



Acephobia: a real nightmare

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INTRODUCTION

Asexual people represent 1% of the population; however, many people do not actually believe in their existence. Due to the lack of representation they have, asexuality is commonly misunderstood and asexual people have to deal daily with several problems.

The world refuses to recognise that acephobia is real, but the true cannot be hidden. And that is what I have decided to do: the aim of this Research Project is to show that asexual people do have real and serious problems, and that they are not likely to be solved in the near future.

To do so I have divided this project into three parts:

In the first part, *understanding asexuality*, I explain some basic notions of attraction and sexuality and what exactly is asexuality and its history. This way everyone who reads this is properly informed to understand better the remaining parts.

In the second part, *demonstrating acephobia*, I reveal most of the problems that asexual people have to face constantly, achieving the main objective of the project, and also try to find the reason and a solution for them.

Finally, in the third part, *analysing asexual visibility*, I analyse several attempts of asexual visibility, this part being strictly related to the solution reached in the previous part.

In the annex you can find the complete interviews and graphics that have help me drawing the conclusions to write some parts of the project.

1. UNDERSTANDING ASEXUALITY

1.1 The five types of attraction

Attraction, in this case, is used to mean the feeling of being drawn to, or experiencing a pull toward, a person whose qualities inspire an impulse or particular nature.

1. SEXUAL ATTRACTION



Sexual attraction

The first type of attraction to usually be talked about is sexual attraction. Even if it is hard to agree on a definition for it, sexual attraction can be described as wanting to maintain certain sexual intimacy when seeing someone or thinking about them; speaking in other terms, is the feeling people get that causes them to desire sexual intercourse with a specific person.

People who do not experience this kind of attraction are called asexual and the ones who do are called allosexual.

2. ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Romantic attraction is what would be defined as being in love with or liking someone. It is even harder to define than sexual attraction; people usually describe it as having butterflies in your stomach and even if it seems that lacks common sense, is actually quite accurate.



Romantic attraction

People who do not experience this kind of attraction are called aromantic, and the ones who do alloromantic.

2.5. PLATONIC ATTRACTION: CRUSH AND SQUISH

The noun “platonic” describes a relationship which is purely spiritual. Unlike sexual, romantic and sensual attraction, it is not a physical feeling but a completely abstract one. Since platonic attraction is a weaker form of romantic attraction, it is usually known as a subset of it.



Crush

Nowadays it is common among teens to use the word **crush** to refer to this platonic attraction in the case that that inspiration evokes a romantic attraction one. However, it is not that strong and as a result, it usually lasts a short period.

Otherwise, aromantic people tend to feel an intense desire to become friends with the person they are platonically attracted to, and that would be called a **squish** instead of a crush.



Squish

3. AESTHETIC ATTRACTION



Aesthetic attraction

Aesthetic attraction is appreciating someone else’s appearance. People experience it constantly: every time you think a person is attractive, or even cute, is because you are aesthetically attracted towards them. Your aesthetic attraction is not defined by your sexual or romantic orientation; it is common for everyone to be aesthetically attracted to all sorts of people regardless their gender.

4. SENSUAL ATTRACTION

As it can be easily deduced, sensual attraction involves the senses, especially regarding tactile sensuality such as hugs, holding hands, giving or receiving massages, kissing... Especially allosexual people misunderstand acts driven by sensual attraction with the ones driven by sexual. They really can be difficult to distinguish but mainly, behind sensual attraction, there is only a desire to touch the object in a non-sexual way, so it is also common to experience it towards friends, relatives, etc., not just your significant other.



Sensual attraction

5. INTELLECTUAL ATTRACTION

Most people who talk about the other types of attractions, never mention intellectual attraction, but it actually is a thing. Intellectual attraction is the desire to interact mentally with the object of your attraction; it may also be the first step to another form of attraction. Being intellectually attracted to someone means that you want to know them deeply or they are a role-model to you. Many people have defined it as feeling “love not in your heart or body but in your head”. However, a consensual definition has yet to be found for it.

Feeling these attractions does not always mean the person who feels it wants to make something happen according to their feelings. For example, you can feel romantic attraction towards someone and not want to date them, or you may feel sexual attraction towards someone you see in the street but that doesn't mean you will act in reaction.

Furthermore, even if all five types of attraction tend to align, intellectual, aesthetic and sensual attraction are usually experienced regardless of the gender; sexual and romantic tend to follow a preference. This preference can vary between one and the other, even if it is not so common. So, that means that there can be asexual alloromantics and allosexual aromantics.

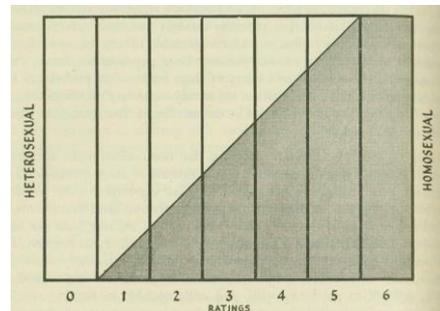
1.2 Sexuality Models

Even if there are many types of attraction, this project is focused on asexuality. However, first it is necessary to dive in the enormous spectrum of sexual attraction, and the best way to do so is to know about the most famous scales used along the years to measure and describe sexual orientation. It is known to be more than 200 scales. The existence of asexuality on these scales demonstrates that it has always existed.

THE KINSEY SCALE

Doctors Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy and Clyde Martin were the ones to develop this scale, also called the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale, which was first published in the book *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* in 1948.

To create the scale, the team interviewed thousands of people about their sexual life. This research showed that many people's sexual thoughts were not always consistent, so instead of using only three terms (homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual), the Kinsey team used six ranges from 0 to 6 and an additional category called X. Someone with rating 0 was exclusively heterosexual, and someone with rating 6 was exclusively homosexual, meaning the numbers in between were the bisexual spectrum. The X category designated the group who reported "no socio-sexual contacts or reactions" in their interviews.



Kinsey scale in the book "Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male" (1948)

Even if it is not as complete or wide as the following scales, the Kinsey scale is important for many reasons. First because it recognises sexuality as a spectrum, an essential fact to later understand all the asexual terminology, and it actually recognises the existence of asexuality in the X category. Moreover, it is one of the first that was made. Lastly, because it created a precedent, since many of those who were published after were inspired by it.

THE KLEIN SEXUAL ORIENTATION GRID

This grid (abbreviated KSOG) was first introduced by Doctor Fritz Klein in 1978 in his book *The Bisexual Option* and is a system for describing a person's sexual orientation in a more detailed way than its predecessor, the Kinsey scale.

This grid consists on rating from 1 to 7 (being 1 exclusively heterosexual) certain aspects of your life in your past, present and perfect future.

The main difference between the Klein Sexual Attraction Grid and the Kinsey Scale is that the

The Sexual Orientation Profile

In order to fill out this profile, read the above article and carefully follow the instructions for completing it. Keep in mind that our behavior, thoughts and feelings are a continuous, dynamic process, and that we only classify ourselves for convenience and socialization.

Female _____ Male _____
Age _____ years old

Do you consider yourself:
Heterosexual _____
Bisexual _____
Homosexual _____

VARIABLE	PAST	PRESENT	IDEAL
A. Sexual Attraction			
B. Sexual Behavior			
C. Sexual Fantasies			
D. Emotional Preference			
E. Social Preference			
F. Self-Identification			
G. Hetero/Gay Lifestyle			

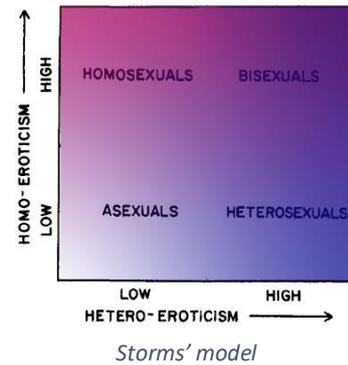
The original Klein Sexual Orientation Grid as it appeared in the "Forum" magazine in 1980

KSOG investigates sexual orientation in the past, present and desirable future, this one not including the X rating.

Basically, what Klein did was say that sexual orientation is fluid and can change through someone's life, a very important fact, and that this orientation can be influenced by many factors, such as your behaviour, fantasies and social preference.

STORMS' MODEL

Storms' model, proposed in 1979 by Michael Storms, is a two-dimensional map of erotic orientation based on the existence of four sexual orientations: homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality, in order to improve certain inadequacies in the one-dimensional Kinsey scale.

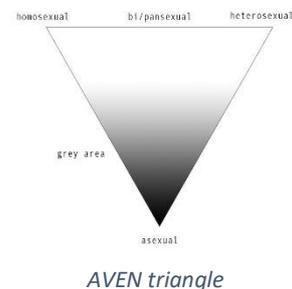


This model distinguishes the strength of the attraction, including asexuality unlike Kinsey, who simply labelled them as X and left them out of the scale. Even if Storms did not say this himself, from this model we deduce that he thought that asexuality existed in the same plane than the other three sexual orientations, rather than be treated like an anomaly and be left out of the scale. Moreover, since it includes asexuality in the spectrum, it considers it a whole spectrum like bisexuality.

Once explained the three main reference models, it is time to talk about the contemporary ones. The following models are not halfway as accepted as the once mentioned previously, but some of them have certain relevancy inside the asexual community.

AVEN TRIANGLE

The AVEN triangle, created by David Jay around 2002, is the symbol of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (see page 17) and a renewed version of the Kinsey scale.



The top white line represents the Kinsey scale and the bottom black vertex represents asexuality. The grey gradient between both ends means the entire asexual spectrum (see page 10).

PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SEXUAL ATTRACTION MODEL

This model, first called Rabger's model, was proposed by a user called Rabger in the forum of AVEN. This model, focused on the asexual spectrum, clearly distinguishes

demisexuals (see page 10) from allosexuals and asexuals and considers that sexual attraction can be subdivided into primary and secondary forms:

-*Primary sexual attraction*: sexual attraction based on instantly available information.

-*Secondary sexual attraction*: sexual attraction that develops over time based on a person's relationship and emotional connection with another person.

-*Primary sexual desire*: The desire to engage in sexual activity for the purposes of personal pleasure.

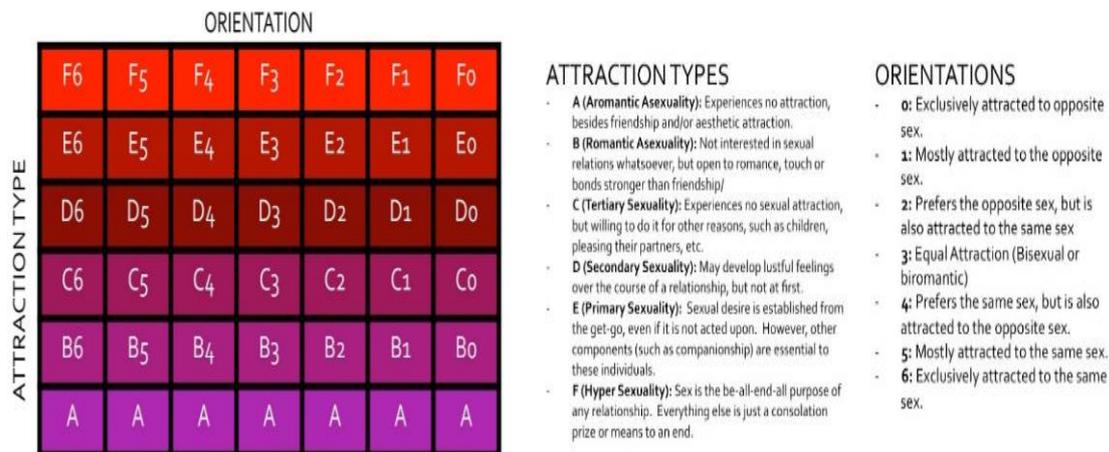
-*Secondary sexual desire*: desire to engage in sexual activity for the purposes other than personal pleasure, such as the happiness of the other person involved or the conception of children.

Sexual orientation	Primary attraction?	Secondary attraction?	Primary desire?	Secondary desire?
Allosexual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demisexual	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asexual	No	No	Yes/No*	Yes/No*

*depending on the person (see page 24)

PURPLE-RED SCALE OF HUMAN ATTRACTION

This model was devised by Langdon Parks in 2015 when he realised the Kinsey scale was not an all-inclusive system. Like the Kinsey scale, the purple-red scale of human attraction allows you to assign a number from zero to six according to the gender of the people you are attracted to, but at the same time, it lets you label the way you feel said attraction.



1.3 Asexuality and the asexual spectrum

There are two definitions for “asexual”. The first, which is the most globally accepted, says that an asexual person is someone who does not experience sexual attraction towards anyone. However, David Jay, the founder of AVEN (see page 17) tried to give another definition to it wanting to create a deeper feeling of community. According to him, the label “asexual” can only be applied internally; no one can impose or deny a label to anyone, so he said that someone is asexual as long as they define themselves as it. David Jay is right in a point: a label cannot be imposed, so part of his definition could be added to the original one, making this result.

Asexual: someone who does not experience sexual attraction towards anyone and wishes to define as it.

Nonetheless, there is the asexual spectrum, which is mentioned in page 7 when talking about the AVEN triangle. There are people who experience sexual attraction under very specific circumstances. These people are in the asexual spectrum, and are welcomed equally in the asexual community (see page 16). The asexual spectrum is wide and most of the terms composing it are not very known, even inside the community itself, but each one has its own specific flag and definition, which you will see down below.

THE ASEXUAL SPECTRUM

1. ASEXUAL



Asexual flag

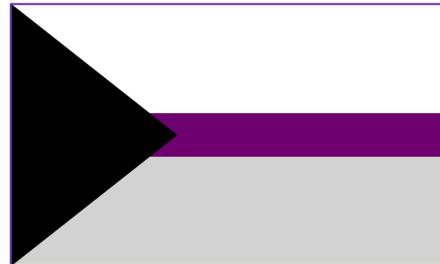
The term asexual can be used according to the definition but also as an umbrella term. An umbrella term is a word which can be used to include many other words which are not as widely known as it. In other words, people belonging to the asexual spectrum can define themselves as asexual even if they are not entirely to avoid having to give further explanations, because they have not found a better

definition yet or because they simply feel better using it.

The asexual flag was created by the AVEN user *standup* on the 30th of June of 2010 and was generally approved to be the symbol of the community. Each colour of the flag means a specific thing. Purple is for community; white is for the allosexual allies; grey is for the greysexuals and demisexuals; and black is for asexuality itself.

2. DEMISEXUAL

Demisexual people are only able to feel sexual attraction once they have formed a deep bond with a person. Demisexual people cannot feel sexual attraction towards anyone they see in the street or towards someone who they do not know deeply. Once the bond is formed, they may feel sexual attraction.



Demisexual flag

3. GREYSEXUAL



Greysexual flag

Greysexual people can feel sexual attraction but only in counted situations or under specific circumstances. Greysexuals are halfway between asexuality and allosexuality but they tend to include themselves in the asexual spectrum.

Since the conditions of greysexual people may vary, there are more specific terms to specify those conditions.

3.1 AKOISEXUAL/LITHSEXUAL

Akoisexual people experience sexual attraction with normality, except that this attraction fades once it is reciprocated. It was called lithsexuality before, but it was changed due to concerns of appropriation of lesbian culture.



Akoisexual flag

3.2 AEGOSEXUAL/AUTOCHORISSEXUAL



Aegosexual flag

Aegosexual people experience a disconnection between themselves and the sexual target; they may enjoy sexual fantasies or have an arousal response to pornography, but they lack any desire to be participant in the sexual activities therein. In other words, aegosexuals are asexuals who enjoy masturbation and fantasies even if they would not have sex. The older term for it is autochorissexual.

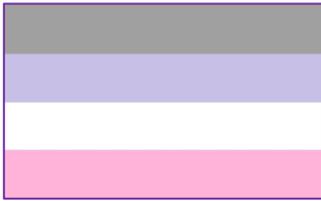
3.3 APOTHISEXUAL

In general terms, an apothisexual is a sex-repulsed asexual. Asexual people can be either sex-repulsed, sex-neutral or sex-positive (see page 24).



