

Apr. 15, 2021

THE HARVARD

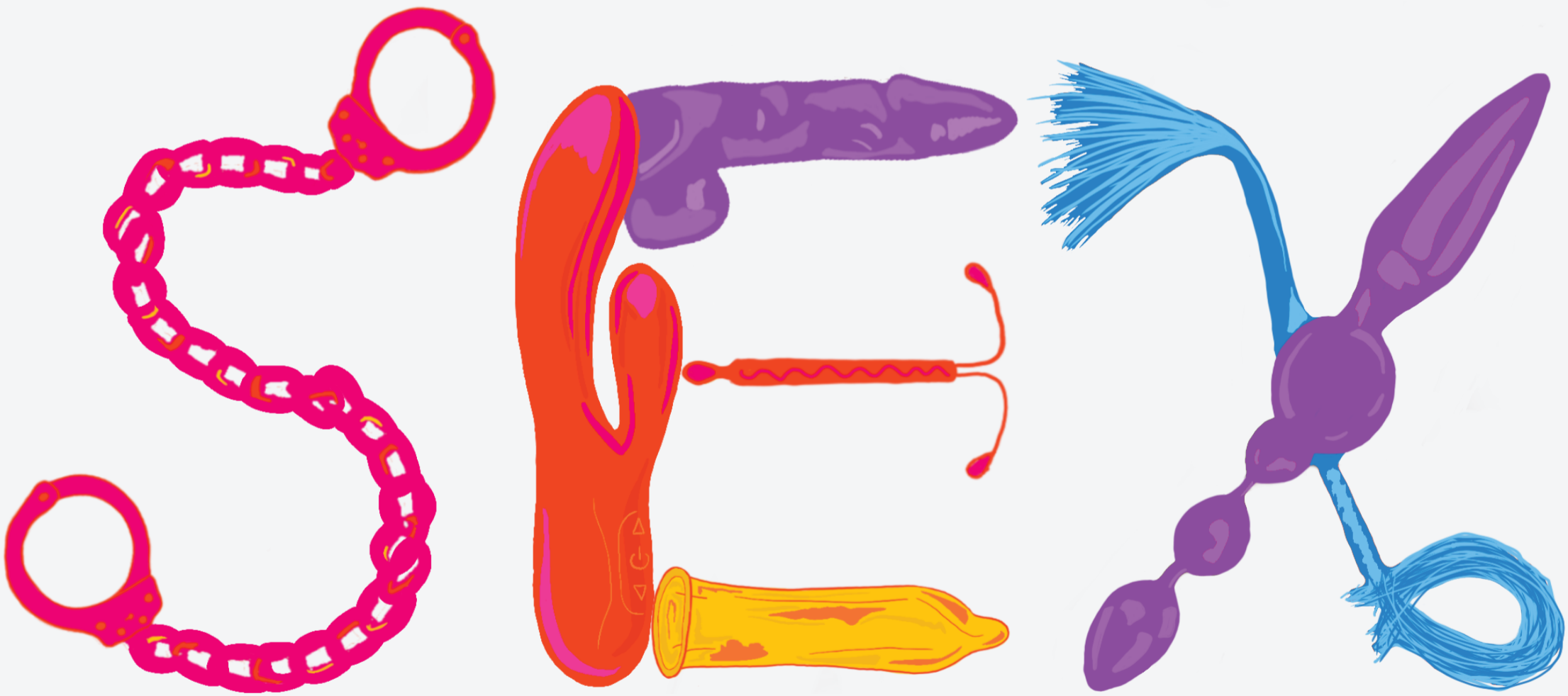
Issue 06

# independent

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

# THE

SURVEYING OUR BURNING



DESIRE FOR TOUCH

# ISSUE

# MASTHEAD

April 15, 2021

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## THE SUSTAINERS

*The Sustainers are a group of Independent alumni committed to supporting our mission by funding one month of office rent each year for at least five years.*

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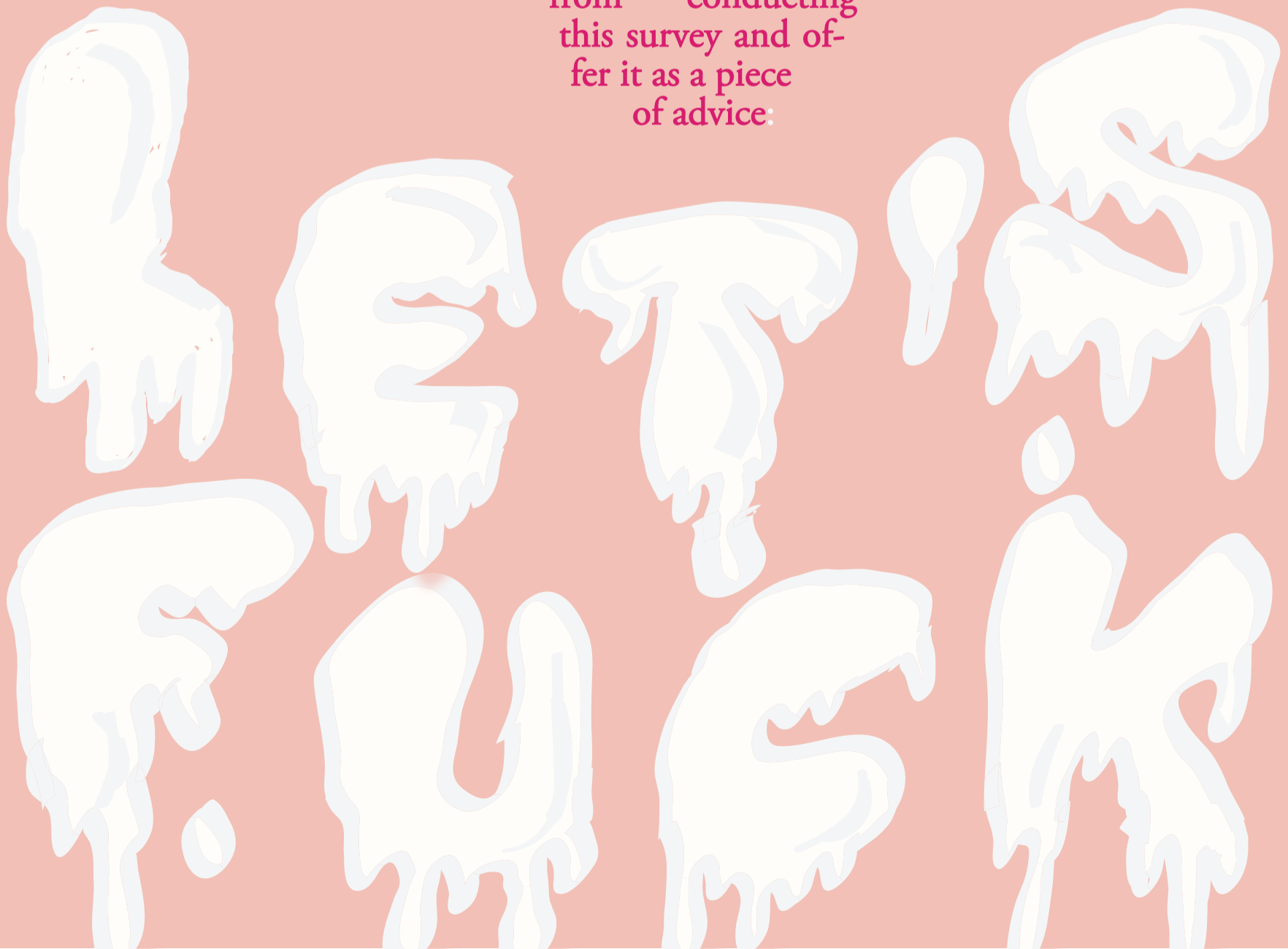
# THE SEX SURVEY\*

