

Proposal for Emoji: ASEXUAL FLAG

Submitter:

- Thomas Schrantz (he/him, they/them), Seattle, WA, USA (Seattle Aces & Aros)

Date: 8/7/2021

Identification

CLDR short name: Asexual Flag

CLDR keywords: asexual, ace, flag, ace, black, white, gray, purple

Images



License: The images provided in this submission are the work of the submitters and have been placed in the public domain.

Category

Category: Flags / flag

Sort Order: after *TRANSGENDER FLAG*   

Possible ZWJ Sequence:

Building on the precedent used by the rainbow flag, the transgender flag, and the pirate flag, we propose the following ZWJ sequence to represent the asexual flag:

U+1F3F3	WAVING WHITE FLAG	
---------	-------------------	---

U+FE0F	VARIATION SELECTOR-16	
U+200D	ZERO WIDTH JOINER	
U+2660	BLACK SPADE SUIT	♠
U+FE0F	VARIATION SELECTOR-16	

Abstract

We are proposing the inclusion of the asexual pride flag, a well-known LGBTQIA+ symbol, used around the world. Its inclusion would expand the currently limited subsection of pride flags in the emoji set.

Introduction

Asexuality is a sexual orientation, like homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality, and so on. Asexuality is characterized by a persistent lack of or low level of sexual attraction or interest. A 2004 study indicates that at least 1% of people are asexual¹, although others place the prevalence considerably higher.² Even on the low end of that estimate, asexuality is at least as common as people with red hair 🧑🏿 or people from France 🇫🇷!

Like other LGBTQIA+ groups, asexuality has a specific pride flag which represents it. The asexual flag has been flown over pride parades around the world, been included on TV shows and in video games, and even been featured on the tallest building in the USA. (See “Other Information” below.) The flag is both a personal statement of embracing an asexual identity, as well as a community symbol of recognition and acceptance.

While the rainbow flag represents all LGBTQIA+ groups, flags for specific identities, such as the asexual flag and the bisexual flag, are extremely important for the identities represented and extremely important to show the broad diversity of sexual, romantic, and gender identities.. Monica Helms, the creator of the transgender flag, once remarked, “The rainbow flag is like the American flag. All of the flags that are out there under it are like state flags.”³

¹ Anthony F. Bogaert (2004) Asexuality: Prevalence and associated factors in a national probability sample, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 41:3, 279-287

² <https://eukaryotewritesblog.com/2017/02/24/how-many-asexuals-are-there/>

³

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/entertainment/events/2019/04/07/phoenix-woman-transgender-betsy-ros-s-created-iconic-flag/3343427002/>

There is currently no unambiguous way to identify oneself as asexual or to express acceptance of asexual people using emoji. Use of the spade character ♠ is common among asexual people, but is more associated with playing cards outside of the community. Sometimes people will use a series of colored hearts to simulate the flag 🖤🖤💜, but even that simulation is incomplete, as there is not currently a gray heart emoji that can be used. This substitution also forces people to use three characters instead of one, which can be an issue in some space-limited scenarios. Moreover, although there are a myriad of ways to express sexuality with emoji (for instance, 🍆 and 🍑) and there are pages dedicated to the formation of emoji innuendo⁴, there are few, if any, equivalent ways to express a lack of sexual interest or desire.

A recent study published by Adobe⁵ on emoji diversity and inclusion found that “emoji users of all ages respond[ed] that greater options for representations are needed to help communicate important personal concerns such as localised cultural touchstones, gender/sexual identities, and the spectrum of users’ abilities.” The study also found that 72% of LGBTQI2+ respondents wished they had more options to express their identities. This underscores the importance of including the asexual pride flag, along with other pride flags, to help make emoji more inclusive and better fit the needs and wants of emoji users.

The asexual flag would be an important complement to the rainbow and trans flags which are already part of the standard.

The asexual flag is comprised of four horizontal colored stripes of equal height. From top to bottom, the colors of the stripes are: Black, gray, white, and purple. The exact shades are not strictly defined. For the example images, we have used RGB #000000 for black, RGB #999999 for gray, RGB #FFFFFF for white, and RGB #7F007F for purple, but implementers would have leeway to deviate from these exact RGB values.

Since the asexual flag is made up of colored stripes, it is impossible to provide a black and white variant of that design. A possible alternative, shown above, is a plain white flag with a spade symbol in the middle. The spade symbol is a commonly used symbol for asexuality, given its association with the word “ace”, which is a frequently used phonetic shortening of the word “asexual”.

