Healthy Sexuality Masterclass: The Future of Healthy Sexuality
22 August 2025

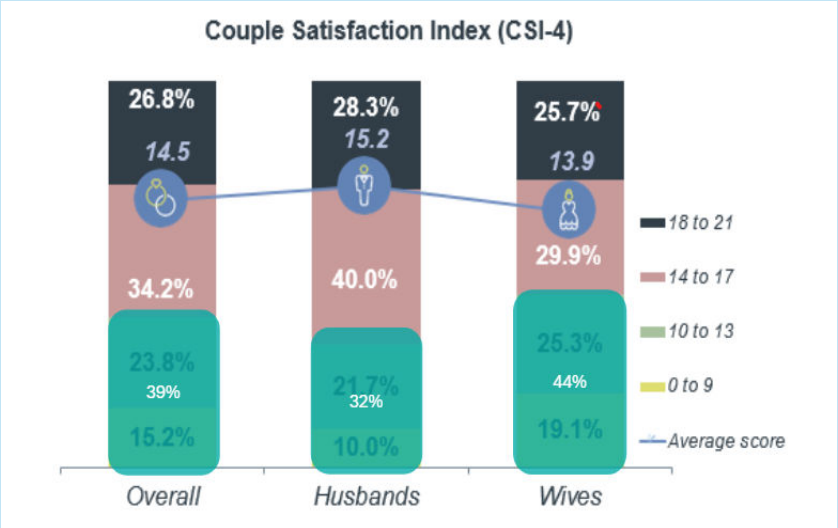
The Healthy Sexuality Masterclass (HSM) is part of Focus on the Family Singapore's (FOTFS) ongoing efforts to equip families with a holistic understanding of sexuality. This year's event in August welcomed 204 participants, including representatives from the social work, education, and counselling sectors, and faith and community leaders.

The following brief outlines key insights, discussion points, and emerging trends that may help you better understand the challenges facing the next generation—and how to respond effectively.

> ***"Healthy sexuality begins with the fundamental understanding that human intimacy flourishes with the love, commitment, and nourishment of the marriage."***
>
> - **Joshua Liong, Principal Trainer, FOTFS**

TRENDS IN SINGAPOREAN MARRIAGES

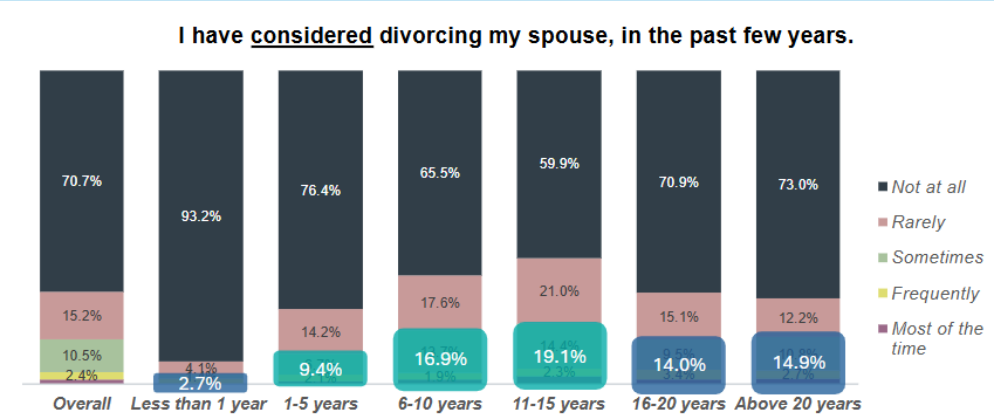
Recent data reveals troubling shifts in marriage patterns, including declining marriage rates and rising divorce cases. According to the Connect2 Marriage Assessment (2024–2025), 40% of men and 29.9% of women report dissatisfaction in their marriages. In addition, when it came to thoughts of divorce, those in their 6th to 10th year of marriage, and 11th to 15th year of marriage reported the highest incidence rates.



