The Porn Impacts Awareness Report:
Comparative Findings From Fight the New Drug Followers and the General Public

Fight the New Drug (FTND) is a non-religious and non-legislative nonprofit that exists to provide individuals the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding pornography by raising awareness on its harmful effects using only science, facts, and personal accounts.

In order to better understand the general public's awareness of porn's risks as well as the efficacy of FTND's educational resources, we developed The Porn Impacts Awareness Survey. In addition to gathering demographic information, the survey also consisted of a knowledge assessment—The Porn Impacts Awareness Test—to gauge how well survey respondents understood the potential effects of pornography based on the current state of academic literature on the topic. The survey was administered to both FTND followers and to a comparative sample from the general population. Results indicate that while the general public is mostly unaware or misinformed about the potential effects of pornography, FTND resources are very effective at educating people on porn's potential risks, thereby empowering them to make more informed decisions.
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Key Findings

Most people are unaware or misinformed about the potential risks associated with porn consumption

• The average score of the general public sample on The Porn Impacts Awareness Test was only 45%.

• Only 10% of the general public received a “passing” score (70% or above) on the test.

• More than half of the general public sample (56%) was not able to answer half of the questions correctly.

• More than 1 in 5 (21%) general public respondents answered less than 30% of the questions correctly.

• Nearly 1 in 7 (13%) could only answer 20% of the questions correctly.

Fight the New Drug is very effective in educating individuals on the risks of pornography

• The average score of FTND followers was 86%—almost double the score of the general public.

• Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) FTND followers scored above 90%.

• None (0%) of the FTND followers scored below 50%.

• Respondents in the general population who agreed that porn can be harmful scored equally as low as the rest of the general population, indicating that FTND followers’ high scores reflect more than just agreement.

Scores did not significantly differ depending on respondents’ primary motivations for following Fight the New Drug (i.e., those trying to quit porn compared to those who have been hurt by a partner’s porn habit).
How well-known are the risks of pornography?

With approximately 84.4% of 14 to 18-year-old males and 57% of 14 to 18-year-old females having viewed pornography,1 and 91.5% of adult men and 60.2% of adult women reporting that they’ve consumed pornography in the past month,2 pornography has become a prevalent feature of our cultural landscape. Considering widespread internet access and the proliferation of the smartphone, it’s no surprise that the majority of kids are exposed to porn by age 13.3 In many cases, that means that young people are developing porn habits before they’ve had any opportunity to learn about the potential consequences porn consumption may have.4 Even as adults, many people regularly consume pornography while remaining unaware or misinformed about the ways in which it may affect them.

Hundreds of peer-reviewed studies have consistently identified potentially negative effects of internet pornography on individual consumers, their relationships, and society more generally. These studies have linked pornography consumption to poorer mental health,5 lower couple relationship quality and stability,6 increased sexual objectification,7 increased sexual aggression,8 compulsive and addictive viewing patterns,9 and dozens of other negative effects. While these patterns certainly don’t apply to all pornography use, they seem to be more common than many people realize.

Despite the growing number of studies documenting the potential risks of pornography consumption, there has been little
research done to understand how well-educated the general population is about the risks of pornography consumption. While pornography consumption is commonplace for many people, many people may be unaware or even misinformed about the risks pornography poses when they engage with it.

**Purpose of the report**

As a non-religious and non-legislative nonprofit that exists to provide individuals the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding pornography by raising awareness on its harmful effects, FTND has engaged in an expansive education campaign that uses online resources and in-person presentations to educate teens, young adults, parents, and others about the unhealthy or potentially harmful influence pornography can have.

Over the years, FTND has developed a large group of followers across the globe. Given the lack of formal education about pornography, several key questions emerge about FTND’s educational efforts. For example, do FTND’s resources actually help increase followers’ knowledge about the impacts of pornography? Is FTND effectively raising awareness on the risks of pornography and helping individuals make informed decisions regarding pornography?