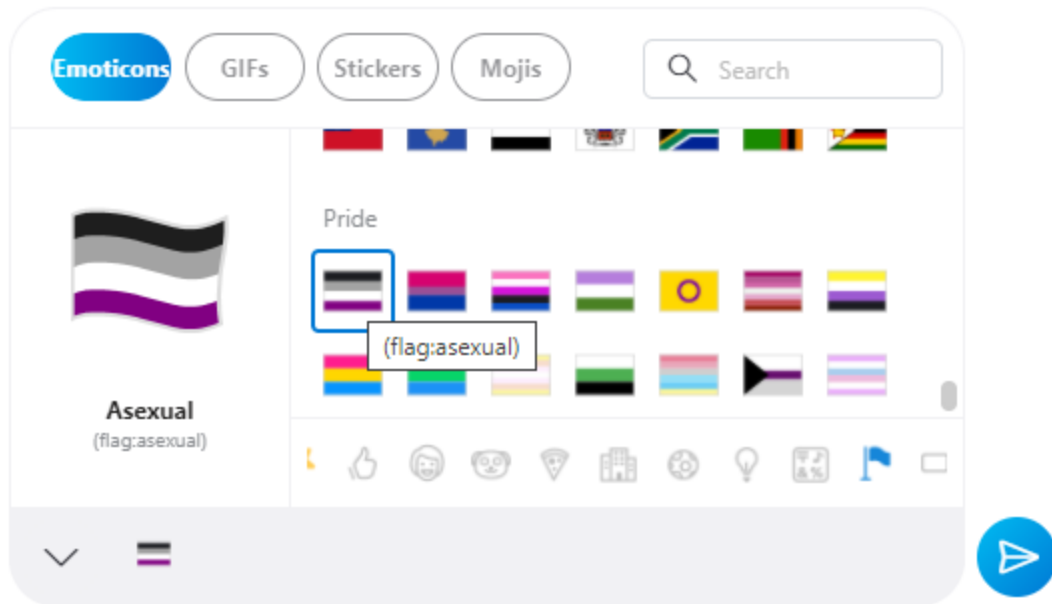
⁴ <https://www.buzzfeed.com/lorynbrantz/nice>

⁵ <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2021/04/15/towards-diverse-inclusive-future-for-emoji-uk.html>

Selection Factors -- Inclusion

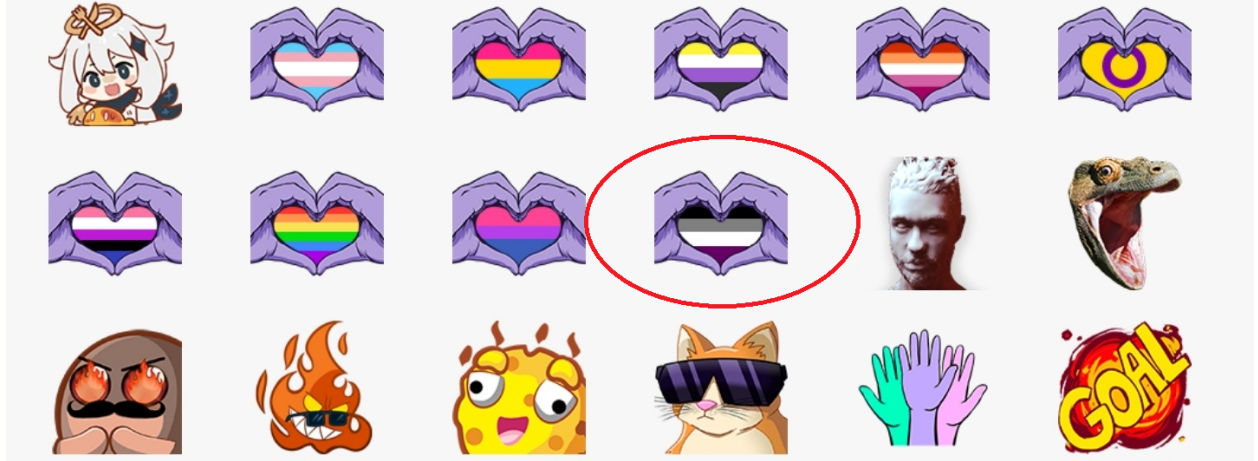
A. Compatibility

The Skype service includes the asexual flag as one of its emoticons:



