

Summary Report

**Slosh and Munch Events in the BDSM Community:
Findings from a Survey of FetLife Users**

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Acknowledgements

There are many people who helped to make this survey happen and we would like to thank them. The most critical people that we would like to thank are the Caretakers of FetLife. Without their permission and assistance, we would not have had easy access to so many people in the BDSM community.

In addition, there were many people on FetLife who assisted us in many different ways. Some suggested improvements to the survey so that future research would be done better. Others on FetLife were helpful in terms of allowing us to post a link to our survey in their groups. Most importantly, we are grateful for all the respondents to the survey, as without them, there would be no data to analyze. We are also very grateful to the many people in the community who educated us about the lifestyle so that we could ask more intelligent questions than we otherwise would have.

There are a number of colleagues who were helpful and supportive through the process, even when the topic seemed a bit far removed from what people expected research on Event Management to be. As a result of all the support from colleagues here at Ball State University, FetLife, and those in the BDSM lifestyle/community, we were able to gather data in this first international survey of the munch as a social institution. We hope that this will be a first and lead to more research on this important social institution.

Crumbs to all of you who were of assistance in this.

Executive Summary

- This survey of over 1,000 people internationally shows that the munch is a critical social institution in the BDSM community, as about 65 percent of respondents to the survey indicated that they go to a munch at least once a month and 68 percent of respondents indicated that it is important for the lifestyle.
- In terms of attitudes towards the munch, it seems that the munch is most highly valued as a way to socialize with others, learn about the lifestyle, and feel like part of the community. Although some people outside the lifestyle would likely imagine that the munch would be an alcohol-fueled and sexually-charged event, the data show otherwise from those surveyed in the BDSM community.
- While there is some indication that some people are concerned about being outed as being part of the community, this is not a major concern for most who attend munches.
- About ninety-five percent of respondents use FetLife to learn about the events, while almost 50 percent rely on word-of-mouth.
- While the majority of respondents report that they have had some sort of sexual experience with people they have met at munches, somewhat higher percentages report having kink experiences with people that they have met at munches.
- For those attending the events, only 12 percent do not use their real names, although a large majority do use their real names.
- The data collected on the demographics of respondents show that those in the lifestyle rate themselves as liberal politically, are more educated than the general population, and represent a broad range of ages.
- The demographic data illustrate that the orientations of respondents is about equally split between dominants, submissives, and switches. In addition, the demographics show that there are very few exclusively lesbian/gay respondents, suggesting that the lifestyle is almost exclusively composed of people who are heterosexual, heteroflexible, and bisexual.
- Interestingly, the data also show that respondents are almost all white/Caucasian. Even those few respondents who denote themselves as being “other” on the question of race sometimes specify with responses such as “Jewish” or “Irish,” suggesting that even the few who put themselves in the category of “other,” most would understand it as being “white/Caucasian.”

Background

In an effort to learn about the munch as a social institution, Dr. Craig Webster of Ball State University, in conjunction with his assistant, Molly Klaserner, planned an international online survey of people in the BDSM lifestyle. The intention of the survey was to learn about the importance of the munch in the BDSM community, perceptions of the munch in the BDSM community, and other attitudes and behaviors that could be linked with the munch as a social institution. The intention was to gather data for publications in the field of Event Management, as there are only two known references to munches in the academic literature and these references are largely descriptive or brief. The superficial references to the munch in the academic literature suggested that there was a need to gather data about the role of the munch and perceptions of the munch in the BDSM lifestyle.

This report is a short summary report designed to inform all of those on FetLife and the general public about the findings of this survey. The intention of the authors is to further analyze the data and publish in multiple scholarly journals, while also making this information available to the broader/non-academic community.

Methods

The data presented in this paper are part of a data set investigating the importance of slosh and munch events to the BDSM lifestyle, globally. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Ball State University and by FetLife which was used to disseminate the survey. Data on the importance of slosh and munch events was gathered using a short, online survey created by the researchers and disseminated on the leading BDSM social media internet site, FetLife. The survey was designed to be as short as possible in order to ensure a high completion rate and only disseminated in English, despite being an international survey of the institution. The data presented in this summary report were collected from January 2016 to April 2016.

Using an online survey program (Qualtrics), a survey was formed with a link to access it. Via a profile that was created using the true identity of the researcher, permission was sought to post the survey invitation and link within groups on the social media site that indicated they were involved in sloshes and munches in their local area. Researchers also posted the survey invitation and link on pages of individuals within the community that indicated they had attended a slosh or munch or planned on attending one. Before participants began the survey informed consent was obtained. Through these methods, 1,021 completed survey responses were received from many different countries. Below are the data showing the results of each of the questions asked in the survey.

Results

Figure 1: How often do you or have you attended sloshes or munches (casual social gatherings for people involved in or interested in kink activities)?

Figure 1 reveals the importance of sloshes and munches to the BDSM lifestyle. Of the 1,111 respondents to this question, 65% of respondents said that they attended a slosh or munch once a month or more. This can be compared to 8% who say they have never attended a slosh or munch. In general, the data show that sloshes and munches are central events in the BDSM community that a strong majority of respondents attend at least once a month.

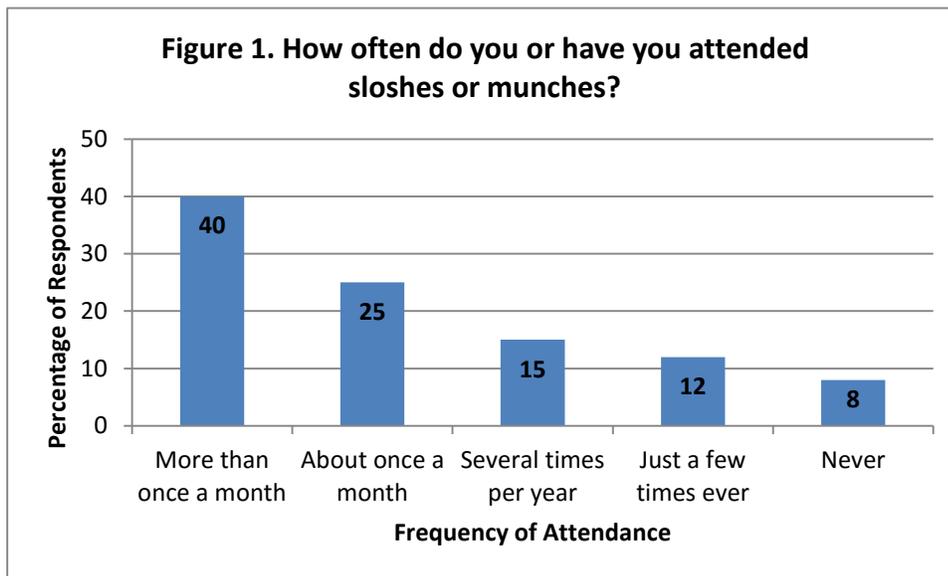


Figure 2: How important is attending a slosh or munch to your involvement in the lifestyle?

Figure 2 illustrates that members of the BDSM community see sloshes and munches as important to their involvement in the lifestyle. Of the 1,013 respondents to this question, 62% of respondents feel that the slosh and munch are “somewhat important” or “very important” to their involvement in the lifestyle. This can be compared to 23% who feel the slosh and munch are “very unimportant” or “somewhat unimportant”.

