

BEAT THE orgasm gap

Women only orgasm a third of the time men do – because we’re “complicated” and “take longer”. But what if that just wasn’t true? This story could change the way you have sex forever...

Say it with us: ‘satyromaniac’. Not sure what it means? Then you’re in good company with spellcheck and Google. It’s actually the male version of nymphomaniac, the derogatory term for a woman with a high sex drive, which we bet you probably knew. We bet you also know frigid; the degrading term for low sexual desire in, yes, you guessed it, women. A male version doesn’t seem to exist.

So, in two incredibly common words (neither with a commonly heard-of male counterpart) we’re told women are too sexual or not sexual enough. If movie sex scenes are anything to go by, the right amount of sexual is about five thrusts. And if the misogynistic terms and two minutes of actual intercourse aren’t enough to make you orgasm, it’s because you’re ‘complicated down there’ or ‘enjoy cuddling afterwards anyway’.

“Men have had the privilege of controlling the public discussion about female orgasm for centuries,” explains Trisha Borowicz, a molecular biologist. She directed award-winning indie film *Science, Sex, And The Ladies* to debunk the “sh*t tonne of confusion” about female orgasm. “We’re bombarded with depictions and jokes and discussion of female orgasm that are simply not realistic. The more we ladies talk honestly to each other, the better this will get,” she adds. Consider this your equal opportunity contract for pleasure.

But first, let’s just recap the O-Q (that’s Orgasm IQ)

We learnt the ‘O word’ during high school, but beyond something vague about waves and a peak, most of us would flunk a biology exam. “Dictionaries declare, ‘Orgasm is the climax of sexual excitement.’ Does that make you any the wiser? I doubt it,” admits Dr Vivienne Cass, adjunct associate professor at Curtin University and author of *The Elusive Orgasm*.

But trying to reach that orgasm without ever truly knowing what your body’s trying to tell you can be more frustrating than trying to remember your Apple ID. You’re not going to get far.

“A person first needs to be aroused,” says Borowicz. Turn-ons are incredibly individual (smell, touch, sound, sight), “but once arousal happens, our bodies react similarly”. Blood flows down to your genitals, tensing the muscles in that area. Keep stimulating your clitoris, and an orgasm is when the tense muscles in your pelvis suddenly relax. Involuntary contractions come every 0.8 seconds, with three to 12 likely in total.

Err, so why haven’t we even mentioned the vagina yet?

The thing is, vaginas have kind of been exaggerating the pleasure-giving section of their CVs. No vaginal orgasms have ever been recorded by lab equipment – and not because of the tech. The only proof is people’s claims; in one instance, a doctor touched women internally until they said they had a vaginal orgasm – though even he admitted he didn’t feel any muscular signs of it.

So why do we consider penis-in-vagina the way to win at sex? Blame Sigmund Freud. Based on *zero evidence*, he said clitoral orgasms were “immature” and after puberty, women should then advance to vaginal ones. (People who couldn’t orgasm via intercourse were said to be disturbed.)

Of course, vaginal contact can feel great. “There are women who find stimulation of the lower front vaginal wall [G spot] pleasurable; stimulating that area can cause arousal,” says Borowicz. Current theory is that internal parts of the clitoris get ‘crushed’ as a penis thrusts in and out, giving us pleasure. What we know for a fact is manual stimulation of the clitoris gives us the strongest orgasm. “It’s not a case of the right penis or the right man; the vagina is not the female pleasure organ,” Borowicz adds. William Masters and Virginia Johnson (of TV’s *Masters Of Sex*) proved this – in a lab! – in 1966. We knew it 50 years ago.

That whole ‘women take ages’ thing? Let’s assess...

“These are the stories we tell ourselves: that women’s bodies are simply more difficult. The clitoris is hard to find and complicated to operate; it’s shy and pernickety; it disappoints its owner ➤

OWNER’S MANUAL

A guide to finger-play by Carlyle Jansen, author of *Sex Yourself: The Woman’s Guide To Mastering Masturbation And Achieving Powerful Orgasms* (carlylejansen.com).

TAPPING

BASIC: Gently tap your vulva with a finger.

PRO: Fold a string of plastic beads against the clitoris and tap very gently. See how your body reacts to the texture of the beads.

SQUEEZE TEASE

BASIC: Let each hand rest against a thigh, with your thumbs above the pubic mound. Move your hands together and allow the outer and inner labia to get ‘squished’ between your hands. Move them up and down slightly, massaging the tissue.

PRO: For more intensity, you can alternatively replace one hand with a vibrator.

FIGURE OF EIGHT

BASIC: Using a well-lubed finger, trace a figure of eight around the clitoris, across the inner labia and around the vaginal opening.

PRO: Mix up the speed – slower or faster, larger or smaller. Use a vibrator to trace the pattern.

WINDSCREEN WIPER

BASIC: Point a well-lubed index finger downwards and run it back and forth over your clitoris like a windscreen wiper for at least one minute.

PRO: Change the position of your finger so that it’s pointing sideways, or you can replace your finger with the showerhead.

and mocks the efforts of her partner,” says sociologist Dr Lisa Wade, author of *Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions*. Now drum in that clitoris means hard – and not the good hard, like a penis – and it’s no wonder we don’t prioritise it. What we rarely hear is this statistic: that, when touching ourselves, the average time it takes us to orgasm is four minutes. Yep, exactly the same as a man. Sex researcher Alfred Kinsey spoke to 6,000 women to suss this out. In 1953.