Twitch provides an asexual flag in their selection of emotes:

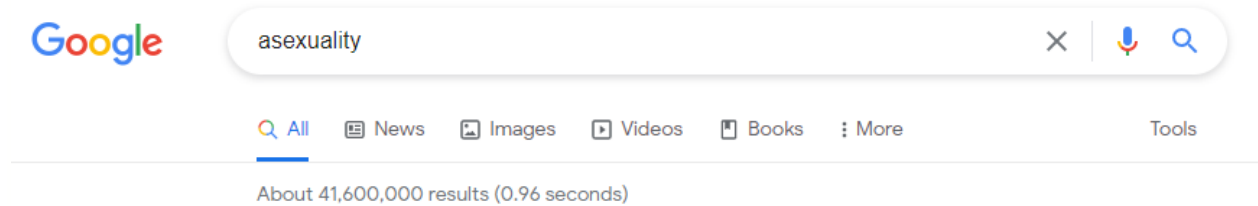
Twitch Emotes



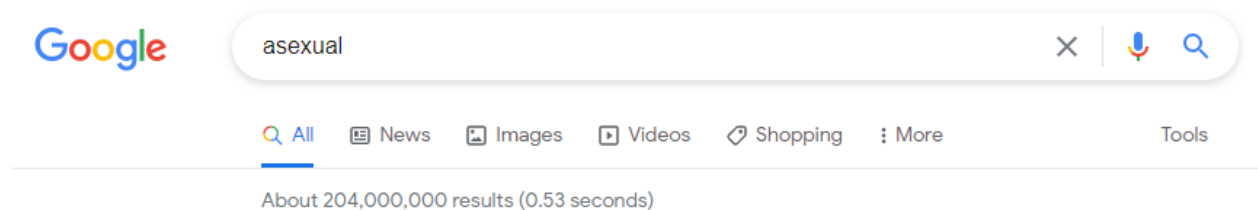
B. Expected usage level

1. Frequency

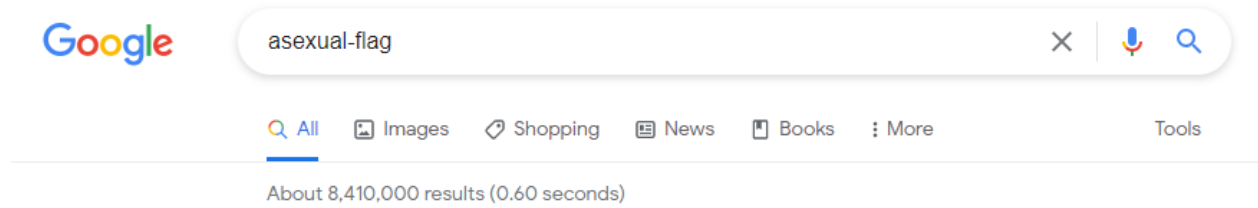
■ B.1.a Google Search



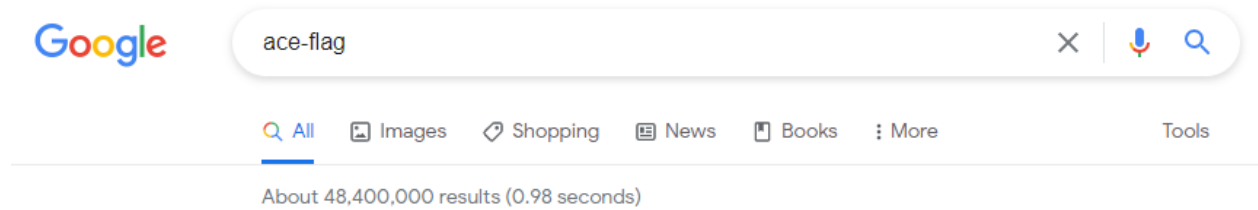
<https://www.google.com/search?q=asexuality>