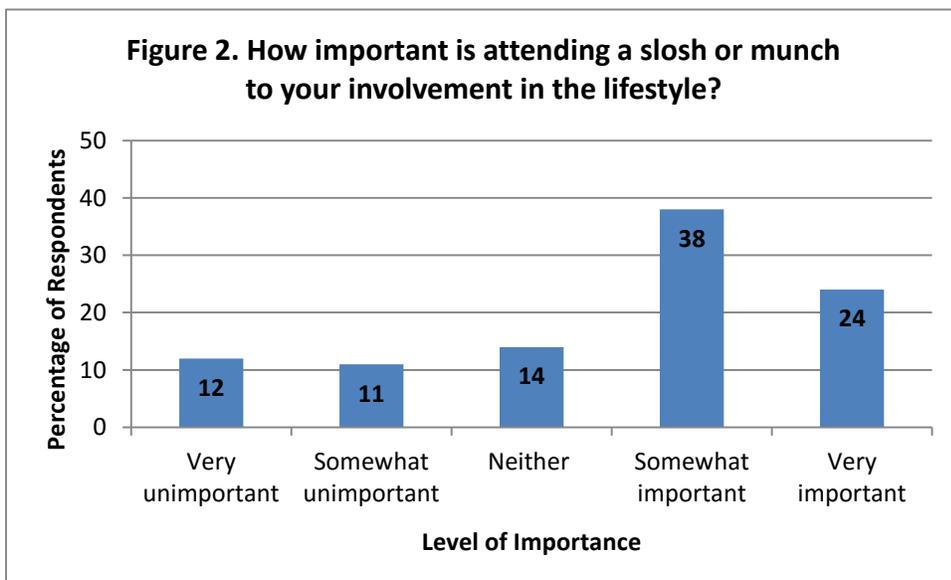


Table 1: Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Table 1 shows how respondents felt about each statement listed. Statements were scored from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A mean closer to five indicates stronger agreement with the statement. Respondents most strongly agreed with the statement “I attend sloses or munches to socialize and meet others in the lifestyle” (M=4.56). They most strongly disagreed with the statement “I drink more at sloses and munches than I would at a vanilla event” (M=1.58). These results showed that respondents use sloses and munches as social gatherings and to feel like more of a community. Sloses and munches are not more sexually charged than vanilla events (M=2.65), nor do respondents drink more alcohol at sloses and munches than at vanilla events (M=1.58).

Table 1. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements		
Statement	Mean	N
I drink more at sloses and munches than I would at a vanilla event.	1.58	942
I am concerned about being outted because I attend sloses or munches.	2.09	944
The atmosphere at a slosch or munch is more sexually charged than at a similar vanilla event.	2.65	944
I attend sloses or munches to find partners for more private events.	2.97	945
I am more flirtatious at sloses and munches than I would be at a vanilla event.	3.00	947
I attend sloses or munches to learn more about the lifestyle.	3.56	941
I feel like part of the community when I attend a slosch or munch.	4.12	940
I enjoy attending sloses and munches.	4.27	939
I attend sloses or munches to socialize and meet with others in the lifestyle.	4.56	994

Figure 3: How do you usually learn about sloses or munches?

Figure 3 shows that FetLife is a central part of the BDSM lifestyle. Ninety-five percent of respondents said they use FetLife to learn about sloses and munches. This can be compared to only 46% who use word-of-mouth or friends in the lifestyle to find out about sloses and munches. Without FetLife many of the respondents would have to find other means to learn about sloses and munches.

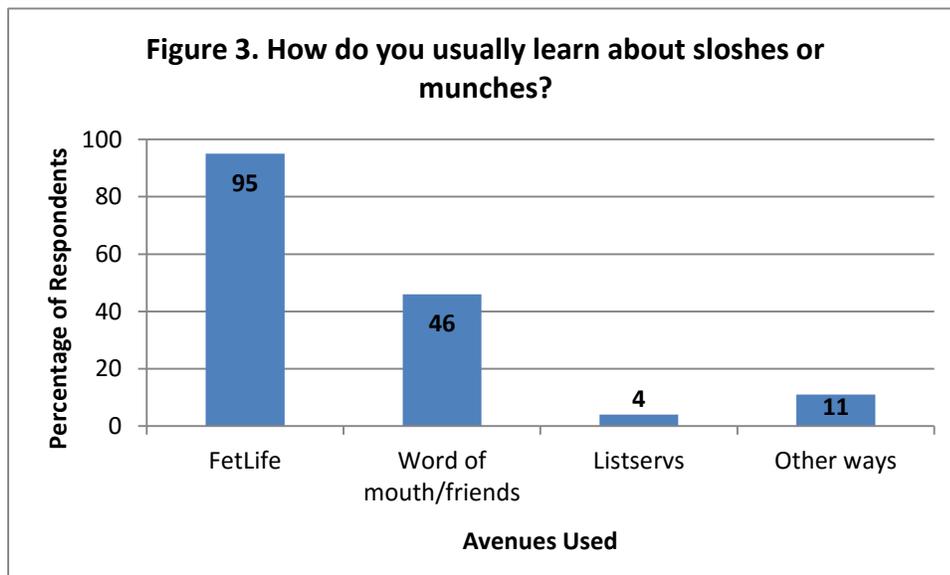


Figure 4: Have you ever had sexual (oral, penetration, or any other genital contact) relations with someone you have met at a slosh or munch?

Figure 4 indicates that 58% of the 939 responding to this question have had sexual relations with someone that they met at a slosh or munch. This can be compared to 42% who say they have never had sexual relations with someone that they met at a slosh or munch. A greater percentage of respondents have had sexual relations with someone they met at a slosh or munch than those who have not.

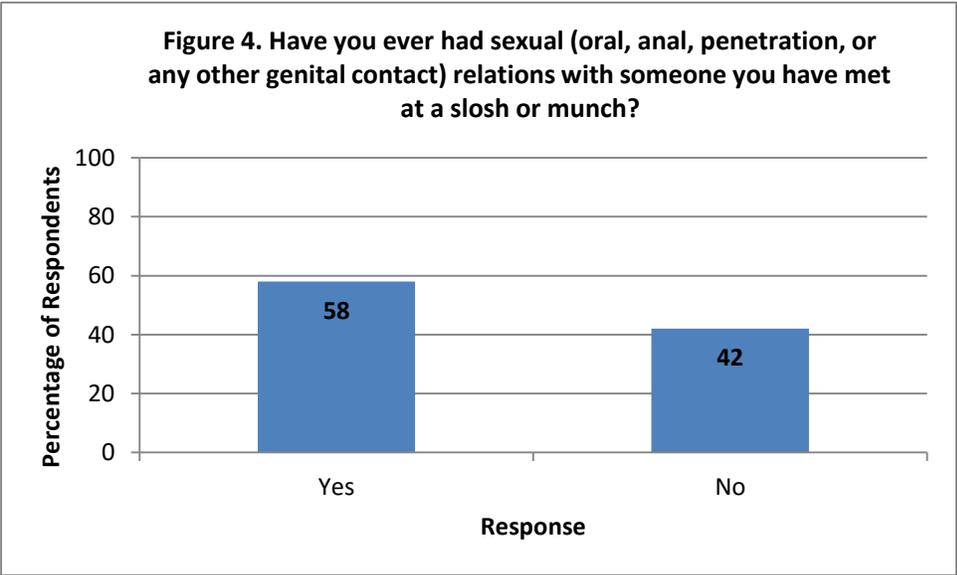


Figure 5: Have you ever had kink experiences in a private encounter with someone you have met at a slosh or munch?

According to Figure 5, 69% of the 938 respondent to this question have had a kink encounter with someone they met at a slosh or munch. This can be compared to 31% who have not had a kink encounter with someone they met at a slosh or munch. Interestingly, a smaller percentage of respondents indicated that they have had sexual relations with someone they met at a slosh or munch (58%), than those who indicated that they have had kink experiences with someone they met at a slosh or munch (69%).