It’s normal to have ghost-gasms

What do we mean by ghost-gasm? Well, you’ve most-likely experienced the annoying feeling before. One minute you’re teetering so close to the edge that you need a handrail, and the next, it’s vanished. But this poltergeist pleasure – what Dr Cass calls a plateau – is completely normal. “Depending on our mood, what’s happening around us, and so on, arousal may decrease or level out,” she explains, noting that it’s particularly common just before an orgasm, or to happen several times. “Many women think, ‘Oh no, I’m losing the feelings (again)’ and just stop all sexual activity. If they’d known that it’s perfectly normal for their sexual arousal to go up and down, they might have relaxed and enjoyed the moment until their arousal built towards a climax.”

Know your orgasm entitlements

While pioneering sex research from five decades ago has struggled to shift orgasm misogyny, a recent US study found a way to crack the gender gap: turning a ratio of three male orgasms for every one female into (practically equal) 1.04:1 odds. How? Increase the number of times a couple sleeps together (relationships give seven times more orgasms than hook-ups) and the number of activities per session (combining oral sex, intercourse and clitoral self-stimulation had up to a 92 per cent orgasm success rate). The reason that hook-ups fared so badly was that women didn’t really feel entitled to come. One woman, of the 15,000 people interviewed by sociologist Elizabeth Armstrong, admitted of hook-up sex, “I will do everything in my power, whoever I’m with, to get [him] off.” But on the likelihood of bringing a woman to orgasm, a man replied, “In a hook-up, I don’t give a sh*t.” So, still think your “difficult” genitals are to blame?

ORGASM HELP DESK

BECAUSE TURNING IT ON AND OFF ONLY WORKS FOR COMPUTERS. REMEMBER THESE TIPS NEXT TIME YOU’RE BETWEEN THE SHEETS.

★ **THEY NEED DIRECTION – YOU’RE EMBARRASSED**
Lose the idea that men know what to do through experience and women don’t because you have similar bits. Stay silent and you’ll only focus on what’s turning you off.

★ **YOU’RE MORE WORRIED ABOUT HOW YOU LOOK THAN HOW IT FEELS**
“We generally don’t look much different during orgasm than when we’re having a good laugh,” reassures Dr Cass in *The Elusive Orgasm*.

★ **YOU’RE CONSTANTLY THINKING, “I HAVE TO GET THERE RIGHT NOW”**
But that strive for perfectionism equals fear of failure. The second you think about an orgasm (the future), you stop feeling it (the present). Focus on now.

★ **YOU FEEL WEIRD ABOUT TOUCHING YOURSELF**
“We’re taught in society that our vaginas are forbidden. But seriously. Masturbate. You need to know your vulva,” says Melissa A. Fabello, co-managing editor at *Everyday Sexism*.

★ **LIFE IS TOO STRESSFUL TO THINK ABOUT THE BEDROOM**
Vent. Cry. Yell. “Women who cope in this way are much less likely to have their sexual feelings affected by that’s happening in their lives,” adds Dr Cass.

WORDS GEMMA ASKHAM. PHOTOGRAPHY TRUNK ARCHIVE.

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Me & MY orgasm

How To Make Me Come, a Tumblr of orgasm confessions, has gone viral. “We wanted to start a dialogue about how women achieve sexual pleasure; something often ignored, or devalued,” says founder Sylvia. Make like these women and get sharing at howtomakemecome.tumblr.com.

“I spent the first 25 years of my life as a lesbian, knowing I was always secretly bisexual. Then I tried it with a man. It seemed OK. But with a lot of trial and too much error, I decided men had no idea. Let’s face it, I’ve worked with real experts. Giving the direction ‘fingers inside me with clitoral stimulation’ seemed to cause as much confusion as telling him to look behind something to find the milk. I half expected him to stand at the foot of the bed and gaze at me in endless confusion at this foreign concept.”

“I didn’t learn how to orgasm until a guy went down on me in college. He discovered my clitoris for me. I wish my sex ed teacher had said, ‘Hey, there’s a button above your vagina that puts it into turbo mode,’ but no one told me.”

“I love masturbating. I know just what I like, and I always, always come. I’ve never had an orgasm during sex. Not even during oral sex, to which friends have exclaimed, ‘Seriously?’ I totally understand how I come, and it has to be by my own hand.”

“I equated having an orgasm with just getting really, really close to it. I didn’t understand the burst of euphoria everyone was always talking about. When I was crabby and people told me I needed to get laid, my response was, ‘I get laid all the time and I’m still in a bad mood.’ But on a tremendous, rare night where surely pigs flew, Halley’s comet shot by, and volcanoes spouted ice cubes elsewhere in the world, we got intimate and I finally came.”

“There’s a big heap of masculinity at stake in being able to make a woman orgasm the right way. But the way to actually make it happen is to do it her way.”

“He would go down on me for five minutes and then come up and say, ‘Did you come?’ As if I were going to say, ‘Yes, I just did! You’re amazing!’”

“How do I explain to someone that I like it rough and fast, but still want someone to hold me after and call me pretty? How do you really let someone in, and not just physically? Sure, I can explain the logistics of my sex organs, but I don’t know if I can explain the inner-workings of my brain. Until I feel safe, I simply can’t give in to an orgasm because I’m scared of losing control.”