



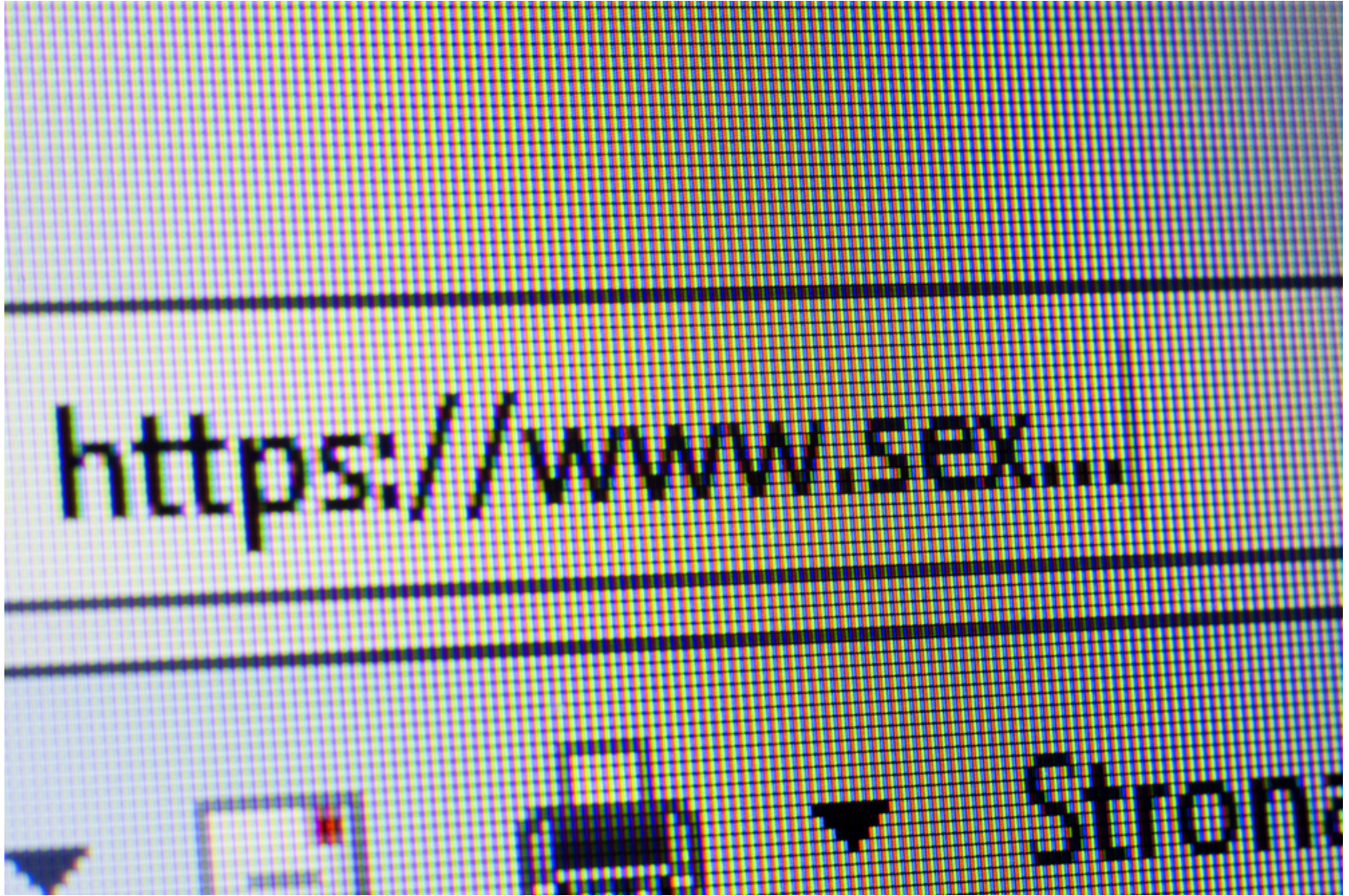
D-brief

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People in Religious and Conservative States Seek Out More Pornography Online

By Carl Engelking | December 30, 2014 1:26 pm



Strip club owners around the country are privy to a little secret: It's better for business if your city hosts the Republican National Convention than if it hosts the Super Bowl.