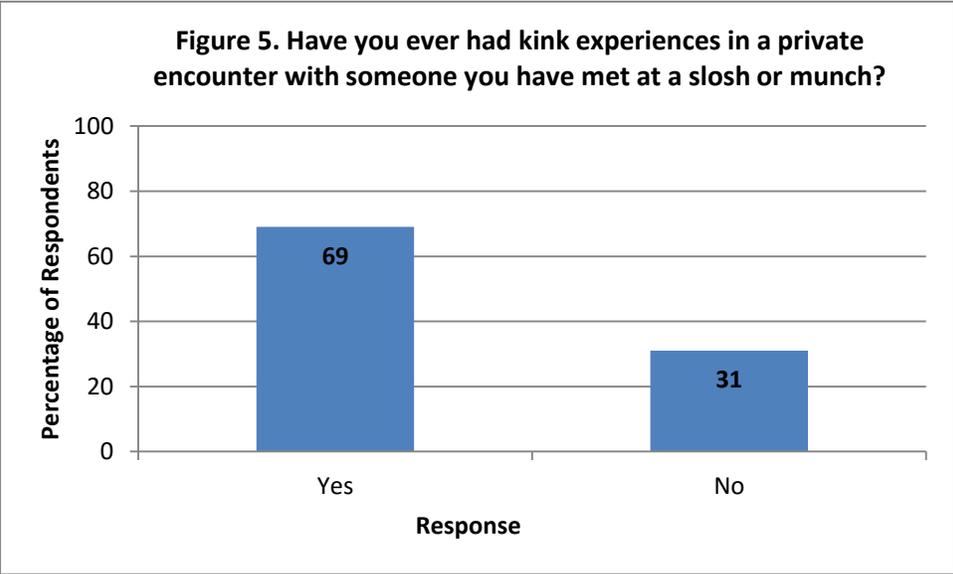
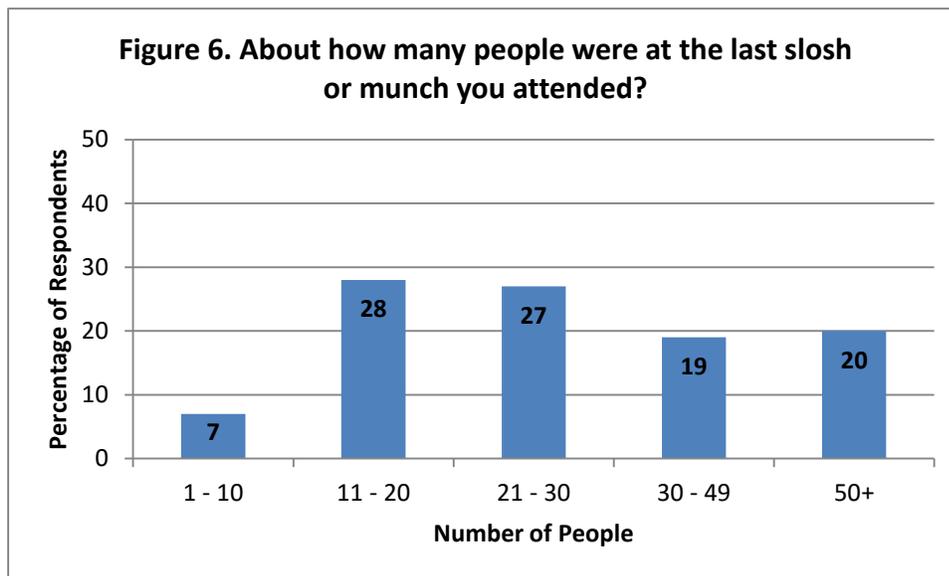


Figure 6: About how many people were at the last slosh or munch you attended?

Sloshes and munches can vary in size. According to Figure 6 the greatest percentage of the 939 who responded to this question reported that the last slosh or munch they attended had between 11 and 20 people (28%). This was closely followed by 27% of respondents who reported that the last slosh or munch they attended had 21-30 people.



What word or words would you use to describe the last slosh or munch you attended?

Words that respondents used to describe sloshes and munches were generally more positive than negative. Some positive words included “fun”, “friendly”, “social”, “casual”, “relaxed”, “welcoming”, “informative”, “interesting”, “open”, “educational”, and “community”. Negative words included “crowded”, “loud”, “boring”, and “busy”.

Figure 7: At sloshe and munches, do you use your real name?

Figure 7 illustrates that most of the 937 respondents to the question use their real names at sloshe and munches. Sixty-five percent of respondents said that they use their real names at sloshe and munches, while 35% reported never or occasionally using their real names at sloshe and munches. This indicates something about the trust that members of the BDSM community have for one another.

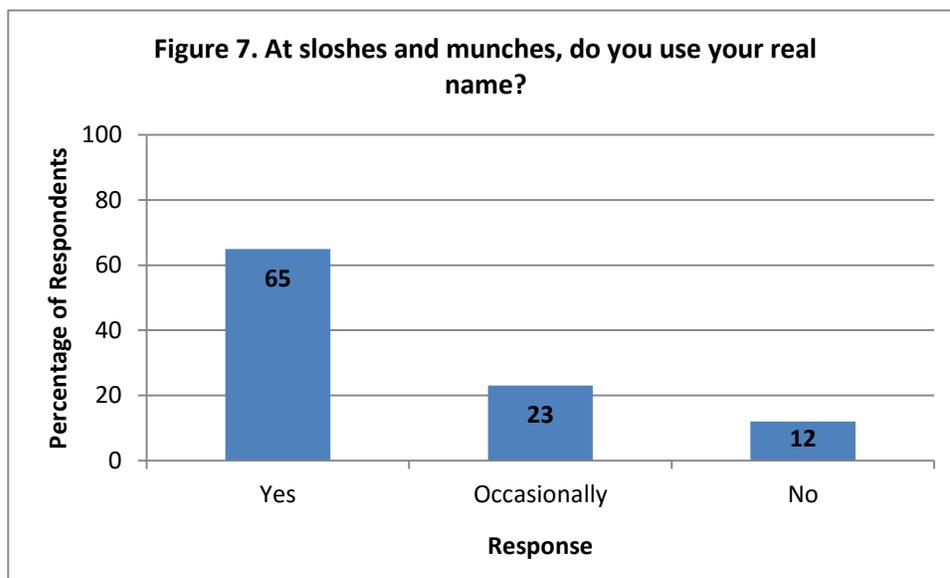


Figure 8: What is the leading reason you have never attended a slosh or munch?

Figure 8 represents those 88 respondents that said they had never been to a slosh or munch. The figure illustrates that the leading reason respondents have never attended a slosh or munch is stated as “other”. This indicates that there are many reasons that members of the BDSM community do not attend sloshes and munches and it is difficult to categorize them into one reason. Following this, 26% of respondents have never attended a slosh or munch because they “are not plugged into the community”.

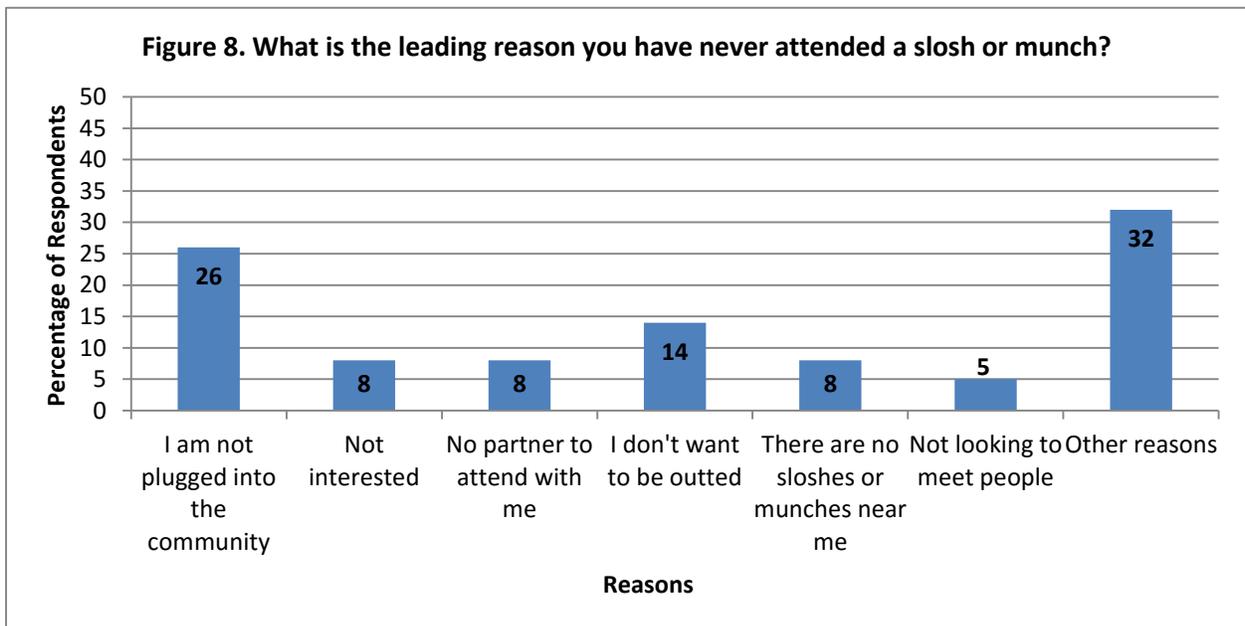


Figure 9: How open or secretive are you to the vanilla world about being involved in the lifestyle?

Figure 9 illustrates the openness members of the BDSM community have with the vanilla world about being involved in the lifestyle, according to the 1,016 respondents to this question.

Fourteen percent of respondents said they are very open while 21% said they are very secretive.

Interestingly, about half of the respondents said they are open and the other half said they are more secretive. While almost equal amounts are open as are secretive there is a slight skew towards secretiveness represented by the data.