CONDUCTED BY THE INDY'S SELF-PROCLAIMED, REVERED-BY-MANY SEXPERTS

ARSH DHILLON '23  
RYAN STANDED '23

\*THIS SURVEY DOES NOT REPRESENT THE OPINIONS OF HARVARD'S ENTIRE STUDENT BODY—ONLY ITS RESPONDENTS

**W**e're back, and the Indy's hornier than ever, just like you--according to the Indy's Sex Survey of 2021. After taking a year-long hiatus, the *Independent's* Sexperts returned to ask about your sexcapades in life and during your time at Harvard, your sexual fantasies and desires, your favorite sex toys, your masturbation practices, your favorite positions, your thoughts on whether Harvard students have sex appeal and which concentrators have the most sex appeal, and obviously, whether you spit or swallow. In the *Independent's* Sex Issue, you will discover all of the compiled data and read the unedited anecdotes, but before you begin, your Sexperts want to summarize everything we learned from conducting this survey and offer it as a piece of advice:



# MASTURBATE!

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE TASTE OF CUM?

DO YOU WATCH PORN?

45.6%  
SOMETIMES

21%  
OFTEN

30.3%  
NOPE

3.1%

ONLY WHEN I'M NOT IN A RELATIONSHIP

37.9%  
SEXUAL PARTNERS

54.4%  
ME

7.7%  
NEITHER

WHO'S BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL AT MAKING YOU ORGASM?

4%  
BITTER/  
WEIRD

6.7%

SOUR

42.6%  
SALTY

43.6%  
NEVER TRIED

SPIT OR SWALLOW?

78.7%  
SWALLOW

21.3%  
SPIT

FIRST PORN EXPERIENCES

"GOOGLED BOOBS AT AGE 7. THE REST IS HISTORY."

"JUST TRYING TO FIND SOMETHING SOFTCORE BUT COULD ONLY FIND ORGIES"

"LOOKING UP 'SEX' AND THEN CRYING AND TELLING MY MOM"

"FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE AFTER I BOUGHT MY FIRST SEX TOY"

"TWO GIRLS ONE CUP"

"AN OMEGLE AD"

HAVE YOU BEEN MASTURBATING MORE DURING THE PANDEMIC?

52.3%  
YES

47.7%  
NO

HOW OFTEN DO YOU MASTURBATE EACH WEEK?

64.6%  
1-4x

21.5%  
5-9x

9.7%  
NEVER

4.1%  
10x +

# ONLY GOOD VIBES

## DON'T HAVE A SEX TOY FROM GOOD VIBRATIONS? YOU'RE MISSING OUT

BY KATE TUNNELL '24

Some college students might blush at the idea of knowingly entering a store that exclusively sells sex toys, but the sex store Good Vibrations in Harvard Square boasts nothing but quality products and welcoming vibes. Quality is important when considering sexual wellness, and Joani Black, founder of Good Vibrations, made it her life's mission to encourage healthy pleasure. Blank found that all the vibrators on the market were low-quality and, as one Harvard student states, "smarmy". She set out to build a business focusing on women and sex education, establishing her first store in San Francisco in 1977. With a focus on high quality sex toys, the brand expanded to several different locations and soon catered to all genders and sexual orientations.

Let's talk vibes. One Harvard student '22 describes how a trip to Good Vibrations is "like walking into Lush," a cosmetics store that displays its products in an appealing and colorful way, inviting new customers. "It just feels fresh and good... it's a very professional

setting," the student said. "If you're someone who's just exploring your sexuality or have never been in a sex store before, it's a great place to kind of dip your toe in the water." Stepping into a sex store that resembles a cosmetics chain encourages timid customers to view sexual pleasure as something approachable and commonplace, as opposed to something dirty or forbidden.

Good Vibrations furthers this mission of destigmatizing sex with its sex-education platform, centered on sex-positivity and non-intimidating information. Good Vibrations has a longstanding presence at Harvard's Sex Week, hosted by SHEATH (Sexual Health and Education Advocacy Through Harvard). The company provides Harvard students with trained speakers and free sex toys in the form of \$200 vibrators. In fact, one student says that if it weren't for Good Vibrations, Harvard wouldn't have Sex Week.

Although Good Vibrations is convenient, its prices deter some students from purchasing their products. Yes, the business

throws around \$200 vibrators, but for students walking in to purchase a toy, the minimum sale is around \$50. Even though the company preaches accessibility, the quality of their products does not come at a small price. However, "if you think how often you would use [the sex toy] per day divided by the cost, you're probably making a good investment," one student said. Also, it is often more difficult for people with vaginas to orgasm through masturbation than it is for people with penises, so the investment in a quality vibrator may be worthwhile.

Read some reviews of Harvard students' favorite products from Good Vibrations, and learn which vibes are the vibe. An important note: the store sells many sex toys for people with penises—not just for people with vaginas!