The *New York Times* **reported in 2012** that Republicans, on average, spend three times as much at strip clubs as Democrats at convention time. But is there something to this, or is this just political mudslinging? According to researchers who analyzed state-by-state Google searches, the evidence holds water. The highest volumes of Internet searches for sexual content were found in states where religion and

conservatism were most prevalent.

More Religion, More Sex?

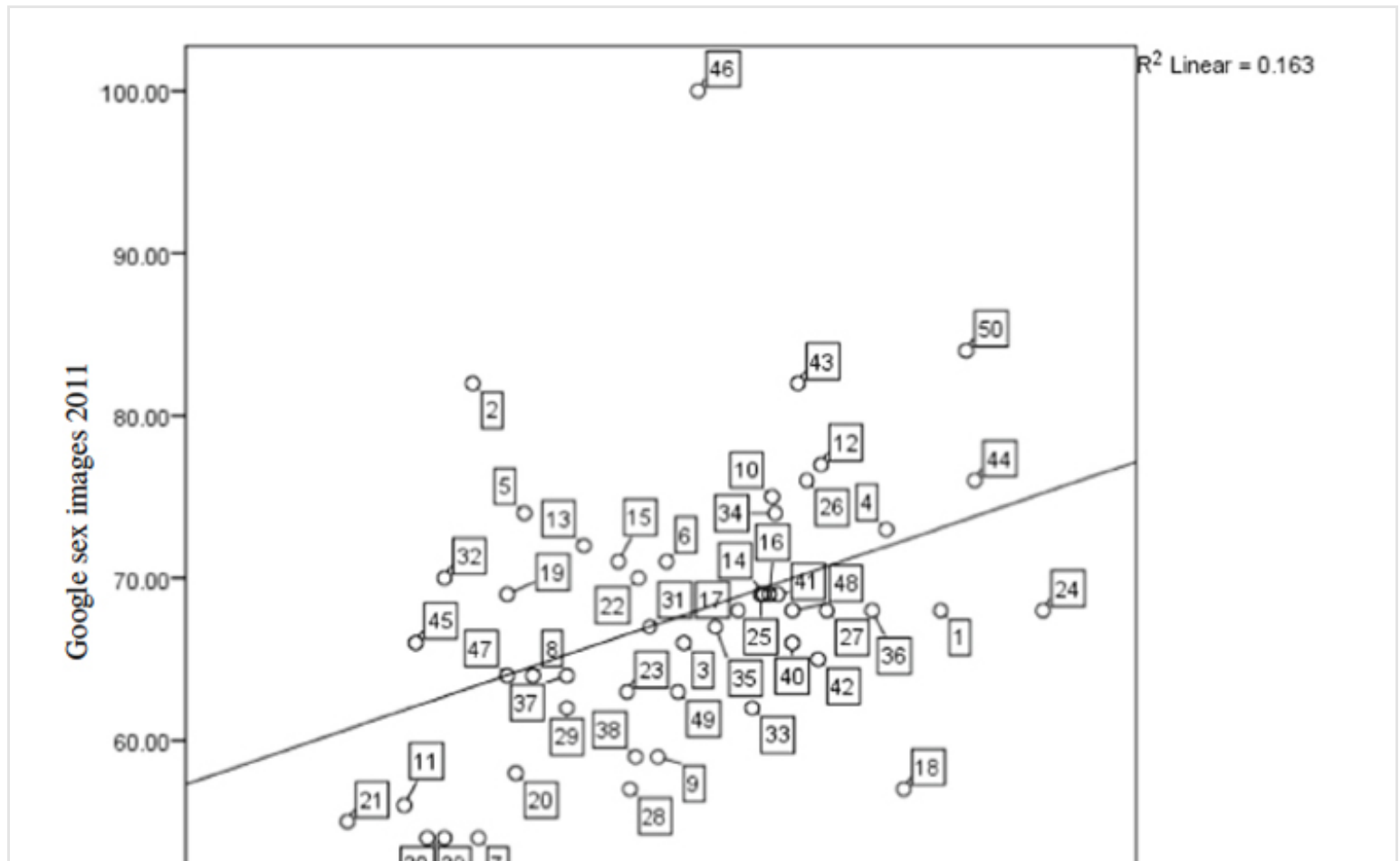
The basic premise of this study harkens back to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theories. Basically, humans are born with natural sexual urges that we repress to get along peacefully in society. As the theory goes, the more people repress these urges in public, the more often they will indulge in them privately.