Source: Connect2 Marriage Assessment, 2024-2025

(This assessment tool has been used across churches to help couples assess the health of their marriage.)

This is in line with findings from the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Family Trends Report (2025), which notes that marital struggles often intensify between the 5th and 10th year of marriage. Common causes of breakdown include infidelity, unresolved conflict, early marriages, and incompatibility (PKWA Law, 2025; Gloria James-Civetta & Co, 2017).

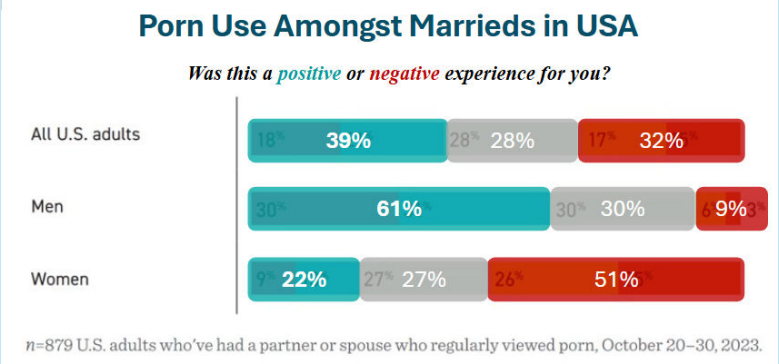


Source: Connect2 Marriage Assessment (2025)

IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY

A significant contributing factor to marital dissatisfaction is the use of pornography. Often used as a coping mechanism for relational stress, pornography can erode trust and intimacy.

According to the Whole Life Inventory (2020), 19% of men use pornography monthly, compared to just 1% of women. Barna's Beyond the Porn Phenomenon Report (2024) reveals a gender divide in perception—while 61% of men view pornography positively, 51% of women report it as a negative experience.



Source: Beyond the Porn Phenomenon (2024)

Research shows that pornography consumption often leads to unrealistic expectations, decreased satisfaction with partners, and heightened tension in relationships. Many spouses of porn users report feelings of betrayal and emotional trauma, making it difficult to rebuild trust. These findings emphasise the importance of a strong marital foundation, as unresolved issues and external influences like porn can significantly undermine marital stability and emotional connection.

UNCOVERING THE UNSPOKEN: SEXUALITY'S IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

The first plenary session, hosted by Alicia Boo, Chief of Impact at FOTFS, discussed exploring the intersection of sexuality and family dynamics. Panellists included:

- Benny Bong – Family & Marital Therapist with over 40 years of experience. Author of Couples in Crisis (2008) and Restoration: Rebuilding Four Areas of my Life (2025))
- Jason & Shelen Ang – Trainers in dating, marriage and parenting; equipped in marital profiling and couple assessments

> ***"Pornography, by its nature, objectifies individuals, distorts expectations, and fosters addictive behaviours. It has no place in the sacred bond of marriage."***
>
> - **Jason Ang**

Shelen posed a critical question: "Does porn help couples build oneness, or does it drive them further apart?"

Highlighting the emotional consequences of porn use within families, Benny shared a poignant story of a young girl who, acting like a "policewoman" at home, discovered her father's pornography use—leading to her mother uncovering the behaviour. This example underscores

how unresolved sexual issues within marriage can ripple through the family, affecting children's sense of wellbeing, emotional safety and trust.

FROM MARITAL STRUGGLES TO FAMILY BREAKDOWN

A healthy understanding of sexuality begins in the family—and it starts with strong marriages. When couples thrive, they are more intentional about shaping their children's values around sex and relationships. However, when marriages break down, the resulting struggles often spill over into the broader family dynamic, affecting children's sense of security and the parents' ability to be effective role models. This breakdown creates a ripple effect: children are left to learn about sex and relationships through the internet and social media.