<https://www.google.com/search?q=asexual>

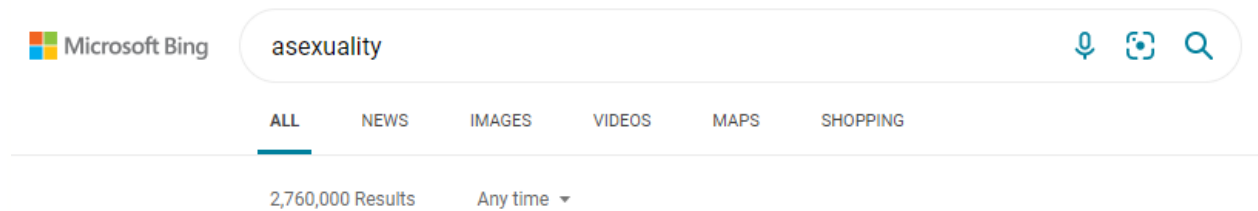


<https://www.google.com/search?q=asexual-flag>

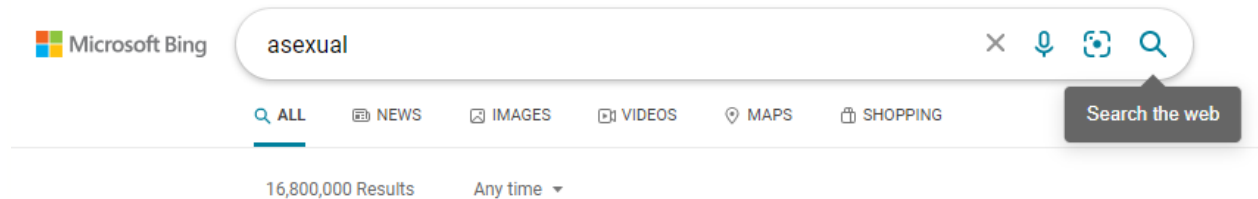


<https://www.google.com/search?q=ace-flag>

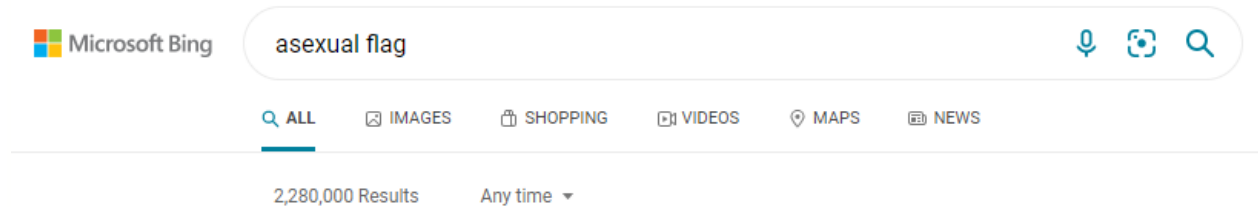
■ B.1.b Bing Search



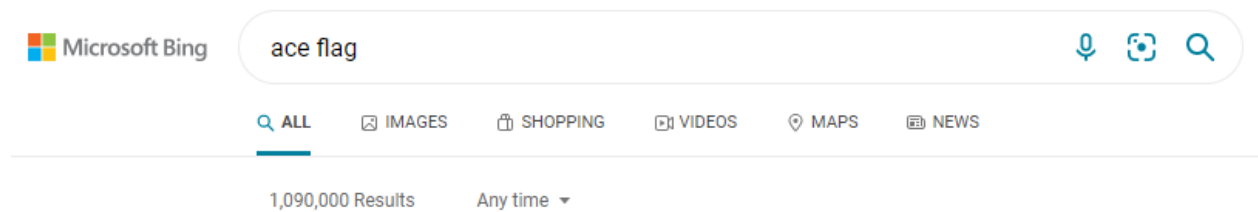
<https://www.bing.com/search?q=asexuality>



<https://www.bing.com/search?q=asexual>

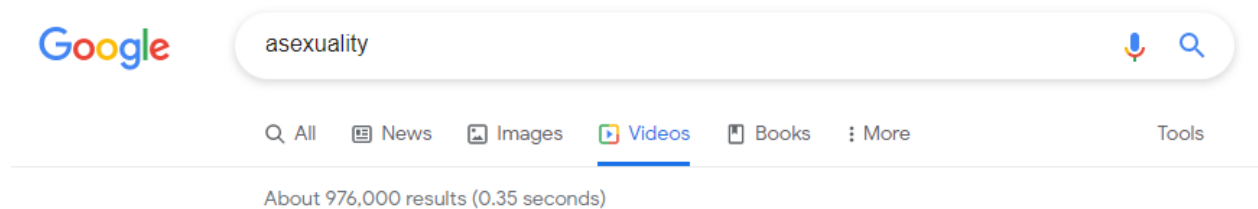


<https://www.bing.com/search?q=asexual%20flag>



<https://www.bing.com/search?q=ace%20flag>

■ B.1.c Google Video Search



<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=asexuality>



asexual



Q All

News

Images

Videos

Shopping

More

Tools

About 1,010,000 results (0.32 seconds)