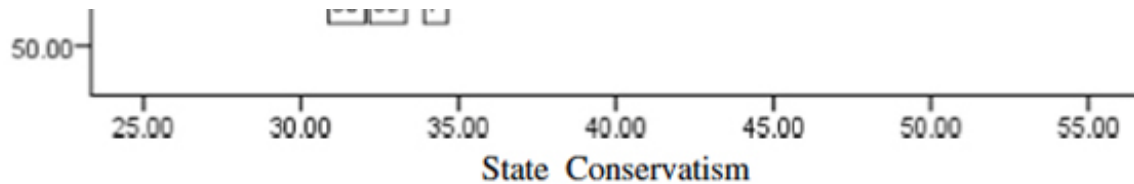
Theories are all well and good, but researchers were looking for data to support this paradoxical claim. So, they tracked Google Trends in 2011 and 2012 to build a rough sketch of Americans' private lives, measuring the volume of searches for a variety of explicit terms including "sex" and "XXX."

To measure religiosity and conservatism, researchers relied on two Gallup polls conducted in 2009 and 2011, each surveying over 350,000 adults across the United States. Researchers calculated a "religiosity index" for each state based on the number of people who said they were "very religious" or who "considered religion an important part of their daily lives." Political leanings were measured by the percentage of self-identified conservative individuals within each state.

Skeletons in the Closet

According to the data, Freud was right. States that scored highest in conservatism and religiosity were also the source of a higher volume of sexual content searches. In these states, researchers noted increased searches for sex, gay sex, porn, free porn and gay porn.