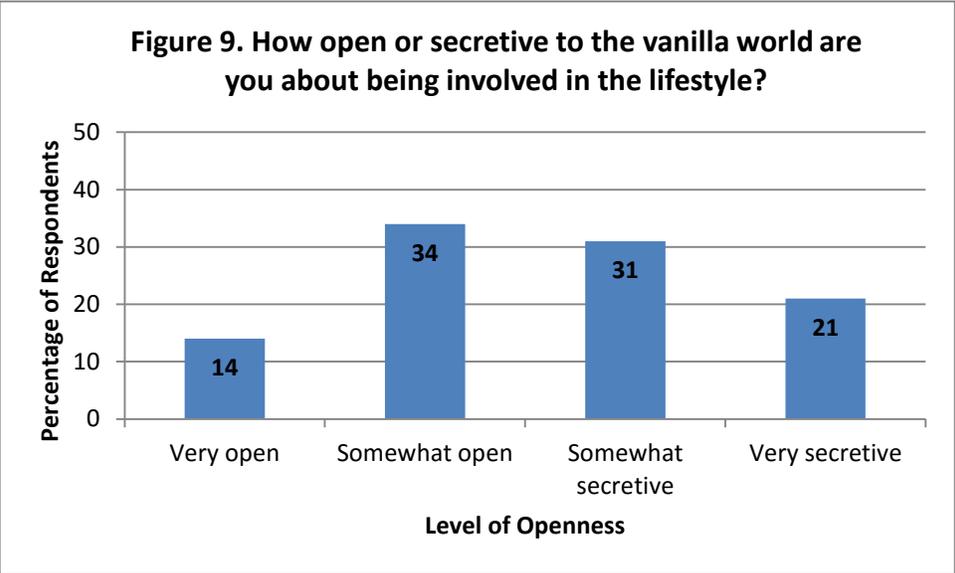


Figure 10: How often do you engage in a scene with a partner or partners?

According to Figure 10, 39% of the 1,009 respondents to this question reported engaging in a scene weekly followed by 31% engaging in a scene monthly, and 20% engaging in a scene a few times per year. Only 6% said they engage in a scene daily and only 5% said they never engaged in a scene. This data represents that most respondents do not fall within the extremes on this question, they are likely somewhere in the middle of daily and never for engaging in scenes.

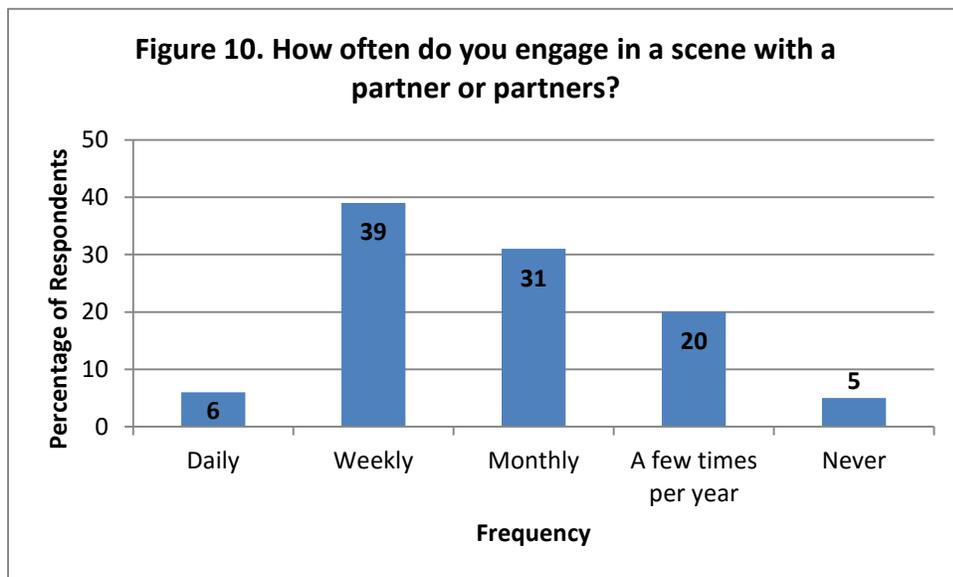


Figure 11: How kinky do you feel your fantasies are?

Looking at Figure 11 it can be seen that 46% of the 1,015 respondents to this question felt that their fantasies are “very kinky”, 28% felt that their fantasies are “extremely kinky”, and 24% felt that their fantasies are “somewhat kinky”.

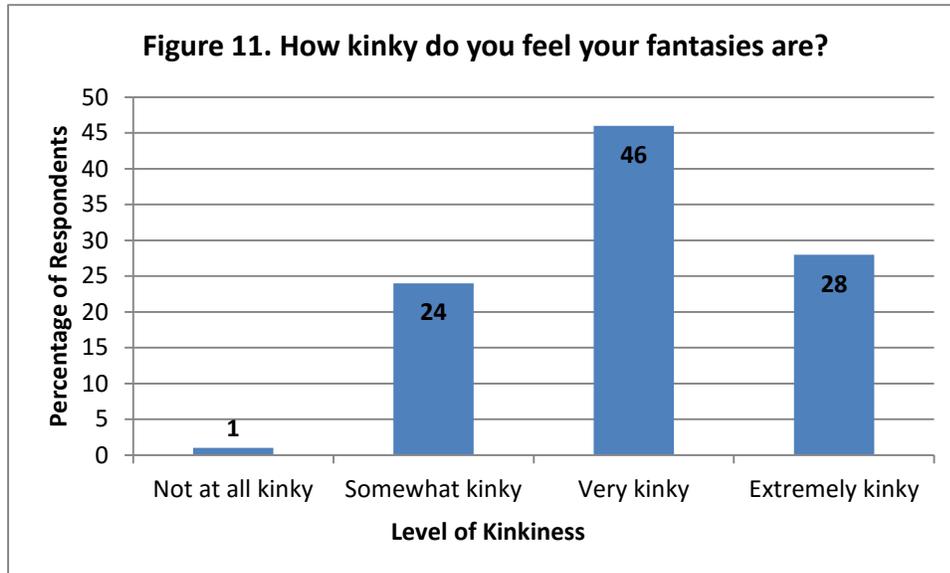


Figure 12: How kinky do you feel you are in practice (personal or sex life)?

Figure 12 represents how kinky respondents feel they are in practice, from the 1,016 respondents who replied to this question. Forty-four percent of respondents felt that they are “very kinky” in practice, 39% felt they are “somewhat kinky” in practice, and 14% felt they are “extremely kinky” in practice. These results can be compared to the results in Figure 11 to relate fantasy to practice. What is interesting is that in practice a much greater percentage of respondents felt they are “somewhat kinky” (39%) than those who felt their fantasies are “somewhat kinky” (24%). Additionally, a much lower percentage of respondents felt they are “extremely kinky” in practice (14%) than the percentage of respondents that felt their fantasies were “extremely kinky” (28%). This shows that oftentimes members of the BDSM community have kinkier fantasies than what they practice.

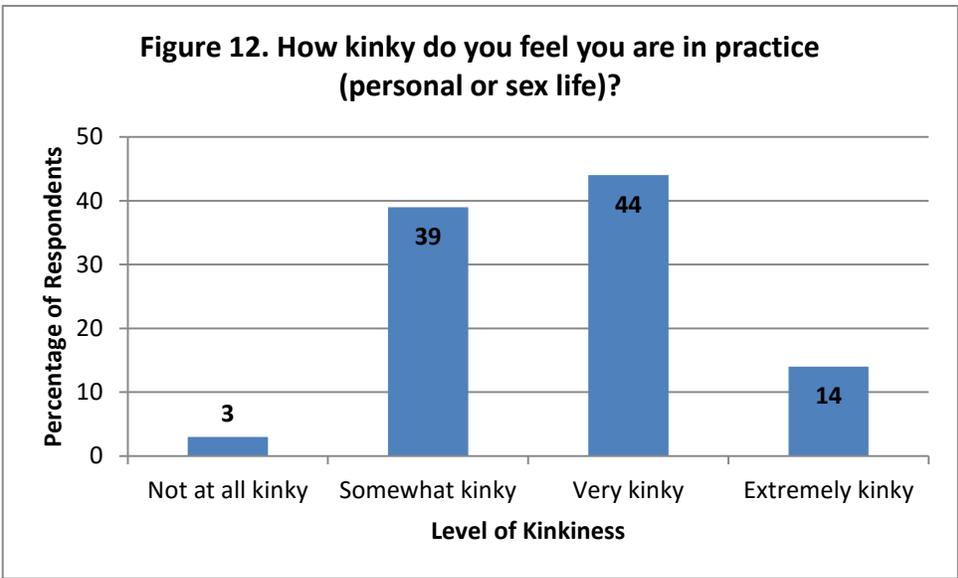


Figure 13: How many years have you participated in the lifestyle?

