

# Gender Differences in Smartphone Use by Undergraduate Students

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## Introduction

Smart phones are ubiquitous in modern society. Depending on phone type, there are tens of thousands of apps which can access music, social and dating sites, banking, shopping, and educational opportunities. The present study examined gender differences in how men and women used their smartphones.

## Method

Participants were 29 men and 127 women ( $N = 156$ ) undergraduate students at Valdosta State University. Students were between 18 and 33 years old ( $M = 20.46$  years,  $SD = 0.82$ ). Most students were sophomores ( $N = 82$ ) and juniors ( $N = 48$ ) with relatively few freshman ( $N = 5$ ) and seniors ( $N = 17$ ). One student had graduated and was seeking a bachelor's degree in a new major.

## Results

Both men and women showed use of the same kind of smartphone apps, with no gender differences observed in data storage, making payments online, shopping, banking or listening to music ( $p > .05$ ). Main similarities are shown in figure 1.

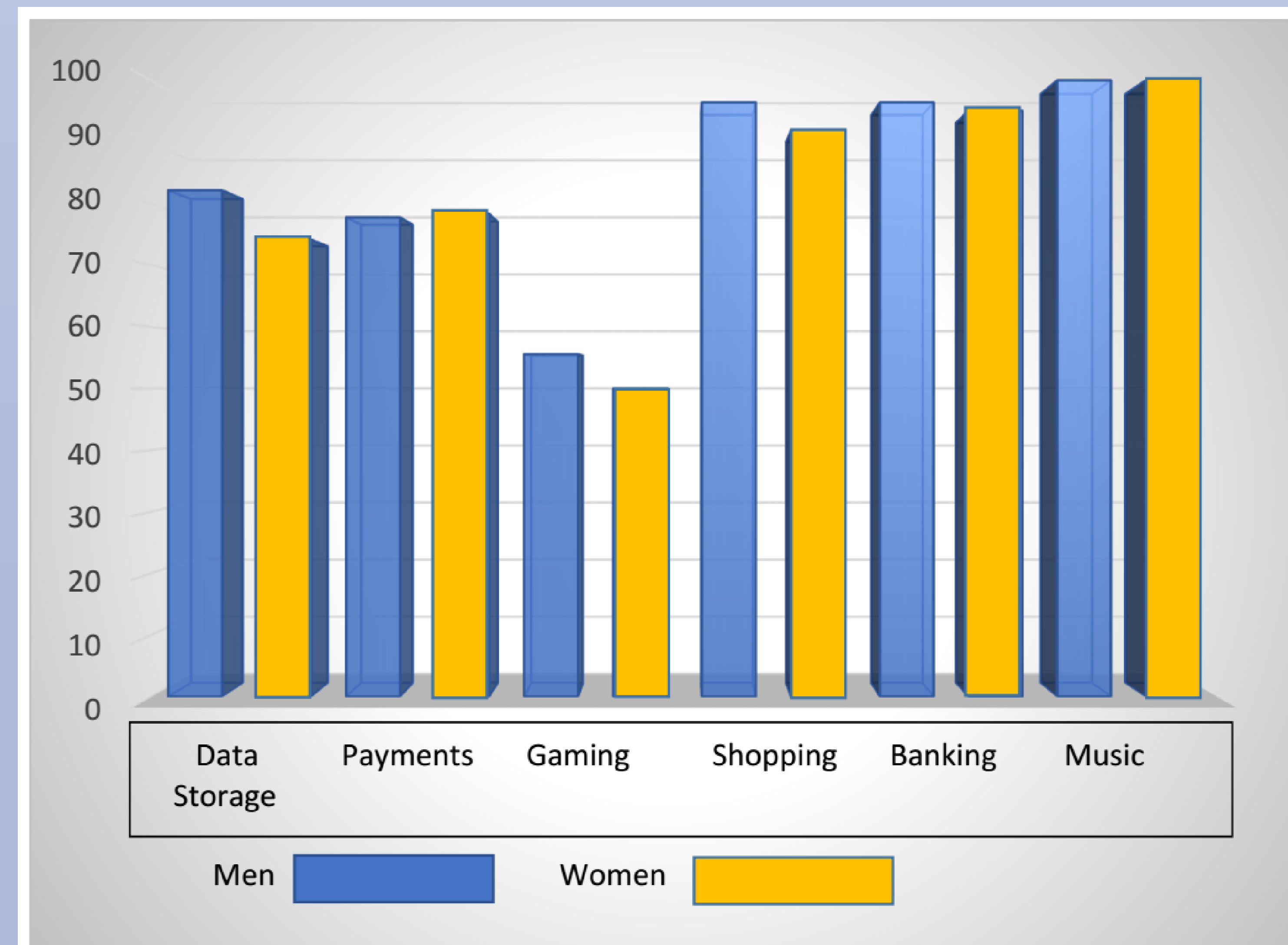


Figure 1: Similarities in the percentages of use of phone apps by men and women

Gender differences were observed for obtaining news on phone apps and use of three types of entertainment. These differences are shown in figure 2.