In this report, we summarize the findings of a new survey fielded in 2022 entitled “The Porn Impacts Awareness Survey.” This survey was designed to answer two primary questions:

- How aware is the general public of the potentially harmful effects of pornography?
- How effectively is FTND able to educate people about the risks associated with pornography?
To address these questions, we fielded The Porn Impacts Awareness Survey. In addition to gathering basic demographic information, the survey included a 39-item multiple-choice assessment called The Porn Impacts Awareness Test (PIAT).

The survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey in 2021 and 2022, and gathered data from two different sample groups of adults living in the United States.

The first was a sample of FTND followers who were informed of the survey through FTND emails or social media. The second group was a sample of adults collected independently by SurveyMonkey using their U.S. census template, which was adjusted for age in order to better match the sample of FTND followers. Both samples were given a knowledge assessment to examine how well the survey respondents understood the potential effects of pornography, as identified in academic literature. This assessment tested respondents’ awareness of the known risks of pornography related to couple relationship quality, sexual objectification, addiction potential, risky sexual scripts, the normalization of aggression, and other risks that have been linked to frequent and unhealthy viewing of pornography.

Assessment

Questions on the 39-item assessment included a wide array of topics as they relate to porn (i.e., “According to research, by what age are most young people exposed to porn?” with the answer being “13,” and “True or False—Research suggests that pornography consumers are more likely to objectify others,” with the answer being “True.”)

While the preponderance of evidence suggests that porn is often harmful, we also included questions based on research findings that show some positive effects of pornography (i.e., “True or False—Some research suggests that couples can experience an initial spark in their relationship when they watch porn together” with the answer being “True”) and questions based on common misconceptions held by some anti-porn campaigners (i.e., “Can pornography be ‘addictive’?” with the correct multiple choice response being “Yes, but most porn consumers do not qualify as “addicts” in a clinically diagnosable sense” rather than none or “nearly all” consumers being labeled as addicts) so as to mitigate any bias from respondents who may assume that the correct response was always the response that painted pornography in the worst light.

The knowledge assessment consisted of multiple choice and true or false questions, and scores were calculated based on the percentage of questions respondents answered correctly. In the time between when the test was administered to FTND followers and the general population, test questions were minimally edited for clarity, and an answer response that read, “I don’t know the answer to this question” was added as a response option to each question.
FTND follower sample

The first dataset consisted of a sample of 1,543 FTND followers from 56 different countries around the globe that was collected in July-August of 2021 and May of 2022.

To maintain primary language consistency in comparisons, a sample of 1,065 FTND followers from the United States was used in the analyses presented in this report. In terms of gender identity, 62% of respondents identified as female, with 36% male and 2% who identified as transgender, non-binary, or other. In terms of age, 41% were between the ages of 18 to 24, 31% were 25 to 34 years old, 15% were 35 to 44 years old, and 13% were older than 45 years old. Education levels were 1% Some High School, 11% High School Grad, 22% Current College Students, 19% Some College, 31% College Degree, 6% Current Graduate Student, and 11% with a Graduate Degree.

General public sample

The second data set included a sample of individuals (ages 18 to 60) from across the United States who agreed to participate in an online survey testing their knowledge about the potential effects of pornography on individuals and couples. This national quota sample of 1,470 individuals was obtained by the data firm SurveyMonkey using their “basic census template” and was collected in May 2022.

The sample was recruited from across the United States based on quotas for age, race, education level, and geographic region and aimed at creating a demographically diverse sample. In terms of gender identity, 51% of the sample identified as female, 46% as male, and 3% as transgender, non-binary, or other. In terms of age, 19% were between the ages of 18 to 24, 35% were 25 to 34 years old, 31% were 35 to 44 years old, and 15% were older than 45 years old. Education levels were 4% Some High School, 15% High School Grad, 10% Current College Students, 16% Some College, 32% College Degree, 5% Current Graduate Student, and 16% with a Graduate Degree. Average household income was between $50,000 and $75,000 per year (with 36% of the sample below $50,000 per year and 32% of the sample above $100,000 per year).