### The Tenga Egg

"I feel like men don't know they have sex toys available to them," said a student '22 who uses a tenga egg, which is "like an easter egg, and you crack the egg open and you get



this silicon egg that's flexible and malleable. Inside of each egg is a sort of design, some of them are ribbed, some of them are polka dots, but they are all textured, so if you just throw some lube in there it's really pleasurable for people who are penis-having."

### The Rabbit

One student '23 purchased a vibrator "called the rabbit, because it has little bunny ears at the end," they said. "I had one from Goop and it's about the same size except this one has different speeds and modes whereas the Goop one was just different speeds. Except I like the Goop one better because the one from Good Vibrations is supposed to be used externally but the Goop one can be used for both."

### Handcuffs & Lube

"I purchased them on a whim because Good Vibrations seemed like a convenient place to buy sex toys," said one student '23. "I would say the things I purchased were pretty standard—I was happy with my purchases. The women in the store were super helpful and had a lot of personal experiences to share with each toy I bought."

### G-spot Bullet

Another student '23 owns "a small, waterproof, and rechargeable silicone vibrator" from Good Vibrations. "Of the other vi-

brators I've tried, this one might be one of my favorites," the student said. "It's easy to travel with because of its size and you don't have to worry about batteries." The product has "different vibration settings and intensities, and for a small vibrator the vibration can be more intense than others. Because of its shape, it's also great to use internally, but I personally prefer external clitoral stimulation, especially when using this vibrator. It's super easy to clean, just water and soap because it's silicone so it's very hygienic."

### Vibrator and Sex Book

Student in class of '24 says, "I've had a vibrator now for 2 years... I'm so pro-female masturbation honestly. I went into Good Vibrations in November with a couple friends, and we all got new vibrators. I got this one vibrator, I don't know exactly what it's called, but the people at the store were so helpful and nice. They wanted to make sure everyone had good experiences. But it's such a good vibrator and I probably honestly use it like 3-4 times a week. And I just think it's so important for sexual health to masturbate and just like health in general. But I've also bought little things there for people—for example, for my roommates it was Valentines Day and they both got out of relationships, and so we got them both books there that were very informative

and sex-positive. I've gotten all my roommates into buying vibrators from Good Vibrations and I just think it's the best move ever. I probably orgasm twice when I use it.

"The staff is also amazing there. They're so helpful and they really just point you in the right direction. And the quality of things that they have there is super super high. You can basically just go in there and know that whatever you are getting is good which is very positive."

Pick your poison, or, for the sake of Good Vibrations's mission and values, your remedy. You cannot go too far wrong when shopping at this sex toys store. Stop by 52 JFK street for a chat with a certified staff member or just to check out their displays.

Let's free sexual wellness from stigma and shame. There's no need to whisper what Good Vibes writes on their website in all-caps: "OWN YOUR PLEASURE".

Kate Tunnell '24 (ktunnell@college.harvard.edu) is a Staff Writer for the Independent.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

# KINKY OR COMPLACENT?

## HOW HARVARD COUPLES HOPE TO SPICE UP THEIR SEX LIVES

BY ANONYMOUS '24

With almost a year of online school under our belts, more and more couples, both at Harvard and long distance, have experienced the trials of life at home or being stuck in a dorm room. The all-too-familiar side effects of Zoom fatigue and restricted social gatherings are preventing students from meeting new friends and potential sexual partners in physical settings. While this might hurt one's ability to feel out traditional hookup culture, it also gives high school sweethearts and long-distance couples the chance to stay together without jeopardizing their relationships.

For those who entered college already committed to a romantic partner from their home town or high school, or perhaps those who have met their significant other at Harvard, sex holds a meaning different than that of just another one-night-stand. The ability to articulate personal sexual desires and preferences and experiment with unconventional outlets of intimacy becomes more prevalent as the relationship develops, and something that the pandemic has augmented. The *Independent's* Sex Survey reveals how Harvard students are keeping the sparks in their relationships alive.

The most obvious and perhaps overlooked aspect of being in a relationship is the ability to shamelessly ask for and try new things. Hooking up with someone for a long period of time allows each partner to become more comfortable with both their own and their partner's desires. Contributing to the romance and attraction in a relationship, this sexual history encourages partners to "Listen to what I say I like, and implement things immediately after we discuss," says one student.

Yet with this intimacy and familiarity of having a long term boyfriend/girlfriend comes the fear of reaching complacency. Two-thirds of respondents articulated their desire for new ways to sexually please themselves and their partners. The other third defended their current sexual routines and indicated that they were happy with their sex lives. But the overwhelming majority expressed some desire in engaging in anal sex and/or having a three-some—activities that transcend the boundaries of stereotypically traditional sex.

For those not in committed or exclusive relationships, reservations about these acts could arise from a plethora of causes. A common fear is that both anal sex and threesomes (when experienced with an

unknown third person) can be very messy and potentially awkward situations. For anal sex specifically, a combination of the fear of pain without proper lubrication, the fear of a partner's unknown history, and the fear of ending up with feces in undesired places can understandably deter someone from this experimentation. Yet it is important to recognize that sex, regardless of its form, will likely be a messy affair, and that proper communication and acceptance can greatly improve the experience.

Couples may not wish to engage in threesomes primarily for the fear of jeopardizing an already functioning and happy relationship, as well as simply not finding the perfect time or place to do so. Especially in college, where finding an independent third wheel might be difficult, the act of engaging

**"TWO-THIRDS OF RESPONDENTS ARTICULATED THEIR DESIRE FOR NEW WAYS TO SEXUALLY PLEASE THEMSELVES AND THEIR PARTNERS."**

**"MANY SIMILAR RESPONSES FROM THE INTERVIEWED COUPLES DEMONSTRATED THAT...COWGIRL AND DOGGY-STYLE...WERE POPULAR AMONG THOSE APPRECIATED CONVENTION."**

**"GIVEN THE LULL IN HOOKUP CULTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC, STUDENTS HAVE EXPRESSED A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN NONTRADITIONAL SEXUAL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING DIRTY TALK, BONDAGE, ROLE PLAY, AND CREATING SEX TAPES."**

in polyamory remains uncommon, as only 9.1% of students reported they have engaged in a threesome. More than 40% of responses, however, express an interest in sex with three or more partners. As long as boundaries are set, decisions and intent are clearly established, and each member of the trio is willing to set aside feelings of jealousy or personal agendas, threesomes can substantially improve the thrill and seduction of sexual experiences, and can even help an individual learn more about their sexuality.