Apothisexual flag

3.4 CUIOSEXUAL



Cupiosexual flag

Even if asexual people do not feel asexual attraction, they may feel sex drive and arousal, so some of them still desire to have sexual relationships (see page 24); that is a cupiosexual: someone who does not experience sexual attraction, therefore they are in the asexual spectrum, but still want to have sex.

3.5 FRAYSEXUAL

Fraysexuals feel sexual attraction, but these feeling weakens or disappears once a bond is formed. They may feel sexual attraction towards strangers, but these attractions will go away once they get to know the person. Fraysexuality is the opposite of demisexuality. In other words, fraysexuals only feel primary sexual attraction (see page 8).



Fraysexual flag

3.6 PLACIOSEXUAL



Placiosexual flag

Placiosexuals have little or no desire at all to receive sexual acts but they do have desire to perform them on someone else. The opposite of placiosexual would be **lamvanosexual** (not having desire to perform sexual acts but yes to receive them) but this term has just recently been born and is not on use.

3.7 RECIPROSEXUAL

Reciprosexual people feel sexual attraction but only once they have realised that someone is sexually attracted to them. In other words, they will only be sexually attracted to someone if they know that that someone is sexually attracted to them.



Reciprosexual flag

4. ACEFLUX



Aceflux flag

This term is used to describe someone whose experience of sexual attraction varies over time. Aceflux people may feel strongly asexual one day and strongly allosexual the next one.

1.4 History of asexuality

Even if asexuality has probably always existed, there is a lack of historical recording before the XIX century. Since asexuality has remained invisible for so many years, it is almost impossible to find conclusive data about asexuality along history. However, there are two things dating ancient years worth to be commented.

Ancient Greece is known for seeing bisexuality and homosexuality normally, so it is not weird that many asexual people have tried to find evidence of asexuality in old myths and stories. Although no evidence has been found, to many people the first asexual reference is the Greek goddess Athena. These people defend their theory saying that from birth, Athena was distanced from sexuality, being created from Zeus' forehead. They also support it referring to the myth where Hephaestus was told by Ares that Athena wanted to make love to him, so when she asked him to make her some new weapons, he said that the only payment he would need was her love. Athena did not catch the innuendo because to her love did not equal sex.



Athena

Even if there is no evidence in the ancient Greek myths, there is a dialogue, written in the Roman Empire, called *Erotes*, by Lucian of Samosata in the II century A.C, which very probably has an asexual character. The play describes four men: Theomnestus, who likes

Theomnestus: This god, Lycinus, is an eater of oxen. What's more, he likes his victims steaming. If we are to honor him with stories, mine have dragged on long enough and grown stale. Your turn, please. Let your own Muse cast off her usual gravity and spend the day delighting together with the god! I see you do not favor one love over the other, so be an impartial judge please: Tell me who is better—the lover of boys, or the one who delights in women? I, who am smitten by both, lean neither this way nor that, but keep in balance the two beams of the scale. You, who remain untouched by either, give me your impartial opinion. Be frank, dear friend. Say which side you are on, now that I have revealed my loves to you.

Extract from the book "Erotes" by Lucian of Samosata written in the II century A.C. The underlined sentences refer to asexuality

men and women, Charicles, who likes only women, Callicratidas, who likes young men, and Lycinus, the narrator. In the page 5 (2013 English version) Theomnestus asks Lycinus to tell which type of love is better, whether towards women or towards men, saying that Lycinus will be impartial because he

remains untouched by either. Obviously, it is not an evident reference to asexuality, but it might very well be.

Aside from that, there is no reference to asexuality until halfway the XIX century. It was in 1869 when the Hungarian writer and journalist Karl-Maria Kertbeny coined the words homosexual and heterosexual, leading to a shift in the understanding of sexuality, the start of the LGBT activism and the development of sexology. It is not surprising that references to asexuality can be found from that time on.

The earliest use of a word referring to asexuality is in an 1896 pamphlet called *Sappho and Sokrates* by Magnus Hirschfeld, a German sexologist and activist. In the page 6 of the pamphlet, it says:

There are individuals who are without any sexual desire (anaesthesia sexualis)

Further in the book, in the pages 421 and 422, the author also talks about an asexual transgender girl describing her as totally repulsed by sex *even if her organs were developed completely normal*. He talks about *monosexuals, people who only masturbate*, too. Even though in the beginning he refers to asexual people as *anaesthesia sexualis*, he calls them asexual the rest of it, the word having the same meaning as it has now. In the third volume of the pamphlet, in the pages 162-163, he writes the following:

Let us first turn to the talking about drivelessness, but we have to answer the question beforehand: "Are there even anerotical people, men and women of a post pubic age without any desire for sexual activities?" It is often said about someone, even male but especially female persons who don't have any sexual desires whatsoever. They be called asexual, anerotical or how one could also say atropic.

The next spotted appearance of asexuality in history comes with the Kinsey scale in 1948. It is remarkable that some of the most well-known sexologists, such as Kinsey himself, make mention of asexuality, and yet it has been understudied. This statement leads to two questions: was asexuality studied under another name? Maybe it was studied under a different category, for example a dysfunction?

It is confirmed that asexuality has been pathologized, but little research has been made in order to know more about that pathologization. The research would involve an examination of pathologized sexual behaviour which overlap or incorporate asexuality. Some examples would be frigidity, sexual anaesthesia, or more recent terms like Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD). (see page 34)

In 1970, in the Dutch TV channel called *Andere Tijden* made a comedy sketch called *hadimassa* about *the new minority: asexuals*. The sketch pretends to make fun of asexuals feeling alienated and different from very young age because they do not want to have sex and describes them according to the loveless robot stereotype. Even if there is evidence that this sketch appeared in television, it cannot be found online.

The New York Times, in May 1st 1978 published an article by Georgia Duller which title was *A Lack of Sexual Desire Emerges as a Contemporary Condition*. In the article, that was later republished in the Globe and Mail (Toronto) and in the Chicago Tribune, the author talks about asexuality, being this a term used only by the public but not the professionals. Georgia Duller mentions that those professionals think it may be a "desire dysfunction". Even if she mentions that, this article is very important because it shows

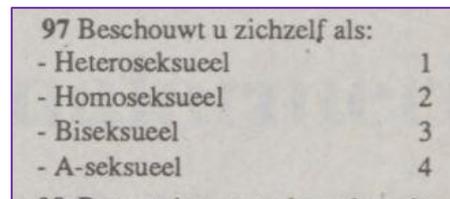
that during the sexual revolution, when people used to go to TV shows to talk about homosexuality and bisexuality, people also talked about asexuality.

The first study that gave empirical data about asexuals was published in 1983 by Paula Nurius. In this study, she sought to examine the relationship between sexual orientation and mental health. She sampled 689 subjects, most of whom were university students in the United States. The results of the study showed that 5% males and 10% females were asexual and that asexuals were more likely to have lower self-esteem and more likely to be depressed than other sexual orientations.

In 1990, a book called *Forms of Desire* was published. This book is an anthology of articles about social constructionist approaches to sexual orientation. There is chapter by John Boswell containing the following quote:

“The sister-in law of Louis XIV describes the sexual interests of men at the French court in terms almost exactly like modern sexual taxonomies: some prefer women, some like both men and women, some prefer men, some prefer children, and some have little interest in sex at all”.

In 1991, local newspapers in co-operation with a well-known Dutch psychologist did a survey for Dutch residents. The survey results were published in the newspapers analysing the data and a section was especially dedicated to explaining asexuality and commenting the results. In 1991 in the Netherlands, 1,5% men and 2,7% women who took the survey identified as asexual. The most impressive thing about these article and survey is not the fact of their existence, but the fact that the asexual community was not even a real thing back then; asexual people had not started to organize themselves. The article is also remarkably sensitive about it and puts asexuality in the same category as other sexualities.



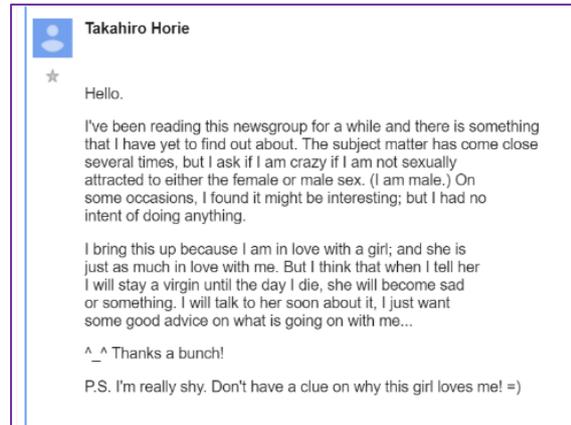
97 Beschouwt u zichzelf als:	
- Heteroseksueel	1
- Homoseksueel	2
- Biseksueel	3
- A-seksueel	4

Extract of the survey

Three years later, in 1994, another survey appeared which gave empirical data about asexuals. Carried out by a research team in the United Kingdom in order to find out more information about people’s sexual habits because of the recent AIDS epidemic, this survey is where the frequently quoted 1% comes from. 18,876 British people completed the survey, in which 1% responded that they had never felt sexually attracted to anyone at all.

1.4.1 Asexual communities

Until the development of the internet, asexuals did not have many ways to talk to each other and share their experiences. In the early and mid-90s, people would occasionally post their experiences in sexuality-related newsgroups expressing their lack of sexual attraction, but search functions were not effective enough yet, making it difficult to find someone who also related to it. An example of this is Takahiro Horie, who on the 11th of May of 1996 posted on a newsgroup that he did not feel sexual attraction to either male or female. Takahiro was lucky though, because on the same day someone called Eric Pepke answered him explaining about asexuality. However, in the same page there are posts asking about the same with no answer. Another problem was that common vocabulary and definitions had not been developed yet.



Takahiro Horie's post

Therefore, the asexual community starts on the internet through small asexual communities on websites.

The first online asexual community is known to be the comment section of an article called *my life as an amoeba* by Zoe O'Reilly published by StarNet Dispatches on the 30th of May 1997.

"Some might say that we aren't really asexual, we just want to think we are. Remember this quote: *I think, therefore I am*. Add a couple words: *I think I'm asexual, therefore I am*."

-Zoe O'Reilly, StarNet Dispatches, 30th May 1997

Later, on the 12th of October 2000, a Yahoo group for asexuals, **Haven for the Human Amoeba (HHA)**, was founded. The group is structured such that emails to the group are viewable by all the members, but it is not possible to have comments organized into threads as done in a forum. There was also a chatroom. Activity only raised in HHA in August of 2001, and it was then that a member of the group, in hopes of starting an asexual web-ring, contacted David Jay, who by then had created the main page for AVEN, and he joined the discussion on Haven for the Human Amoeba. Various members created their own websites as part of the web-ring. Nowadays, HHA has over 500 members and still experiences sporadic activity.

David Jay had created a page on his university webspace in March 2001. It was initially called Human Asexual Visibility and Educational Network (HAVEN), but it was shortened to **Asexual Visibility and Educational Network (AVEN)**. By then, it only gave a definition

for asexuality and asked for the email of those who identified with it. AVEN was founded with two distinct goals: creating public acceptance and discussion of asexuality and facilitating the growth of the asexual community.

On the 20th of July 2001, the LiveJournal Asexuals Community was founded. This online community was antisexual, which means that they were against sex. Of course, the majority of the global asexual community was against this community, so a member of AVEN called Nat created another LiveJournal group (**LiveJournal Asexuality Community**) on the 28th of April 2002.

Later, around 2007 the **blogosphere** was born. It is difficult to list the entire asexuality little blogs scattered around the internet. The likely to be the oldest blog is **Asexy Beast** created by Ily, which started running on 2007. The one that has grown up to be the biggest blog and also functions as a community center is **The Asexual Agenda**, which started running on the 22nd of July 2012.

The same happens with **Tumblr**. Tumblr is a microblogging and social networking site founded in 2007. Tumblr contains hundreds of blogs related to asexuality and are an important part of the community, but it is almost impossible to list them all. The first asexuality-related and important Tumblr blogs were created around 2010. Tumblr is very important to the asexual community since many topics related to it are discussed there and also many of the symbols were born on Tumblr (see page 22)

However, no matter how many communities are there, the most important since its creation has been and will always be AVEN. Since its inception, AVEN has grown to host the world's largest asexual community, serving as an informational resource for asexual people and questioning as long as academic researchers and press. AVEN members throughout the world regularly engage in visibility projects and make sure to be a safe space for asexual people and provide accurate information to everyone who wants to know more about it.

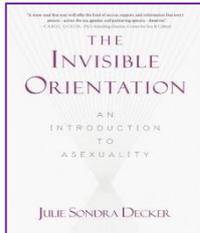
It was all thanks to the online communities and the fact that asexual people were organizing themselves for the first time that on 2009 AVEN members participated in the first asexual entry into an American pride parade when they walked in the San Francisco Pride Parade.

On the 30th of June 2010 the asexual pride flag was announced and also that year the Asexual Awareness Week was founded by Sara Beth Brooks (see page).



Asexuals in the San Francisco Pride Parade in 2012

In 2012, the first Asexual Conference was held at the 2012 World Pride in London.



"The invisible Orientation", book by Julie Sondra Decker

In 2014, *The Invisible Orientation: An Introduction to Asexuality*, by Julie Sondra Decker, was published; it was the first mainstream published book about asexuality. This book won many awards, such as the Next Generation Indie Book Awards 2015 (see page 49).



George Norman

In 2015, George Norman became the Britain's first openly asexual parliamentary election candidate.

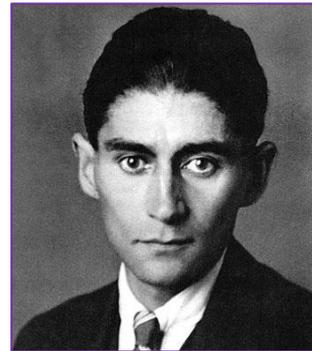
And the data goes on and on to slightly more irrelevant facts and many others that have not been recorded. Asexuality's history demonstrates that it has always existed, that it is real, and that asexuals, even if they are only around the 1% of the population, have managed to make a foothold in society and fight for their visibility.

1.4.2 Asexual people in history

So, if asexuality has always existed, could someone famous had been asexual? This question is quite hard to answer because, even if it has always existed, people did not know about it. However, some famous people throughout history (and actuality) are confirmed or thought to be asexual.

Franz Kafka (1883–1924)

Kafka, one of the major writers of the universal literature of the XX century, is suspected of being asexual. Kafka's sexuality, actually not knowing it, has fascinated historians and fans for decades. It is confirmed that Kafka had a clear aversion for contact and sex despite his attraction to women. This could have been due to him being asexual, but it is not clear enough to confirm it. A biographer also said that this aversion could had been caused by fear of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy because in those times people were more interested in maintaining sexual hygiene rather than chasing sexual pleasure, but that fact does not make Kafka's view slightly different than the rest.



Franz Kafka

Paul Erdős (1913-1996)

He was Hungarian and one of the most prolific mathematicians of the 20th century. He once said, "I actually have an abnormality. I can't stand sexual pleasure. It's a curious abnormality, it's almost unique".

Edward Gorey (1925-2000)

He was an American illustrator and writer. In an interview in 1980, he revealed that he considered himself fortunate that he was "apparently reasonably undersexed or something..." He also agreed that the sexlessness of his books was due to his asexuality.

Caitlyn Jenner (1949)

She is an American television personality and retired Olympic gold medal-winning decathlete. Diane Sawyer interviewed her on the 21st of April 2017 for the abc news. Since Caitlyn Jenner is a transwoman, the journalist pressed her about her sexuality, and then she came right out and said, "I'm asexual". To avoid confusion, she later added, "Sexuality is who you are personally attracted to (who turns you on), male or female. But gender identity has to do with who you are as a person and your soul, who you identify with".