<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=asexual>



asexual-flag



Q All

Images

Shopping

News

Videos

More

Tools

About 217,000 results (0.30 seconds)

<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=asexual-flag>



ace-flag



Q All

Images

Shopping

News

Videos

More

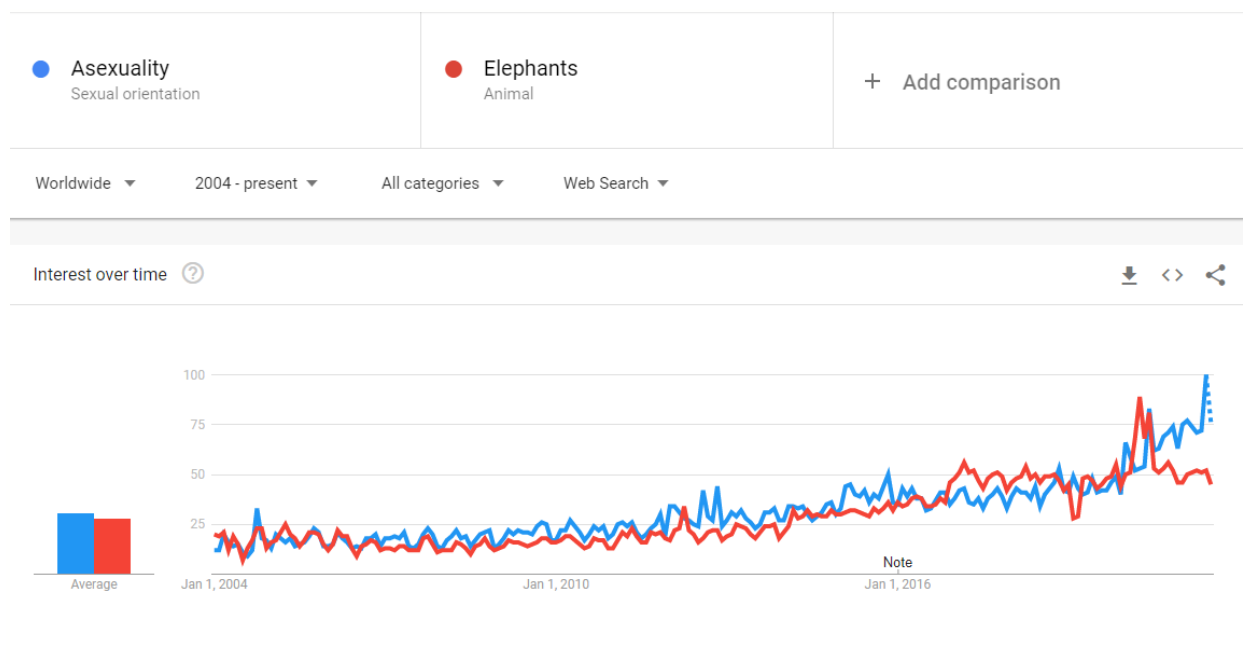
Tools

About 1,850,000 results (0.36 seconds)

<https://www.google.com/search?tbm=vid&q=ace-flag>

■ B.1.d Google Trends: Web Search

A comparison between “Asexuality” and “Elephants” shows comparable popularity since 2004, with “Asexuality” slightly exceeding “Elephants” for much of that time. In the past several years, “Elephants” has remained largely steady, while “Asexuality” continues to climb.



<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=%2Fm%2F014lwr,%2Fm%2F07kb%2Fbhf>