So for those who are familiar with and confident in their partners' recent sexual history, any hesitations should only lie in a sense of confidence and curiosity in exploring new avenues of pleasure.

*Give it a go, and make sure to bring some lube with you.*

A surprisingly large number of re-

spondents articulated a sense of satisfaction with their current routines and "like to keep things basic" with the same types of sex positions. One student in a relationship said, "we like to pull each other in close; and the skin-to-skin touch feels more intimate," while another simply said, "cowgirl is fun, and doggy's just hot." Many similar responses from the interviewed couples demonstrated that these two positions—cowgirl and doggy-style—were popular among those who appreciated convention. Based on the responses, the former position primarily pleased the interviewed cis women more, whereas the interviewed cis men, on average, tended to appreciate the latter.

However, not all Harvard students want to "keep things basic." An important aspect of maintaining sexual interest with a consistent sexual partner is creativity, and given the lull in hookup culture during the pandemic, students have expressed a particular interest in nontraditional sexual activities, including dirty talk, bondage, role play, and creating sex tapes. 40% of survey respondents enjoy and regularly engage in choking their partners during hookups as well as obtaining pleasure from acts of domination and submission. The majority of respondents (~60%) are either interested in or have already partaken in some form of physical play—including spanking, whips, and paddles, as well as experience in or plans to engage in temperature play. This unity in sexual curiosity falls short when it comes to golden showers: a strong 61.5% of respondents refuse to be urinated on during sex. Overall, it seems that Harvard students are quite kinky.

Regardless of the type of sex that couples enjoy, the primary consensus is that relationship sex differs greatly from hookup sex, and that the way couples keep things interesting differs.

Despite the trends in interview answers and poll responses, there is no concrete routine or formula to keep the sparks of a relationship alive—it is a matter of communication, patience, and understanding to discover what works best for you.

*Illustration by Marina Zoullas '23*

thoughts & whispers that keep us awake at night

# Pillowtalk

by Abigail Koerner '21

## Dirty Talk

56.9% of you say, *Yes to it*

25.4% of you say, *I could never take it seriously*

7.6% of you say, *I'd like to try it*

6.1% of you say, *No to it*

4.1% of you say, *The pandemic has led to phone sex, so yeah...*

## Consent

I want to hear you say yes  
Before, during, and after  
I want you to ask  
If I want it slower or faster  
Inside or outside  
Standing up or sitting down

*Consent* is the word  
And enthusiasm is key  
It needs to be mutual  
If you want to get freaky with me

## Missionary

Laying down and getting fucked  
Ass down, face up  
A classic position for genital play  
But the laying person should feel dismayed  
While they chill, the other goes hard  
Chest to chest and heart to heart

## Hitting it From the Back

POV:  
You're hitting it from the back  
A very erotic attack  
Hard enough to make that ass ripple  
But surely, one musn't forget to reach around  
And grab her nipple  
Hold her back and slam it in  
This poem describes some hetero shit  
But do remember...  
All bodies have a back to hit

Fellatio and chill / Genitals are such a thrill / a favor for a favor equals sixty-six  
There's this thing we do  
Living things That we humans do to meet our needs  
A naked activity  
Some associate with "love"  
But the truth is that *Sex* can simply be fun  
Anyone can do it  
And any genital can play  
Alone, with one, with many  
And sometimes even all day?  
*Sex* is awesome and that's the truth  
If you read this whole poem  
Please take your genitals  
And put them to good use

## Sex

Sam Cooke in my headphones sings  
*You send me*  
And Darlin' you do  
Send me to somewhere quiet  
Because my voice doesn't work when  
I'm with you  
Take me anywhere  
Take me away

I think you know the game i want to play  
When it's dark outside and no one can hear  
My heart screaming softly  
I want you near  
I want you always but mostly at night  
When I'm quietly smoking  
The light of my lighter burning bright  
A flick of my bic or a flick of my hand  
When I hit you with it and you understand  
Because you asked  
Because you begged  
Hands oblige, hands understand  
I want to kiss you softly  
But not all the time  
I can't be soft if  
I'm gonna make you mine

69

An Ode to BDSM and Love



**carrier**

**100%** HORNY  
**0%** VIRGIN  
**56%** INTO  
BDSM  
**94%** WATCH  
PORN



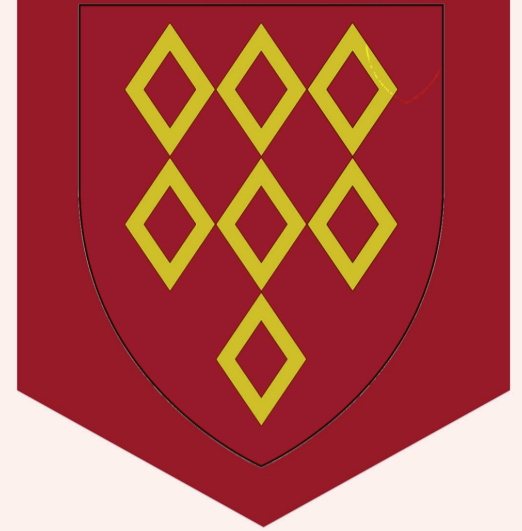
**lowell**

**93%** HORNY  
**19%** VIRGIN  
**56%** INTO  
BDSM  
**63%** WATCH  
PORN



**dudley**

**75%** HORNY  
**0%** VIRGIN  
**100%** INTO  
BDSM  
**0%** WATCH  
PORN



**quincy**

**66%** HORNY  
**5%** VIRGIN  
**71%** INTO  
BDSM  
**76%** WATCH  
PORN

*house  
pride*

HORNIEST HOUSES BY THE NUMBERS



# IS HARVARD

CAN YOU BE SEXY AND SMART?

by **CHRISTIAN BROWDER '23**

# HOT?



GREAT EYES,  
NICE SMILE....



**T**he *Independent's* annual Sex Issue aims to do two things—uncover students' sexual experiences so we can report those experiences back to the student body. Accordingly, this year we wanted to gauge the perceptions of Harvard students as it pertains to sex appeal. In other words, we asked students if their peers are hot.

