

Kinsey Reporter: Free app allows public to anonymously report, share information on sexual behavior

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The Kinsey Reporter platform is available free from Apple iOS and Google Play (for Android) online stores. Reports made by anonymous citizen scientists will be used for research and shared with the public at the Kinsey Reporter website. Credit: Indiana University

Indiana University has released Kinsey Reporter, a global mobile survey platform for collecting and reporting anonymous data about sexual and other intimate behaviors. The pilot project allows citizen observers

around the world to use free applications now available for Apple and Android mobile platforms to not only report on sexual behavior and experiences, but also to share, explore and visualize the accumulated data.

"People are natural observers. It's part of being social, and using [mobile apps](#) is an excellent way to involve [citizen scientists](#)," said Julia Heiman, director of The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction. "We expect to get new insights into sexuality and relationships today. What do people notice, what are they involved in, and what can they relate to us about their lives and their communities?"

The project will collect [anonymous data](#) and then aggregate and share it openly. Kinsey Reporter is a joint project between The Kinsey Institute and the Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research, or CNetS, which is part of the IU School of Informatics and Computing and the Pervasive Technology Institute. Both Kinsey and CNetS are based on the IU Bloomington campus.

CNetS director Filippo Menczer called development of the citizen reporting platform an opportunity to gather information on important issues that may have been difficult to examine in the past.

"This new platform will allow us to explore issues that have been challenging to study until now, such as the prevalence of unreported [sexual violence](#) in different parts of the world, or the correlation between various [sexual practices](#) like [condom use](#), for example, and the cultural, political, religious or health contexts in particular geographical areas. These were some of our initial motivations for the project," he said.

Users simply download the free app and begin contributing observed information on topics such as sexual activity, public displays of affection, flirting, unwanted experiences and birth control use. Even

though no information identifying users submitting reports is collected or stored, the time and general location of the report is collected and input into the database. Users also have the option of selecting their own geographic preference for the report by choosing city/town, state/region or country.

Surveys will change over time, and users can view aggregated reports by geographic region via interactive maps, timelines or charts. All of these reporting venues can be manipulated with filters that remove or add data based on specific survey topics and questions selected by the user.

Both Heiman and Menczer said The Kinsey Institute's longstanding seminal studies of sexual behaviors created a perfect synergy with research going on at CNetS related to mining big data crowd-sourced from mobile social media. The sensitive domain—sexual relations—added an intriguing challenge in finding a way to share useful data with the community while protecting the privacy and anonymity of the reporting volunteers, they added.

Reports are transmitted to Kinsey Reporter using a secure, encrypted protocol, and the only data collected are a timestamp, the approximate geo-location selected by the user, and the tags the user chooses in response to various survey questions. The protections and anonymity provided to those responding to surveys allowed IU's Institutional Review Board to classify the research as "exempt from review," which allows the data to be used for research and shared without requiring informed consent from users of the apps.

The Kinsey Reporter platform is now in public beta release. Apps are available for free download at both the Apple iOS and Android app stores. Accompanying the app release are a Kinsey Reporter website, a Twitter feed and a Facebook page. The four resources also provide links to information about sexuality, such as blogs and podcasts from the

Kinsey Confidential website. YouTube videos on "What Is the Kinsey Reporter App" and "Making the Kinsey Reporter App" are also available for viewing.

Provided by Indiana University

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