A note about statistical analysis—as indicated, the sample of FTND followers was somewhat younger than the general public sample, with fewer college degrees and slightly more likely to be female. However, we examined these patterns and found no statistically significant differences in porn risk awareness levels based on educational level, gender identity, or age.
Findings

How aware is the general public of the harmful effects of pornography?

The first aim of this study was to determine how aware the general public is of the risks associated with pornography, as identified in peer-reviewed research. To assess this on an overall level, we examined respondents’ scores from the general public dataset on The Porn Impacts Awareness Test (PIAT). We found that the average score in the general public sample was only 45%. In fact, only 10.2% of public respondents received a score of 70% or above, while 56.1% scored below 50%. Perhaps even more concerning was that more than 1 in 5 (21.2%) general public respondents answered less than 30% of the questions correctly, and nearly 1 in 7 (13.1%) scored below 20.

These findings raise significant concerns about the current levels of pornography risk awareness in the United States. The fact that the average respondent in a national sample of adults was not able to answer even half of the questions correctly shows that there is a troubling gap in most people’s understanding of the level of risk they are assuming when they view pornography, particularly if they begin to view it in frequent and obsessive ways. While this is troubling for all people, it is particularly concerning that teens and young adults are making decisions about pornography in their lives while lacking a full understanding of how it may impact their relationships, mental health, and future well-being.

As a non-legislative organization, we are not working to take away the rights of adults who consume legal and consensual forms of pornography. Rather, our goal is to enable people to make an informed decision regarding pornography. As it stands, it would seem that few individuals are making informed decisions regarding their pornography habits, given that most don’t seem to be fully aware of the potential risks. Decades of studies from respected institutions have demonstrated significant impacts of porn consumption on individuals, relationships, and society. It’s clear that we need to greatly expand our cultural conversation about pornography and do a better collective job of educating people about porn’s harms – FTND is committed to being a part of that effort.
Does FTND effectively educate people on the risks of pornography?

The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not FTND’s educational efforts are effective in teaching followers about the substantiated harms of pornography. Again, to evaluate this on an overall level, we examined the percentage of questions answered correctly by our sample of FTND followers on the PIAT. We found that the average score of FTND followers was 86%—41% higher than the average score in the general public sample. This means that the average level of porn risk awareness among FTND followers is nearly twice as high as the general public. It is also noteworthy that nearly 1 in 4 (23.1%) FTND followers scored above 90%, with none (0%) of them scoring below 50%.

This indicates that FTND is very effectively educating its followers on the research-backed risks associated with porn consumption, thereby empowering them to make more informed decisions, as is part of our mission.

FTND followers with only some high school education still scored 33% higher than the average respondent from the general public survey.
How do scores compare?

Using a typical school grading system (where a score of 90% or above would receive an A grade, a score between 80% and 89% receives a B grade, and so on) reveals that 23.1% of FTND followers scored an A grade on the test, while only 0.2% of the general public earned this grade. Additionally, nearly 57.8% of FTND followers scored a B level grade on the test, whereas only 1.8% of the general public earned a B grade. Another 15.2% of FTND followers scored in the C level on the test (between 70% and 79%), while 8.2% of the general public sample scored in this range. Taken together, this means that if 70% or a C grade is considered the typical level of passing a school exam, then only **10.2%** of the general public is currently able to pass the PIAT, while **96.1%** of FTND followers passed the test.

As illustrated in the figures below, there is very little overlap in the two groups, with even the lowest scoring FTND followers scoring higher than nearly all of the highest scoring general public respondents.
How do FTND followers compare to the general public in specific areas of porn risk awareness?

