

Publications of the Population Research Institute,
Series D 41/2003

Sexual Trends in the Baltic Sea Area

**Elina Haavio-Mannila
and
Osmo Kontula**



The Population Research Institute
Väestöntutkimuslaitos
Väestöliitto, The Family Federation of Finland

The cover picture by Sirkka-Liisa Lonka,
hand-made linen paper, *Couple* 1992.

Translated by Maija Mäkinen
Layout: Anne Virtanen

The Population Research Institute
Väestötutkimuslaitos

Väestöliitto, The Family Federation of Finland
PO Box 849 (Iso Roobertinkatu 20–22 A)
FIN 00101 Helsinki, Finland
Telephone: +358-9-228 050
Telefax: +358-9-612 1211
E-mail: pop.inst@vaestoliitto.fi
<http://www.vaestoliitto.fi>

ISBN 952-9605-99-4
ISSN 0357-4725

Hakapaino Oy
Helsinki 2003

Contents

Prologue	7
1. Introduction	11
Background on sexual research.....	11
Different approaches	11
Sex and sexuality.....	13
Sexual generations.....	15
International comparisons	16
The structure of this book.....	18
2. Sexual initiation	20
Acceptance of sexual relations among young people	20
Talking about sex, and teaching young people about sex	23
The beginning of dating	25
The sexually uninitiated	28
First time of sexual intercourse – at what age?	28
The first sexual partner.....	31
Use of contraception in first sexual intercourse	34
3. Couple formation and sexual relationships	37
Current forms of couple relationships.....	37
Marriage, cohabitation, living-apart-together (LAT), and living single	37
Love and the couple relationship.....	41
Sexual partners and lifetime relationships	44
Number of sexual partners	44
Loving and sexual relationships.....	51
Social factors that contribute to the number of sexual partners	53
Marriage and cohabitation.....	55
Workplace romance	58
Parallel relationships	60
Lifetime relationship types.....	69

Preferred sexual lifestyle.....	72
Form and commitment of preferred sexual relationships.....	72
Preferred types of sexual relationships among different age groups	74
Compatibility of preferred and actual sexual lifestyle	75
4. Sexual desire	79
Nature of sexual desire	79
Satisfaction with the frequency of intercourse in the present couple relationship	80
Prevalence of lack of sexual desire	87
Factors that explain lack of sexual desire.....	91
5. Sexual activity	93
Sexual relationship with a partner.....	93
Relationship to the latest partner	93
Sex with a same-sex partner	94
Discussing sex with a partner	99
Frequency of sexual intercourse.....	101
Gender roles in initiating intercourse	104
Alcohol and sexual intercourse	107
Types of sexual expression.....	109
Positions in intercourse	110
Manual stimulation.....	113
Oral sex.....	116
Anal intercourse	123
Bondage and sadomasochism.....	124
Sex for money	125
Masturbation	129
Autoeroticism and masturbation	129
Fears connected to masturbation	131
Differences in masturbation frequency	132
Masturbation and the couple relationship	136
Who has the highest motivation to masturbate?.....	137
The relative significance of factors that predict masturbation	142
Use of pornography.....	143
What is pornography?	143
More exiting porn, but less of it	144
Masturbation and pornography	151
Factors that explain the use of porn.....	153
Phone sex.....	154

6. Sexual wellbeing and sexual health	155
Orgasms.....	155
Orgasmic frequency	156
What increases orgasmic frequency?	160
Sexual satisfaction.....	162
Satisfaction with sexual experiences and couple relationships	162
Sexual self-image	167
Factors that affect sexual satisfaction.....	170
Problems with sexual arousal and duration of sexual intercourse	172
Erection dysfunction.....	173
Vaginal lubrication difficulties	178
Timing: when the partner is too quick or too slow.....	181
Effect of illness on sexual relations.....	184
Contraception	185
Abortion	190
Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).....	194
7. Sexual trends in the 1990s	200
Summary of the implementation of the study	200
Regional differences in sexual life	203
Sex in youth.....	203
Sexual relationships.....	204
Sexual activity	206
Sexual wellbeing	207
Contraception and sexually transmitted diseases	207
Sexual culture in the east and west	208
Gender similarities and differences	211
Gender similarities	211
Gender difference similarities in different areas	212
International variation in gender differences.....	213
What are the future sexual trends?	214
References	222
Authors	228

Appendices	229
The data.....	229
The 1971 Finnish study.....	229
The 1992 Finnish study.....	231
The 1999 Finnish study.....	234
The Swedish data for 1996.....	236
The St. Petersburg data for 1996.....	237
The Estonian data for 2000.....	238
Presentation method of the findings.....	239
Representativeness of the 1999 data set.....	240
Demographics, lifestyle and couple relationships.....	240
Data from retrospective questions.....	243
Entire life course data.....	245
Conclusions regarding the representativeness of the 1999 data.....	248
The 1999 survey questionnaire.....	253

Prologue

It is thanks to a small group of researchers – Kai Sievers, Osmo Koskelainen and Kimmo Leppo – and to the nationally representative data on sexual issues that they collected through interviews as early as 1971, that it has been possible to study the changes in sexual behavior and values that occurred among the adult population in Finland during the 20th century (Sievers, Koskelainen & Leppo, 1974).

In the 1990s, we, the authors of the present volume, collected two new data sets that are largely comparable to the first sex study. In 1992, the Academy of Finland funded our project to interview and survey 2,250 Finnish participants aged 18-74 years. The study's findings and the comparisons with the 1971 study were published as *Suomalainen seksi. Tietoa suomalaisten sukupuolielämän muutoksesta*. (Sex in Finland: Information about changes in Finnish sexual life, Kontula & Haavio-Mannila, 1993). Central portions of the book were published in England as *Sexual pleasures: Enhancement of sex life in Finland, 1971–1992* (Kontula & Haavio-Mannila, 1995a). This volume is also available on the web, at www.sexology.cjb.net.

