

Over 80 percent of survey respondents report sexting within the past year

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Credit: Peter Griffin/Public Domain

The practice of sexting may be more common than generally thought among adults. More than eight out of 10 people surveyed online admitted to sexting in the prior year, according to research presented at the American Psychological Association's 123rd Annual Convention.

"Given the possible implications, both positive and negative, for sexual

health, it is important to continue investigating the role sexting plays in current romantic and sexual relationships," said Emily Stasko, MS, MPH, of Drexel University, who presented the research.

Stasko and her co-author, Pamela Geller, PhD, associate professor of psychology, ob/gyn and public health at Drexel University, surveyed 870 [participants](#) from the United States age 18 to 82 to assess sexting behaviors, sexting motives, and [relationship](#) and sexual satisfaction. Just over half the participants were women.

Sexting, for the purpose of this study, was defined as the sending or receiving of sexually suggestive or explicit content via text message, primarily using a mobile device, said Stasko. Participants were asked if they had ever engaged in such behaviors.

The researchers found that 88 percent of participants reported ever having sexted and 82 percent reported they had sexted in the past year. Nearly 75 percent said they sexted in the context of a committed relationship and 43 percent said they sexted as part of a casual relationship. Additionally, the researchers found that greater levels of sexting were associated with greater sexual satisfaction, especially for those in a relationship. Participants who identified as single (26 percent) had significantly lower overall scores for [sexual satisfaction](#).

The researchers also found that greater levels of sexting were associated with relationship satisfaction for all but those who identified their relationship as "very committed."

The survey also asked about attitudes toward sexting and found that people who sexted more saw the behavior as more fun and carefree and had higher beliefs that sexting was expected in their relationships.

Sexting has received growing attention as a risky activity, associated with

numerous other sexual risk-taking behaviors (e.g., unprotected sex) and negative health outcomes (e.g., [sexually transmitted infections](#)), said Stasko. This perspective, though, fails to account for the potential positive effects of open sexual communication with a partner.

"This research indicates that sexting is a prevalent behavior that adults engage in for a variety of reasons," said Stasko. "These findings show a robust relationship between [sexting](#) and sexual and [relationship satisfaction](#)."

More information: Session 3014: "Reframing Sexting as a Positive Relationship Behavior," Symposium, Saturday, Aug. 8, 9 - 9:50 a.m. EDT, Room 203D North Building, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, 255 Front St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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