While comparing overall scores on the PIAT provides a general understanding of porn risk awareness of the general public and FTND followers, it is also instructive to examine specific areas of awareness and education. As noted, the PIAT consisted of 39 questions that assessed knowledge about several specific areas of porn’s effects, as established in academic research. Most of these questions can be combined into areas or domains of porn risk awareness. Specifically, the PIAT covers the following subcategories:

- **Porn and Mental Health**: These questions assess respondents' knowledge of links between pornography consumption and poorer mental health, such as increased likelihood of depression and anxiety and lower self-esteem.

- **Porn and Relationships**: The PIAT also contains several questions that evaluate respondents' awareness of the research links between pornography consumption and relationship outcomes. Several longitudinal studies, for example, have shown that frequent porn consumption is associated with lower marital quality and higher likelihood of divorce or breakup.

- **Problematic Consumption**: Several of the questions ask respondents to demonstrate their knowledge of problematic porn consumption and its addictive potential. Many studies, including neuroscience-based studies, provide evidence of pornography’s addictive properties and the resulting impact, including signs of escalation, associated tolerance, habituation, and withdrawal symptoms.

- **Porn and Sexual Aggression**: Another area of risk related to pornography consumption is the acceptance of sexual aggression and violence, particularly toward women. Dozens of studies—including meta-analyses—have documented the link between pornography and objectification, increased sexual aggression, more sexist viewpoints, and increased attitudes supportive of violence against women.

- **Teen Porn Scripts**: The PIAT also contains questions that evaluate respondents’ awareness of the ways in which pornography can shape young people's sexual scripts in unhealthy ways. This can fuel patterns of risky sexual behavior, objectification, and unhealthy sexual attitudes in their real-life relationships.

- **Shame and Porn Consumption**: Research on pornography consumption has also identified that shame may play a role in unhealthy porn consumption by fuelling an unhealthy cycle. The PIAT contains questions that evaluate respondents’ acknowledgment of these patterns.

- **Problematic Practices in the Porn Industry**: Although high-level data from peer-reviewed research on this topic is sparse, there is compelling evidence emerging from qualitative research and the accounts of pornography performers who have experienced manipulation, coercion, sex trafficking, or other non-consensual practices in the industry. The PIAT evaluates respondents’ awareness of these non-consensual practices in the production of porn.
In addition to these specific areas of porn risk awareness, The PIAT also included questions that tested respondents’ knowledge about porn’s links to sexual dysfunction, image-based sexual abuse, the prevalence of porn consumption, and other substantiated risks associated with pornography.

When comparing the correct response rates on each of the specific areas of pornography risk awareness targeted in the PIAT, we found that FTND followers scored significantly higher than the general public on every subsection of the assessment. Even in the subsection with the smallest difference between average scores, FTND followers still scored 36% more than the general public, scoring up to 51% more than the general public in the areas with the greatest score discrepancies.

Are these differences just reflecting people’s personal values about pornography?

Pornography is a controversial topic and carries with it a wide range of personal opinions about whether viewing it is a negative, positive, or neutral behavior in people's lives. Many people have deeply-held values and opinions about pornography that arise from very personal experiences in their lives. Because of this, some may wonder whether the differences in porn risk awareness we found between FTND followers and the general public are a reflection of people’s views or values towards pornography. In other words, do people simply score higher on the PIAT if they have negative views about pornography or personally feel that pornography is harmful or unhealthy?

Obviously, people who follow FTND on social media will most likely resonate with the messaging and tend to share concerns about the ways that pornography is impacting or could impact their lives. On the other hand, if someone views pornography in a positive light, do they score lower on the PIAT simply because they have a different value stance about porn?

As part of our survey of the general public sample, we asked respondents to report their personal views on pornography. Specifically, they could select 1 of 7 statements on a continuum that they agreed with the most. These statements included: (1) “Porn is always healthy” (3% agreed), (2) “Porn is mostly healthy” (8% agreed), (3) “Porn isn’t necessarily healthy, but it’s not harmful” (19% agreed), (4) “Not sure–never really thought about porn being healthy or harmful” (19% agreed), (5) “Porn can have negative effects, but only sometimes” (21% agreed), (6) “Porn can have many negative effects” (21% agreed), and (7) “Porn is always harmful” (agreed by 12%). We then looked at the average Porn
Impacts Awareness Test scores for our general public respondents divided by those who view it in positive terms, neutral terms, and those who feel it is mostly or always harmful. We found that the average correct response level of individuals who personally agree that “Porn is always harmful” was 45%—almost exactly the average porn risk awareness score of the larger general public sample and only 10% higher than the individuals who agreed that “Porn is always healthy.”