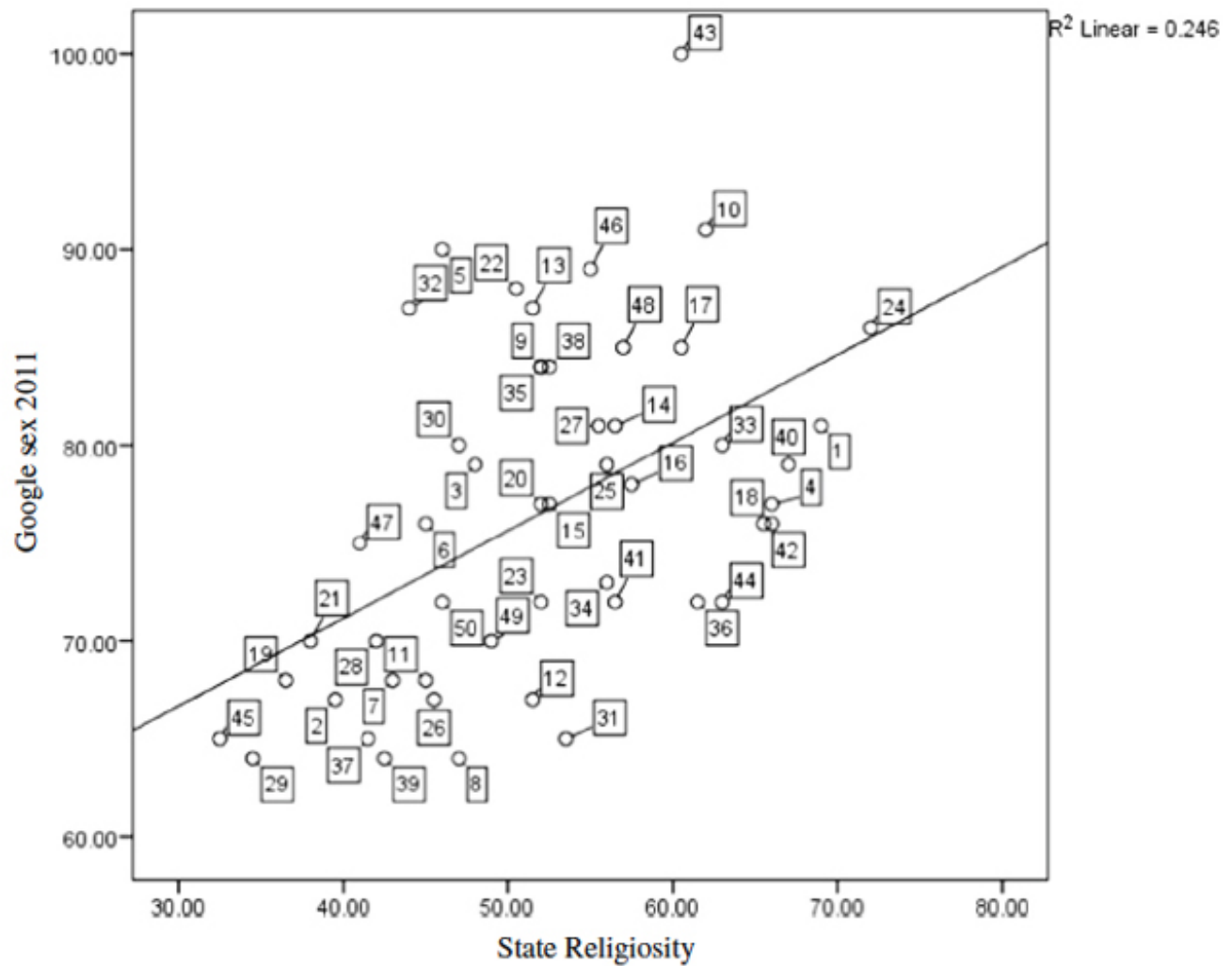


State legend

Alabama	1	Louisiana	18	Ohio	35
Alaska	2	Maine	19	Oklahoma	36
Arizona	3	Maryland	20	Oregon	37
Arkansas	4	Massachusetts	21	Pennsylvania	38
California	5	Michigan	22	Rhode Island	39
Colorado	6	Minnesota	23	South Carolina	40
Connecticut	7	Mississippi	24	South Dakota	41
Delaware	8	Missouri	25	Tennessee	42
Florida	9	Montana	26	Texas	43
Georgia	10	Nebraska	27	Utah	44
Hawaii	11	Nevada	28	Vermont	45
Idaho	12	New Hampshire	29	Virginia	46
Illinois	13	New Jersey	30	Washington	47
Indiana	14	New Mexico	31	West Virginia	48
Iowa	15	New York	32	Wisconsin	49
Kansas	16	North Carolina	33	Wyoming	50
Kentucky	17	North Dakota	34		

Scatterplot depicting the correlation between state-level conservatism and “sex” image Google searching in 2011. (From: MacInnis, C. and Hodson G., *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, January 2015, Volume 44, Issue 1, pp 137-147)

The association between religion, conservatism and porn was strong, and simply knowing the number of conservatives in a state was an accurate predictor of the magnitude of pornography searches. The findings held true even after researchers controlled for state-by-state differences in population, poverty rate and Internet use.



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States like Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama scored high in religiosity and likewise in sex searches. Texas, the biggest outlier, had more sex searches than its religiosity would predict – but its conservatism makes up part of the explanation. States such as Vermont and New Hampshire were the least religious and searched for the least amount of sexual content.

Researchers published their findings in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

Let's Not Jump to Conclusions

Of course, this being science, there are some caveats. Though researchers found statewide associations, at an individual level the study didn't show that religious individuals and/or conservatives were doing the searching. It could be that agnostic liberals are driven to seek out sex online since they live in an area where these urges are discouraged. However, researchers say their findings gel with firsthand accounts of club owners and sex workers in cities like Tampa Bay, which hosted the 2012 Republican National Convention.

Thus, the study seems to support a well-known aspect of human nature: We don't always practice what we preach.

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