

# Who's got the stronger sex drive, men or women?

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Perhaps to no one's surprise, new research has determined that men do,

in fact, have a much stronger sex drive than women.

After reviewing more than 200 studies, investigators "found that men consistently report a higher sex drive," said study author Julius Frankenbach, a doctoral student of psychology at Saarland University in Saarbrücken, Germany.

En masse, the research showed that men say they spend considerably more time thinking about sex, fantasizing about sex, feeling [sexual desire](#) and masturbating, compared to [women](#).

"What did surprise us," said Frankenbach, "was that the finding was consistent across countries, age groups, ethnicities or sexual orientations. Men having a higher sex drive than women seems to be a quite universal psychological pattern."

But there's a hitch. When discussing one's own sexual proclivities, are people always honest?

"Sexuality is a sensitive topic," Frankenbach acknowledged. "So we also considered the possibility that people's self-reports are not fully accurate. There was some evidence for such inaccurate responses in our data."

"For example," he noted, "men reported having had more sexual partners than women, which, by simple logic, is almost impossible. However, we concluded that this response bias was relatively small, and could not explain all of the gender difference in sex drive we observed. In other words, we think that the gender difference is real."

The 211 studies reviewed were published after 1996, and participants were at least 14 years old. In all, more than 621,000 people were involved.

Frankenbach and study co-author Malte Friese, a professor in Saarland University's psychology department, analyzed the way each study was conducted. After accounting for some differences, the researchers concluded that the male sex drive is stronger than the female sex drive, with a "medium-to-large effect."

Frankenbach said that the overall degree to which sex drive differs by gender could be compared to standard differences in male vs. female bodies, with "the gender difference in sex drive roughly equal to the gender difference in body weight."

Carole Hooven, a lecturer in the department of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University, welcomed the study.

"I'm not surprised that researchers have confirmed what most of us know to be true by virtue of being a sexually mature human," said Hooven, who wasn't involved in the analysis.

"But what's nice about this study," she said, "is that it compiles, examines and summarizes results from many other studies that have evaluated this question of sex differences in sex drive, and the authors attempted to correct for the influence of bias in people's answers."

Still, the researchers pointed out exceptions to the rule.

Frankenbach said between 24% and 29% of women appear to have a higher sex drive than the "average" man.

So, while on average men may have a stronger sex drive than women, "there are plenty of women who are more into sex than many men," he added.

What exactly accounts for [sex drive](#)?

Frankenbach suggested it probably boils down to a complex interaction between [social norms](#), roles and learning on the one hand, and genetics, physiology and biology on the other.

Hooven said "culture certainly plays a strong role in shaping not only how men and women express their sexuality. It also shapes how the sexes feel about what kind of behaviors are appropriate."

Beyond that, "we have so much research now, across time and place, that converges on the same observation: Men are more motivated by sex than women," with higher levels of the male hormone testosterone likely playing a key motivating role throughout a man's life, she added.

All that aside, however, Hooven said it bears keeping in mind that "some women clearly enjoy it, and none of this scientific stuff has any bearing on what kinds of behaviors are right or wrong."

The findings were published recently in *Psychological Bulletin*.

**More information:** Julius Frankenbach et al, Sex drive: Theoretical conceptualization and meta-analytic review of gender differences., *Psychological Bulletin* (2022). [DOI: 10.1037/bul0000366](https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000366)

There's more on sex drive and gender differences at the [AARP](#).

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