Caitlyn Jenner

Michael Jackson (1958-2009)

The king of pop needs no introduction. Michael Jackson is another of the huge worldwide celebrities who could have been asexual. There is no evidence, but in some interviews, he talked about having met girls to have sex but doing nothing in the end, making the girls mad. It is also known that he only had sexual relationships with his wife, so all his previous girlfriends were purely romantic. Moreover, there is a song written by him called *That's what you get (for being polite)* whose lyrics could remind us of the thoughts an asexual person could have. However, it is all speculation.



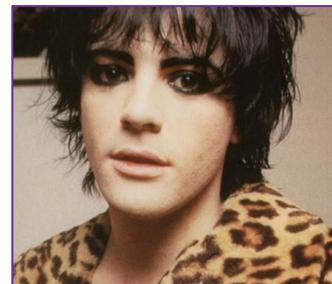
Michael Jackson

Janeane Garofalo (1964)

She is an American actress, comedian and writer; she has appeared in more than 50 films. In Janeane Garofalo's stand up show, *If You Will*, she said, "I don't have fear of intimacy, I have sort of a genuine lack of interest, which is not good for my boyfriend of 10 years".

Richey Edwards (1967-2008)

He was the lyricist and rhythm guitarist of the band *Manic Street Preachers*. Edwards disappeared on the 1st of February 1995, and in 2008, he was declared dead in absentia. During his life, he claimed to never enjoy sex and that he used to have sex just to prove he could. Moreover, in an interview, when they asked him about once he had had sex, he said, "I'm always looking to see what will make me happy." And did it? "No. I felt nothing. I couldn't even put an emotion on it."



Richey Edwards

Bradford Cox (1982)

He is the frontman of a band called *The Deerhunter*, and he has always stated he is asexual. Once, talking to the singer of another band, he said, "At 34 years old, I'm actually a virgin. To be asexual is very confusing. Many people are mistreated who are asexual, because I don't think people really believe in asexuality".

Valeriya Novodvorskaya (1988-2014)

She was a Russian politician activist. She declared not to be interested in sex and never have been attracted to anyone. She said so in an interview made by Alexander Chalenko for his blog.

Mari Cagle (1989)

She is an American web comic artist. On the 18th of October 2014, she came out as asexual tweeting the following “Over the past year I’ve discovered that I’m probably asexual, which in retrospect explains a lot about my work and taste in media”.



Mari Cagle's tweet

Kim MinSeong (1993)

This Korean idol also known as Hansol came out as asexual on a personal live broadcast on the 20th of August 2017. He textually said, “I’ve been thinking a lot. I’m asexual. Asexual. I don’t like anyone.”



Kim MinSeong

The list goes on with less recognised names. There are also speculations about other famous people such as J. M. Barrie, Nikola Tesla, Isaac Newton, Chopin, H. P. Lovecraft, Hitler, Immanuel Kant, etc. being asexual, but there is not enough evidence to prove they could had been.

1.5 Asexual symbols

The global asexual community, in the same way as the others, has its own symbols and references, which only people inside it will understand. Here are some of them:

1. ACE



Ace is the short for asexual. It is more common for asexual people to call themselves ace instead unless the other person is not acquainted with the slang.

Because of this abbreviation, asexual people have made aces (playing cards) a big part of their culture.

Moreover, sometime ago people in the asexual community could identify themselves as aces of spades, hearts, clubs or diamonds according to their romantic orientation or whether they were greysexual or demisexual.

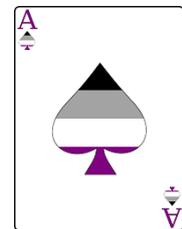
Ace of spades: asexual aromantic

Ace of hearts: asexual alloromantic

Ace of clubs: asexual greyromantic/greysexual

Ace of diamonds: asexual demiromantic/demisexual

However, now it is unused.



Ace of spades with the asexual flag

2. CAKE

*I'D RATHER
EAT A CAKE*



Drawing of a cake with the asexual flag colours

Another asexual community-related term they always refer to is cake. Asexuals say they would rather eat cake than having sex, so they made cake one of their biggest symbols. Cake has been a symbol for the asexual community since 2003, when members of AVEN started to use it.

(It is not true at all that asexual people dislike sex, though. See page 24)

3. BLACK RING

Around 2006 members of AVEN decided that they needed a method to recognise an asexual people on the street, so they started discussing and they reached a conclusion: the ace ring. The ace ring is a black ring worn on the middle finger of the right hand; the design does not matter as long as it is black.

Not all asexuals wear the black ring, and there are allosexual people who wear it for fashion, but it is still an important part of the culture.



Hand with an ace black ring



Amoeba

4. AMOEBEA

Amoebas are unicellular protozoans that reproduce asexually, splitting in half. In the early years of the asexual community “amoeba” was used

as a colloquial term to refer someone asexual, though in recent years the term “ace” has outstripped it.

5. DRAGONS AND UNICORNS

Anyone knows where this started, but asexual people identify with and love mystical creatures, especially dragons. This fact is not strange at all since there are few of them and people think they do not exist, but when, where and who started it? No idea.



Dragon holding an asexual pride flag

6. INVISIBILITY

For my Halloween costume, I'm going to dress up in the asexual flag and when people ask me what my costume is I'm going to tell them I'm the invisible man.

Funny tumblr post about asexuals being invisible

Related to the previous thing, asexuals are conscious that their orientation is invisible to most of the people of the planet, but instead of taking them down, this has become a part of their community. Especially on Tumblr, there are hundreds of funny posts referring to them having invisibility powers and ace flags being invisibility cloaks.

7. BAD PUNS

An undeniable fact is that most of the asexuals love puns. There are thousands of asexual puns, jokes and funny posts on the internet. The two most famous puns are the “ace from the space” and the “acethetic”. Here are more examples:

What's an asexual person's favorite weapon?

A mACE

Asexual pun seen on Tumblr

applies to NASA to become the first acetronaut

Asexual pun seen on Tumblr

I am the ace up my sleeve

Asexual pun seen on Tumblr

When your asexual friend tells you something inaccurate

Misinformaceion

Asexual pun seen on Tumblr

8. ASEXUAL AWARENESS WEEK

In order to raise awareness, every year there is a week called Asexual Awareness Week. The dates depend on the year, but it usually is between October and November (for example in 2018 it has been from the 21st to the 27th of October). During this week, asexual people organise several activities such as meetings, conferences and meetups with the aim to let more people know about it and for asexuals to meet others like them.



Promotional image of the Asexual Awareness Week of 2018

1.6 Asexuals, sex and romance

Last of this section, I will answer some frequently asked questions related to asexuals and their romantic and sexual life.

Can asexual people have sex?

Contrary to what everybody thinks, yes, asexual people can have sex if they want to. This may seem senseless, but it can be easily explained with one word: biology. The human body is like a machine that is almost the same for everyone. The machine is programmed to respond in a certain way to certain stimulations, which means that even if the sexual attraction is not there, the body will probably respond to sexual intercourse (arousal). An example to demonstrate this is true is that some rape victims achieve the orgasm, and they are being raped, there is no sexual attraction nor desire.

There are three types of asexuals: sex-positive, sex-neutral and sex-repulsed. Sex-repulsed asexuals are repulsed by sex; sex-neutral asexuals are not repulsed by it but either they have no special interest to have it; sex-positive asexuals are the ones who enjoy the reaction their body has when they have sexual intercourse even if the sexual attraction is not there.

Do asexual people masturbate?

Some do and some do not, like allosexual people. Sex-positive asexuals are likely to masturbate, while sex-repulsed asexuals are not. Some asexuals say they masturbate because it relaxes them, while some others do it for medical purposes or simply enjoy it. It all depends on the person and the effect it causes on them.

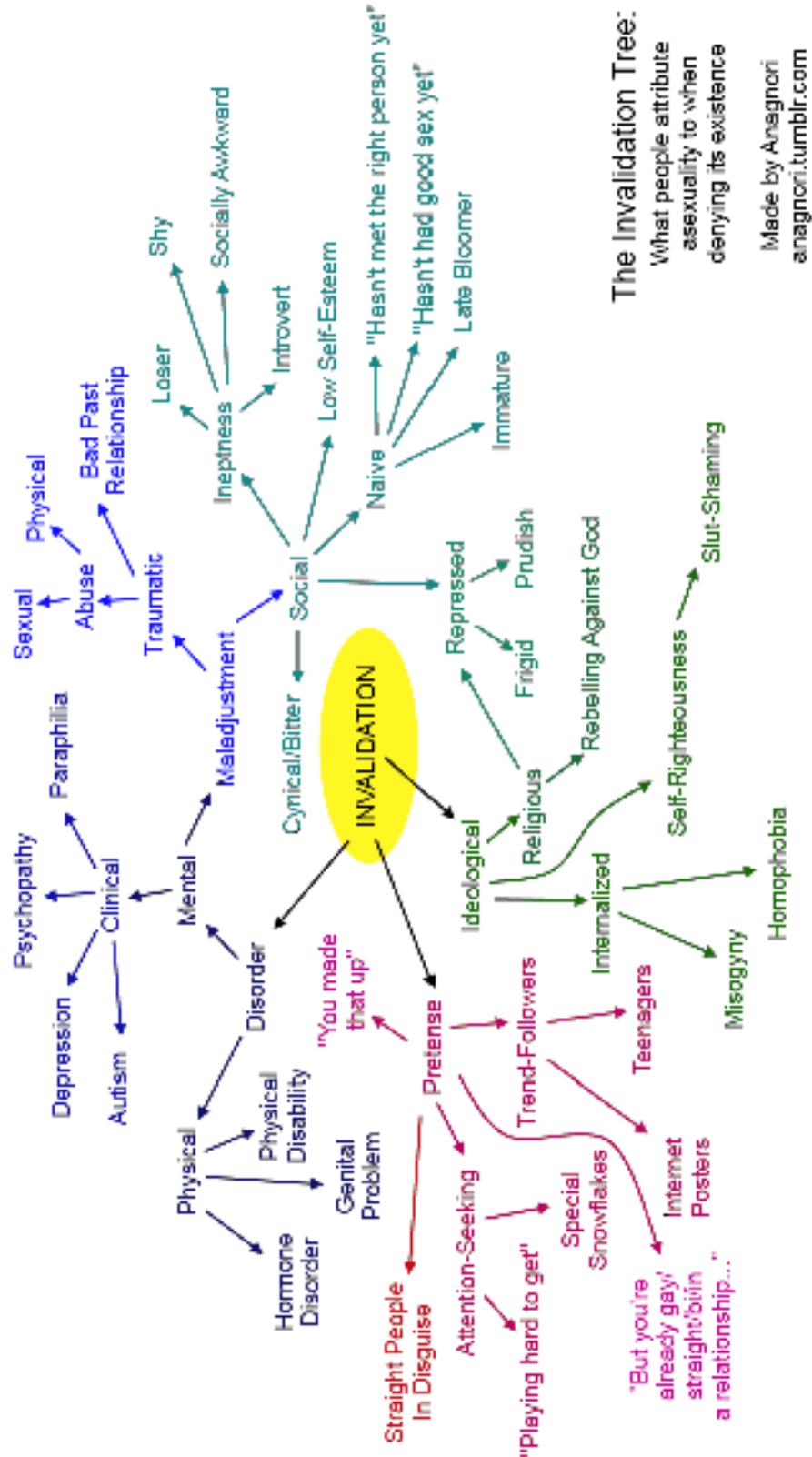
Can asexual people fall in love with someone/be in a relationship?

Of course. Asexual people do not feel sexual attraction but as said in page 5, sexual attraction and romantic attraction can go separately, so an asexual person can fall in love. In terms of relationships is not as easy because depends on their perspective of sex and their partner's. Sexless romantic relationships between asexuals and allosexuals are not easy, but they are perfectly possible.

2. DEMONSTRATING ACEPHOBIA

2.2 The invalidation tree

Here is an image that shows schematically what people attribute asexuality to when trying to deny its existence. Most of them will be discussed and denied in the following pages.



2.3 Hate comments

Hate comments towards asexual people are not difficult to find, simply go to google and you will find tens of screenshots. Down below I will include some of them because even if it seems that they do not prove anything, it can be very useful. These people exist in real life and they will not remain silent if they come across someone asexual.

 **Enkie Zinki**
They both look like their on billions of antidepressants and that definitely doesn't make you horny at all. I like the poly girl she's cool.
30 April 2016 · Like · Reply

 **Joe Jones**
So, in other more real terms, they're screwed up and defective and the popular, politically correct thing to do is name it and push for the acceptance of these stupid terms to be "a thing" to think is "normal"
30 April 2016 · Like · Reply

 **Rémy Moon II**
....it's like dating a wall
30 April 2016 · Like · Reply

 **Casey Martino**
So do asexual even masturbate??.....I dunno man, I could not handle dealing with one of them especially if i had feeling for them. That would be horrible...I guess we could be friends since thats pretty much all we could be..

 **Tony Zolezi**
Asexual makes no sense. You can't be no gender you fucking snowflake.
5 May · Like · Reply

 **Christian Heck**
the good thing is, they will never pass this stupid ass shit onto their kids.
4 May · Like · 18 · Reply

Mattea Rose
as a psychiatrist. being asexual isnt a actual thing. It can be cured, just saying. With the right psychiatrist and therapy . The mind takes a year to rewire , alot of these things we try to normalize are nothing more than mental illnesses that can be cured if we start thinking logically and start seeking professional help.
1 October 2015 · Like · 3 · Reply

 **Mikey MC Green**
asexual? I've heard that term before. It's funny. Never trust anybody who doesn't like sex or food. They aren't human.
20 December 2015 · Like · 7 · Reply

 **Brandon Chase Valadez**
This is a misrepresentation of what asexuality is. They're not reproducing with themselves. There are other words for it. Mentally disabled, prude, weird, traumatized, not right in the head, defective... If you have no inclination to fuck you're incomplete. Sorry but that's kinda how shit works. This sounds depressingly like giving up, zero self confidence, zero self worth. If they masturbate they're hypocrites. If they don't they need help.
5 May · Edited · Like · Reply

 **Isabella Cascio**
I would be very interested to know if
1) these people took antidepressants before puberty
2) their mothers took antidepressants while pregnant
or 3) their mothers took antidepressants while breastfeeding.

As far as I know there are no historical accounts of people who are asexual. Yet all of a sudden you have a bunch of people identifying as such when a medication with the main side effect of blunted sexuality has become ubiquitous in our society.
30 April · Like · Reply

These comments were found on a Facebook post which unfortunately has been delated, but there were hundreds of them. The only positive thing is that most of them are based on misconceptions some of which have already been explained. The rest shows that asexual people will always worry about whether they will be loved without sex or not.

2.4 Myths and misconceptions

There are tens of myths surrounding asexuality, and some of them will be denied right now. To do so I have interviewed three people: Gemma Pujós, biologist; Anissa Ouali, sexologist; and an anonymous very informed asexual. The complete three interviews can be found in the annex.

Asexuals are super-religious people

Someone super-religious could be asexual, but asexuality is not related to religion in any way.

Asexuality is the same as celibacy

No, asexuality and celibacy have nothing to do. Celibacy is chosen, it is an option you have and you decide whether you want to be celibate or not. Instead, asexuality is not chosen; no one can choose to be asexual or to stop being it, it is a part of you.

Asexuals hate everyone who has sex

Even if some people who have sex hate asexuals for not having it, the majority of asexuals do not care about other people's sex lives. There are some exceptions, but asexual people tend to be respectful, since they want to be respected too.

Asexuality is a choice

As said before, asexuality is not a choice because any sexual orientation is a choice, it is something that is part of you, whether you like it or not.

Asexuals cannot fall in love

Sexual attraction and romantic attraction are two different concepts. In the same way that someone may have sex with a person they are not in love with, an asexual person can fall in love and have romantic relationships without being sexually attracted to them.

