

Not Just a One Night Stand

your ultimate guide to Sex, Love & Relationships



'Not Just a One Night Stand' Online Survey: The Report

Introduction:

In preparation for the 'Not Just a One Night Stand' conference, Evangelical Alliance, Love for Life and Summer Madness conducted one of the largest surveys into sexual attitudes in Northern Ireland¹. Over a thousand 16-30 year olds were asked about their values, attitudes and behaviours around issues including sex, relationships, marriage and pornography. The organisers also explored whether and in what way faith had an impact in this area making the results unique.

The findings make interesting and challenging reading for the organisers, church leaders, politicians and the general public:

More than 90% said they intended to get married;

87% agreed that the Bible has something to teach us about relationships and sex;

and even though 81% of respondents thought pornography was harmful, 79% of males had accessed it online.

The 'Not Just a One Night Stand' conference on Wednesday 10th February in Orangefield Presbyterian Church, aims to respond to the issues highlighted in the survey. Its purpose being to help and support young people and young adults by:

- ⇒ Exploring God's plan for love, sex and relationships;
- ⇒ Engaging with biblical teaching on a number of related issues;
- ⇒ Developing our 'relational intelligence' from a Christian perspective;
- ⇒ Encouraging dialogue within the faith community on important and sensitive issues as they relate to relationships and sexuality.

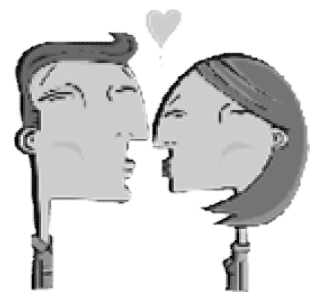
The aim of this report is to document the results of the survey, allowing the numbers to do the talking. Each of the organisers may make separate comment on the impact of the results for their respective members and wider constituencies. It is, however, their desire that the results and any additional comments made regarding the survey should be distributed widely and contribute towards not only the preparations for the conference, but future programmes and practice inside and outside of the faith community.

The Sample Group:

The survey was completed by 1172 people of whom, over 80% were between the ages of 16 and 30. 41% of respondents were male and 59% female.

The respondents making up the sample group identified themselves as:

- ⇒ single – 81%
- ⇒ heterosexual – 97%
- ⇒ Christian – 91%
- ⇒ living in Northern Ireland- 81%



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Attitudes:

Of the respondents who were not yet married...

- ⇒ more than 90% said they intended to get married in the future
- ⇒ 2% said they didn't intend to get married - the majority of whom were 16-18 year old males
- ⇒ 70 % said they did not intend to have sex before they married

63% of all respondents felt that sex before marriage is always wrong.

- ⇒ for those who placed themselves in the most committed to church category¹ this rose to 80%
- ⇒ for those who placed themselves in the least committed category this decreased to 25%
- ⇒ for those describing themselves as 'Non-Christian' or 'Not Sure' this dropped further to 8%

**More than
90% said
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When asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement 'A one night stand is no big deal' 68% of respondents answered 'strongly disagree'. This increased to 86% when 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' categories were combined. This trend was seen across all age groups, denominational groups and levels of Christian commitment.

68% of all respondents felt that sex between adults of the same sex is always wrong.

- ⇒ for those who placed themselves in the most committed to church category this rose to 82%
- ⇒ for those who placed themselves in the least committed category this decreased to 33%
- ⇒ for those describing themselves as 'Non-Christian' or 'Not Sure' the percentage was 27%

Neither age nor faith significantly affected the respondents' views on the influence of friends and the media. Overall 82% agreed or strongly agreed when asked to respond to statements claiming that many young people were having sex due to pressures from their friends and pressures from the media.

Advice and Information:

83% of all respondents 'definitely' or 'probably' gained advice and information on relationships and sex from friends, 54% from the media and 48% from parents. For those describing themselves as Christian, church and youth leaders were also ranked highly with 53% of these respondents 'definitely' or 'probably' gaining advice from church and 49% from youth leaders.

In response to the statement 'The Bible has nothing to teach us about relationships and sex', of those surveyed:

- ⇒ 6% of all respondents 'strongly agreed or 'agreed' with the statement
- ⇒ Agreement with the statement rose to 34% for those describing themselves as 'Non-Christian'

36% of respondents thought that young people knew where to go if they have concerns around their sexual health including issues of contraception, STI testing, unplanned pregnancies.

87% agreed that the Bible has something to teach us about relationships and sex

¹ Chose option '1' when asked to rate their level of commitment to church where 1 was the highest and 5 the lowest.

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Sexual Experience/Behaviour:

Of those who described themselves as single or engaged...

- ⇒ just under 30% had had sexual intercourse, reducing to 15% for those describing themselves as Christians who were most committed to their church

Results broken down by age for those who were not married showed:

- ⇒ the highest percentage of those who had had sexual intercourse was amongst the 16-18 year olds at 41%
- ⇒ this was double the level amongst 19-21 year olds where only 19% reported to having had sex
- ⇒ for 22-30 year old respondents the percentage was 28%
- ⇒ this rose again in the group of single over 30 year olds to 39%

Faith also appeared to affect the likelihood of having had sex, especially before the age of 19...

- ⇒ 17% of 16-18 year olds describing themselves as having the highest level of commitment to church had already had sex compared to 80% of those placing themselves in the lowest commitment category

11% of all respondents had had sex before they were 16 and 25% by the time they were 19.