The survey began by asking its respondents a simple question: *Do you find the average Harvard student attractive?* To this question the three available answer choices were: *meh*, *no*, and *yes*. *Meh* was the top choice, claiming 52% of the vote. Of the remaining choices, *no* held a large lead over *yes*, with popularities of 34% and 14%, respectively. Though the pool of respondents was not overwhelmingly large, nor was it perfectly representative of the entire student body, the perspectives we gathered indicate that the average Harvard student is somewhere between a definite *yes* and definite *no*—or *meh*, to be concise.

But gauging perception on a near-binary scale of hotness can be one-dimensional, so the survey asked students to elaborate on what is and is not attractive, differentiating between physical and emotional traits. 28% of respondents indicated athleticism/fitness among their preferred

traits, holding a plurality over all other answers. In descending order, the top five preferred physical traits among respondents were: athleticism, height, face, hair, and eyes. Also in descending order, the least attractive traits were: hair, feet, height, physique, and weight.

Students took two different approaches in answering this question. Some viewed it as a question of what they find outright unattractive, and listed the traits they dislike; others answered with what they find least attractive, and listed the traits to which they are indifferent. For example, hair was the least attractive trait among respondents, but this is likely because many people are relatively indifferent to hair style, not because they find hair in general unattractive. On the flipside, height, which was the third most selected trait, was likely selected in a different context than hair. The majority of people that indicated they had an issue with height specifically stated that shortness was unattractive, suggesting an active dislike for particular heights, rather than an indifference towards all heights. That being said, readers should not interpret these results at face-value.

As for the emotional traits, students' answers were slightly less predictable. Humor was by far the most attractive trait, with 33% of respondents indicating its importance to them. Following humor, the top emotional traits were kindness, communication, intelligence, and confidence, in descending order. As for least attractive personality traits, students listed toxicity, entitled, rudeness, insecure, and stiffness—*toxicity* to mean general immaturity (think cheating, fighting, or narcissism) and *stiffness* to mean either boringness or seriousness. Interestingly, there was a also notable number of responses which indicated that *toxicity* was attractive, and *tenderness* was unattractive—which is roughly the opposite stance from the average answer.

The Sexperts chose not to gather answers on the basis of gender or sexuality, though it would be interesting to see how these preferences vary across each spectrum.

Aside from polling attraction, the survey also asked students which concentration they thought had the most sex. Predictably, the overwhelming answer was Economics, which brought in 34% of the vote. In a distant second place was Psychology, only

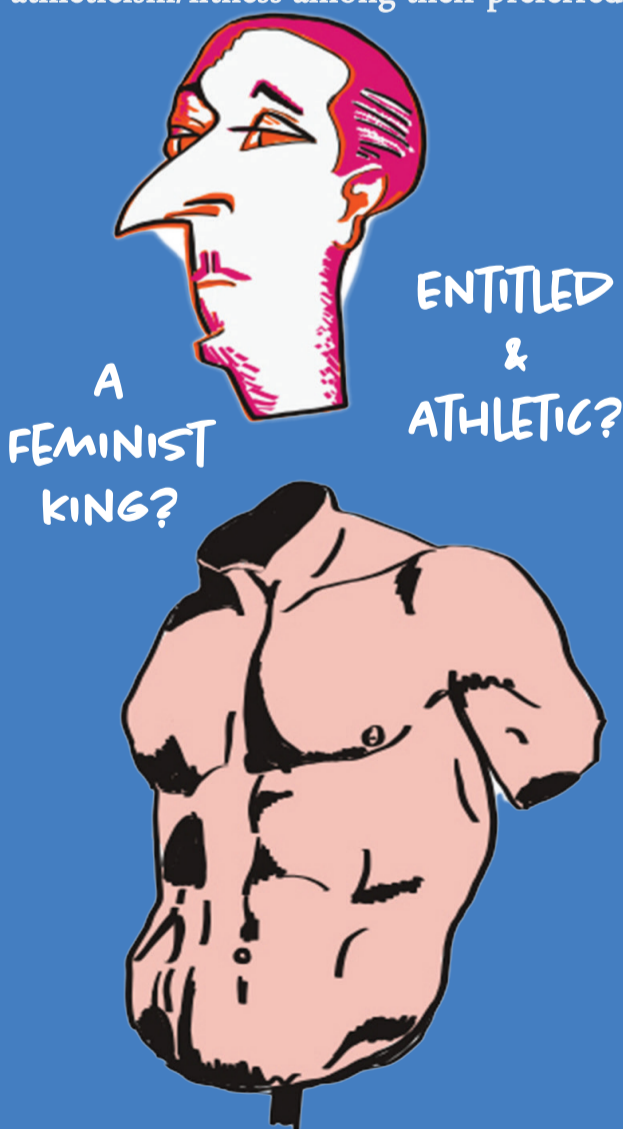
holding 8% of responses. Computer Science concentrators tried to prop up their egos by voting for themselves.

Students' written responses were revealing as well. One student found it most attractive if their partner is "strong enough to throw me around the room." Another student said, "Clear skin, long hair, and the obvious straight-man turn-ons attract me the most. The average straight-man turn-ons, that is, except for large behinds. Those do nothing for me." Other respondents wrote: "breasts, doesn't matter what size," "Someone who has the same mental illnesses," "feminist kings," "swagger," and, "I heard Slavic Languages and Literatures has some extremely sexy people."

All in all, it is important to remember what these results are—a collection of opinions. Is Harvard hot? Well, while the average student may be without a definitive answer, such a question can never be answered anyway. Attraction is subjective, and though trends exist in what people find sexually appealing, no specific traits are inherently more valuable than others, and no general claims should be made from these answers. However, the survey results are entertaining to examine, and given that students have not had the chance to live alongside each other in over a year, it's encouraging to believe that Harvard is hot.

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*Illustration by Ellie Hamilton '23*



# WHERE DO YOU WANNA GET IT ON?



# THE ONLY "SIN" THAT'S NOT A CRIME

by MICHAEL KIELSTRA '22

I do not claim to speak for the entire Christian church, nor even for all Protestants, but I think I am on pretty solid ground in saying that, all in all, Christianity is an anti-murder faith. It's right there in Exodus 20: "You shall not murder." While the debate about whether euthanasia and similar acts constitute murder can get fuzzy, everyone agrees that, if you can show that something is murder, then Christians should not do it.