It should also be noted that the scores of individuals in the three personal stance categories who personally agree with the potential harms of pornography (e.g., Sometimes harmful, Many negative effects, and Always harmful) still scored between 34% and 41% lower than the average FTND follower on porn risk awareness. This shows that the notable differences in porn risk awareness between FTND followers and the general public are much more than ideological differences and that simply having a negative personal opinion about pornography is not the same as being familiar with research findings and the current state of academic literature surrounding the potential effects of pornography. These findings support the conclusion that the differences in porn risk awareness between FTND followers and the general public are due to educational differences, not ideological differences.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Public's Views on Pornography</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porn is Always Healthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porn is Mostly Healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes Harmful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Harmful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always Harmful</td>
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Who benefits from FTND's educational efforts?

Considering the multiple audiences that FTND serves, we also wanted to investigate whether different sub-groups of FTND followers benefit more or less from FTND’s educational efforts. To accomplish this purpose, we analyzed the average correct response rates on the PIAT of FTND followers who differ from each other in a variety of demographic markers, as well as motivations for following FTND.

Accessible content

We first examined if porn risk awareness scores differed among FTND followers who differed in educational level. We were pleased to find that there was only a 9% difference in the average correct response rate between FTND followers with only some high school education (78%) compared to those who have a graduate degree (87%)—and that FTND followers with only some high school education still scored 33% higher than the average respondent from the general public survey. There was only a 5% difference between FTND followers with a high school diploma (82%) and FTND followers with a college degree (87%). This means that FTND is producing educational content that is effective yet accessible to a wide range of people regardless of age or education.

Wide appeal

We next examined porn risk awareness scores across different age groups of FTND followers. While FTND primarily focuses on educating teens and young adults, we also have more mature followers who may be parents or grandparents. We found that there was statistically no difference in porn risk awareness levels across age groups of FTND followers. These are the correct response rates.
Serving multiple audiences

Finally, we also wanted to know if FTND’s educational materials have a similar impact on individuals who follow FTND for different reasons. Especially considering the wide range of respondents’ motivations for following FTND, it can be difficult to create materials and resources that speak to each subgroup’s needs and experiences. Many people start following FTND as they are trying to quit using porn, while others are romantic partners of porn consumers. Some are parents who want to help their kids avoid unhealthy porn habits, while many others are motivated primarily by a desire to avoid contributing to the demand for degrading or abusive content. Other motivations include a desire to protect mental, sexual, relational, or even spiritual health. Regardless of their motivations, we were curious to know whether those specific motivations might affect the ways in which followers engage with and learn about the risks of pornography.

In our survey of FTND followers, we asked respondents to choose from a list of motivations for following FTND, and to indicate which was their primary motivation. We then compared porn risk awareness scores for each group. As noted in the graph below, there were no differences between groups in their level of porn risk awareness. This means that FTND is successfully helping to educate a wide range of people in a variety of life circumstances and with different motivations to learn.

A variety of effective educational approaches

Fight the New Drug uses a wide range of approaches to share its material. Because of this, we were interested in evaluating whether any of FTND’s educational approaches appear to be more effective in helping followers achieve higher levels of porn risk for each age group identified in our survey: **Age 18 to 24—86%, Age 25 to 34—86%, Age 35 to 44—85%, Age 45 to 54—86%, and Age 55 to 64—85%**. Given that FTND primarily uses online materials to educate people, we were particularly pleased to see that followers across age groups were equally able to achieve high levels of porn risk awareness from engaging with FTND materials.