With at least 78% of visits to adult websites coming from mobile devices, pornography is more accessible than ever. Nearly half of young adults report first encountering porn between the ages of 13–19, usually out of curiosity, and many continue viewing it for years afterward. A local case involving a 15-year-old boy exposed to porn on Instagram underscores the crucial role parents play in guiding their children's sexuality education.

Top websites in Singapore (Adult Industry)

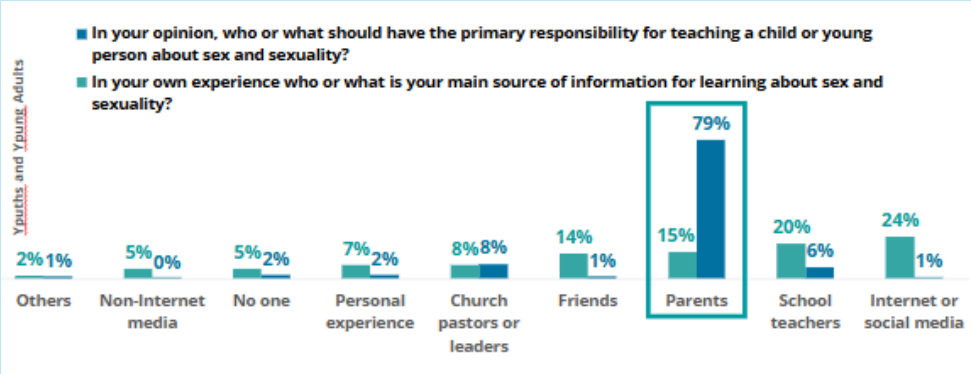
July 2025

Domain	Visits	Desktop share		Mobile share		MoM	YoY	Main Traffic Source
pornhub.com	24.13M	15.29%	3.69M	84.71%	20.44M	↓8.15%	↑4.12%	Direct
xhamster.com	9.68M	14.18%	1.37M	85.82%	8.31M	↑5.08%	↑15.52%	Direct
xvideos.com	9.25M	14.46%	1.34M	85.54%	7.91M	↓8.04%	↓15.65%	Direct
xnxx.com	7.84M	7.83%	614.05K	92.17%	7.22M	↑0.49%	↓19.86%	Direct
javtiful.com	2.39M	18.01%	430.92K	81.99%	1.96M	↑13.48%	↑26.83%	Direct
onlyfans.com	2.24M	21.55%	482.06K	78.45%	1.75M	↑9.62%	↓8.4%	Direct
thumbzilla.com	2.16M	7.89%	170.46K	92.11%	1.99M	↓5.37%	↓4.72%	Direct
theporndude.com	2.09M	17.44%	364.02K	82.56%	1.72M	↑0.4%	↑23.08%	Search
javmost.com	2.05M	14.9%	306.2K	85.1%	1.75M	↓11.84%	↑1.12%	Direct
javhdporn.net	1.97M	11.99%	235.83K	88.01%	1.73M	↑23.17%	↓14.18%	Search

Source: Semrush (2025)

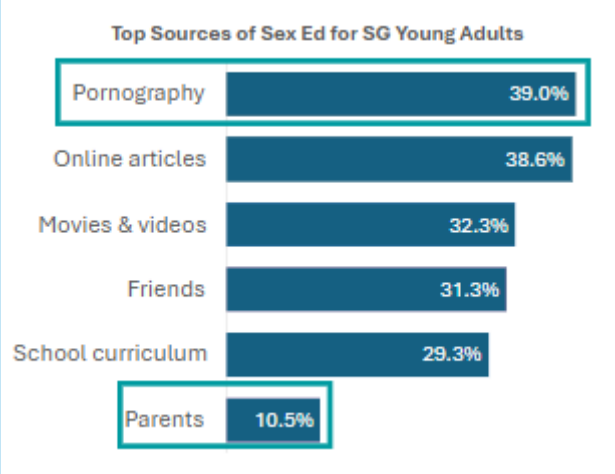
SINGAPOREAN YOUTHS & SEX EDUCATION

Despite the desire for parental guidance, a significant gap remains. According to the Whole Life Inventory Survey (2020), 79% of youths believed parents should teach them about sex and sexuality, but only 15% actually learned from them. In contrast, just 1% thought the internet or social media should be the main source, yet 24% cited it as their primary source of information.



