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Men over 60 who pay for sex use less protection and purchase more sex as they age

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A new study published today in the *American Journal of Men's Health* surveyed American men between the ages of 60 and 84 who pay for sex and found that the older they were, the more frequently they paid for sex and the more likely they were to have experienced unprotected sexual intercourse multiple times with their favorite commercial sex providers.

"There is a nearly universal perception that older men do not pay for, or even engage sexually with regular frequency," said lead study author Dr. Christine Milrod. "This view may contribute to a false sense of security for both clients and sex workers during their encounters, and may lead to less protective strategies than with younger purchasers of sex. In addition, the exchange of emotional intimacy during the so-called 'Girlfriend Experience' as well as the possibility of being viewed as an elderly low-risk client who engages with only one or a very limited number of providers may contribute to a relaxation of boundaries and a false sense of security in avoiding STIs," Milrod continued.

Using various sex provider review websites and discussion boards, Dr. Christine Milrod and University of Portland sociology professor Martin Monto surveyed 208 men between the ages of 60 and 84 who solicited sex workers in order to assess their condom use and sexual risk taking. The researchers found that:

- 59.2% reported not always using protection with sex workers. 95% reported avoiding protection for manual masturbation and 91% reported avoiding protection for oral sex.

- 31.1% reported having been diagnosed with a STI at some point during their lifetime. 10.2% were once diagnosed with gonorrhea, 10.1% with genital warts, 7.8% with genital herpes and 5.3% with chlamydia.
- Men who reported more unprotected sex acts perceived their HIV risk to be higher and were more likely to have been diagnosed with a STI.
- 77.4% reported that they perceived their likelihood of becoming infected with HIV as "low," while only 62% reported having been tested for HIV.
- 29.2% reported having an "all-time favorite" sex provider with whom they engage repeatedly. Being more emotionally attached to sex workers was positively related to more unprotected sex.
- Of the 60- to 84-year-old men surveyed, advancing age was also positively associated with unprotected sex acts.
- 57.2% reported talking with a doctor about sex since turning 60, though 82.2% of these conversations were initiated by the patients, not by their doctors.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics—Men 60 Years or Older Who Solicit Sex Online.

Item	Percentage (*N*)
Ethnicity	(208)
White	96.6% (201)
Hispanic, Chicano, or Latino	0.5% (1)
East Asian	1.9% (4)
Multiracial/other	1.0% (2)
Education level	(207)
High school or GED	1.9% (4)
Some college or vocational training	15.5% (32)
Bachelor's degree	34.8% (72)
Graduate degree	47.8% (99)
Marital status	(208)
Married	68.3% (142)
Divorced	14.4% (30)
Separated	1.4% (3)
Partnered	2.9% (6)
Widowed	7.2% (15)
Single	5.8% (12)
Income	(205)
$0-35,000	9.8% (20)
$36,000-70,000	20.5% (42)
$71,000-100,000	27.3% (56)
$101,000-150,000	18.0% (37)
$151,000-250,000	12.7% (26)
$250,000+	11.7% (24)
Age (years)	(208)
60-64	60.1% (125)
65-69	27.9% (58)
70-74	8.2% (17)
75-79	2.9% (6)
80-84	1.0% (2)
Total sex partners (12 months)	(208)
1-4	21.6% (45)
5-10	47.6% (99)
11-20	19.7% (41)
21-30	6.3% (13)
31 or more	4.8% (10)
How often sex (12 months)	(207)
None	1.0% (2)
1	0.5% (1)
2-6	8.7% (18)
7-12	15.9% (33)
13-24	33.2% (69)
25-50	24.5% (51)
Over 50	15.9% (33)
Sex with wife or regular partner (Yes)	51.0% (106/206)

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older they were, the more frequently they paid for sex and the more likely they were to have experienced unprotected sexual intercourse multiple times with their favorite commercial sex providers. Credit: Christine Milrod, PhD and Martin Monto, PhD

To reduce the incidence of STIs among sexually active older men, Milrod and Monto suggest that health care providers ask their older male patients about their sexual partners and discuss protective strategies for avoiding STIs.

The researchers wrote, "Medical and mental health clinicians should not assume that old age is a barrier to paying for sex, particularly among the generations that began engaging in sexual activity prior to the epidemic emergence of the HIV virus."

More information: "Condom use, sexual risk, and self-reported STI in a sample of older male clients of heterosexual prostitution in the United States" *American Journal of Men's Health*, 2015.

Provided by SAGE

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