

Study shows female brain responds to porn the same as male brain

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A small team of researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics has found evidence that suggests the female brain responds to pornography in the same ways as the male brain. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the researchers describe their analysis of data from thousands of MRIs taken while volunteers viewed porn and what they learned from it.

Most people would agree that men are more interested in viewing [pornography](#) than women. And statistics would seem to back up such views—the bulk of people watching porn online are male. Such statistics also appear to back up the notion that males are more interested in sex, nudity and the pursuit of gratification. And such widely held beliefs likely contribute to the notion that there are gender differences in the ways that the [brain](#) processes sexual situations in general and pornography specifically. But such a perception might be based more on social convention than reality, as the researchers with this new effort found no differences in the ways the genders process pornography in their brains.

The researchers analyzed data from 61 studies involving sexual response in the [human brain](#)—each involved showing volunteers pornographic pictures or videos during MRI scanning—in all, 1,850 volunteers participated.

The researchers found that there were no discernable gender-based differences in the ways the brain responded to the imagery. The areas of the brain that were activated, such as the [insular cortex](#) and the amygdala, fired in nearly identical ways. There was one caveat, however—the women in the study reported reacting less positively to the images they were shown than did the males. The researchers suggest their findings challenge the status quo—it might not be the case that males are more visually stimulated than females when it comes to sexual matters. It might be that women are less inclined to view pornography than men because of the [social stigma](#) that comes along with viewing such material. They also acknowledge that their study involved looking at large parts of the brain, which means it is possible that there are [gender differences](#) at a more cellular level.

More information: Ekaterina Mitricheva et al. Neural substrates of sexual arousal are not sex dependent, *Proceedings of the National*

Academy of Sciences (2019). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1904975116](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1904975116)

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