Figure 13 indicates that there is a large range of years that people have participated in the BDSM lifestyle, from the 999 people who responded to the question. Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they have been participating in the lifestyle for ten years or more. The remaining respondents indicated that they have been participating in the lifestyle for less than ten years with the next highest number of years being 2 years. Eleven percent of respondents indicated that they have participated in the lifestyle for two years.

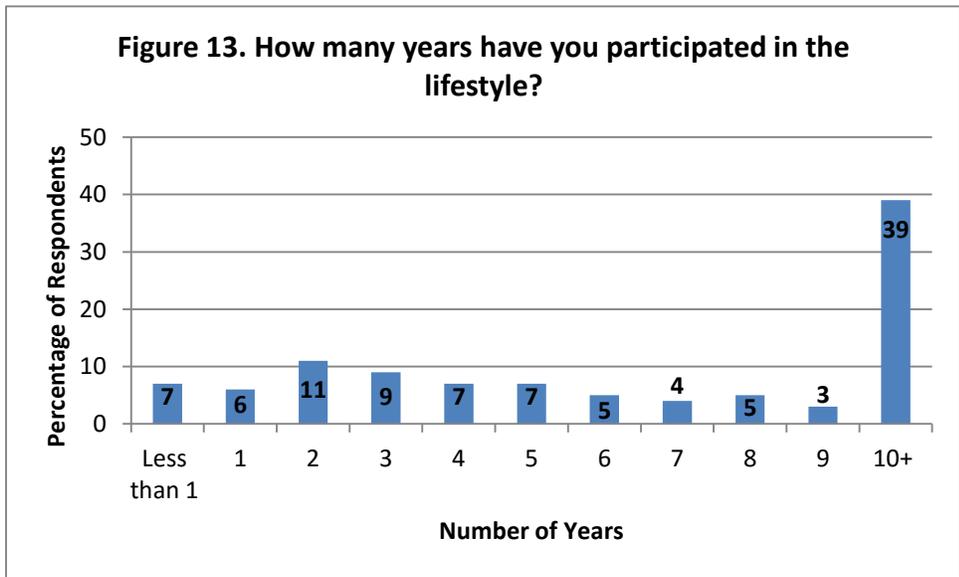


Figure 14: How many years old are you?

Figure 14 shows that about 75% of respondents are between the ages of 21 years and 50 years old, from those 971 who responded to the question. The lowest percentage of respondents fell within the 18 – 20 year old category (4%). This shows that most BDSM practitioners do not get into the lifestyle until at least the age of 21 and that the BDSM lifestyle is appealing to many age groups.

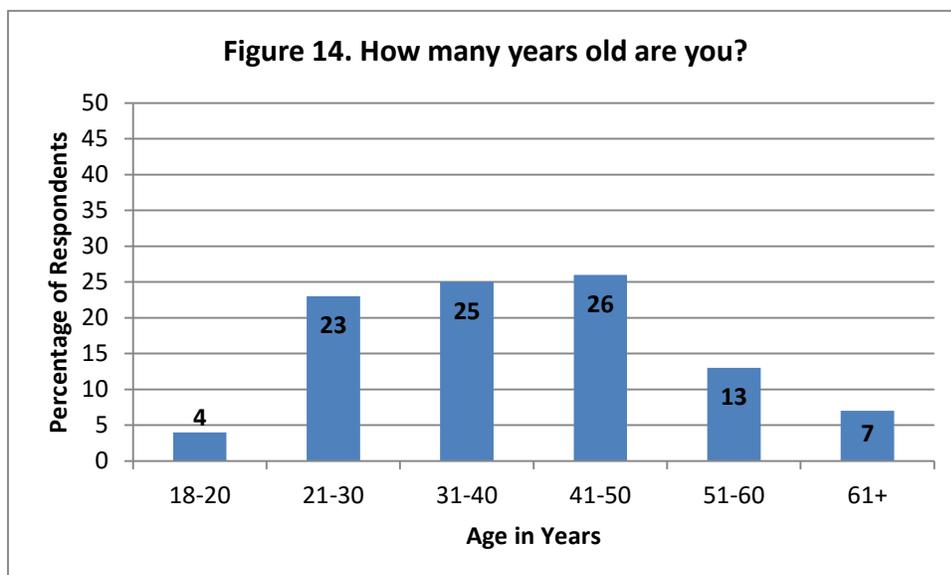


Figure 15: Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.

About half of the 1,003 respondents who reported on the question of their education have completed their Bachelor's degree as shown in Figure 15. Twenty-four percent have received a degree higher than a Bachelor's degree. These results show that the BDSM community members are well-educated and majority of them have attended college.

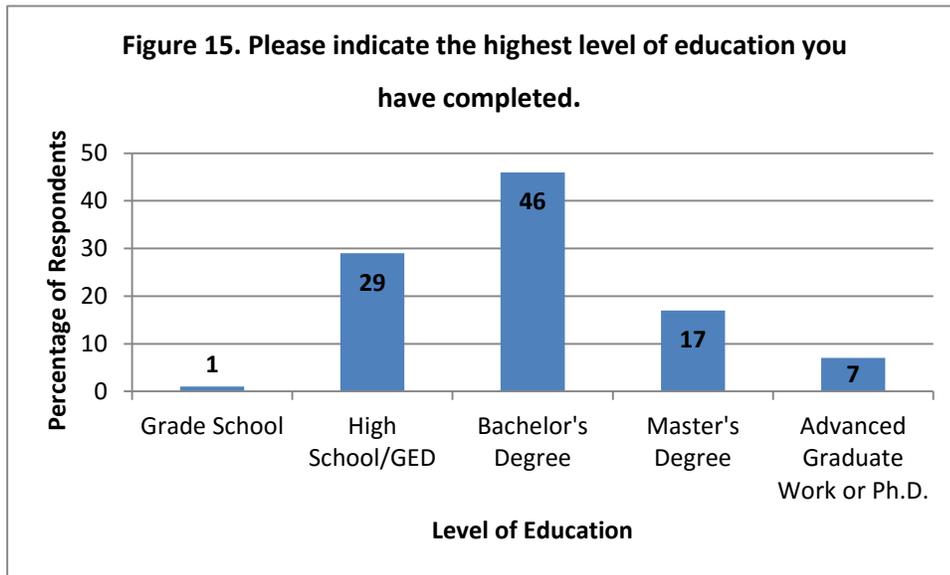


Figure 16: Politically, how would you consider yourself?

Figure 16 shows that 65% of the 988 respondents who responded to the question considered themselves to be “somewhat liberal” or “very liberal”. This can be compared to only 15% who considered themselves to be “somewhat conservative” or “very conservative”. Twenty percent of respondents considered themselves to be centrists.

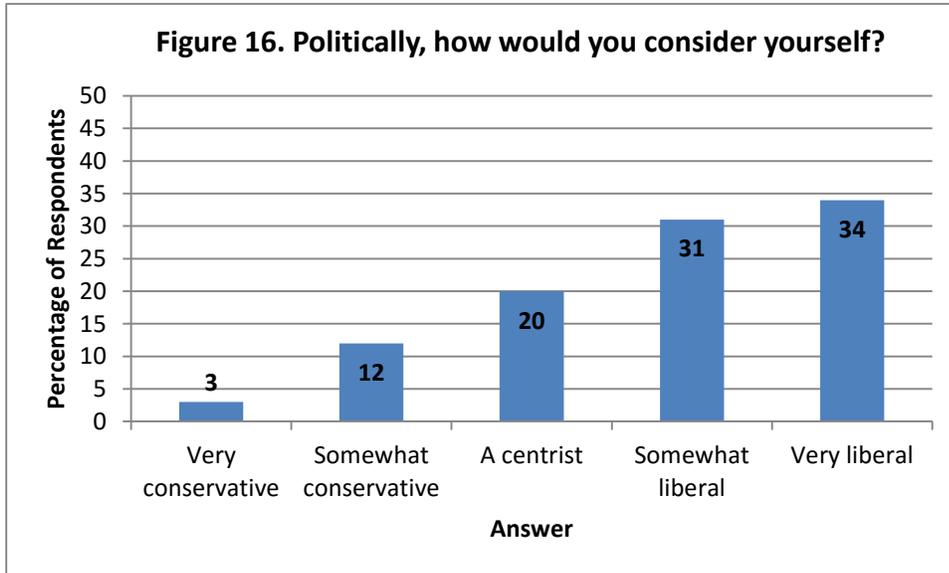


Figure 17: Please indicate where you see yourself on the following scale (Kinsey Scale)

Figure 17 shows how respondents would consider themselves on the Kinsey Scale (0- Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual experiences, 1- Predominantly heterosexual to 6- Exclusively homosexual) and 1,004 respondents replied to this question. In terms of the Kinsey Scale an equal percentage (26%) of respondents considered themselves a 1 or a 2 (1- Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual experiences, 2- Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual experiences). Twenty –four percent considered themselves a 0 (Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual experiences) and 16% considered themselves a 3 (Equally heterosexual and homosexual).

