

# BEYOND THE PORN PHENOMENON

## About the Study

Pure Desire Ministries, in partnership with Barna Group, has released a new study on pornography use. The *Beyond the Porn Phenomenon* study covers porn use across genders, generations and Christians, revealing its impact on personal well-being, mental health and relationships. It also examines where porn users seek help and how people view the role of churches in supporting recovery. Learn more about the study by visiting <https://puredesire.org/beyond-porn-phenomenon>.

## About Pure Desire Ministries

[Pure Desire Ministries](#) is a sexual integrity ministry focused on equipping men, women, students and churches with resources and structured groups to bring hope and healing from the effects of sexual brokenness, addiction and betrayal. Through small group resources, on-site or online counseling, training events and ministry partnerships, Pure Desire leads the charge in fostering integrity and sexual health in the Church. Pure Desire is based in Troutdale, Oregon.

## About Barna Group

[Barna Group](#), in its 40-year history, has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation, and generations. Barna Group has worked with thousands of businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world. Barna is an independent, privately held, nonpartisan organization based in Dallas, Texas, with offices in Nashville, Tennessee; Ventura, California; and Atlanta, Georgia.

## Key Findings

- **Pornography use remains a growing problem.** Today, two in three U.S. adults (61%) report viewing pornography, and half of those who use porn say that “no one” knows.
- Additionally, **84% of reported porn users say they don't have anyone in their life helping them avoid pornography.**
- **Common assumptions about porn use are proving to be untrue.** For example, while pornography use is more prevalent among men and non-Christians, a significant proportion of women and Christians also view pornography.
- **The ripple effects of pornography include a notable decline in mental health and well-being.** Meanwhile, 44% of U.S. adults believe “watching pornography has little impact on the other aspects of an individual's life.”
- **Men and women have drastically different experiences surrounding pornography use,** which calls for different recovery strategies. Men tend to have a more positive view of porn use and minimize its effects, while women generally see porn use and its effects as mostly negative.
- **Many Christians also hold conflicting beliefs about pornography.** Over three in five Christians (62%) tell Barna they agree a person can regularly view pornography and live a sexually healthy life.
- **Christians want the Church to address pornography.** While only 10% of U.S. Christians and churched adults say their church offers programming to help those struggling with pornography, just over half (53%) say it's important to them that their church is addressing topics of pornography and compulsive sexual behavior.
- While many churches may not be running specific programs to help porn users, **75% of U.S. pastors say they are individually ministering to those who struggle with porn. They indicate that half of those who've sought help from them (51%) are married men.**
- **Two-thirds of pastors (67%) have a history of porn use,** with almost one in five (18%) saying this is a current struggle. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of pastors (86%) feel porn use is common among Christian pastors.
- **Nearly nine in 10 youth leaders (89%) say they wish teens were taught about sexual health and behaviors by a parent,** however, seven in 10 believe “friends” and “social media” (69% each) have the biggest influence on what young people learn about sex today.

## **Methodology**

### General Population

A survey of 2,976 U.S. adults was conducted online from October 20–30, 2023, via a consumer research panel. Among this sample was also an oversample of practicing Christians—U.S. adults who self-identify as Christian, regularly attend church and agree strongly that their faith is very important in their lives today. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 2.3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Quotas were set to representation by region, race / ethnicity, education, age and gender based on the U.S. Census Bureau. Minimal statistical weighting has been applied to maximize sample representation.

### **Ministry Leaders**

#### U.S. Youth Leaders

A survey of 205 U.S. Christian youth leaders was conducted from November 16, 2023–January 16, 2024. Participants were recruited through two primary channels: referrals from pastors on our proprietary Pastor Panel and email recruitment through a number of youth leadership networks. While effort was made to ensure a diversity of sample, representativeness may not be guaranteed due to sample size and recruitment limitations. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 6.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

#### U.S. Senior Pastors

A survey of 462 U.S. senior Protestant pastors was conducted from September 27, 2023–October 9, 2023. The margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. For this survey, researchers used an online panel for data collection and observed a quota random sampling methodology. Participants are all members of Barna Group's proprietary Pastor Panel. Minimal weighting has been used to ensure the sample is representative based on denomination, region and church size.