Asexuals do not know anything about sex

People always assume that asexuals are like kids and as innocent as them, but that is not true. Asexual people receive sex education at schools and can also make research about it if that information is not enough. Ask any asexual about the topic and they will answer as any allosexual person would.

Asexuals do not want or cannot have sex

Sex-positive asexuals exist, and they do want sex. As regards the second part of the myth, it is also untrue. Biology is the same for everyone. If an asexual person has sexual intercourse, they will probably feel almost the same as an allosexual would (except if they are sex-repulsed), the only difference is the absence of desire. To understand it better: imagine your favorite food. Now imagine eating it when you are starving and

imagine eating it when you are almost full. The experience is different; however, that does not affect their biological system in any way.

Asexuals are just faking it for attention

There are better ways to draw attention to oneself if desired. Moreover, the attention you receive for saying you are asexual is not the type of attention anyone wants.

Asexuality is just a phase or an internet thing

Yes, asexuality may be a phase, but in the same way that every other sexual orientation can be if we take them as fluid or as a step to personal discovery. Sexual orientation can change through life, and that should not be seen as a bad thing or as a proof that they are less valid. In addition, asexual people have it really hard to figure out and be sure about what they are due to the absence of information that is given. However, it is not an internet thing. The biggest part of the community is online, but that is because they are so few that otherwise it would be impossible to find each other and organise anything. Internet has helped them create a community, but asexuality has always existed outside it.

Asexuality is not a sexual orientation

This discussion has lasted for so long and still there are people who would contradict this statement, but asexuality is a sexual orientation. They are attracted to no one, that is it. In the same way that black is considered a colour even though it is the absence of it and zero is considered a number, asexuality is considered a sexual orientation even though it is the absence of sexual attraction.

Asexuality is caused by a hormonal imbalance

The list of symptoms that are caused by a hormonal imbalance is not precisely short, and none of them is asexuality. Hormonal imbalance or other health problems may cause a decrease of the sex drive, but there would be other visible symptoms which led them to know that something was not working well.

That is not the definition for asexual

Polysemic words exist.

Asexuality is the evolution's response for overpopulation

Firstly, there is no way that that would happen. Secondly, asexuality has always existed, even when overpopulation did not.

Sexual intercourse will change it

If someone is asexual, having sex will not magically make them feel sexual attraction. They might like sex and from that point want to have it more often, but the sexual orientation would have not changed if that were the case.

You cannot know if you are asexual if you are a virgin

Asexual people, even if it is more difficult to find out, can perfectly know that they are asexual in the same way that a virgin heterosexual knows that they are heterosexual and no one questions them about it for being a virgin.

Asexuals do not or cannot masturbate

Biology is the same for every healthy human being. Not feeling sexual attraction does not mean that asexual people cannot be aroused or enjoy masturbation, the same that happens with sex.

Asexuals are just single or unattractive people looking for an excuse

There are incredibly gorgeous asexuals and also married or in a relationship asexuals.

All asexuals are virgins

Asexuals can be virgins or not because asexuals can choose to have sex or not, like any other orientation.

Asexuals are cold and loveless

Asexual does not mean aromantic; and even if someone is asexual and aromantic, that does not mean they do not love their friends or their family as much as someone else.

Asexuals are hermaphrodites

Asexuality has nothing to do with gender. In humans, true hermaphroditism is an intersex condition that does not affect sexual attraction.

Asexuality is a gender

Asexuality is a sexual orientation; people who do not identify with any gender are called agender.

Asexuals do not experience sexual arousal

Biology is the same for everyone. An asexual's body is the same as someone who is not's and therefore they react the same to sexual stimulation.

Asexuals have not met the right person yet

Saying this is the same as saying that someone is heterosexual because they have not found the right person of the same sex yet. Can it be true? It is improbable but yes. Are heterosexual people told that too? No.

Everyone feels like that sometimes

It may be true that some people lack sexual attraction in certain points of their lives due to whatever issues, but asexuals do not lack sexual attraction just sometimes: it is always. The only ones who occasionally feel it are in the grey spectrum, and even though they are closer to the always than to the sometimes.

Asexuals are gays in denial

Why would some say they are asexual when denying they are gay? Saying that you are asexual can carry you many more problems than saying that you are gay. Gays in denial usually make themselves believe to be bisexual or heterosexual, but not asexual.

Asexuals only date other asexual people

It is true that a relationship between an allosexual and an asexual may be really difficult and hard for both parts, but that does not make it impossible. Sometimes sex is not an issue because the couple reaches an agreement which is not any trouble for them.

Asexuals are afraid or disgusted of sex

Some are, but some are not; it all depends on whether you are sex-repulsed or not. However, asexuals should definitely stop being seen as haters of sex, because not all of them are and that just allows the myth to continue existing.

Asexuality is caused by being autistic

Many asexual people are not autistic and there is no evidence to be a connection between a sexual orientation and a disorder.

Asexuals are victims of sexual trauma

A sexual trauma does not make you asexual. A trauma can make you “change” your sexual orientation, but it really does not: there is just the trauma stopping it from being that way. If there is a trauma behind it, there will be other signs that will tell the person that it is a trauma and they will act on it.

There are no asexual men

Both men and women can be asexual, gender has nothing to do with that. If people have the feeling that there are less asexual men than women is because sex is more imposed to men as something they should absolutely love and desire and for a man saying that he does not like sex can mean being laughed at, which is less common in women.

There is a pill to fix asexuality

Asexuality is not an illness, so it does not need to be fixed in anyway. Neither there is a pill to make you feel sexual attraction out of nowhere; if you are asexual, there is no way to feel sexual attraction.

Asexuals do not face any problems when it comes to their love and sex lives

Asexual people are humans. If they do not want to date, they crave emotional intimacy in other ways and need it anyway. If they want to date, they have to find other asexual people (very difficult) or negotiate with non-asexual partners about sex.

Asexuals do not experience oppression nor discrimination

This section's aim is to prove this sentence wrong. According to the dictionary, discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people; and oppression, in the context of social justice, means behaviours and words that marginalise and cause harm to a minority. The existence of these myths and all the upcoming sections will demonstrate that oppression and discrimination towards asexual exists, and it is called acephobia.

2.4.5. Asexuality as a disorder

Asexuality is often thought to be a disorder, seen as unhealthy, and actually it was considered a disorder until some years ago.

The **Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD)**, which figures in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), is characterized as a lack or absence of sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity. However, for this to be considered a disorder the patient must meet two other criteria: it must cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulties and not be happening because of another illness, a drug, some other mental condition or *asexuality*.

Even if the actual definition takes asexuality on consideration, it was not mentioned until 2013, when the DSM-5 was published with it including this new addition. In other words, asexuality was considered a mental illness until four years ago. Before 2013 asexuals were diagnosed with a mental disability they did not have by professionals, and even nowadays some mental health professionals keep seeing asexuality as something that should be changed, if not as HSDD even if the patient tells them that they identify as asexual.

The medical validation should be enough for asexuality to finally start being considered the forth sexual orientation it is, but since to some reluctant people it is not, there are some other reasons not to think asexuality is a way to deny having HSDD.

For a diagnose of HSDD to be valid the patient must suffer from distress or interpersonal difficulty due to the lack of desire for sex, and the research date (Prause & Graham, 2007) does not suggest that asexual people in general are distressed by their lack of sexual interest. Even if some asexuals were, that would not mean that asexuality itself means distress, because given the case that it happened with homosexuality, it would not mean it. Furthermore, the source of that distress is usually society which makes asexual people feel bad for being who they are.

When it comes to interpersonal relations, they do not only revolve around sex. Asexuals function normally in all relations beyond sexuality. Also, asexuals can perfectly feel arousal, which people diagnosed with HSDD cannot.

Lastly, what if truly an atypical biological process or physical health conditional underlied asexuality, would that mean that asexuality is a disorder? Neither would it. Great musical talent is given because of that, and it has been never seen as a disorder. It is important not to confuse the cause of human psychological variation with a determination of whether that variation is currently a mental illness.

2.5 List of problems that only asexual people face

- The lack of research on the subject and therefore the little information there is compared to other sexual orientations.
- Having just a few films, TV shows, documentaries and fictional media with asexual characters.
- Since there are not many studies or media representation, it is very difficult to find them free.
- Not being mentioned on high schools when talking about sexuality.
- Not feeling sexual attraction is seen as a mental illness by some mental health professionals or a problem which needs to be solved.
- In surveys, commonly, there are boxes for all orientations except for asexuality.
- Many people who experience sexual attraction were aware that their sexual orientation was an option before they reached puberty, and they knew that others felt the same way they did. Asexuals did not.
- There are therapists dedicated to helping homosexual and bisexual people with the problems they might have related to their sexuality, but there is nothing like that for asexual people.
- People who are not asexual are not told that they are aliens, seen as passionless or considered less human based on their sexual orientation (see page 39).
- Only asexual people have to defend the existence of their sexual orientation when discussing or disclosing it.
- The assumption that romantic relationships will be sexual when they are serious or committed enough.
- People who are asexual are seen as childish or innocent just because they do not feel sexual attraction.
- It is highly difficult to tell if someone is asexual or to find asexual people, so asexuals have to turn to the internet to find someone like them with whom they can share their experiences. It is very easy for them to feel lonely.
- Asexuals' dating options are hugely reduced if they do not want to have sex.
- Asexuals are excluded by both straights and LGBT community members.
- The inability to understand why sex seems to be that important to most of the world makes some aspects of daily life senseless. They have to interact with the world despite living inside a sex-focused culture to which they often cannot relate.
- Allosexual people do not constantly worry about problems regarding sex before starting dating someone on the way asexual people do.
- Having the fear to come out to your acquaintances in case they see asexuality as worthy of interrogation, pathological, in need of rehabilitation, unhuman or inconceivable.

2.6 List of laws, situations and attitudes that negatively affect asexual people

Acephobia does not only consist on asexual people being treated horribly and asexuality being erased and misunderstood. There is not a specific law that directly relates to asexual people, but there are many laws, situations, attitudes and issues that negatively affect asexual people. Here are some examples:

Consummation laws:

Some countries have laws that require the consummation of a marriage for it to be considered binding. In some other places, such as England or Wales, the inability or refusal to have sex is a ground for voiding the marriage. This also happens in a Catholic marriage. If two people marry but the spouses have not had sexual intercourse, the marriage is said to be a *ratum sed non consummatum*, and it can be dissolved or annulled by the pope without mattering the reason for non-consummation.

Adoption denial:

Some asexual couples have tried to adopt a child but not allowed after the interview. The Social Services asked them why they did not have children by themselves, and when did answered that it was because they were asexuals the Social Services said that they were not fit to be married. Not only their petition was denied, but also their marriage was questioned.

Discrimination by mental health professionals:

If the therapist fixates on asexuality as a symptom of another disorder, they can come up with the wrong diagnoses. Asexual people have found themselves prescribed sexual arousal drugs or testosterone shots or were misinterpreted as repressing themselves due to trauma or fear they were not suffering from.

Religious pressure or discrimination:

A myth about asexuality says that they are super religious or that they should not have any problem related to religion because of their “purity”, but that is very far from the true. Asexuals can be considered ungodly, unnatural or going against their religious duty because of their lack of the urges that encourage sexual reproduction.

Corrective rape:

It may sound quite unprovable, but the very truth is that asexuals are raped for being asexuals. They are forced into having sex because the rapist thinks that that will “cure” the asexual person, that it is impossible that they do not feel sexual attraction and that having sex will solve the “problem”. Moreover, this rapist is not a random stranger or acquaintance, sometimes they are the asexual person’s partner. Some believe that they partner owes them sex, and that it is correct to do what is necessary to get it. The worst is the huge number of people who defend those people because they believe that the

bad person is the asexual because they are imposing such unbearable torture. Society has always made us believe that sex is part of the package deal, and the ones who dare to disagree to that are seen as evil.

2.7 Intergroup bias toward group X, by MacInnis and Hodson (2012)

In 2012 Cara C. MacInnis and Gordon Hodson, two Canadian researchers, held an investigation to prove that an antisexual bias really existed.

First of all, they established seven criteria that indicated the several points related to bias toward asexual people that they had guessed and wanted to prove:

- Criterion 1: attitudes toward asexuals should be relatively negative due to the sexual minority prejudice (Herek, 2009).
- Criterion 2: exaggerated negativity toward asexuals among individuals with negative intergroup predispositions (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation).
- Criterion 3: positive associations between asexual attitudes and attitudes toward other sexual minorities.
- Criterion 4: representing asexuals as less human.
- Criterion 5: contact avoidance intentions.
- Criterion 6: discrimination intentions.
- Criterion 7: distinguishing antisexual bias from singlism (DePaulo and Morris, 2005)

To prove these seven criteria, they held two studies. The goal of **Study 1** was to document intergroup bias against asexuals by these criteria using an undergraduate sample, so they asked 148 heterosexual students at the Canadian university a series of questions to which they had to answer using scales their thoughts on different sexual orientations in different areas.

The **results** were the expected ones: attitudes toward heterosexuals were the most positive, revealing a *sexual minority bias*, and antisexual prejudice was the most pronounced of all. Each of the criteria was confirmed:

“Our analysis suggests that antisexual prejudice is indeed a sexual minority prejudice, correlating positively with attitudes toward homosexuals and bisexuals. [...] We find significantly more bias against asexuals than other sexual minorities. [...] Overall, we find clear evidence of previously unidentified and strong sexual minority prejudice: *antisexual bias*. [...] Antisexual bias is a type of sexual minority prejudice distinct from related constructs and rooted in ideological opposition to deviant sexuality. Asexuals were dehumanized with regard to both dimensions (represented as *animalistic*, and particularly as *machine-like*), regardless of whether these assessments were based on traits or emotions. Generally speaking, asexual dehumanization was greater than that characterizing other sexual minorities, showcasing this bias as serious and extreme.”

Study 2 sought to replicate these patterns in a broader online community sample. The procedures were the same, except that they included a lesser-known “sexuality”: sapiosexuality, to see if unfamiliarity had to do with the results.

The **results** were highly similar to those of the previous study.

“Results of Study 2 largely confirm those from the university sample examined in Study 1. [...] Notably, asexuals were evaluated more negatively than a very unfamiliar sexual minority comparison group, sapiosexuals. [...] Those prone to prejudice are more prone to antisexual bias, and that asexuals are targets of dehumanization, avoidance, and discrimination intentions. [...] University students were more negative toward homosexuals, bisexuals and asexuals than the population in general. [...] Sex differences emerged, whereby men represented asexuals as more animalistic more consistently than did women. [...] Overall, asexuals are clear targets of bias by heterosexuals.”

The article with the results of the research ended with the following words:

“Asexuals are the sexual minority that is most clearly considered “deficient by heterosexuals”. [...] Although antisexual bias is a clear component of sexual minority prejudice, it is also unique in that it was repeatedly stronger than bias toward other sexual minorities. Most disturbingly, asexuals are viewed as less human, especially lacking in terms of human nature. This confirms that sexual desire is considered a key component of human nature, and those lacking it are viewed as relatively deficient, less human and disliked. It appears that asexuals do not “fit” the typical definition of human and as such are viewed as less human or even nonhuman, rendering them an extreme sexual orientation outgroup and very strong targets of bias.”

2.8 Invisibilization is the Evil

Without doubt, the worst part of acephobia is invisibilization. Most of the myths and misconceptions previously mentioned (and many of the ones mentioned in the next pages) could be totally erased if it did not exist. Many of the misconceptions showed in the image of page 27 come from invisibilization.

If people knew about asexuality, if asexuality were at least mentioned, so people could be curious about it and investigate by themselves, many of the problems that the asexual community faces nowadays would not exist.