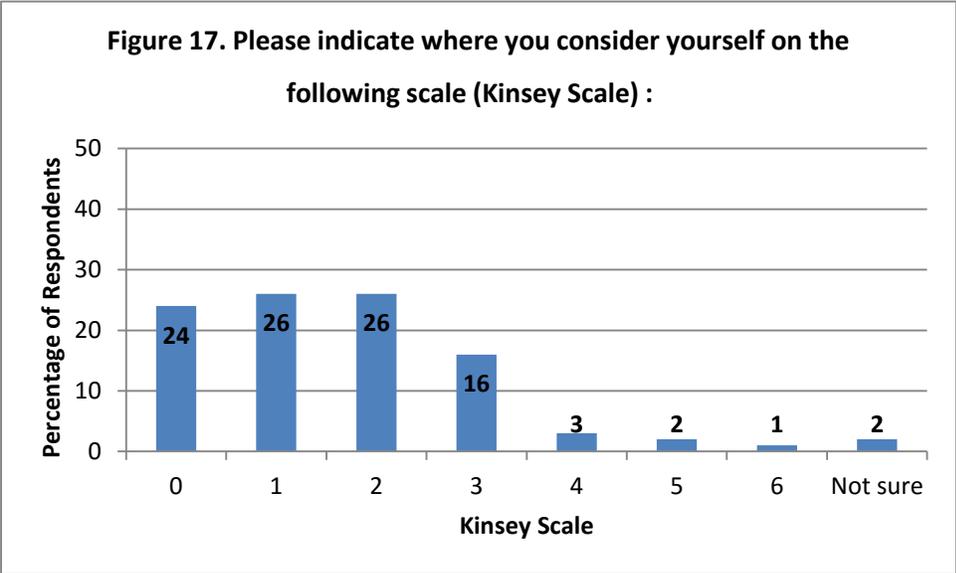


Figure 18: Are you dominant, submissive, or switch?

Figure 18 shows which percentage of the 1,004 respondents who responded to the question identify themselves as dominant, submissive, and switch. The respondents are fairly evenly spread out among the three with 30% being dominant, 32% being submissive, and 35% being switch. From this data it can be seen that there has been an increase switches within the community as several years ago the term was not widely used in the community. There are also significant gender variations in terms of how people identify, with males more likely to report being dominant and females more submissive.

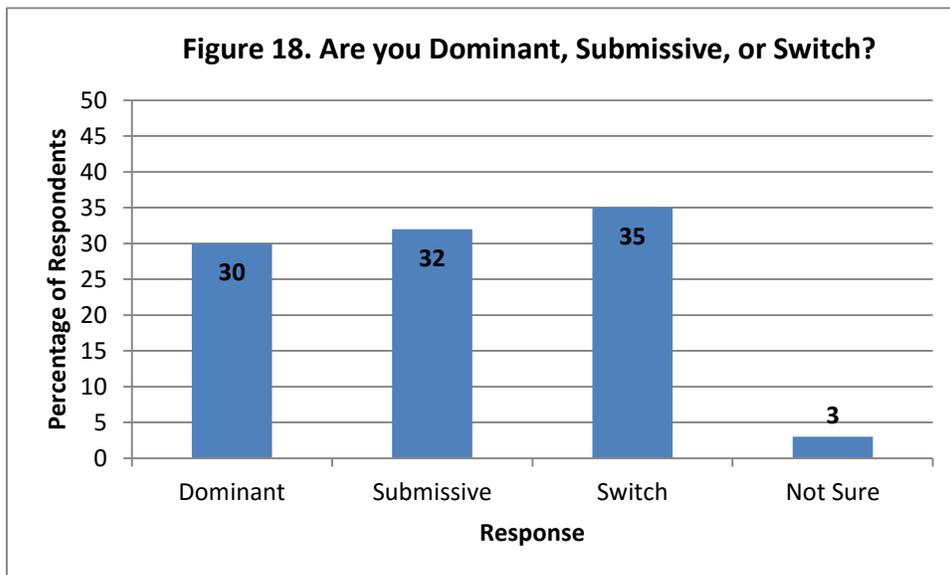


Figure 19: What is your legal marital status?

According to the data in Figure 19, most of the 1,002 who responded to this question are single and have never been married (35%). The remaining respondents were either separated (4%), married (23%), living with a partner (16%), divorced (18%) or widowed (3%).

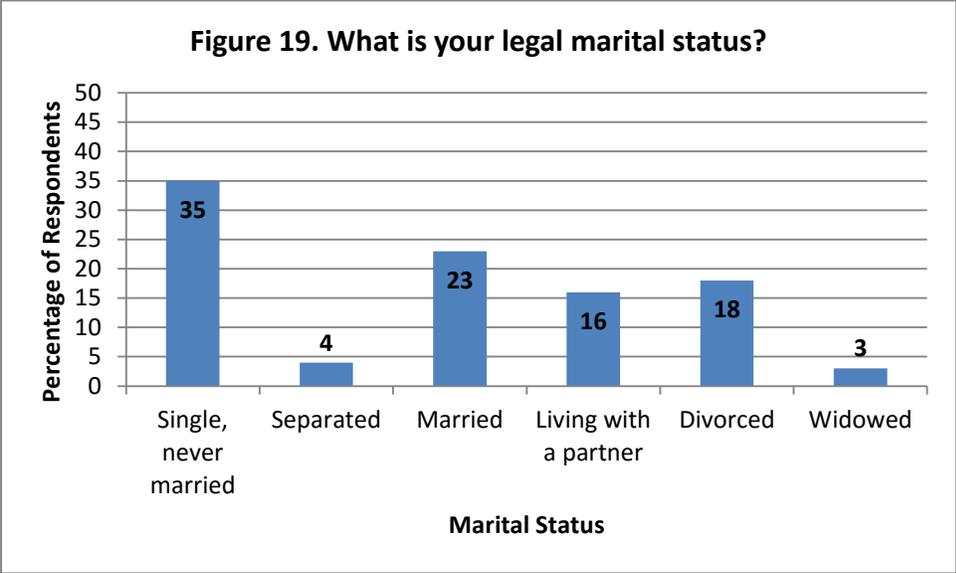


Figure 20: Do you have a child or children?

Thirty-nine percent of the 999 who responded to this question reported having a child or children. This can be compared to 61% of respondents that did not have a child or children. This data can be used to dispel some of the misconceptions about BDSM practitioners by showing similarities between the BDSM practitioners and the vanilla world.