Of those who described themselves as having the highest level of commitment to church, 5% had had sex before they were 16 and 17% by the time they were 19.

The age at which the individual had first had sex was also affected age the respondent was at the time of completing the survey; exhibiting a positive correlation.

Of those under 19 years olds who stated that they were sexually active, over 70% also stated that it had been with multiple partners and over 30% with 5 or more partners.

The number of sexual partners the respondents reported to have had was not greatly affected by whether they considered themselves to be Christian or Non-Christian but was affected by the level of Christian commitment described by the respondents:

- ⇒ Proportionally, there were half as many 'most committed' Christians claiming to have had more than 5 sexual partners compared to the least committed Christians.

1 in 5 of the 16-18 year olds claiming the highest commitment to church had already had sex

Contraception:

There was little variation in the use of contraception across all groups (including denominations) but the results did reveal that:

- ⇒ 42% of unmarried males who had had sex said they always used contraception
- ⇒ 73% of unmarried females who had had sex said they always used contraception

42% of unmarried males who had had sex said they always used contraception

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Internet Usage:

Access to and usage of the internet was very high:

- ⇒ 97% of respondents had access to the internet from home
- ⇒ Over 90% reported to using the internet everyday
- ⇒ Higher levels of usage were found amongst over 18 year olds, where it was predominantly several times a day

The type of usage was also affected by the age of the respondent:

- ⇒ For those who were 18 years old or younger using social networking was the highest rated activity type at 84%
- ⇒ For those over 18 years old it was sending/receiving e-mails at 97%
- ⇒ General browsing/searching for information was significantly higher in the over 18 age category as was using the internet for buying and selling goods

Flirting Online:

When asked about flirting online...

- ⇒ 16-18 year olds reported the highest levels of experience with flirting online at 38% - slightly above the average of 33%
- ⇒ The numbers of respondents who had flirted online with someone they didn't know were significantly affected by level of church commitment with those in the highest category of church commitment reporting that 25% had compared to 53% within the lowest category
- ⇒ Less than 30% of respondents thought it was easier to flirt online
- ⇒ More than 50% of the over 30s said they didn't know if it was easier

Internet Porn:

79% of males in the sample group and 17% of females had accessed online porn:

Unlike previous findings this was not affected by Christian commitment, or marital status.

There was a very strong consensus within all groups on the harmful effects of viewing porn (81%), and specifically the damage it can do to relationships (76%).

**Christian
commitment
had no bearing
on the
likelihood of
having viewed
internet
pornography**

Respondents made a number of additional comments in this section of the survey, for example:

"The church should be a place people can turn to if they are snared by this 'wide web'."

"As a young man I received no teaching about the issue in church and had no opportunities to be accountable to others/leaders. I don't mean to shift the blame but rather wish that this generation of youth... would have access to the teaching I have now had."

81% of respondents thought pornography was harmful

Christian Commitment and Denominational Background:

As already highlighted 91% of respondents described themselves as Christian although this represented a broad spectrum of stated levels of commitment to their churches which ultimately appeared to have a greater influence on their responses to questions.

Age breakdown of Christian commitment did show that there were a higher proportion of older respondents in the higher commitment categories.

Additional comments in the section on sexual behaviour revealed that a significant number of the respondents who reported to having had sex before marriage did so before becoming a Christian, for example...

"No longer sexually active; have changed my views towards this especially since becoming a Christian"

A smaller but notable number of comments also highlighted that by answering yes to the question on sexual intercourse it did not necessarily mean that it had happened voluntarily, some respondents explained they had been raped/abused.

In terms of denominational breakdown, 28% of those identifying themselves as Christian also identified themselves as Presbyterian. The next largest denominations in the survey were Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic and Baptist - 19%, 10% (This increased to 25% within the 16-18 yrs age group) and 7% respectively.

23% were unable or unwilling to label themselves as belonging to one denomination. The following comments from the survey highlight this:

"I hate denominations!! Sorry... I grew up in [X denomination], but I would call myself an evangelical Christian."

"Doesn't matter, all one in Christ Jesus!!!"

23% of respondents were unable or unwilling to label themselves as belonging to one denomination

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A Note on the Organisers:



Promoting unity and truth, acting as an evangelical voice to the state, society and the wider church, and working collaboratively with members and other evangelicals we aim to present Christ credibly as good news for spiritual and social transformation.

Evangelical Alliance
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Our vision is to influence change within society so that young people have a healthy respect for themselves, relationships and sex.

Love for Life
6 Banbridge Road
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CRAIGAVON
BT66 7QA
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Supports young people as they work out their faith in community.

SM organises an annual camping Festival for several thousand young people from across the island. It seeks to help young people address their own and others spiritual and developmental needs.

Summer Madness
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¹ Notes on the survey methodology:

Responses were sought from the conference target audience, those within the 16-30s age bracket.

Questions were compiled using ideas from existing surveys, including the 'Northern Ireland Life and Times' survey and various surveys and evaluations used by Love for Life.

The survey was circulated widely across Northern Ireland, through church, school and youth settings with over 90% of the respondents completing an anonymous online version of the survey. The others were carried out with a group of young people from a youth engagement programme in Belfast via a hard copy of the survey.

Ultimately the survey was not designed to be a piece of scientific research; however the number of responses gathered has generated a highly significant and representative set of results.