Here are some examples of invisibilization; many of them have been previously mentioned:

- **Absence of asexual characters on media and literature.**
- **Misinformation that there is on the subject.** This misinformation implies:
 - Asexuals constantly having to defend the existence of their orientation.
 - Asexuals having to give a thirty to forty minute education session during which they must defend and explain the existence of their orientation when coming out.
 - Some mental health professionals seeing it as a disorder and consequently giving wrong diagnoses to patients.
 - Young asexuals not knowing why they feel different from their friends and therefore feeling excluded or even broken.
 - Asexuals being perceived as less human.
 - Acephobia not considered real due to the erasure of the problems asexuals face daily.
 - Due to that erasure, asexuals being seen as making themselves the victim and therefore being sometimes excluded of the LGBT community for “not needing any help because they do not have issues”.
- **Straight-passing “privilege”.** Differently to other sexual orientations such as homosexuality, with which is easier, there is no way to tell that someone is asexual unless they tell you; it is impossible to tell someone is asexual when seeing them in the street. Especially if the asexual person is heteroromantic, they are considered to have straight-passing “privilege”. The problem is that that is not a privilege, it is a horrible problem. It is true that due to this “privilege” asexuals will not be beaten up in the street or killed but imagine being constantly assumed to be something you are not. This straight-passing “privilege” means having to *constantly* come out every time you meet someone and do not want them to think you are straight and being treated like a heterosexual if you do not. This can be seen as no big deal, but asexuals can end up seeing themselves as liars because of people around them being convinced they are something they are not.

In short, invisibilization means lack of information, and when there is lack of information people assume incorrect facts and neither there is someone who knows enough to

correct them. Invisibilization can be considered the root of most acephobic attitudes, so it is acephobia itself. Invisibilization for asexual people means not being able to connect with others like them. It means being very likely to conclude that they are broken. It means seeing no boxes to check and being filled with shame or frustration. It means being isolated in a way that is unimaginable to most people who take their visibility for granted. And it means that as soon as they try to be seen, the vile attitudes and unreasonable requests for justification they will be subjected to will probably make them wonder if invisibility was that bad.

2.8.5 How to put an end to invisibilization

The best way to fight invisibilization is visibility. How can that be done? Here are a few examples.

- **Including asexual characters on media and literature.** Including these characters on representations of real life like TV shows and books makes people realise that asexuals are real and that they probably know someone who is, or at least makes them familiar with the term and its meaning.
- **Talking about asexuality when talking about the other three attractions.** When talking about sexuality it is very common to mention heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality, but asexuality is never mentioned and consequently not believed to be a sexual orientation.
- **Improvement of the sex education classes at school.** Sex education classes are improving a lot, but they have to improve even more. It is crucial to teach teenagers around 15 years old about homosexuality, bisexuality and, of course, asexuality. It is one of the best ways to ensure that everyone has a little notion of the term.
- **Publication of books and airing of documentary films that show acephobia.** For some reason, people think that asexuals do not face any problems for being asexual, but that is not true. If asexuality were seen in the same way as homosexuality, as a less common sexual orientation that faces hate even though it is natural, people would try to understand it and would believe asexuals when they say that acephobia exists.
- **Do scientific research about asexuality.** Asexuality is an incredibly interesting topic to investigate but due to its permanent invisibility, that has never been done. Research would be a way to have more accessible information on the topic and discover more about it. The more information there is the easier to have access to it.

2.9 Sexnormativity and internalized acephobia

Until now, several examples of acephobia towards asexual people have been showed, but what about asexuals themselves? Can they be acephobic?

Asexual people can also be acephobic. Internalized acephobia happens when asexual individuals are subjected to society's negative or erroneous perceptions, intolerance and stigmas towards asexuals, and as a result, end up believing them as if they were true.

Internalized acephobia can occur in many different ways, but all the cases have in common that they are caused by social acephobia, by all the perceptions society imposes without stopping to think of its validity.

Sexnormativity is one of these perceptions. People in general assume that sex always goes by hand with a serious relationship and see it as something unquestionable. The problem is that there are people, among whom there may even be allosexuals, that do not see it that way, and that ends up being fatal for asexuals. This sexnormativity highly affects them, for example by making them force themselves into having sex or by hoping that it is all just a phase (even though deep inside they know it is not) or desiring to end up being greysexual or demisexual. This also can make them feel incredibly guilty for not wanting to have sex with their partners, blaming themselves harshly and even thinking that they are not enough and that they do not deserve their partner.

An acephobic society also makes asexuality ill seen. As it has been showed along this section, asexuality is seen as something abnormal, and it is easy even for someone asexual to believe that. Many asexuals are afraid of coming out openly because chances of being rejected or seen as weird are high. That makes asexuals hide under the straight-passing privilege, since being considered something you are not is better than being laughed at or being seen as an alien, among other horrible things.

In conclusion, asexuals tend to hide and hate themselves because of a society that has imposed that sex is "the normal thing" and that not wanting it makes you weird and less valid. Internalized acephobia may probably be the worst of acephobia in general: you can stand people hating you, but it is impossible to live happily hating yourself. However, internalized acephobia would not exist if it were not for the social acephobia, so the problem to solve is there. How to solve it? Easy: visibility. Visibility is always the key.

2.10 Results of the surveys

Finally, in this section, I want to comment on the surveys that I have done to have more empirical data. I have done two of them: in the first, I asked asexuals about their own experience, and in the second one, I asked allosexual people about their thoughts on asexuality. The whole surveys can be found in the annex (see page 68); I will only talk about some of the answers.

ASEXUALS' EXPERIENCES ON ASEXUALITY

Since there are not many asexual people around me, I posted the survey on Tumblr. Luckily, it got up to 4438 responses. Thanks to that, I managed to get a wide age rank. The results are similar to all that I had previously found.

The majority of the respondents found out about sexuality on the internet (73.63%) and informed themselves there.

94% agreed on the existence of acephobia; that was proved when 16% said they would change their asexuality if they could, 85% believed that asexual people face daily problems that other people do not and 40% declared having been oppressed for being asexual. The surveys also confirmed that many asexuals live surrounded by people who do not support them at all, since 13% of the asexuals who were not out of the closet with anyone was because it would put at risk their physical or mental health; only 50% declared feeling supported by those around them; and 54% answered they had been told to go to a psychologist for being asexual or thought it might happen if they said they are.

When asked about sex and masturbation the answers were incredibly varied, so it is clear that being asexual does not mean that they cannot have or enjoy sex.

Not surprisingly, 94% of the respondents thought that the problems an asexual person may have are related to the lack of information about the topic, and 99% said they would like more asexual representation on media, books, etc.

ALLOSEXUALS' THOUGHTS ON ASEXUALITY

For this one I only managed to get 61 responses, so the results are not as accurate and the age rank is not as varied, but I still find it useful to know about what people around me think about this topic.

Most of the people thought themselves able to define asexuality (90%) and had heard before about it (95%), but only 56% of them knew that asexuality is a sexual orientation, this meaning that their definition was actually not accurate. Neither did the 33% know that asexual people could masturbate and have sex. Further, 18% believed that asexuality could be chosen, and 28% considered it a phase from which someone can get out of.

67% of the respondents considered sexual intercourse an essential part of the relationship, and 66% admitted that they would never be in a relationship with someone who would never have sex with them, confirming that asexuals have it really hard to find a partner.

Only 47% believe in acephobia and 54% said that they do not think that asexual people face problems that allosexuals do not.

So, people claim to know what asexuality is, but in the moment of truth, they actually do not.

3. ANALYSING ASEXUAL VISIBILITY

3.1 The key to make good asexual representation

Now that I have investigated and proved acephobia, I would like to analyse all the attempts of asexual visibility and representation that have been made to see if they really help the community or if, otherwise, they perpetuate stigma or directly were made to mock asexuality.

It is relatively easy to analyse non-fictional contents: just by checking the information given is veridical and assuring that the author truly informed themselves and made sure to include real experiences you can know if the content is trust-worthy. However, to ensure the correct analysis of the further fictional contents, I have made a list of how a good fictional asexual representation should be, taking into account all the points mentioned on both previous parts.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

- Mention the world asexual or asexuality at least once.
- Ensure that the reader or viewer correctly understands what it means.
- Include problems that characters may have due to their asexuality.
 - Show how asexuality affects the character's romantic relationships (if there are any).
- At least one character accepting them and loving them by who they are.

WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE

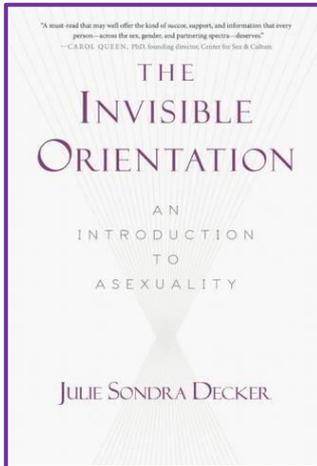
- Any myths represented as true.
- The asexual character thinking they have to change.
- The characters who love the main character wanting them do change.
- The asexual character following the asexual stereotypes (cold, mean...).

STEREOTYPES TO AVOID

- The asexual character being a psychopath/sociopath.
- The asexual character being a robot.
- The asexual character suffering from trauma.
- An allosexual character being painted as pure/innocent and treated as an asexual for that.
- The asexual character being completely undesirable.
- The asexual character constantly derogating people who enjoy sexual intercourse.
- The asexual character constantly being fetishized.

3.2 Books: non-fiction

THE INVISIBLE ORIENTATION (Julie Sondra Decker)



*"Understanding asexuality"
book cover*

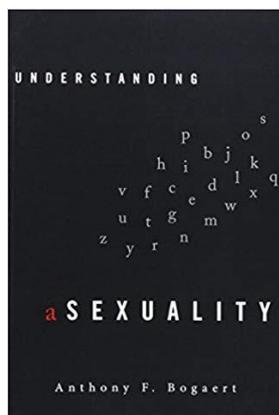
Julie Sondra Decker is asexual, and it is the first thing written in the book. In this book she wanted to *outline what asexuality is, counter misconceptions, provide resources and put asexual people's experiences in context as they move through a very sexualized world*. And that is what she did.

This book does not say anything new or unknown for most asexuals, but that is what makes it perfect for allosexual people who want to inform themselves on the topic, or even for asexuals who have recently discovered about their sexual orientation and prefer to search information on a book rather than on the internet. Since it is aimed at people who are not familiarized with the topic, all the terminology is introduced slowly, and she makes sure that all the concepts are perfectly

explained. Moreover, it includes many quotes from asexual people who gave their own opinion on various topics.

All the information given is totally true and I personally consider it the best book to get introduced into the topic.

UNDERSTANDING ASEXUALITY (Anthony F. Bogaert)



*"Understanding Asexuality"
book cover*

This book was the first book to be published about asexuality as a sexual orientation, and that makes it highly important. However, many asexual people think that this book fails to capture their experiences.

The book has diverse sections, each covering different aspects of asexuality and sexuality in general. Maybe the problem with this book is that: that it focuses too much on sexuality in general. It constantly mentions homosexuality and compares it to asexuality.

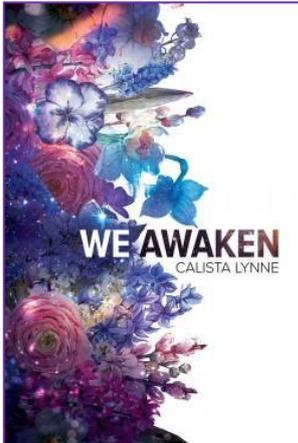
Another characteristic of *Understanding Asexuality* is its technical language. It talks about genetics and some topics using specific language that not everyone may be able to understand. However, to someone who is familiar with the terms and wants to understand sexuality better, it is great.

The third flaw of this book is that it is based on unconfirmed theories. Genetics is a difficult field to investigate, and even more when regarding to sexuality, so Anthony F. Bogaert may be giving some aspects for valid when actually they are not.

However, this book has positive aspects too. It is one of the few books that talk about HSDD and asexuality and particularly that chapter is well written and expressed. In addition, it is recommendable for those who can read it being sceptical about what is said, but not for those who have just got into asexuality and want to discover more about it. Moreover, Anthony F. Bogaert is a well-recognised sexologist and knows what he is talking about.

3.3 Books: fiction

WE AWAKEN (Calista Lynne)



"We awaken" book cover

We Awaken tells the story of Victoria and Ashlinn. Victoria is a human girl who is going through a hard part of her life, and Ashlinn is a being in charge of creating pleasant human dreams. When they meet in one of Victoria's dreams, they instantly start liking each other. Ashlinn, who is asexual, will help Victoria understand asexuality and realise that she is asexual too, and that that is why she had always felt differently from those around her.

We Awaken perfectly portrays the character of Victoria what is it like to feel something different in you, to later discover asexuality and understand nothing about it and to finally realise that it fits you and end up understanding everything. Almost every asexual can identify with Victoria's thoughts and understand her perfectly, because that is what they have personally experienced.

The author made sure to include an acephobic character too: Victoria's best friend. She loves Victoria but in the beginning, she is unable to understand asexuality and tells Victoria that it makes no sense and that she is just confused. Luckily, in the end she understands it and respects her.

This book is probably the best asexual fiction book that has ever been made.

TÍTERES DE LA MAGIA (Iria G. Parente and Selene M. Pascual)



"Titeres de la magia" book cover

Iria and Sele are two Spanish authors who are known for including characters with diverse sexual orientations. In this book, they decided to include an asexual character: Ariadne. Both the narrator and Ariadne herself refer to her sexuality several times along the story.

The best this book and the portrayal of Ariadne is that she is a secondary character whose sexual orientation is just mentioned and not seen as something trivial nor important for the personality of the character. Iria and Selene's books are mostly read by teenagers, and it is great that they include characters like her.

The bad part of Ariadne's sexuality is that the word "asexual" is not mentioned. They simply use the description. However, Iria and Selene are against the use of labels, so it is not surprising that they do not use it.

Moreover, I think that there is a demiromantic character, Hazan, but it is not as obvious as with Ariadne.

SEVEN WAYS WE LIE (Riley Redgate)



"Seven Ways We Lie" book cover

This book, which is about the daily life of seven teenagers each of whom is related to one of the seven sins, has become quite popular on the internet due to it having non-straight characters. One of them is supposed to be on the process of realising that he is asexual aromantic.

The character is Valentine Simmons and through the book, he shares his thoughts of not being attracted to anyone or feeling that he has not experienced the type of attraction that everyone around him seems to experience. When another character asks him out, he rejects him, saying that he is not into anyone (the other character respects it and they end up on good terms).

Asexuality itself is not mentioned, but the author confirmed it in an interview.

Valentine's special trait is that he is highly likely to be autistic. It is not recommendable to make an asexual character autistic because it is easy for someone who is not into the topic to think that both are related, but incredibly, it is not the case, which is a huge point on favour of the author.

3.4 Radio

BBC RADIO- BEING ASEXUAL

On the 23rd of September of 2017, the BBC Radio 4 aired a broadcast about asexuality. It basically consists on personal experiences, but it includes a short and accurate introduction at the beginning. It lasts 23 minutes, so it is perfect for everyone who wants to get to know more about the topic through asexuals' own voices. In that short lapse of time they cover the definition, several myths and interesting current discussions inside the community, remark that it is an orientation and that it has no cause and finally include the actual recordings of asexual people talking about their own cases.

CANAL EXTREMADURA- LA TARDE CONTIGO 1H

On the 2nd of January of 2018, in the radio of Canal Extremadura, they invited a psychologist to talk about the "asexual disorder". A thousand pages could be filled with all the mistakes that that interview has, but the worse one is that they treat asexuality as a disorder. But not only do they say that it is a disorder, but also further in the interview the psychologist says that it can be chosen and that it is not related to any physical or psychologic pathology, contradicting herself.

Along the interview they also talk about the "causes" of asexuality, give a horrible and incredibly inaccurate definition to it and in general both the interviewer and the interviewee talk reluctantly about it, even laughing and treating asexuals as rare and incomprehensible. They blame asexuals and say that they are selfish to start romantic relationships because they cannot make the other person happy and moreover, they make them feel guilty for wanting sex.

There is even a point when the psychologist admits that asexual people are raped. She says that the worse things you can do to someone asexual is force them, because that worsens the "disorder", but that that is what commonly people tend to do.