Source: Whole Life Inventory (2016-2020)

A Durex survey (2022) found that 39% of young adults in Singapore use pornography as their form of sex education. This trend is deeply concerning, as pornography often promotes unrealistic expectations, risky behaviours, and distorted views of intimacy. In some cases, compulsive use escalates into Compulsive Sexual Behaviour Disorder (CSBD), which can severely impair daily functioning.



Source: Durex Survey (2022)

The family environment plays a pivotal role: Cold, conflict-ridden homes with unstructured family environments are predictors of youths using pornography, while warm, harmonious family relationships and open conversations serve as protective factors (Mahbobe et al., 2012; Cecilia et al., 2016; Moya et al., 2025).

Yet only up to 13% of teens (Whole Life Inventory Survey, 2020) report having meaningful conversations with their parents about sex during their formative years. When families delay engagement, pornography often fills the educational void—shaping the next generation with consequences that extend from personal struggles to marital breakdown and even criminal behaviour.

NEXT-GEN SEXUAL ISSUES

The second panel discussion, hosted by Joshua Liong (Principal Trainer, FOTFS) explored emerging sexual issues among Singaporean youths. Panellists included:

- Dr Tsao I Ting – Clinical Psychologist with more than 15 years of experience, across public and private settings, specialising in complex relational dynamics
- Dr Ng Liang Wei – Director of Sexual Wholeness Services at Lakeside Family Services; Executive Director of Indigo & Co, a charity focused on sexuality and gender identity
- Michelle Soon – Educator and commissioned Colson Fellow, trained to engage culture today through a Christian worldview

> ***"You have to be actively sowing seeds that sex and sexuality can be healthy, so that your kids make good judgments when they are not in your reach."***
>
> - **Michelle Soon**

Michelle highlighted how youths with a naturalistic worldview may construct morality based on personal feelings rather than objective truth. This can lead to confusion, experimentation, and internal conflict—especially when cultural messages around sexuality are inconsistent or misleading.

YOUTH LONELINESS & ANXIETY

Recent data reveals a troubling rise in loneliness and social anxiety among youths. More than half of youth respondents in 2024 reported feeling more comfortable communicating online than face-to-face, with many experiencing anxiety during in-person interactions. In contrast, fewer than half of adults over 35 expressed the same preference.

Sng (2024) identified key drivers of youth loneliness, including strained family relationships, emotional isolation, superficial online connections, and long school or work hours. The IPS Working Paper (2025) noted that this year marked the lowest average number of close friendships among youths.

	Average number of close friends across years		
Age cohort	2013	2018	2024
18-35 years old	7.68	8.56	6.04
36-50 years old	8.64	10.18	6.77
51-65 years old	7.80	11.82	7.86
>65 years old	7.59	10.98	6.34

Source: IPS Working Paper (2025)

Joshua emphasised the importance of parents being the "first voice" in conversations about sexuality. Using the "Principle of First Mention," he explained that when children first learn about relationships and intimacy from their parents, they are more likely to develop a healthy understanding.