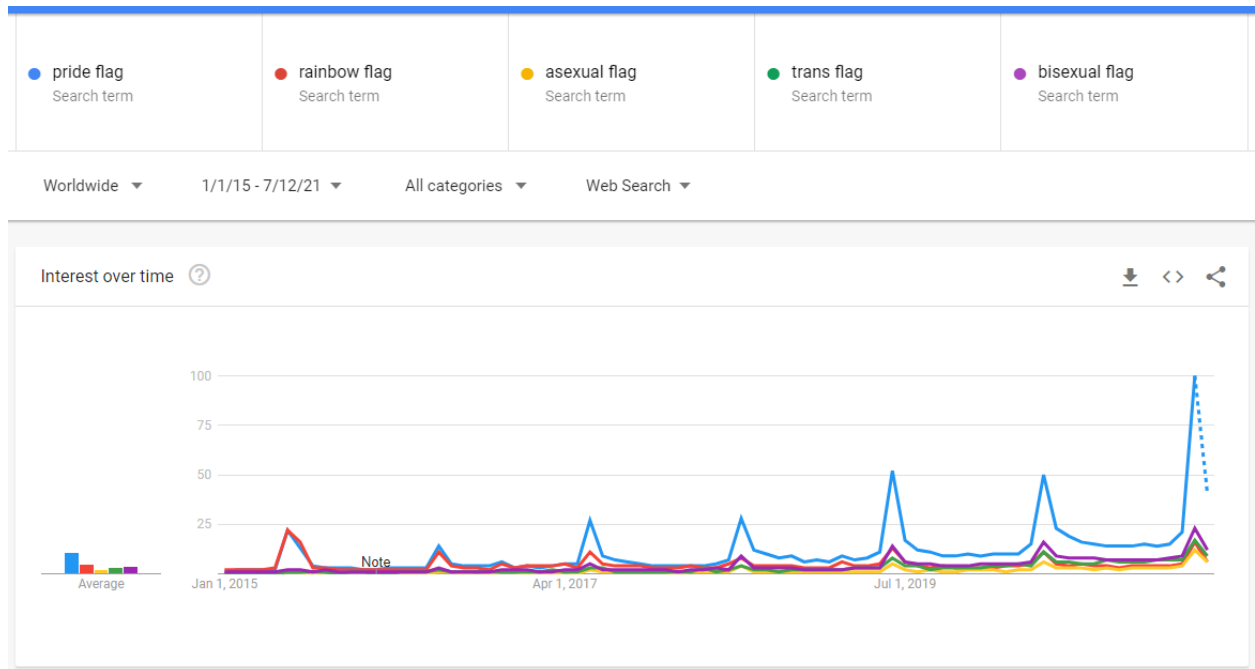
In the following comparison, we have selected “Construction Worker” as our reference emoji, for the same reasons that the Transgender Flag emoji proposal⁶ did, namely that it is an emoji that represents a general personal identity. Comparing the topic of “asexuality” to the topic of “construction worker”, we see that asexuality has a higher rate of interest, which has been steadily growing over time.

⁶ <https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2019/19080-transgender-flag.pdf>



<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=%2Fm%2F014lwr,%2Fm%2F047x57>

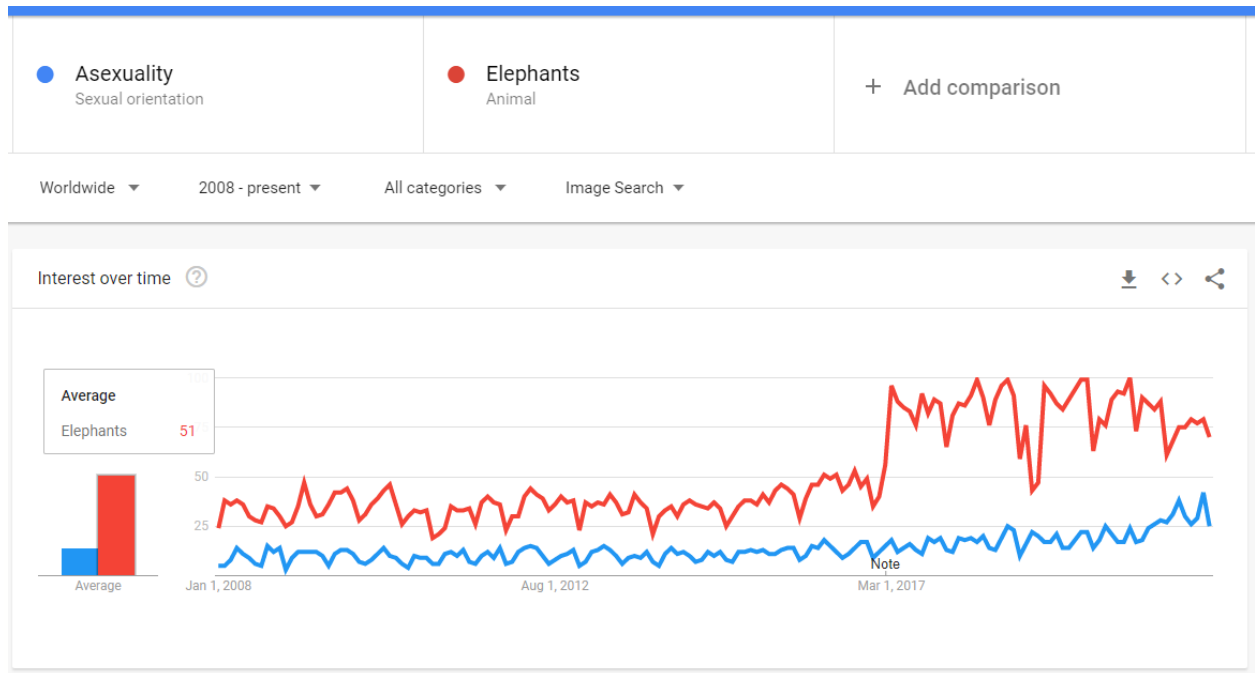
This Google Trends comparison shows that since January 1st, 2015, the interest in the generic “rainbow flag” has declined, while interest in the general term “pride flag” and flags for specific sexual orientations and gender identities have been steadily increasing. This demonstrates the value in including flags for more specific sexual and gender identities, including asexuality. (The annual spike in interest seen across all flags corresponds with Pride Month in June.) Of particular note, this trend shows that the interest in “asexual flag” today is the same as the level of interest in “rainbow flag” was in 2016, when the rainbow flag was added to Emoji 4.0.