What this disastrous demonstrates is that there are psychologists out there really believing that asexuality is a mental illness that can be solved, and that these people can completely mess up someone's life.

3.5 TV: Non-fiction

(A)SEXUAL (2011)



"(A)sexual"'s film poster

This documentary, written and directed by Angela Tucker, tries to show how asexual people struggle to find comfort and support in a society that is reluctant to acknowledge their existence. (A)sexual is probably the best documentary on the topic out there. It totally meets its objective and does so in the best way possible.

The main focus of the documentary is David Jay, founder of AVEN, and throughout the film he explains how he came to find AVEN, the history of this website and how it has benefited the whole asexual community. It also includes experts talking about asexuality, researchers (such as Anthony F. Bogaert) that slightly introduce their findings and

mundane asexuals from different ages who explain their own experiences. The asexuals chosen really portray the whole community, since some of them have different opinions on certain subjects and live their (a)sexuality differently. It also includes allosexuals giving their thoughts on asexuality (some of which are clearly acephobic).

Since it is meant to be watched for both asexuals and allosexuals, it has an introduction on the topic at the beginning, which is perfectly understandable even for the ones who have not heard about asexuality before.

Numerous myths are denied throughout the documentary and it covers many topics that can bring to confusion those unaware of the topic, such as masturbation, romance, the relation between asexuality and mental illnesses, whether asexuals belong to the LGBT community, etc.

This would be the best asexual documentary if it were not for two little errors. The first one is that it gives the wrong idea that asexuals do not have sex, when some of them do. This mistake is perfectly understandable because in 2011, the asexual community was not as wide as now and this could have led to misunderstandings due to the lack of different experiences. The second one is that at the end, it focuses too much on David Jay; it ends up focusing on his own relationships with people around him. Those relationships are slightly weird and confusing and have little to nothing to do with him being asexual, but can be misunderstood as the normal thing for asexuals easily. Moreover, David Jay gives an incredibly wrong view regarding sex during the last minutes.

TAKING THE CAKE (2015)

This 30-minute documentary, directed by Sam Broadley, excels in its purpose, which is to talk about asexuality as an orientation, but also within a broad social and cultural context. It is divided in four sections, each of which covering a different aspect of asexuality. The documentary is made from several people of all ages relevant for the asexual community talking about the topics.

In the first section, asexuality is defined. They talk about AVEN, the importance of the asexual community, the symbology and discuss some topics in which asexuals have diverse opinions.

In the second section they talk about sex in media, which is not talked too much about. It is shown how asexuality has been treated as an illness on numerous TV series and shows.

In the third section they talk about sex in medicine and how sex is imposed on our daily lives as one of the ways to be truly happy. One of them says that asexuality is seen as an illness because it is easier to do so than to try to understand it, and it is actually pretty accurate.

Lastly, the last section focuses on sex in education. This last section is what makes this documentary essential, because this topic is never talked about and it is crucial. They all agree on how disastrous sex education is and they conclude that it is essential, not only for asexuals to be widely accepted but also for less-normative sexual diversities to be normalized.

ASEXUAL MATTRESS COMERCIAL

It may sound kind of surreal, but a Spanish mattress brand called Flex made an advertisement talking about asexuality. The ad describes asexuality quite correctly, talks about sexnormativity and ends up saying that in Flex they believe that everyone should do what they please in bed. The campaign started on the 21st April 2016, and two versions were made: a 20 second one and a 30 second one.



Screenshot of the comercial

3.6 TV: Fiction

LA QUE SE AVECINA: SEASON 10 EPISODE 2



"La Que Se Avecina"'s main characters

The Spanish show *La Que Se Avecina* is popular for its inability to portray correctly certain topics. On season 10, they made an episode where they talked about asexuality and, as expected, it is a complete disaster.

Since the beginning, when Enrique Pastor (the supposed asexual character) says that he has decided to *become* asexual. Evidently, the representation is awful. Not only do the characters constantly say that asexuality consists of not having sexual intercourse voluntarily, but also Antonio is not actually asexual, he just tries to start being one by going to an association, with the apparent motive that life is easier being like that (which is a stereotype they are perpetrating). They even treat sex as a vice when a character says that being asexual is like stopping smoking.



Enrique Pastor

The other "asexual" character is a woman who becomes Enrique's friend in the association. He clearly has a romantic/sexual interest on her but constantly tries to convince himself that he has not because "now he is asexual". This woman in the beginning does really seem asexual, but at the end, she and Enrique have sex and she says that he has ruined her celibacy. Moreover, she once says that life is better being asexual, and then gives a long list of supposed advantages that actually make no sense.



Antonio Recio

The third character involved and definitely the worst one is Antonio Recio. He is Enrique's friend and he is constantly questioning his asexuality and the woman's asexuality. He repeatedly says that not having sex is bad, that Enrique is going to the asexual association just to flirt with ugly women, that the woman is just pretending to be asexual to pretend being decent, and that he wants to be asexual too to stop being addicted to sex.

However, an incredible thing happens. The background information given is completely accurate. All the posters and the written whiteboards in the association's reunion room are totally right: there is a poster with the AVEN triangle and in the whiteboard it is mentioned that asexuality is a sexual orientation, that it is not the same as being celibate, etc. In some specific occasions, the characters say things that actually do represent asexual people's experiences (for example, a woman says that she felt guilty for not having sex with her partner and that it seems like you are a bad lover or that your love is worthless). Later it is said that we live in a hypersexualized society that does not understand that having a partner and asexuality are perfectly compatible. The woman

says that she does not have the necessity to have sex with anyone, but that she masturbates a lot. All this means that the background research was accurate and well done, but somehow they ended up making this complete mess with opposing messages. It makes no sense at all.

THE BIG BANG THEORY'S SHELDON COOPER



"The Big Bang Theory"'s main characters

Sheldon Cooper is probably one of the worldwide most known characters of the current television panorama. He is known for being the most annoying human being on earth, for rarely showing human feelings and for having a weird personality that has many times been attributed to several mental illnesses by

mental health professionals in real life. *The Big Bang Theory* is a comedy show and no one has never talked about any serious topic regarding its characters, about neither illnesses nor sexuality.

However, it is easy to deduce that Sheldon is clearly asexual. Specially during the first seasons, he states that he does not have any sexual need and even when he establishes a relationship with Amy in season 4, they do not have sex until season 9, and that happens because they reach an agreement to have sex once a year to fulfil Amy's needs.

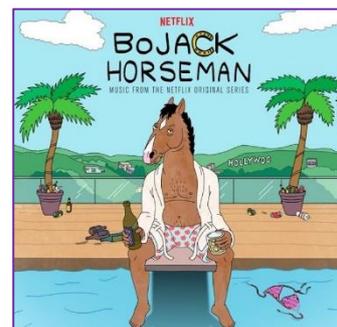


Sheldon Cooper

The problem with Sheldon Cooper is that he reunites almost all of the bad presumptions made about asexuality: he is antisocial, cold, calculating, has several mental illnesses, is robotic-like and has a peculiar way of experiencing human emotions. It could be very damaging for asexuals despite the visibility, because even if there may exist an asexual like Sheldon, the chances are odd and it would give a completely wrong vision that people would believe.

BOJACK HORSEMAN

This cartoon series is about an anthropomorphic talking horse who has gone from being a Hollywood star to a severely depressed alcoholic. Todd Chavez, the main character's best friend, is asexual. Not only is Todd confirmed to be asexual, but he also discovers and accepts his identity along several seasons.



The first hint of Todd's asexuality appears in season 3, when he talks with his ex-girlfriend Emily about being not gay nor straight. Back then, he does not know the term asexual yet, so he just says that he is nothing, and Emily is totally okay with it.

Later, on season 4, is when Todd finally discovers the word asexual thanks to Emily. In the beginning, he is shocked and does not relate to it, but further in the same season he ends up seeing that the label actually fits him and comes out as asexual to BoJack, who understands it pretty well. In that episode, Todd says it aloud several times and admits that it feels so good to talk about it. Finally, he goes to an asexual meeting, where he meets many other asexuals.



Todd and his axolotl girlfriend

On season 5, Todd starts dating an anthropomorphic axolotl who is also asexual. Their relationship goes through several stages until they break up because they did not have too many things in common besides both being sex-repulsed asexuals.

BoJack Horseman's representation of asexuality is probably the best one ever done on TV. The viewer discovers asexuality and understands it at the same time that Todd does,



Todd at the asexual meet-up

and the procedure takes time to happen, in the same way that it happens in real life. Todd at first is uncomfortable using the label, and rejects it in the first place, but later he realises that it fits him, and when he does, he feels relieved. Another aspect well expressed is the existence of aromantic asexuals

and alloromantic asexuals: Todd has a romantic relationship, and that does not make him less of an asexual. Through that relationship it is also shown that is not as easy as finding another asexual person for someone asexual do date, evidencing one of the several daily problems that they experience.

In general, the portrait is excellent, diverse and does not fall in any stereotypes. Evidently, everything can be improved, but there is *anything* wrong in BoJack Horseman related to asexuality, and that is very unusual. Season 6 does not have a release date yet but it will continue to follow Todd's road to self-discovery.

3.7 Music

REGGAETON ASEXUAL (Mr Cucumber, Dasoul and Sombra)



Dasoul

Ironically, on November 2015 this song could be heard on a Spanish radio. Given that reggaeton usually focuses on sex, Mr Cucumber, Dasoul and Sombra completely turned around the situation by producing a song which, as it says in the title, talks about a guy being asexual. It is not perfect, since it perpetuates the stigma that asexuals do never have sex, but it is an amazing attempt to talk about the topic in a highly unexpected area and a huge step. Furthermore, that it is almost impossible to represent all asexuals at once, and this song achieves to represent a very big part of them.

A-OKAY (Adam Winney)



Adam Winney in the song's cover

This is probably the most famous asexual song inside the asexual community. The context is totally different from the previous one: the author identified as asexual and was perfectly informed on the topic, so the result was better: it talks about the whole asexual spectrum and the lyrics are a reliable source of information for everyone who listens to it and does not know much about the topic.

CONCLUSIONS

Acephobia is real. As it has been shown in the second part, asexuals are the sexual minority who have it worse and yet they are the most invisibilized, practically erased as if they did not exist.

Acephobia goes beyond mean comments on the internet and people not knowing the definition: it is in the laws, on the TV programmes that people watch daily without realizing how harmful they are, inside some people that are supposed to be professionals and help people who have a mental illness. Everywhere.

The myths are extended to a point where no one questions them, where they are seen as the truth rather than the lie they are. Asexuals have to live their whole lives hearing them, being constantly questioned, being constantly told to justify themselves, being constantly told that what they feel is not real, that *they* are not real.

40% of the asexuals declared having been oppressed for being asexual. 94% agreed on the existence of acephobia. Only 50% felt supported by the people around them.

54% of the allosexuals said that they did not think that asexuals have to face problems that allosexuals do not. 18% thought that asexuality could be chosen. Only 56% knew that it is a sexual orientation.

Sex is imposed on society, seen as the normal, because most of the world does not know that not everyone out there feels the same about it, and if they do, they do not really try to understand. It is easier to label someone as unhuman rather than trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes. This imposition is so hard that asexual people end up being acephobic themselves, wanting to change so badly in order to be loved, in order to be "normal". All this if they ever get to discover that they are asexual, because sadly it takes a long time before a person has the chance to come across the term.

Fortunately, the biggest part of acephobia has a solution: visibility. If the world knew about asexuality, if the world could understand asexuality, things would completely change for asexuals. The myths would end up disappearing, and they would not have to explain anymore that they are real, that their feelings are valid.

Unfortunately, right now this is an almost impossible goal in the short term. For this to be accomplished, it would require participation from all the sectors that have a voice, mainly media. Only a small percentage of the chances to make asexual representation are taken, and many of them are inaccurate and the cure ends up being worse than the illness.

So, by now asexuals have to keep fighting daily, changing bit by bit a world that refuses to be changed, a world that is unaware that it needs to be changed: that's the sad reality, but not all realities should be real.

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4. ANNEX

4.1 Interviews

ANISSA OUALI, SEXOLOGYST

Can it be harmful not to have sexual intercourse?

No, we can live without having sex. If there is desire, having them makes sense; but if the desire is not there, it does not have to be bad.

Can the sexual orientation be chosen?

It is scientifically proven that it cannot, it comes predetermined, only that it wakes up slightly later than other things.

Can the sexual orientation change or it is the same since the moment we are born until the moment we die?

It depends on the studies you consult; some say that it cannot change and others say that it varies before settling.

Is there an age when someone can “become” asexual?

It is difficult, because throughout the life cycle you go through different stages. Along the old age you have other preferences and your body is not as ready, but it would not be called asexuality.

Which is the difference between HSDD and asexuality?

Asexuality is not a disorder, but the absence of sexual attraction can appear because of a mental illness. However, there would be other symptoms.

Is asexuality a sexual orientation? How many sexual orientations are there? Could you list them?

Asexuality is a sexual orientation. I could not list them all because constantly new sexual orientations are emerging.

Can someone become asexual due to a trauma? Would that person be considered asexual?

No, in that case the absence of sexual attraction would not be a sexual orientation, but a trauma. If there is something interfering, if there is a trigger, it cannot be a sexual orientation and that person identifying as asexual would be a symptom erroneously detected and the trauma should be searched. However, it is what I have said before: if it is a trauma it will not come alone.

Will someone who does not have sexual intercourse be less happy than someone who does?

Not necessarily. Sexual intercourse provides pleasure, not happiness. Someone asexual can be happy and obtain pleasure from other things. Happiness is different for everyone, and it cannot be compared.

Can a couple be happy without having sexual intercourse?

If they both agree on it, there should not be any problem. For a couple to keep being in love, evolution is necessary. Probably that couple would need to talk about it every certain amount of time to make sure that both parts are still comfortable with the situation, but that happens in all the couples regarding diverse topics.

Has someone ever come to your office for being asexual?

I have only had cases of people questioning their sexual orientation. When something makes you doubt, that has to be investigated, and that is what we do: investigate if there is something stopping it from emerging. What happens constantly too is that they find out their orientation but cannot live it comfortably. Asexuals can have a hard time because of asexuality being constantly questioned by society.

GEMMA PUJÓS, BIOLOGYST

Can it be harmful for physical health not to have sex?

No. In the case of men, they have to expel the sperm every now and then, but there are nocturnal ejaculations, so sex is not necessary.

Are we “designed” to feel sexual attraction?

Yes, mammals especially; reproduction is the last instance of any living being, our body is designed to feel sexual attraction. However, even if our body is designed like that, someone may not feel sexual attraction and that does not have to be bad.

Can someone homosexual or asexual be considered a disadvantage for the evolution of humans?

Scientifically speaking they are, but nowadays with overpopulation it could even be an advantage.

What is your opinion on the following sentence: “someone asexual can have sexual intercourse and feel aroused because biology is the same for everyone, in the same way that some rape victims reach orgasm”?

It is true. Biologically it works like that.

Some people say that there is a pill to cure asexuality, is that true?

It does not exist, and it could not be created, since asexuality is not an illness that needs to be cured.

There are people that say that asexuality is the evolution's response to overpopulation, what do you think about that?

No, no, no, no way!

ANONYMOUS ASEXUAL TEENAGER

How and when did you realise you were asexual?

My attitude towards sex had always been different from all of my friends'; they all masturbated and talked about sex as if it were an amazing thing they could not wait to do. I had never understood why all of them liked it that much, and neither had I had the wish of masturbating or fantasized about hot idols. I thought of myself as a late bloomer but when I was fifteen, I searched on the internet the word "asexual", which I had heard somewhere but did not know the meaning, and I was surprised of how much it fit me.

When you found out, was it like all the pieces had fit together?

Somehow yes, but not at all. It took about four or five days of me to start considering myself asexual, because it was a new word for me and in a certain way I had the hope that I was just confused, I just wanted to be like everyone else. However, that only lasted some days and soon I started to love that part of me.

