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SEX & RELATIONSHIPS • 3 minutes read

Everything we know about sex and the pandemic

By [Kirsty Mason](#) | Medically reviewed by [Dr Luke Pratsides](#)



Regardless of gender, sexual preference, or relationship status, there's one thing the pandemic changed for almost everyone: sex. How? We spoke to the medical advisors at Numan and looked at sex toy sales over lockdown to understand how sex has changed today - and how it might change forever.

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partner's personal space, it's no surprise that a vast number of couples didn't survive lockdown.

With the rules on social mixing gradually relaxing, the measures that have devastated sex lives across the nation will no longer be in place. But will the social behaviour that we've learnt over the past year have a lasting impact?

We spoke to the medical experts at Numan, took a peek at the rate of sales over lockdown at sex toy company, Bondara, and examined studies across the globe to scrutinise the impact the pandemic has had on sex and relationships. Our research dug up 4 aspects of our sex lives that have made astonishing and unpredictable transformations...

1. Sexual desire

A UK-based study looked at the sexual behaviour of young adults during lockdown. Although they found an overall decrease in sexual behaviour among the participants, women reported a reduction in sexual desire compared to before the pandemic, whereas men did not.

Studies from across the world have replicated similar results, seeing the frequency of sex plummeting over lockdown. A study in Turkey found that as anxiety, depression and stress increased, so did the rate of sexual dysfunction. These results were replicated by a study in India with participants reporting having less sex over lockdown. The researchers also found that participants were more likely to explore new sexual behaviours. This brings us to our next point...

2. Sex toy sales

Researchers at the Kinsey Institute conducted a survey to investigate the impact the pandemic has had on sex and relationships. The majority of participants reported that satisfaction with their sex lives had declined or stayed the same, with just 13.6% reporting an improvement since the start of the pandemic.

Approximately 1 in 5 participants introduced something 'new' into their sex lives over the course of the pandemic, such as a sex toy or BDSM. Those participants were found to be significantly more likely to report an improved sex life over lockdown compared to participants who made no new addition.

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In the [Couples Toys](#) department, there was a 78% increase in sales, with [sexy_games](#) increasing by 89%.

It's impossible to predict why this change in behaviour occurred but lockdown boredom, or simply having more free time for sexual exploration, could both be factors.

3. Erectile dysfunction

[Erectile dysfunction](#) is caused by several conditions - both psychological and physical. A psychological condition that is thought to interfere with libido (which can result in erectile dysfunction) is stress. A wealth of research has indicated that the [pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on mental health](#), causing increased stress and anxiety across the globe.

Stress triggers a biochemical reaction in the body and may result in [sexual dysfunction](#). [Dr Luke Pratsides](#), lead GP at Numan, notes, "Societal changes have impacted the mental health of the population over the last year and COVID has presented new problems for many, including relationship stress, financial concerns, general anxiety and uncertainty for the future. This may contribute to a rise in erectile dysfunction."

[Prof. Sam Shah](#), our Chief Medical Strategy Officer, agrees. "The root cause of erectile dysfunction can be psychological. Lockdown has had a grave impact on mental health. It's also restricted physical intimacy and social contact. This could lead to performance anxiety or a loss of libido, restricting the ability to get an erection."

He also recognises that lockdown could impact erectile dysfunction in several different ways. "Many people have had dramatic lifestyle changes, such as a decrease in physical activity or a drastic change in diet, which can contribute to erectile dysfunction. As many [underlying health conditions can cause erectile dysfunction](#), it's important that people who are worried contact a health service provider. [Erectile dysfunction symptoms can often be treated](#) and seeking help allows the opportunity for someone to improve their general health and wellbeing."

4. Masturbation

A report by [Tenga](#) found that the pandemic drove a rise in masturbation, especially among men. Similar results were found in the [study](#) that was carried out in Turkey, with 'solidarity

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151% in sales of [Kegel Balls](#).

It's clear. Sexual behaviour has transformed over the past year - whether it be new sexual explorations, a change in libido or a new outlook on sex after a year of restrictions.

But will it change our sexual behaviour forever? Only time will tell.

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