We also looked at porn risk awareness scores across different gender identities. As we expected, there were no statistically significant differences between women (average score = 86%), men (average score = 85%), and individuals identifying as non-binary, transgender, or other (average score = 86%). This means that FTND connects with a wide range of gender identities who all learn about the harms of pornography at similar levels.

**Primary Motivation for Following FTND**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score on The Porn Impact Awareness Test</th>
<th>Primary Motivation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83%</td>
<td>I don’t want to contribute to the demand for degrading or abusive content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>I’ve been hurt by a partner’s porn consumption</td>
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<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>Avoiding porn is better for my sexual health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>I’m a parent/caregiver and want to help protect my kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Avoiding porn is better for my mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Spiritual/religious reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Avoiding porn is healthier for my relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>I’m trying to quit porn/have already quit porn</td>
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</table>
Results indicated that FTND is effectively educating followers from diverse backgrounds through a variety of educational approaches. Results indicated that FTND is effectively educating followers through a variety of educational approaches, and no single method or approach appears to be significantly more successful than others. Much of this is due to the fact that FTND focuses on sharing similar research, facts, and personal accounts in all of its educational materials, so followers are likely to achieve similarly high levels of porn risk awareness through a variety of means. Whether that awareness comes from reading articles on the FTND website, engaging with FTND’s social media posts, or watching the Brain, Heart, World documentary series, it appears that each of these methods effectively teaches followers about the risks of pornography.

We did find that there are a few factors that are statistically associated with slightly higher levels of porn risk awareness among FTND followers. For example, we found that if a person follows FTND for longer, they are slightly more likely to have a higher level of porn risk awareness ($r = +0.15^{**}$). This makes sense as more time learning about the harms of pornography will likely lead to a better level of understanding and awareness. We also found that the more time followers spend each week on the FTND website ($r = +0.06^{**}$) and engaging with FTND’s social media content ($r = +0.10^{**}$) leads to slightly higher than average porn risk awareness levels. We also found that followers who reported fuller engagement with FTND’s educational materials, such as reading all of the Get the Facts articles ($r = +0.12^{**}$) and watching all of the Brain, Heart, World documentary series ($r = +0.13^{**}$) had higher levels of porn risk awareness as well.

All in all, it appears that the different formats and approaches that FTND uses are each able to educate followers successfully. This is a tremendous strength of FTND because it means that followers can tailor their learning experience to their personal preferences and time constraints while still achieving equal equational outcomes.

Prior to coming across this page, I looked at porn relatively regularly. Since finding this page and reading the research you guys share, I’ve pretty much eliminated porn from my life (not perfect yet but working on it). Just wanted to say thanks! I feel like I’m a much better person, husband and father since making this change.

• M

You really opened my eyes. I thought porn wasn’t harming anybody, especially me watching it. Since I started informing myself through your documentary and publications, I’m finally changing myself and I’m starting to get rid of this horrible habit that I had since I was 12.

• A

You have genuinely helped me stay on a healthy path, giving me more incentive to stay away from porn for good. It’s been over three months and I see genuine improvements in my relationship and my overall health. Thank you all for fighting the good fight!

• I

Thank you for all that you do, your movement has changed the trajectory of my life and given me many strategies to continue my recovery from pornography.

• L
Conclusion

While it is concerning to note that the majority of people in the general population seem to be unaware or misinformed about the potential effects of consuming pornography, the findings of our survey also provide strong evidence that FTND’s materials and resources are able to successfully educate a variety of audiences on the risks associated with pornography.

Whether through social media, our documentary series, podcast episodes, or live presentations, these findings suggest that FTND’s educational materials successfully speak to a wide range of audiences with a wide range of needs. As a result, FTND is successfully achieving its mission to provide individuals the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding pornography by raising awareness on its harmful effects using only science, facts, and personal accounts.


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The Porn Impacts Awareness Report:
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