What did you do once you found out you were asexual?

Inform myself about everything related to asexuality. No one had ever talked to me about it, and I wanted to learn everything, since I am a very curious person. On my own, I learnt about the community, the spectrum and the internal jokes. Then, once I figured out all I was curious about, I decided to tell my two closest friends about it.

How did your acquaintances react when you told them about it, if you have ever done it?

I have only told my closest friends, and most of them reacted as I had expected: asking so many questions at first but understanding it and supporting me at the end.

Have you ever had a bad experience coming out?

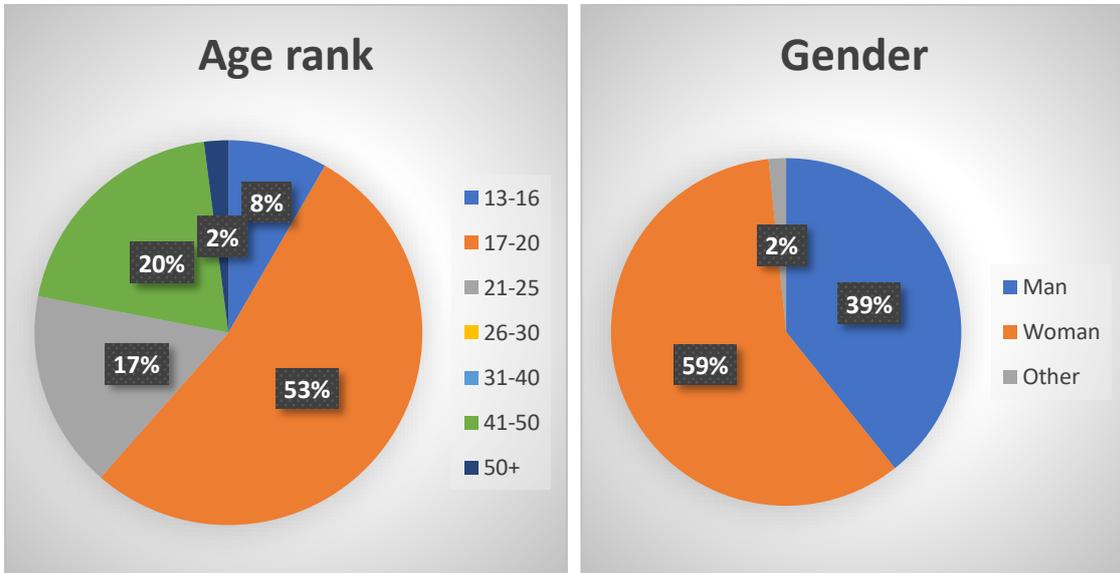
Only once. I told a friend about my asexuality and my view of sex he said that I was very cold and that he was not able to understand. Our relationship got a little bit awkward since that.

Do you fear that in the future, when you like someone and they like you back, your relationship will not work because of your asexuality?

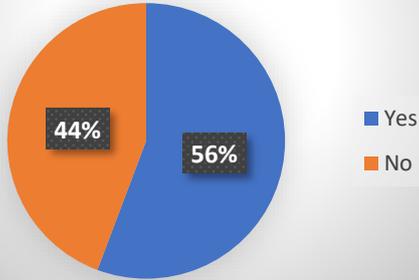
Totally. I am not sex-positive and since nowadays sex is very imposed, I fear that it will take me a lot of time to find someone who really does not care about the sex thing, if I ever do find someone like that.

4.2 Graphics

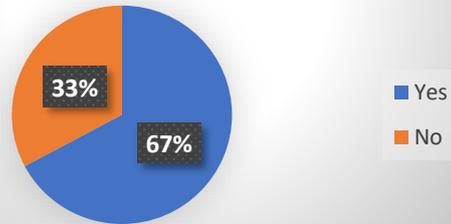
ASEXUALITY ACCORDING TO ALLOSEXUAL PEOPLE



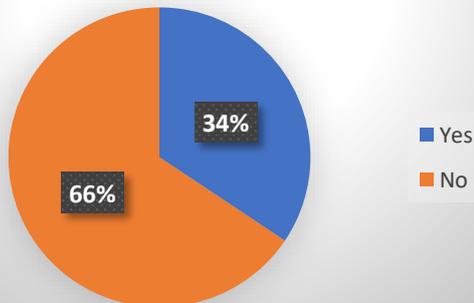
Do you think that asexuality is a sexual orientation?



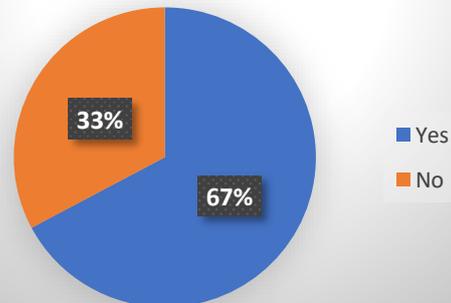
Do you think that asexual people can have sexual intercourse or masturbate?



Would you have a long term relationship with someone who would never want to have sexual intercourse?



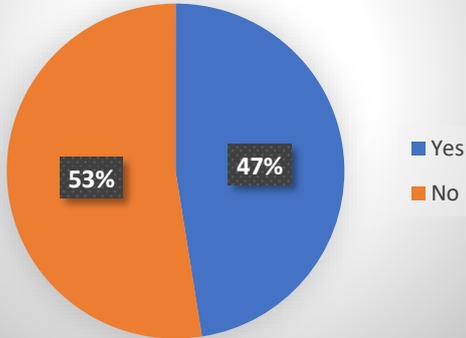
Do you consider sexual intercourse an essential or highly important part of a relationship?



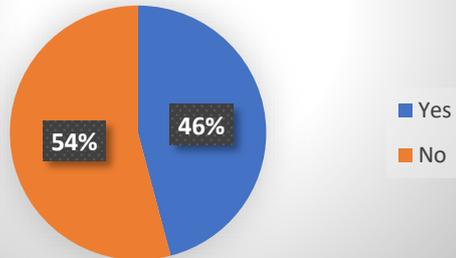
Do you think that a relationship between someone asexual and someone who is not is destined to failure?



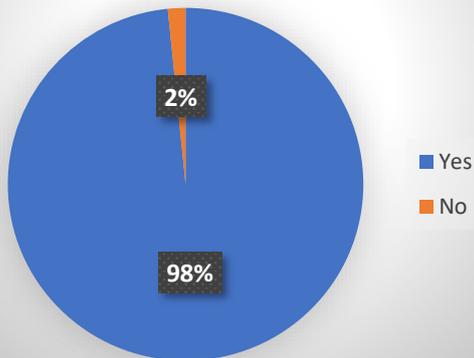
Do you think that asexual people can suffer from acephobia?



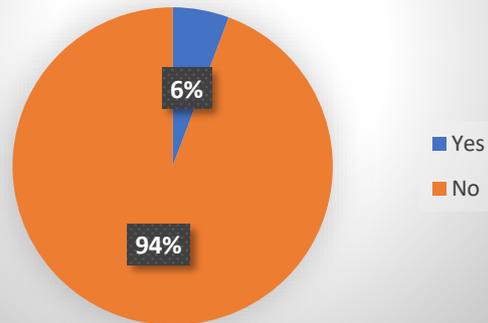
Do you think that asexual people have daily issues that other people do not?



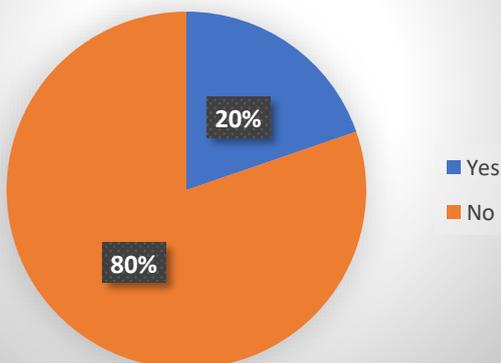
Do you think that asexual people can fall in love?



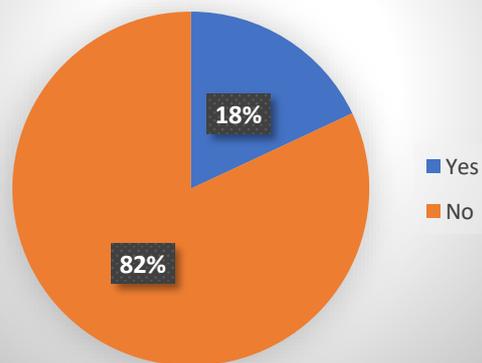
In case of being religious, do you think that asexuality goes against nature or religion?



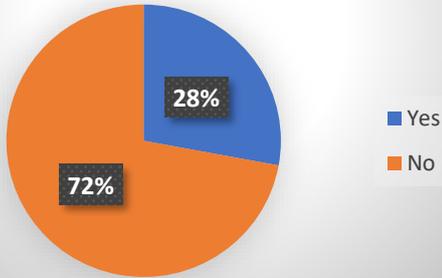
Do you think that asexual people will live a less full life?



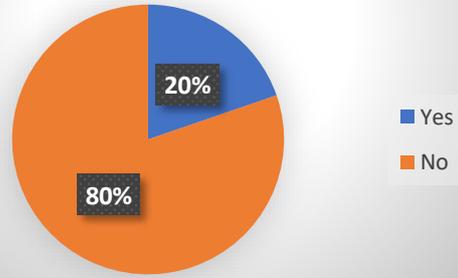
Do you think that asexuality can be chosen?



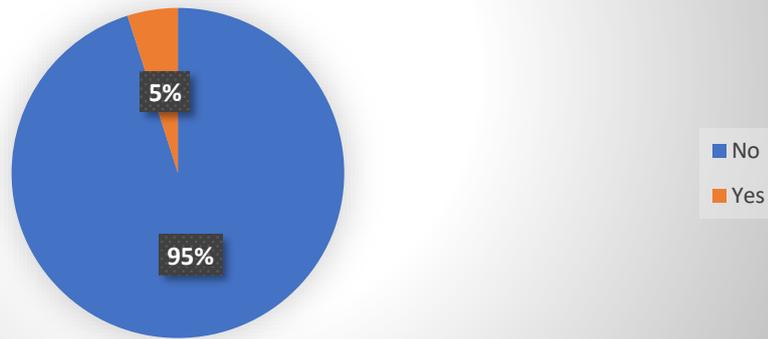
Do you think that asexuality is treatable or a phase that you can get out of?



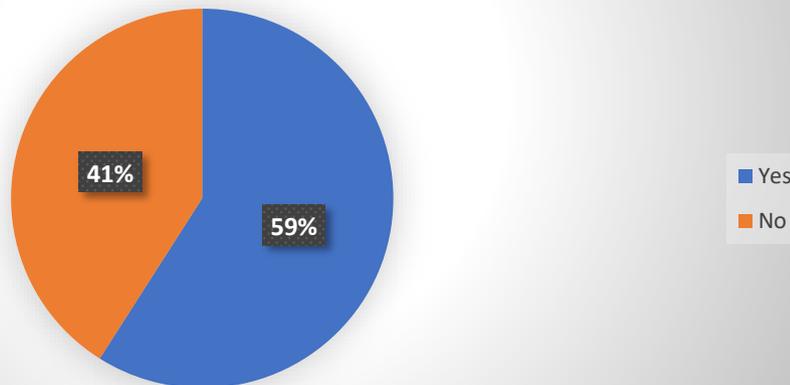
Do you think that someone can stop being asexual by just having sexual intercourse?



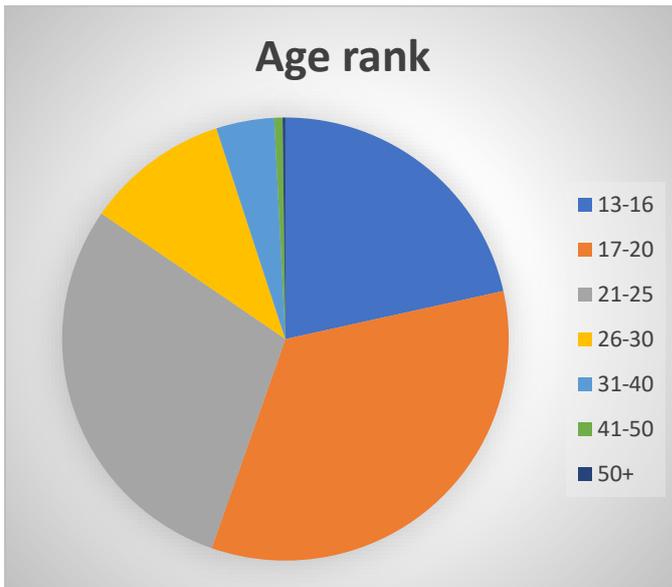
Do you think that asexual people are because they have not found the right person?



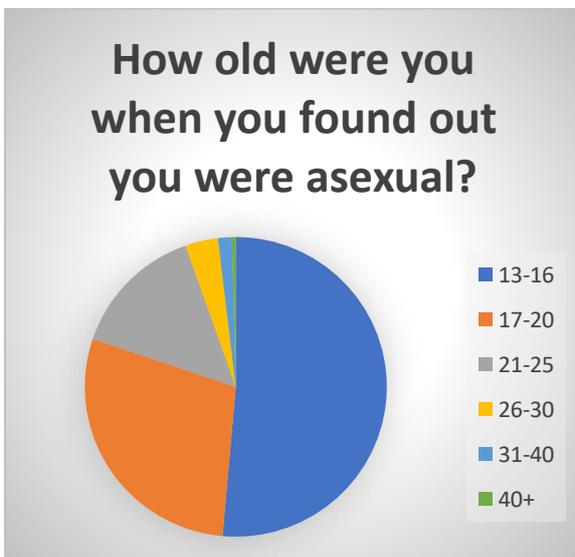
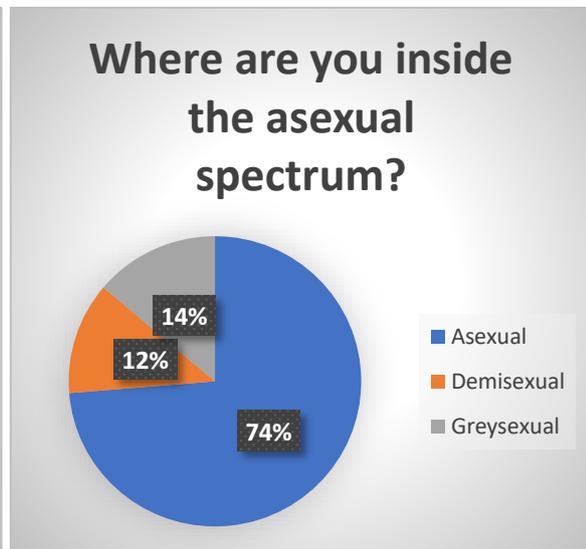
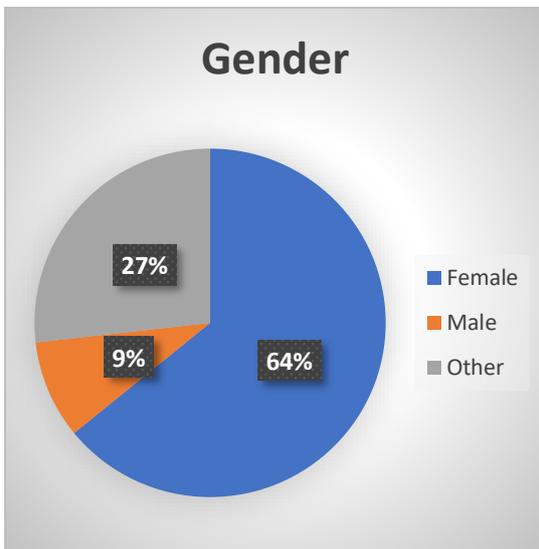
Having completed this form has made you want to search more information about the topic on your own?