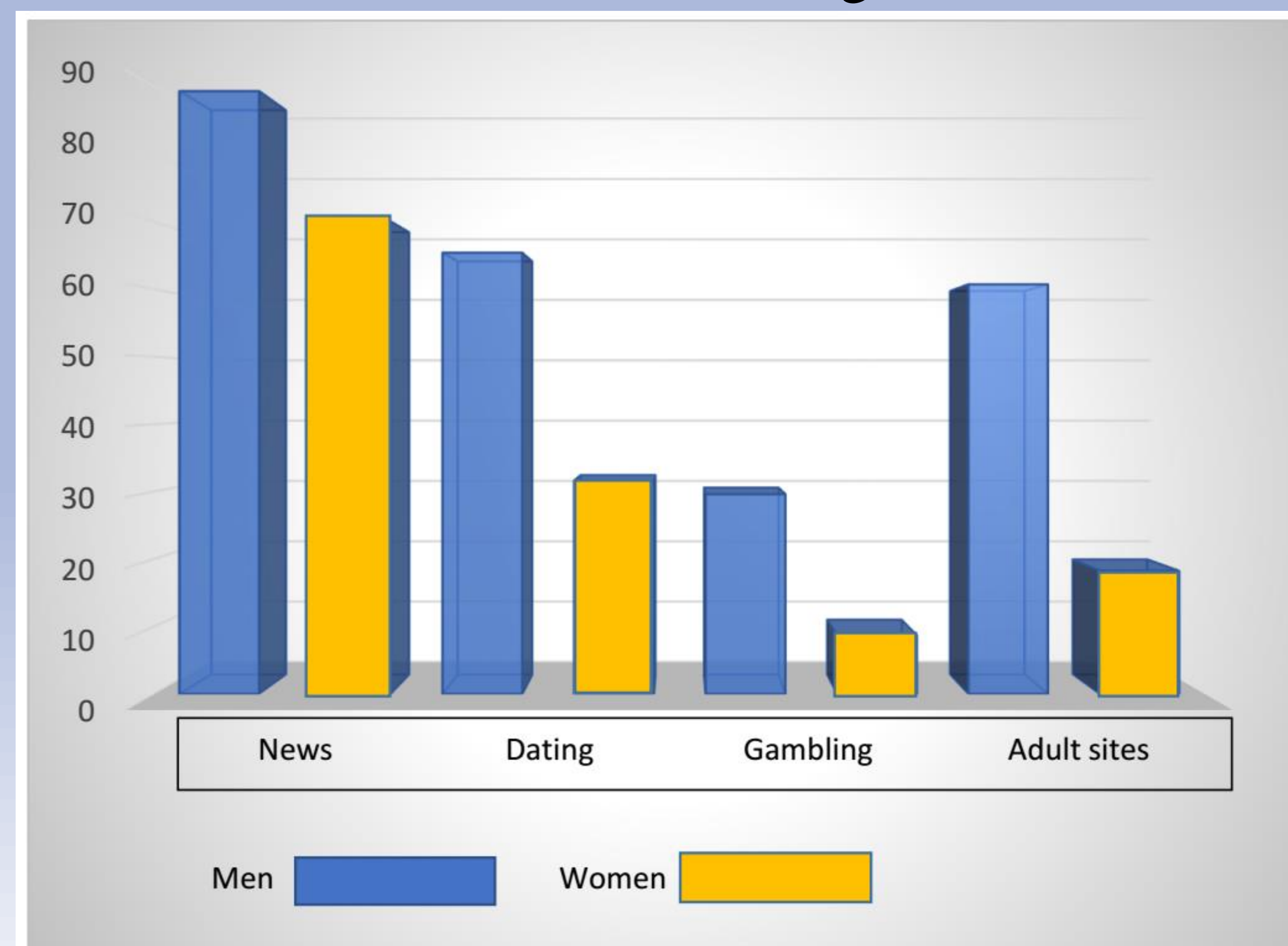


Figure 2: Differences in the percentages of use of phone apps by men and women

Men used their phones to read news ( $\chi^2 = 4.35, p = .037$ ) with 89% of men using apps for news on their phone compared to 71% of women. The other differences could be classified in the general area of social and entertainment activities. Men reported accessing more dating sites ( $\chi^2 = 10.31, p = .001$ ), online gambling ( $\chi^2 = 8.65, p = .003$ ), and visiting adult sites ( $\chi^2 = 4.35, p = .037$ ) in their phone apps than women. The rates of access to dating, gambling and adult sites was two to three times more often compared to women.

## Discussion

Men and women reported the same types of apps and similar use patterns on their cell phones for most activities, especially common and utilitarian apps. Men reported higher use across domains of news, entertainment, and dating.

Although the surveys were completed autonomously, some part of the gender differences could be attributable to a reluctance by women to report certain social and entertainment uses. Similarly, men may be more willing to report these uses.