

Gender difference in interest in sexual activity in people with MS

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Aim

Describe the population and explore associations between various factors and lack of interest in sexual activity.

Background

- Lack of interest in sexual activity is often expressed in people with MS (pwMS).
- The UKMS Register (UKMSR) captures longitudinal clinical and patient reported outcomes (PROs) from pwMS.
- The PROMIS interest in sexual activity (Sexual Function Short Form V2 survey, SexSFsfV2) was first asked on this platform at the end of 2024.

Method

- We analysed demographics, clinical characteristics, comorbidities, anxiety and depression levels (HADS), disability (MSIS-29-Physical scores) and fatigue (FSS) alongside the SexSFsfV2 (4 questions).
- Scores were normalised to give a score

	low	medium	high	p
n	2011	965	264	
SexFS_score (mean (SD))	10.95 (10.85)	47.61 (7.82)	77.79 (8.70)	<0.001
Age (mean (SD))	59.88 (10.75)	55.97 (11.56)	52.96 (11.80)	<0.001
OnsetAge (mean (SD))	37.13 (11.34)	35.26 (10.80)	34.94 (10.81)	<0.001
TimeSinceDiagnosis (median [IQR])	15.00 [9.00, 24.00]	13.00 [7.00, 22.00]	11.50 [6.00, 20.00]	<0.001
Gender = FEMALE/MALE (%)	1605/406 (79.8/20.2)	609/356 (63.1/36.9)	114/150 (43.2/56.8)	<0.001
MSTypeNow (%)				<0.001
PPMS	302 (15.0)	129 (13.4)	33 (12.5)	
RRMS	969 (48.2)	554 (57.4)	175 (66.3)	
SPMS	605 (30.1)	235 (24.4)	49 (18.6)	
Unknown/Other	135 (6.7)	47 (4.9)	7 (2.7)	
MSIS-29-Phys_score (median [IQR])	48.33 [26.67, 70.00]	36.67 [15.00, 60.00]	36.67 [13.33, 56.67]	<0.001
Anxiety_score (median [IQR])	33.33 [14.29, 47.62]	28.57 [9.52, 42.86]	23.81 [14.29, 42.86]	0.016
Depression_score (median [IQR])	33.33 [19.05, 52.38]	28.57 [9.52, 42.86]	19.05 [4.76, 39.29]	<0.001
FSS_score (median [IQR])	74.19 [57.66, 88.71]	69.35 [48.39, 83.87]	67.74 [45.16, 85.48]	<0.001
Comorbidities_n (mean (SD))	1.75 (1.87)	1.37 (1.57)	1.26 (1.45)	<0.001

Table 1: Demographic and clinical characteristics of participants based on interest in sexual activity score (SexFS score). Low (0-33.3), medium (33.3-66.3), high (66.6+) scores out of a total score of 100.

Results

- Comparing those with low(<33.3) and high (>66.6) levels: lower interest were older (59.9 v 53.0), predominantly female (79.8 v 43.2 %) with SPMS (30.1 v 18.6 %), more disabled (MSIS-phys 48.3 v 36.7), with increased depression (HADS 33.3 v 19.1), anxiety (33.3 v 23.8) and fatigue (74.2 v 67.7).
- Regression revealed independent associations between interest in sexual activity and gender, age, and anxiety and depression levels.
- Men had greater interest in sexual activity (mean difference 18.3 points higher), adjusting for all other significant factors.

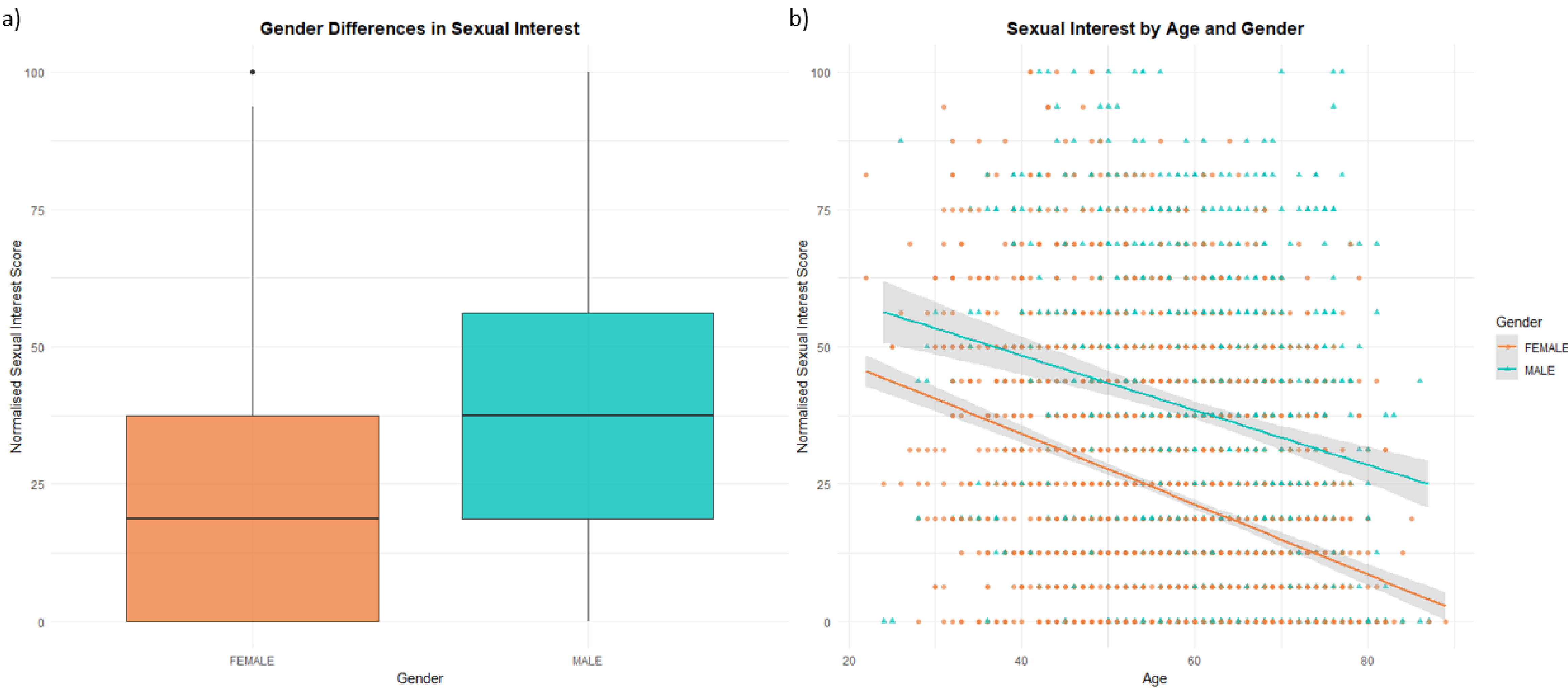


Figure 1: a) Median normalised sexual interest (Sex SFsfV2) score by gender. b) Normalised sexual interest (Sex SFsfV2) score by gender and age showing sexual interest declines with age in both genders, but is consistently higher in men.

Acknowledgements

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Conclusions

This study highlights a substantial gender gap in interest of sexual activity among pwMS. This finding may reflect a combination of biological and social factors that require further investigation.

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