; 6% use Falcon often, 3% sometimes; 5% use Bel Ami sometimes, none use it often. In contrast, the heterosexual material, 24% use Private often, and 24% sometimes; 12% use Relish often, but only 3% sometimes; 6% each use Vivid and Wicked (heterosexual product) often, none sometimes; Ben Dover and Anabolic are both used by 6% often and 3% sometimes. Evil Empire gets 9% often and 3% sometimes.
 - Slightly more viewers of Private see sex works as reflecting reality, rather than a mix of fantasy and reality (25% reality and 24% a mix). Viewers of Ben Dover are twice as likely to see it as a mix of fantasy and reality rather than a reflection of the way sex really happens (4% reality and 8% a mix). Bel Ami viewers perceive sex works to be pure fantasy, (8% fantasy, 0% mixture), whereas Falcon viewers are more inclined to see it as partially reflecting reality (2% fantasy and 7% a mix).

- US produced sex works are a clear favourite (40% of respondents), followed by French and German produced works. British made sex works come fourth (11% of respondents).
- 50% of respondents access porn online (males 74%, females 25%), 48% do not access porn online (males 25%, females 72%). Older respondents are slightly more inclined to access online porn (18-34 years 48%, 35+ years 53%). 90% of respondents' access free sites only. 6% use pay sites (almost twice as many of whom are in the 35+ age group).

October 2006