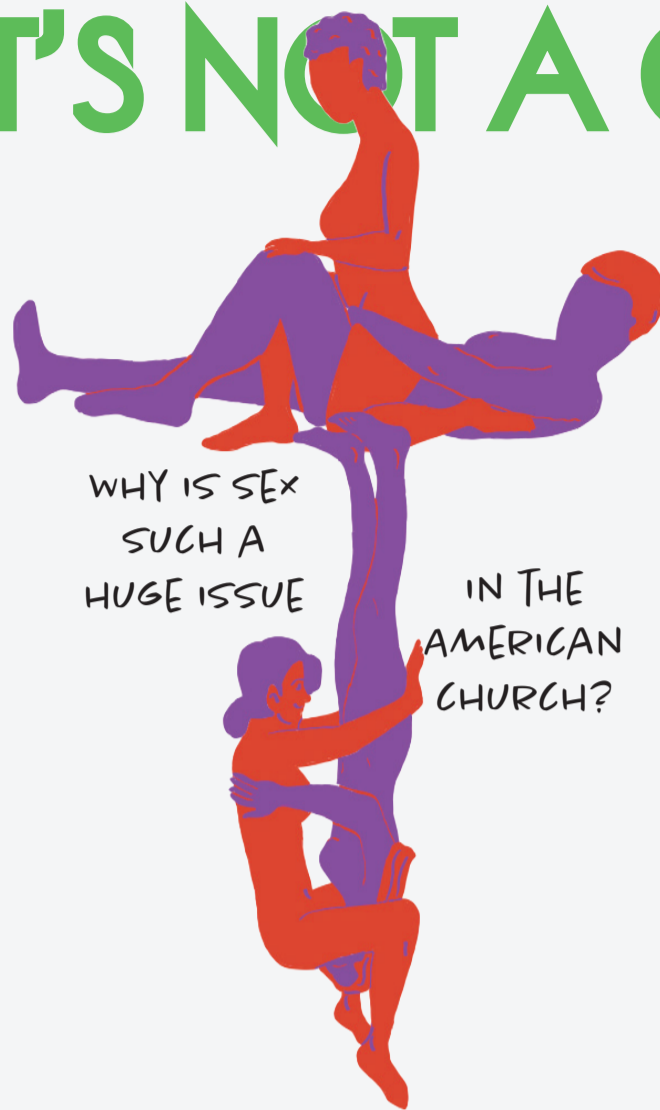
Something else is right there in Exodus 20: "You shall not commit adultery." American Christianity's obsession with its congregants' sex lives is proverbial. There is already a huge amount of literature explaining the Christian view of sex, and I would be happy to point you to it, but I will not parrot any of it here. I propose to answer a different question: why is extra-marital sex so important to churches, as opposed to murder? Both, after all, are considered bad. Both are grounds for the dismissal of a pastor. And it would seem that, if the church were to devote its energies to stamping out one sin, it could do more good by ending mob killings than by ending teenage handjobs.

(The history and sociology of sex in Christianity is complex, touching on issues of feminism and women's rights, LGBT+ rights, and abortion, among many others. To avoid allowing this piece to balloon to several hundred pages, I will be considering only the issue of heterosexual sex between one consenting man and one consenting woman, both of whom were assigned those genders at birth. In short, I will consider only the sex that, within marriage, is accepted across almost all churches.)

The obvious answer is that murder is less common than extra-marital sex. A 2017 paper by Lindsay Labrecque and Mark Whisman at University of Colorado Boulder claims that 21% of men and 13% of women across the US have had sex outside of marriage, while murder is of course much rarer. While this holds up on one level, it works neither emotionally—even to the staunchest conservative, murder is viscerally more horrifying than sex—nor theologically. In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches that, since what really counts to determine a sin is not the action but the intent, getting really angry at someone is morally equivalent to killing them. If churches were simply doing damage control, trying to wipe out their worst or most pervasive sins, the expectation would be that they would become even more obsessed with non-physical sins such as wrath, or nauseating ones such as murder. Sex, done properly, is neither.

The cynics among us will view this as patriarchal, and there is some truth to this, but, again, the expected motivations do not match the actual results. Men who wished to control women would be more likely to start a general moral panic about "unfeminine behavior," while those who wanted to get laid would, logically, be expected to downplay the wrongness of extra-marital sex and talk about the beauty of the act itself. Keeping sex and sex alone as the bogeyman does not work from either perspective.

Rather, I would argue that, to find the answer, we must go back to the fundamental difference in secular society between sex and murder: murder is a crime while sex is not. In terms of murder, the secular world stands together with the church; in terms of sex, the church and secular culture are very



much at odds. The result is highly predictable: the church deploys most of its ideological resources in its most active ideological warzones, with the result that the argument over sex escalates and escalates while murder fades from the spotlight.

There is even evidence to show that, when extra-marital sex was more firmly frowned upon by society, church rules about sex were more flexible. During the 1800s, a time when the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 set penalties for adultery in British law that included a cuckolded husband's right to claim compensation from the other man, huge percentages of European brides went to the altar pregnant. At certain points, these numbers reached 25% of brides in Flanders, 44% in some parts of Scotland, and over 50% in one town in Devon, according to a 2016 historiographical review by Jan Kok, Hilde Bras, and Paul Rotering. If more than half the members of a mainstream American church today believed that sleeping with one's fiancée was acceptable, the pastor would think himself to have a crisis on his hands. Cultural approval for premarital sex and ecclesiastical disapproval of it react to each other and, one might even say, feed on each other, with the church reacting to the sins of the new generation and the new generation rebelling against the norms of their grandfathers' church.

My Christian readers will ask, at this point, if I believe that extra-marital sex should, in itself, be a crime. It should not. Sex acts should not damage body or property, and those are the things over which secular law has jurisdiction. They risk damaging only the soul, and, without breaking the separation of church and state, the law cannot but remain entirely silent on whether the soul even exists or not.

This sort of intellectual argument is all very well, but the fact remains that church attitudes to sex often do very real damage to people. (I am careful not to say "Christian attitudes," as the cornerstones of the most damaging attitudes are self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and fear, and none of these are Christian.) Again, there is good existing literature on this and I will not parrot it here. Many argue that a de-escalation is in order, during which the church loses none of its zeal for God's laws but is more careful to emphasize grace, forgiveness, and

the fact that you are not forever dead to God if you are not a virgin until marriage. Sadly, this usually only leads to more shouting from both sides. However, viewing sex as a uniquely non-criminal sin suggests a counterintuitive possibility: those people who would like the church to ease up on sex should themselves ease up on the church. Certainly, it is crucial to continue holding those church leaders who abuse their power to account, but I would argue that painting the organization as a whole as backward-looking and regressive on this issue does more harm than good. It only encourages church leaders, who almost all genuinely do believe in the truth of what they teach, to double down on what they feel is a truth that the world desperately needs to hear. As their enemies become louder, their tactics, justifiably from this perspective, become more extreme. Conversely, if we were to normalize not wanting sex, if we were to treat losing one's virginity as a serious decision that might or might not, be best done in a marital context, then we could more easily broker a sort of peace.

