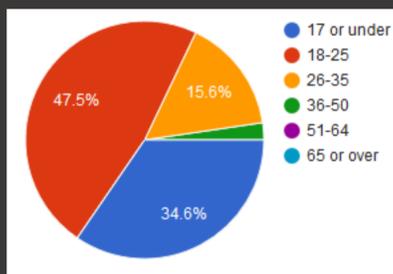


# The Problems with Asexual and Aromantic Representation in Media

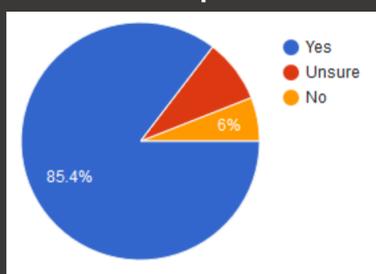
This poster reflects the results of a survey I conducted online. It was open for 24 hours and received 300 responses from asexual and aromantic internet forums, as well as a general LGBT+ forum. Overall, 99% of respondents identified as either aromantic or asexual to some extent. Throughout this poster, when using the words asexual and aromantic, I am referring to the entire asexual and aromantic spectrum respectively.

Asexual = Feeling no/little sexual attraction  
Aromantic = Feeling no/little romantic attraction  
A-spec = Identifying with the asexual or aromantic spectrum

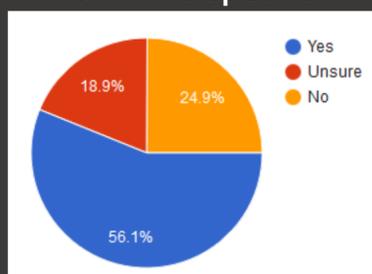
## How old are you?



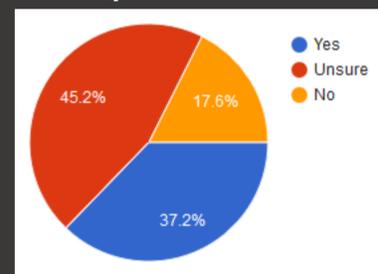
## Are you on the asexual spectrum?



## Are you on the aromantic spectrum?



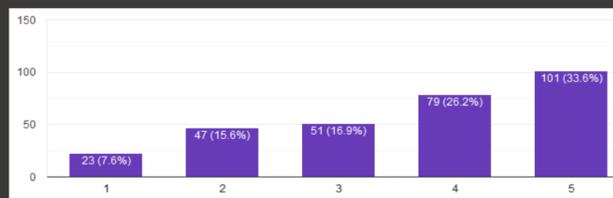
## Do you feel included by the LGBT+ community offline or online?



The greatest age group of responses was aged 18-25, with a fair percentage from the 26-35 group, and a few responses from the 36-50 bracket. This combats the asexual stereotype that the community is only comprised of teenage girls who are 'too young to know' or trying to be trendy. Whilst 8.6% of the sample were unsure about their asexuality, a greater percentage questioned their aromanticism. This may suggest that aromanticism is even less represented, and thus it is more confusing to distinguish between romantic and other attraction. Although over half the respondents felt personally included within the LGBT+ community, more were unsure in real application, partially due to discrimination within the LGBT+ community.

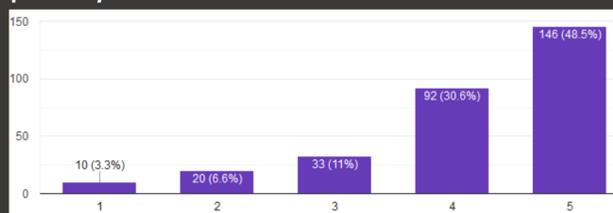
## I have felt broken/alone growing up due to lack of knowledge, either from myself or others, about my sexual/romantic orientation

1 - Strongly Disagree  
5 - Strongly Agree



## I am hesitant to tell others about my sexual/romantic orientation because people may not understand or know about it

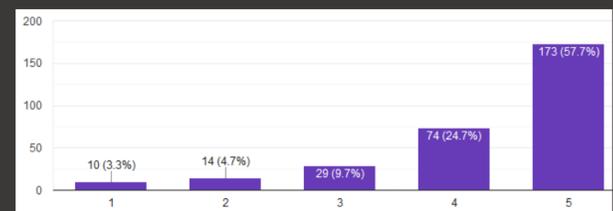
1 - Strongly Disagree  
5 - Strongly Agree



59.8% of respondents admitted that they felt alone or broken in some way due to lack of understanding of their orientation. Visibility and awareness are some of the main problems. 79.1% of respondents agreed to some extent that they were hesitant to come out because of the lack of understanding from society. Many people argue that A-spec people face less discrimination than other LGBT+ people; in reality, it just comes in a different form, the difference being 'invisible' vs. 'hated'. More often A-spec people are forgotten or misunderstood, even within LGBT+ spaces, but many also face direct hate and can be mocked or made feel inhuman.