ASEXUALS' EXPERIENCES ON ASEXUALITY

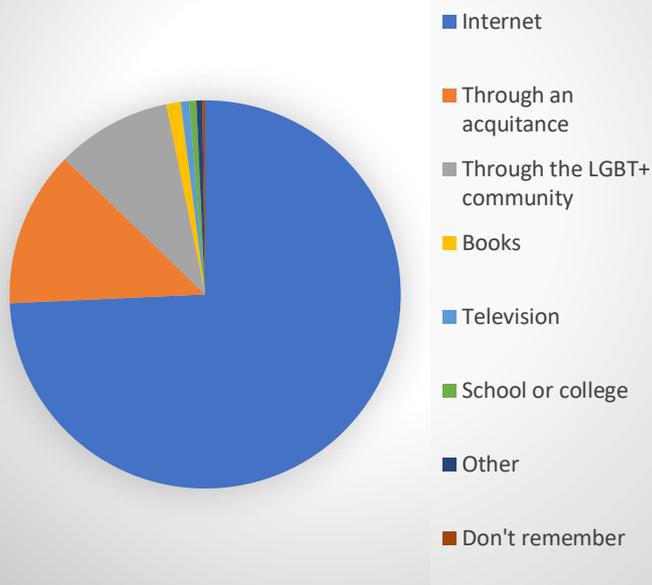


Age	Percentage
13-16	21,5%
17-20	33,8%
20-25	29,2%
26-30	10,4%
31-40	4,2%
41-50	0,6%
+50	0,2%



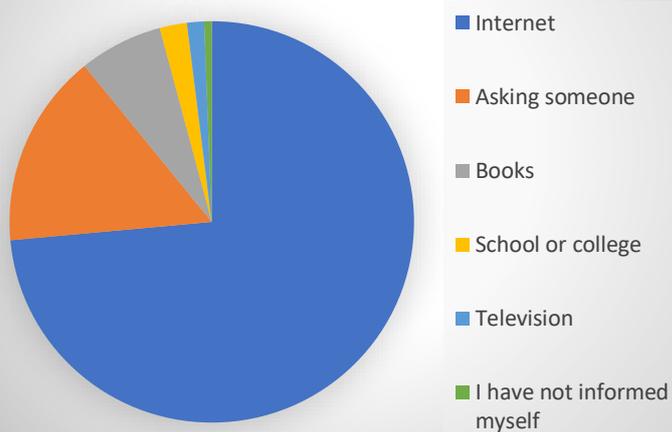
Age	Percentage
13-16	51,4%
17-20	28,8%
21-25	14,4%
26-30	3,5%
31-40	1,5%
+40	0,4%

Through which method did you find out the term "asexual"?



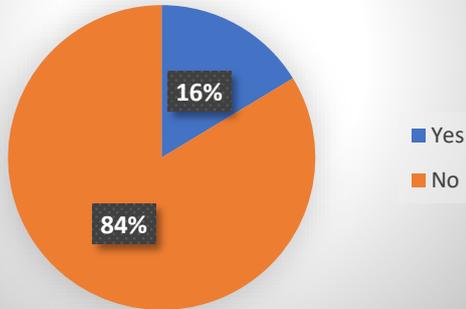
Internet	73,63%
Acquittance	12,84%
LGBT+ community	9,4%
Books	1,17%
Television	0,69%
School or college	0,58%
Other	0,49%
Do not remember	0,22%

Through which method did you inform yourself?

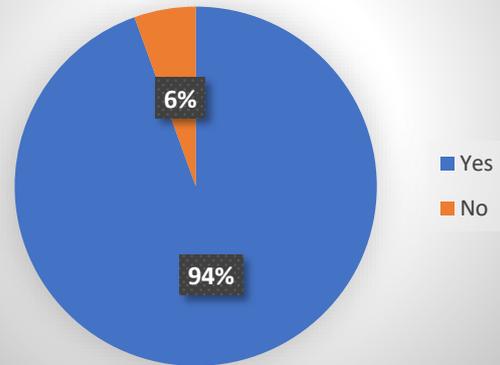


Internet	96,8%
Asking someone	20,6%
Books	8,8%
School or college	2,9%
Television	1,8%
I have not informed myself	0,8%

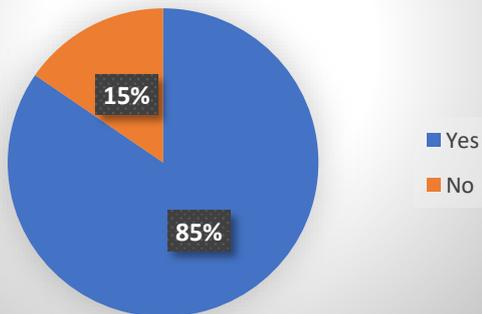
If you could change your asexuality, would you do it?



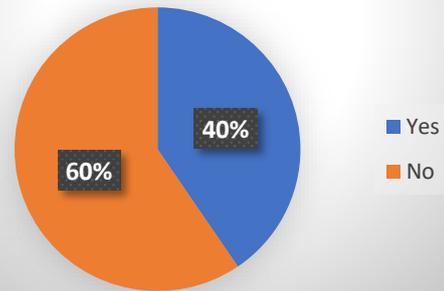
Do you think that acephobia exists?



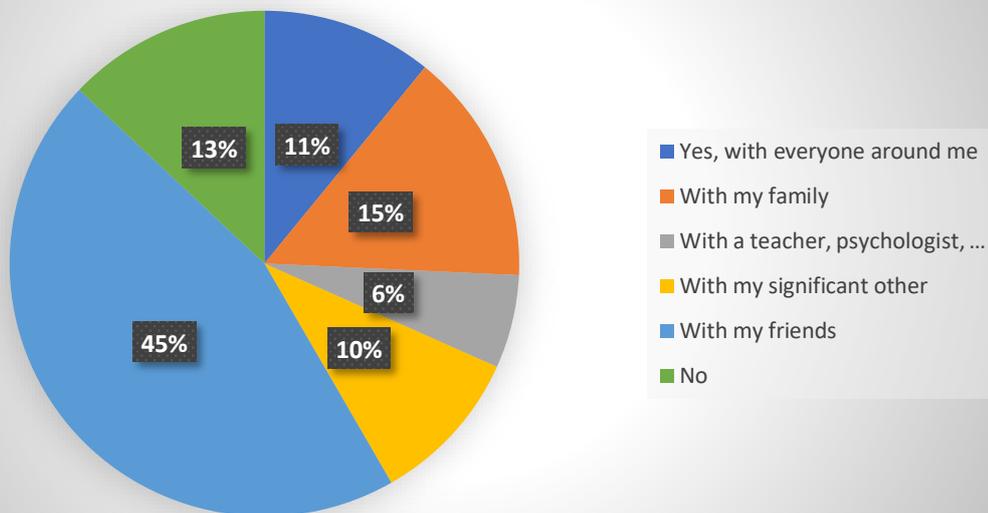
Do you think that asexual people have problems in their daily lives that non-asexual people do not?



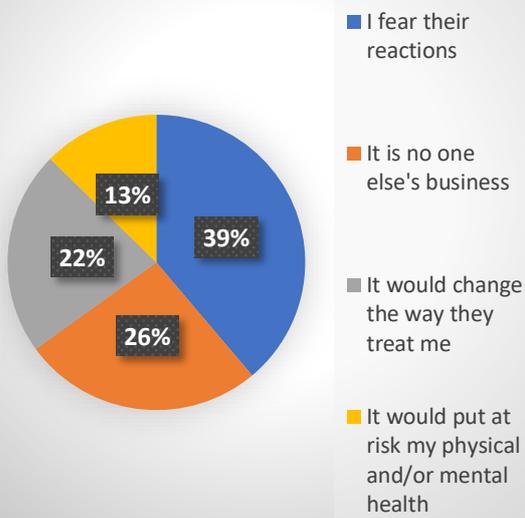
Have you ever been discriminated or oppressed for being asexual?



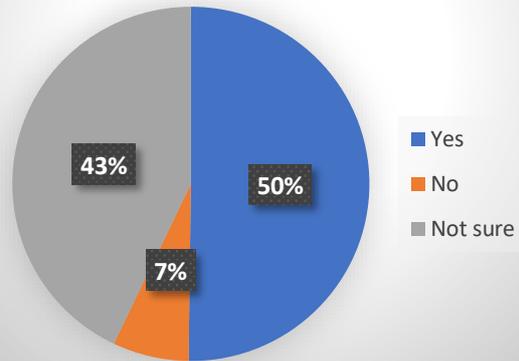
Are you "out of the closet"?



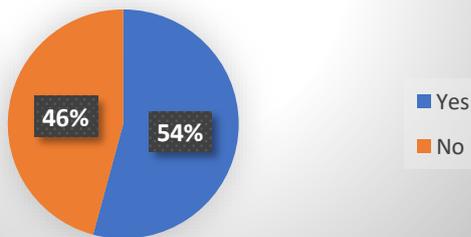
If you are not, why is it like that?



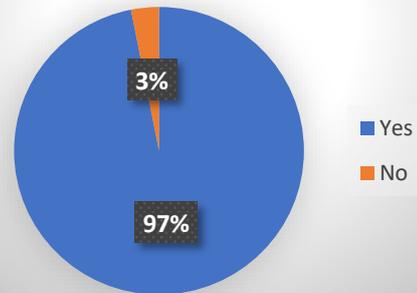
Do people around you support you with this or would do if they knew?



Have you ever told to go to a psychologist for being asexual or you think they would if they knew?



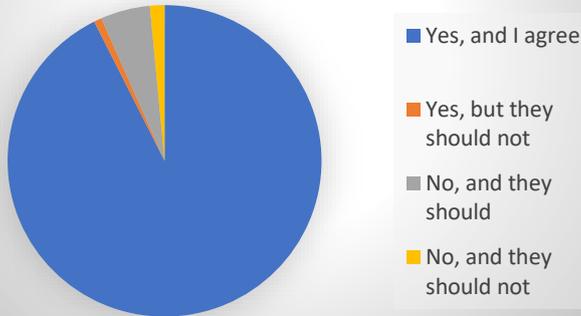
Do you think that asexuality is a sexual orientation?



Do you think that the problems an asexual person may have are related to the lack of information about the topic?

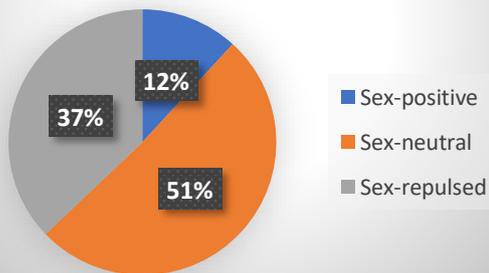


Do you think that asexual people belong to the LGBT+ community?

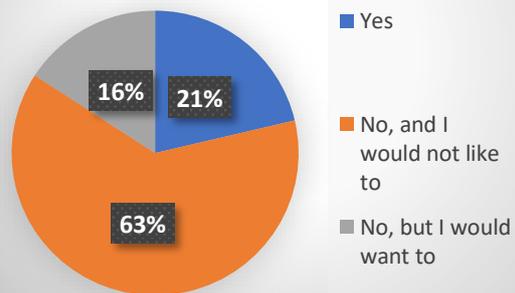


Yes, and I agree	92,6%
Yes, but they should not	0,8%
No, and they should	5,1%
No, and the should not	1,5%

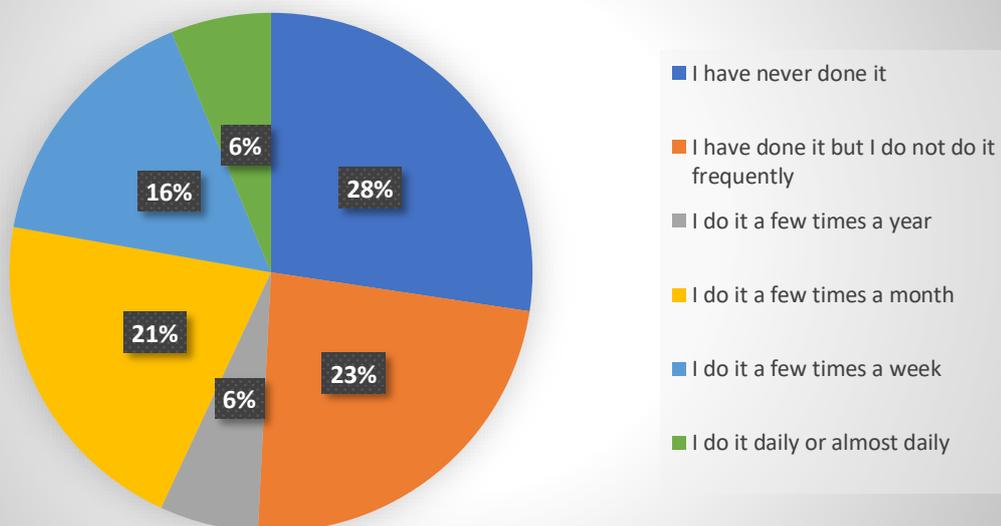
Do you consider yourself sex-positive, sex-neutral or sex-repulsed?



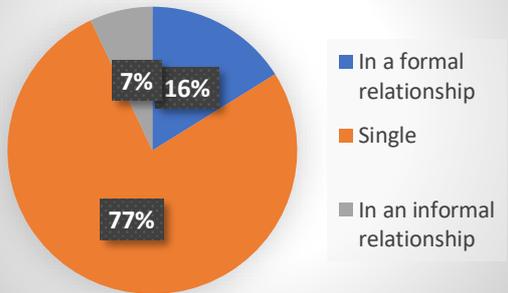
Have you ever had sex? (masturbation not considered)



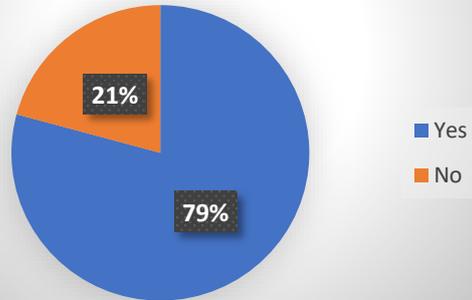
Do you masturbate?



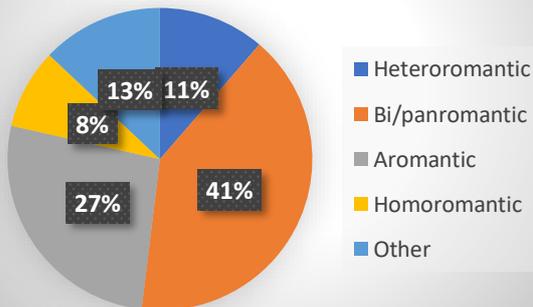
Relationship status



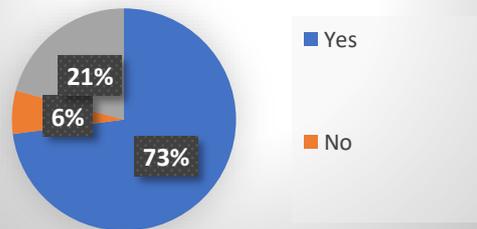
Do you consider yourself informed enough about sex?



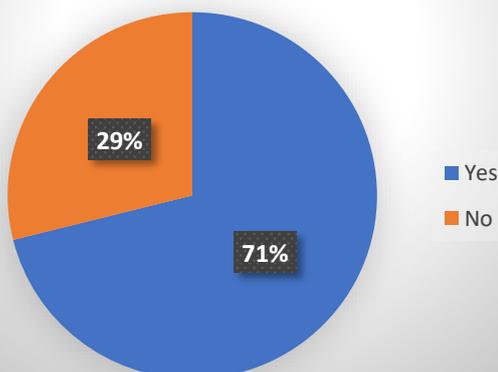
What's your romantic orientation?



Would you be in a relationship with someone who were not asexual?



Do you think that most of the relationships between someone who is asexual and someone who is not go wrong?



Would you like more asexual representation on media, books, internet, etc.?