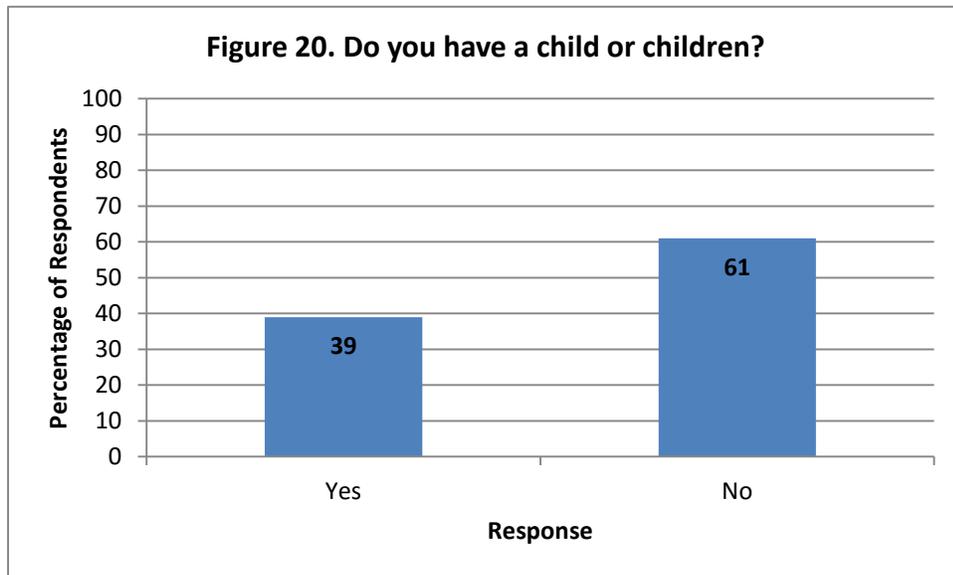


Figure 21: What is you biological sex?

Of those that responded, Figure 21 shows that 44% of the 1,000 people who responded to the question reported that they were biologically male and 53% were biologically female. The remaining percentage of respondents said they were transitioning or other.

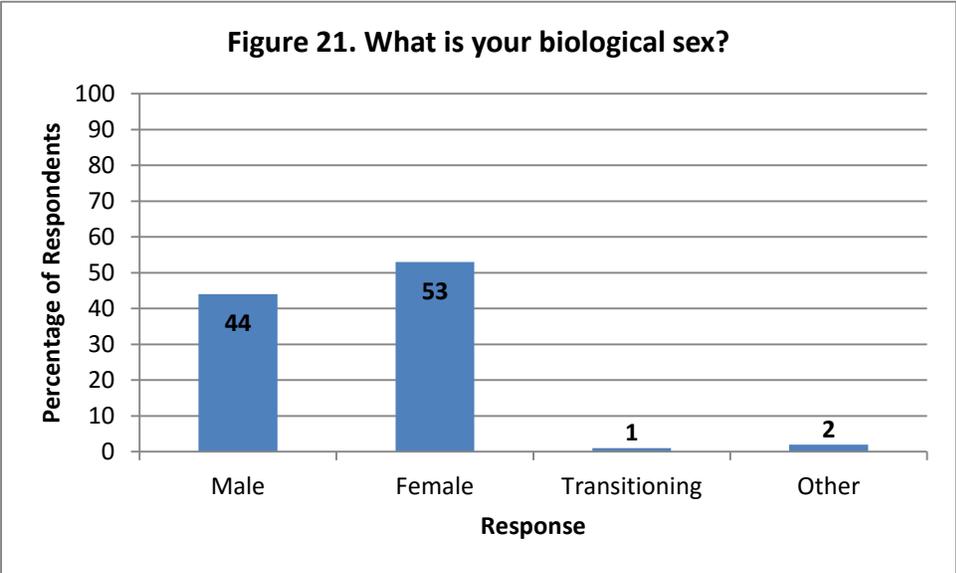


Figure 22: What gender do you identify with?

Figure 22 represents the genders that the 992 respondents who replied to this question identify with. Forty-two percent of respondents said they identify as male and 51% identify as female. The remaining percentages of respondents identify as transitioning or as other.

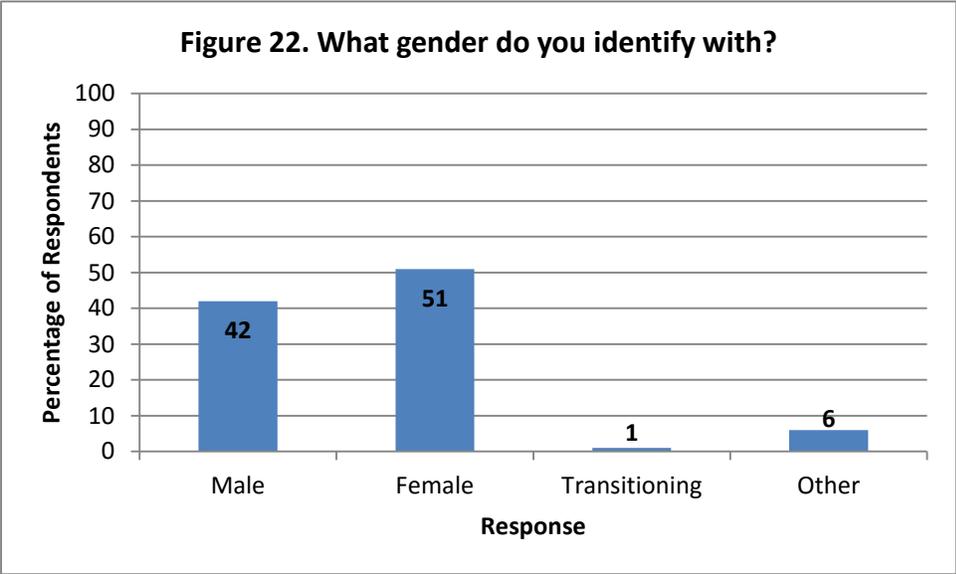


Figure 23: Have you ever engaged in kink activities for money?

Figure 23 represents the percentage of the 1,004 respondents that have participated in kink activities for money. According to Figure 23 the majority of respondents have not ever participated in kink activities for money (87%). Thirteen percent have engaged in kink activities for money.

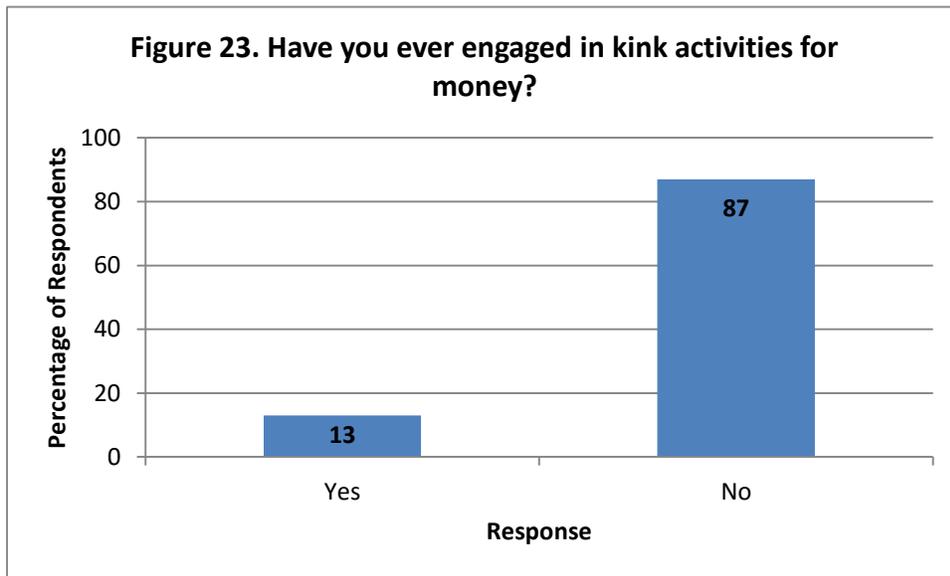


Figure 24: Have you ever engaged in kink activities for barter (exchange of goods/services)?

Figure 24 shows results very similar to Figure 23. This figure shows that the majority of the 1,002 respondents who answered this question have not engaged in kink activities for barter (exchange of good or services) while 13% of respondents have. This matches the percentages of respondents that have participated in kink activities for money.