## Media representation of my sexual/romantic orientation is important

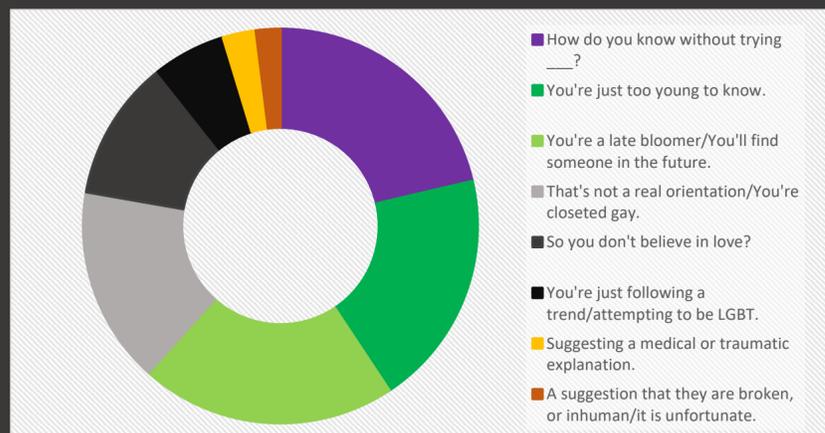
1 - Strongly Disagree  
5 - Strongly Agree



82.4% of respondents agreed to some extent that they felt representation in mainstream media was important. 89% also agreed that there were not enough characters that represented their sexual or romantic identity – this is a big factor in both the lack of visibility and understanding A-spec people have from the rest of the world. Taking final comments from respondents, I have summarised them as:

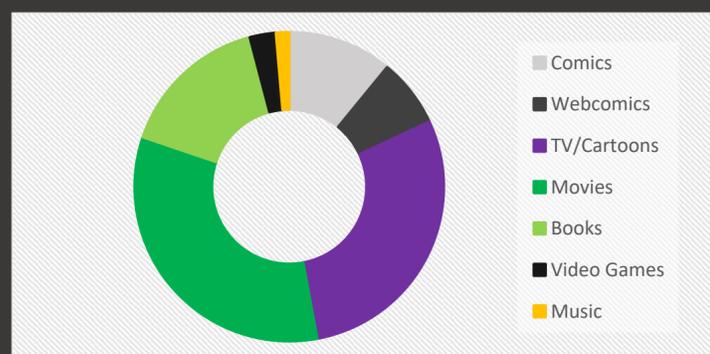
- There is a general fear that asexual characters will be presented as cold hearted, emotionless, or evil, as many already are.
- Representation is important in mainstream media and schools' sexual education to encourage visibility and help younger A-spec people to figure themselves out.
- A-spec characters should be more diverse in age, race, and orientation to show that not all asexual people are also aromantic, and vice versa.
- TV Shows and movies will often force potentially A-spec characters into a romantic or sexual subplot for the sake of the drama, even if they are already A-spec in the original book/comic (for example, Jughead Jones from the Archie comics.)
- The suggestion that a character is 'asexual, but can still feel love and is still human' is invalidating to aromantic people.
- The words 'asexual' and 'aromantic' needs to be explicitly stated, as it is often harder to show this in a non-explicit manner than other LGBT+ orientations.

## Responses to coming out as A-spec



The majority of people that come out as A-spec are often met with the harmful suggestion that this is something negative, or simply explained through a medical or trauma related reason. This lends itself to the idea that A-spec people are broken or confused, and can be 'cured' through hormonal therapy or finding 'The Right One'. Overall, these responses can be primarily blamed on the lack of education and awareness surrounding these orientations, as many do not even believe they exist. Moreover, stereotypes of A-spec people - from what little representation in media they get – further push negativity. Most characters that initially come to mind as possibly A-spec are cold hearted, lonely, sociopaths, evil, or even robots.

## What form of media is most lacking in A-spec characters?



Movies and TV shows were the majority, with movies included in 97% of respondents' submissions. Interestingly, when asked to give examples of characters that are canonically or potentially A-spec, only one movie character was mentioned twice. 41% of responses gave the most common example of Todd Chavez, an asexual character from the adult cartoon Bojack Horseman. Most people within the community agree that this is great representation, and a good start with getting asexuality more widely known. Another example of what is considered good representation is asexual character Raphael Santiago from the TV series Shadowhunters. Although he is a vampire, he explicitly states that he felt no attraction prior to becoming one, which combats the inhuman asexual stereotype. The second most featured was Sherlock Holmes, in various iterations. The original character by Arthur Conan Doyle is accepted to be written as asexual, however BBC Sherlock's writer Steven Moffat insists his interpretation is not. Despite this, many fans take Sherlock as an example of asexuality, which can be considered bad representation due to his antisocial and sociopathic tendencies.