Churches, of course, would not be satisfied with this peace, and would continue, as is their right, to preach the doctrines they believe. The difference would be that they would preach their doctrines in a more matter-of-fact way: less, "If you touch a member of the opposite sex you will get pregnant and die," and more, "Here is how sex works realistically, here is why we believe you should wait until marriage, and here is the forgiveness of God for those who chose wrongly in the past." Many, many churches already do teach like this, and, for those who do not, the shift would be an improvement: it would be more like the way Jesus teaches in the Bible, and it would probably lead to less extra-marital sex, not more, by eliminating the lure of the utterly freakish and taboo.

Sex, in general, is an issue in which people often fail to show grace. The church shames those who say people should do it; secular culture shames those who say people shouldn't. On other issues, from petty theft and fraud to unseemly anger and, yes, murder, people both inside and outside the church agree on the definition of wrong, but here, they do not, and congregants are caught in the middle. I am not suggesting the pursuit of a lasting agreement between the sacred and the secular, nor do I believe that such an agreement would be possible, since as long as there are people who want to have sex, the church will continue to say they should not.

Rather, I suggest only the cessation of active hostilities against the church, and the trust that it will use that ceasefire not to entrench its worst aspects but to build up its best. I encourage the anti-ecclesiastical faction to make the radical move of loving their enemies. But I would not be surprised if only a few of them took me up on this suggestion: in their eyes, it didn't go so well for the last guy who preached it.

*Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) has committed sins but never crimes. Unless you count some accidental tax fraud.*

*Illustration by Ellie Hamilton '23*



# MAKING LOVE TO STRANGERS

*How sex and love  
may or may not fit  
together...*

by YASMINE BAZOS '24

**G**rowing up, I was taught that sex is something you experience with someone you love. The infamous “talk” my mother gave me, complete with a birds and the bees book, ingrained in my mind that the act of sex was equivocal to the idea of “making love.” I became attached to the concept of sex meaning giving a part of yourself to someone else, and that this should only be done with someone who reciprocated a deep appreciation for you.

In reality, this was a glorification of the idea of sex, influenced by mass media and popular culture. In the hyper-romantic drama of shows such as *Gossip Girl* and *The Notebook*, sex becomes a part of the plot line only once a love story is established. Hollywood portrays idealized sex scenes as of out-of-body experiences with perfect lighting and picturesque bedrooms, adorned with every little thing to make the sex appear beautiful, full of intimacy—an act of love.

Yet, as I’ve grown older and come into a world where Tinder dates prevail and random hookups are normalized and even encouraged, my perception of sex has taken a turn, as have the stigmas around sex in general. I had once viewed sex as a deeply important and sacred thing, influenced by people who believed that as well. I’d always put sex on a pedestal, treating it as a final destination in the journey of a love story. Defining sex as something intertwined with love allowed me to romanticize it, buying

into Pablo Neruda’s little pink *Love Poems* book or Edith Wharton’s *Terminus*, which are both flowery accounts of romantic, sexual love.

But coming to college I’ve relinquished this fantasy, discovering that sex is not a generalized ideal but an individualized reality. My reestablished truth is that sex is defined differently by each being—and the idea that it should be one thing or another may even be antithetical to the erotic and the nature of sex itself.

Within college communities and in the broader world, sex culture can be exciting, random, inspiring, devastating, freeing, erotic, awkward or painful. The range of emotion provoked is never ending, and I believe everyone has constructed their own relationship with sex subconsciously. For some, sex may easily be separated from emotion, lacking completely in love. Maybe it’s purely an action, a mere physical connection. Friends with benefits can utilize sex without tapping into emotion, while others may find it complicated to separate sex from feeling and end up with affecting, indelible experiences. For some, the spontaneity and energy around a random sexual encounter is fulfilling, while for others this dynamic is terrifying and destructive to individual self worth. Preserving and feeding our own desire is crucial to validating sex for ourselves.

However, love is often times very absent from sex. The *American Psychological Association’s Review of Sexual Hookup Culture* shared that “a marked shift in the openness