The second part of our so-called FINSEX project was a study of sexual topics as they appear in the media. It was published in *Seksiä lehtien sivuilla* (Sex on the pages of magazines, Kontula & Kosonen, 1994; Kontula & Kosonen, 1996). The aim was to find out how representations of sexuality had changed in the Finnish press in the course of thirty years on the basis of published texts, images and advertisements. This information provided a background for the changes in sexual life that could be observed. This data was used to assess the overall changes that have occurred in Finnish sexual culture, as well as the timing of such changes.

The third part of the larger project consisted of sexual autobiographies that were collected in a writing competition in 1992. On the basis of these autobiographies, we published two volumes in Finnish: *Matkalla intohimoön: Nuoruuden hurma ja kärsimys seksuaalielämäkertojen kuvaamana*. (Along the way to passion: The joy and suffering of youth revealed in sexual autobiographies, Kontula & Haavio-Mannila, 1995b) and *Intohimon hetkiä. Seksuaalisen läheisyyden kaipuu ja täyttymys omaelämäkertojen kuvaamana* (Moments of passion: Longing and fulfillment of sexual intimacy described in sexual autobiographies, Kontula & Haavio-Mannila, 1997). The sexual autobiographies have also yielded an English-language volume, *Sexual Lifestyles in the Twentieth Century* (Haavio-Mannila, Kontula & Rotkirch, 2002). The sexual autobiographies have supported

and provided practical insights into the more profound social changes that have occurred in sexual life – changes that are also apparent in the results of our surveys.

We also cooperated with other European researchers in a venture that was financed by the European Union. The aim was to compile the data collected through national surveys about sexual behavior. Apart from the present project, these studies were financed with funds intended for HIV prevention. Finnish findings were included in a European comparison in a book entitled *Sexual Behaviour and HIV/AIDS in Europe: Comparisons of National Surveys* (edited by Michel Hubert, Nathalie Bajos & Theo Sandfort, 1998). Our contributions were also included in that book.

In the late 1990s, European research cooperation (www.fusl.ac.be/Files/General/ces/rechside.AC2.html) provided one of the incentives to begin to collect follow-up data on Finnish sexual lifestyles. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland supplied the funding. Together with Statistics Finland, we compiled the data in late 1998 and early 1999 in order to compare the results with the 1971 and 1992 surveys. The international comparisons are based on the following adult population survey sets: the survey data collected in 1996 in St. Petersburg through Academy of Finland funding (Gronow et al., 1997), the data from a national interview survey on sexual lifestyles conducted in Sweden in 1996 (Lewin et al., 1998), and the survey data from Estonia in 2000 compiled by Elina Haavio-Mannila. Sexual autobiographies from St. Petersburg and Estonia (Rotkirch, 2000; Karusoo, 1997) also provided indirect support for some of our interpretations.

The present English-language volume is based on a more extensive Finnish work *Seksin trendit meillä ja naapureissa* (Trends in sex life: At home and in the neighbouring countries) (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 2001) as well as a statistical report *Trends in sexual life* (Haavio-Mannila, Kontula & Kuusi, 2001).

This book has two aims. First of all, we analyze the changes that occurred in Finnish sexual lifestyles from 1971 to 1992 and 1999. A sexual lifestyle study that has been repeated three times is unique worldwide. The oldest interviewees were born in 1917 and the youngest in 1981, and their sexual experiences thus span nearly the entire last century.

The second aim is to compare sexual lifestyles in four cultural areas in the Baltic region: Finland, Sweden, Estonia and St. Petersburg. The first two represent Nordic countries, while the latter two represent areas that were part of the former Soviet Union. A comparison of Nordic countries and former Soviet areas illustrates the impact of economic, political and cultural factors on sexual lifestyle. Each of the four areas is geographically adjacent to the Baltic Sea, and the histories are intertwined in many ways. Each of the four areas has its own language, and the ethnic background and culture of each region's population is different.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Population Research Institute of the Family Federation of Finland, and its Director Ismo Söderling, as well as to the Department of Sociology of the University of Helsinki, for providing the essential resources that made it possible to bring forth this book. We would also like to thank Statistics Finland, and particularly Päivi Hokka, for compiling the 1999 data. Additional thanks to Elina Kuusi for her assistance with the tables and figures, and to Tapani Alkula for his invaluable assistance in statistical data processing.

We would also like to thank our international partners. The St. Petersburg and Estonia surveys were designed together with Anna Temkina, Elena Zdravomyslova, Anna Rotkirch and Krista Papp. Roman Magilevski and Oleg Dempo from St. Petersburg Gallup, Olli Perheentupa from the Finnish Consulate in St. Petersburg, and Erkki Rannik from the Estonian Academy of Sciences participated in the collection of the St. Petersburg data. The data on Estonia was compiled by the Emor research center, where Mari Tarum-Seilenthal's input was invaluable. Thank you to Bo Lewin, who graciously allowed us to use the Swedish data.

Since the 1960s, the release of data concerning sexual lifestyles for public use has contributed to the happiness of people's relationships and sexual well-being. In recent years, there has occurred an international trend to promote sexual rights and sexual health (Lottes & Kontula, 2000). Sexual research and new information about sex have played an important role in this development. We hope that the new data in this book will help to promote sexual wellbeing and sexual health also in the personal lives of our readers.

Helsinki, November 2003

Elina Haavio-Mannila and Osmo Kontula