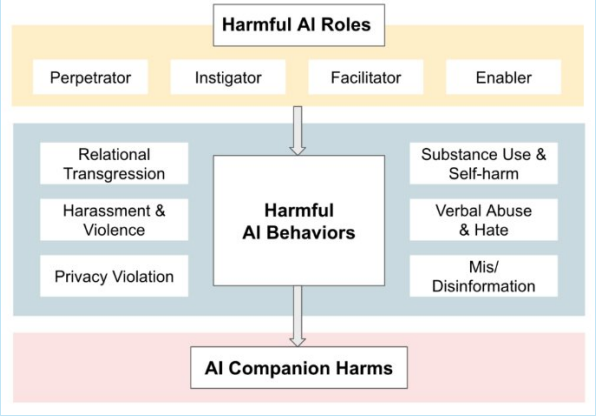
I Ting observed that declining face-to-face interactions have pushed youths toward digital spaces, increasing emotional isolation. With pornography often serving as their primary source of sex education, many youths develop a fragmented view of sexuality—one that is disconnected from emotional intimacy and commitment.

> ***"Youths are learning about sex, without learning about connection."***
> - **Dr Tsao I Ting**

Compounding this issue is the rise of AI companions and digital platforms that offer unconditional acceptance without the emotional demands of real-life relationships. For youths who struggle with self-esteem or social anxiety, these virtual connections can feel safer and more affirming than face-to-face interactions.

A growing trend among youths is the use of AI companions. In the U.S., 75% of teens have interacted with AI bots, with over half doing so regularly. While these tools offer temporary relief from loneliness, they raise ethical concerns. A study of over 35,000 conversations with the AI companion Replika revealed troubling behaviours, including sexual misconduct, manipulation, misinformation, and even promotion of self-harm (Zhang et al., 2025).

Younger teens (13–14) showed higher levels of trust in AI companions than older ones. Experts warn that these virtual relationships may blur boundaries and replace real human connections, especially for youths struggling with self-esteem or social anxiety.



Source: Zhang et al. (2025)

She cautioned that over-reliance on AI interactions may hinder the development of empathy, emotional literacy, and resilience. Liang Wei added that anxiety often stems from a lack of rootedness and emotional margin. Without these, anxiety can flourish, especially as youths grapple with identity formation in a culture saturated with competing messages about self-worth, sexuality, and belonging.

Michelle reinforced the idea that “you are your diet”—not just in terms of food but in the media youths consume. Social media, podcasts, books, and entertainment shape their worldview, including their understanding of sex, identity, and truth. Many youths unknowingly adopt worldviews that normalise sexual experimentation and redefine morality based on subjective feelings. This environment, she argued, can lead to greater confusion, pressure to conform, and internal conflict—further deepening feelings of isolation.

All three experts stressed the vital role of parents in counteracting these trends. Without intentional guidance from trusted adults, many youths turn to online spaces to find answers, often encountering misleading or harmful messages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, we recommend the following:

1. **Curb Digital Exposure, Strengthen Emotional Resilience**

   With AI companions and online pornography becoming primary sources of emotional and sexual education, youths are forming distorted views of intimacy and connection. Policies should address digital literacy, emotional resilience, and guided, informed and ethical AI use among children and teens.

2. **Emotional Resilience Comes Through Adult Modelling**

   A healthy understanding of sexuality begins with strong marriages. When a marriage has unresolved issues, the resulting struggles often affect the family dynamic and family environment, affecting children's sense of security, belonging and love. There is a need to not only invest in pre-marital education, but also marriage enrichment—especially during the identified critical periods of before the 5th marriage year.

3. **Early Sexuality Education is Critical**

   Youths are encountering pornography as early as age 8, yet only 15% have meaningful conversations with parents about sex. There is a pressing need for national-level support to equip parents and educators with tools for age-appropriate, values-based sexuality education starting from preschool.

4. **Sexuality Education Needs to Begin at Home**

   Parents are best placed to initiate developmentally appropriate conversations with their children about sexuality and values from as early as age three or four. Early engagement and education help anchor their children in a grounded understanding of human connection before external influences take hold.

References:

1. MSF Family Trends Report (2025)
2. PKWA Law: Grounds for Divorce (2025)
3. Gloria James-Civetta & Co. (2017)
4. Beyond the Porn Phenomenon (2024)
5. IPS Working Paper (2025)
6. Durex Survey (2022)
7. Zhang et al. (2025)