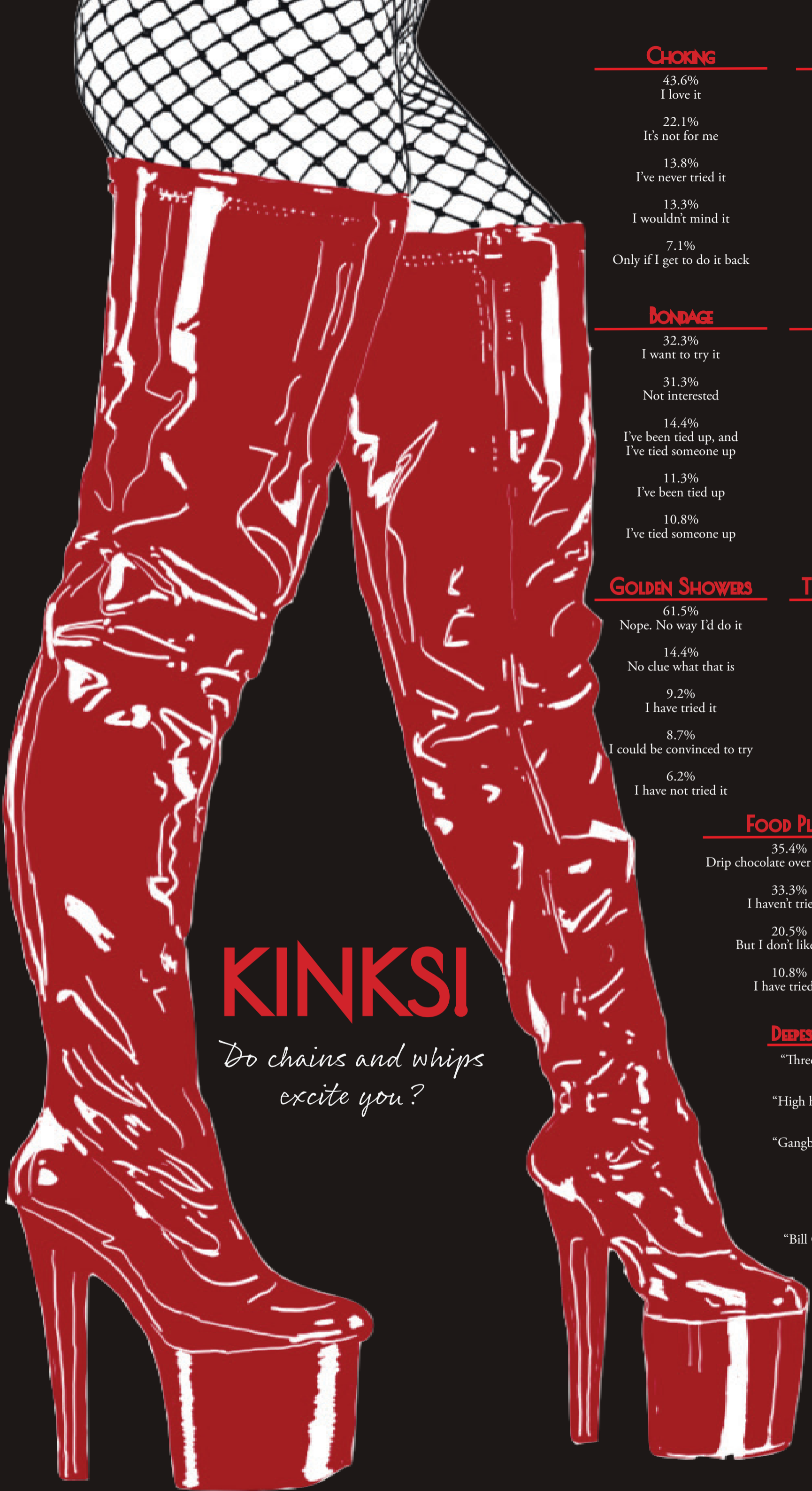
and acceptance of uncommitted sex” has led to an increase in sexual encounters “among individuals who are not romantic partners or dating each other. Over the past 60 years, the prioritization of traditional forms of courting and pursuing romantic relationships has shifted to more casual ‘hookups.’” The review also included a survey of college students, 15% of whom had confirmed having sex with others after just meeting them.

Growing conversations around casual sex may explain these findings; adolescents today express a willingness to take sex off the conceptual pedestal of importance I myself had placed it on. That’s not to say sex is not important, as I’m still very much aligned with the idea of it as a significant giving of yourself to another—but at the same time, I believe an appreciation for all approaches is necessary. Sex can be about experiencing romance, pursuing lust, getting in touch with your own body, or tapping into someone else’s. Whoever you can share this with, whatever can make you feel the way you want to feel, is valid for your own purpose.

Should it be a casual rendezvous or need there be something more attached? It’s up to you to decide.

Yasmine Bazos '24 ([@yasminebazos](https://twitter.com/yasminebazos), [college.harvard.edu](https://college.harvard.edu)) is a Staff Writer for the Independent.

Illustration by Arsh Dhillon '23



# KINKSI!

*Do chains and whips  
excite you?*

## CHOKING

43.6%  
I love it

22.1%  
It's not for me

13.8%  
I've never tried it

13.3%  
I wouldn't mind it

7.1%  
Only if I get to do it back

## DOM & SUB

39.5%  
I have done it

23.6%  
Always wanted to try...

20%  
I haven't done it

14.4%  
Not interested

2.6%  
What is that?

## BONDAGE

32.3%  
I want to try it

31.3%  
Not interested

14.4%  
I've been tied up, and  
I've tied someone up

11.3%  
I've been tied up

10.8%  
I've tied someone up

## IMPACT PLAY

33.8%  
Not interested

33.3%  
Yes, please

21%  
I would try

11.8%  
Ouch, no

## GOLDEN SHOWERS

61.5%  
Nope. No way I'd do it

14.4%  
No clue what that is

9.2%  
I have tried it

8.7%  
I could be convinced to try

6.2%  
I have not tried it

## TEMPERATURE PLAY

30.3%  
I would try it

26.2%  
I haven't tried it

22.1%  
Not interested

21.5%  
I have tried it

## FOOD PLAY

35.4%  
Drip chocolate over me, please?

33.3%  
I haven't tried it

20.5%  
But I don't like food

10.8%  
I have tried it

## DEEPEST SEXUAL FANTASY

"Threesome with two heads  
eating me out"

"High heels, red lipstick, cuffs,  
whips"

"Gangbang by athletic team in  
showers"

"Fivesome"

"Boy toy"

"Bill Clinton in a hot tub"

# BLOW(UP) JOB

*Balloons doing sex stuff*

A PHOTO SERIES BY  
NOAH TAVARES '24 & GOGO TAUBMAN '24

Sex makes people uncomfortable; isn't it obvious? "Blow(up)job" captures this sentiment on Harvard's campus. Our process reveals as much about sex as the photographs themselves. When we were brainstorming about this issue, shooting with sex dolls immediately popped into our heads. The idea to create tender and intimate moments with blow-up dolls for an issue about sex seemed obvious. But even more so, we were interested in how people on Harvard's campus would view the dolls on the page, and how they would view the dolls in the moment. We chose to shoot at locations that define Harvard, contrasting, or maybe even bolstering, Harvard's flawlessly cultivated image with inflatable dolls having sex.

Our first picture was our male sex doll giving the famous John Harvard statue a blow job. On a hallowed location, for tourists, our photography displaced for 5 min-

utes the people who had traveled half-way across the world to rub John Harvard's toe. They were dumbfounded when they saw the legendary statue receiving fellatio. We realized that the reactions we got from onlookers were as telling as the pictures themselves. Contrary to what we imagined in these public places, people complimented us on our confidence, asked to take pictures with us and the dolls, and admired us from a distance. We started the day transporting the dolls wrapped in bed sheets like dead bodies and ended the day carrying the dolls around with inflatable genitalia for everyone to see.

This transition in our attitude shows what we hope you might take away from these photographs. We started by trying to take something taboo and push into the daylight. We ended realizing that what we thought was offensive to other people actually wasn't. It was beautiful.





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*Ash Chellon*  
*Mary Julia Koch*