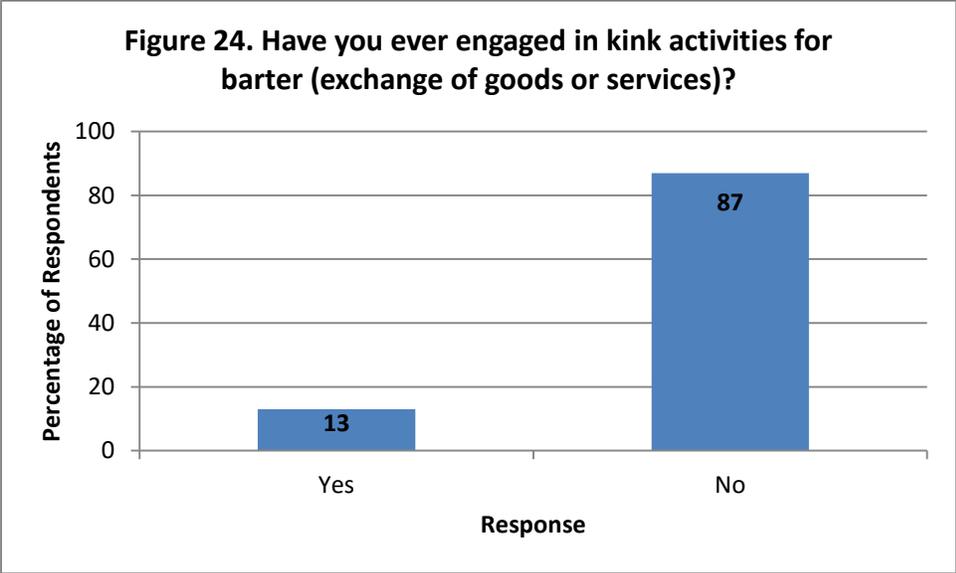


Figure 25: Do you currently perform kink activities as a professional (for money or exchange of goods/services)?

Only 5% of the 1,003 respondents to this question indicated that they currently perform kink activities as a professional. Ninety-five percent of respondents said that they do not currently perform kink activities as a professional. This shows that performing kink activities as a professional is quite rare among this group of respondents.

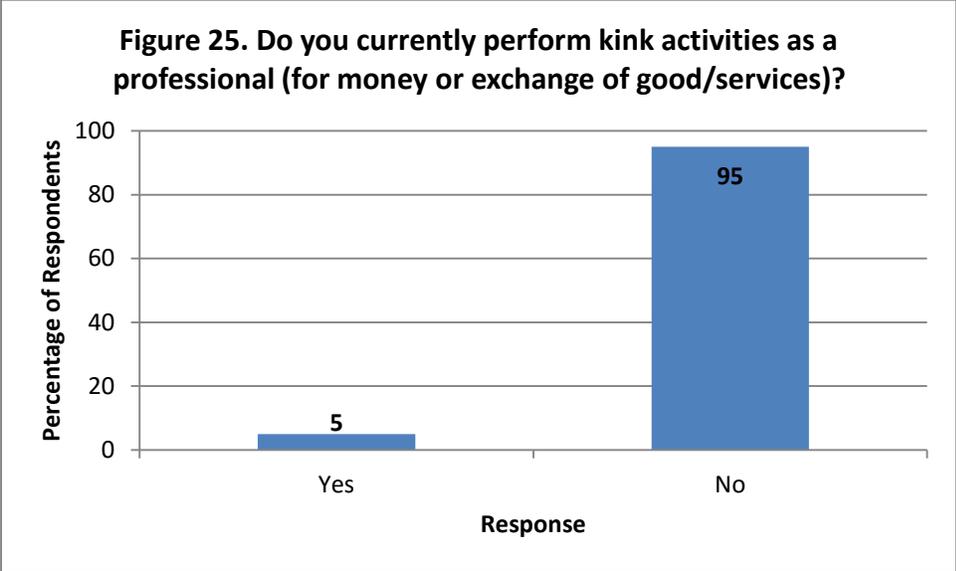


Figure 26: What is your racial/ethnic background?

The racial and ethnic backgrounds of the 1,000 who responded to this question are represented by Figure 26. Not surprisingly, 89% of the respondents were Caucasian. However, this number may also be somewhat lower than what other people would judge, as the “other” category has responses such as “Canadian,” “German,” “European,” and “Jewish,” responses than many would likely consider “white.”

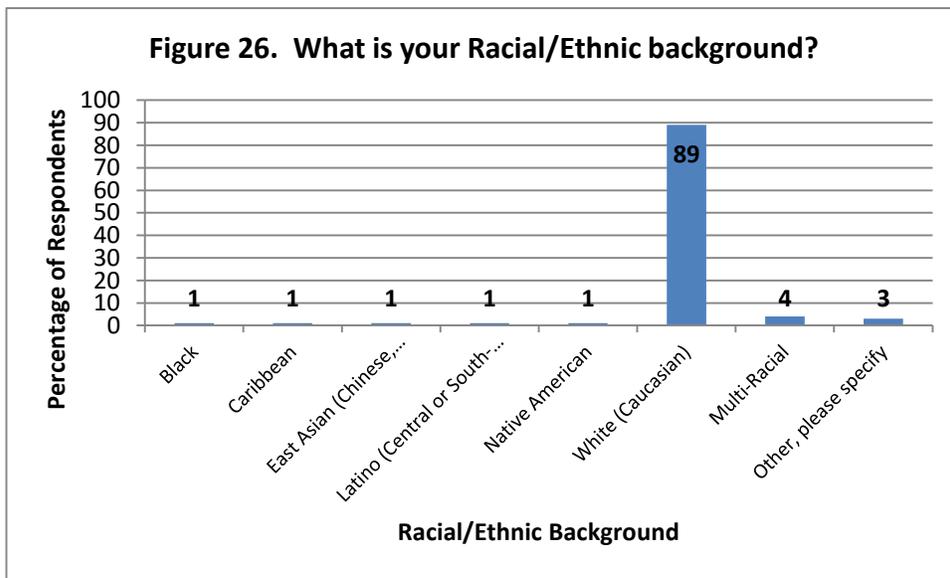
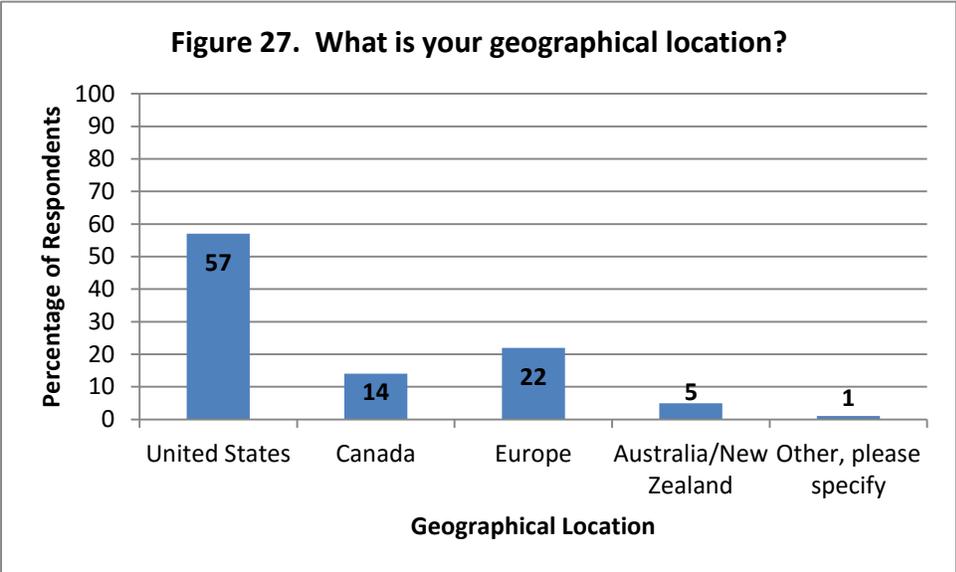


Figure 27: What is your geographical location?

This survey was a global survey that reached several different countries and the 993 respondents who responded to this reflect this. The majority of respondents are from the United States (57%), followed by Europe (22%), then Canada (14%).



Conclusions:

While the data inform us a great deal about the munch and the role of the munch in the BDSM community, a great deal of information was gathered in correspondences to the researchers in the course of collecting the data.

Some of the most interesting and unintended findings via the correspondences were:

- The “slosh” seems to be a regional reference to a munch that is largely practiced in the Midwest of the USA. Some of the language in the questionnaire assumed that all respondents would understand the concept of the “munch” and the “slosh.” Because the research began by being informed from members of the community in the Midwest where “slosh” is as widely used as “munch,” it was assumed that this would be universally understood. In fact, “slosh” is not universally understood.
- What is referred to as a “slosh” in the Midwest of the USA is many times referred to as “kinky drinkies” or a “liquid munch,” as they are similar social events to a munch but generally without substantial food.
- In Germany, when “munch” is used, it usually suggests that there will be an international crowd coming to the event. So while in Germany “BDSM-Stammtish” is used to indicate a munch in which the language of communication will likely be German, “munch” is suggestive that people may be in attendance who will not speak in German.
- One correspondence challenged the veracity of the Wikipedia page explaining the history of the munch.