<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2015-01-01%202021-07-12&q=pride%20flag,rainbow%20flag,asexual%20flag,trans%20flag,bisexual%20flag>

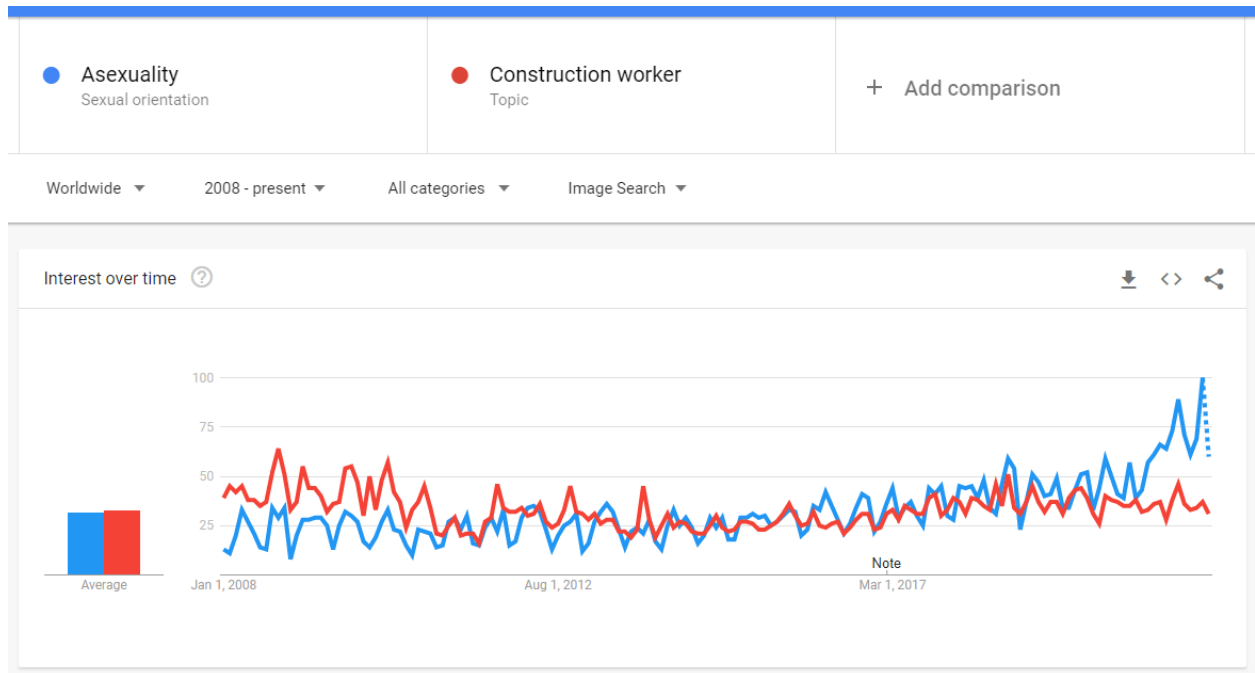
■ B.1.e Google Trends: Image Search

Images Trends: Asexuality vs. Elephants:



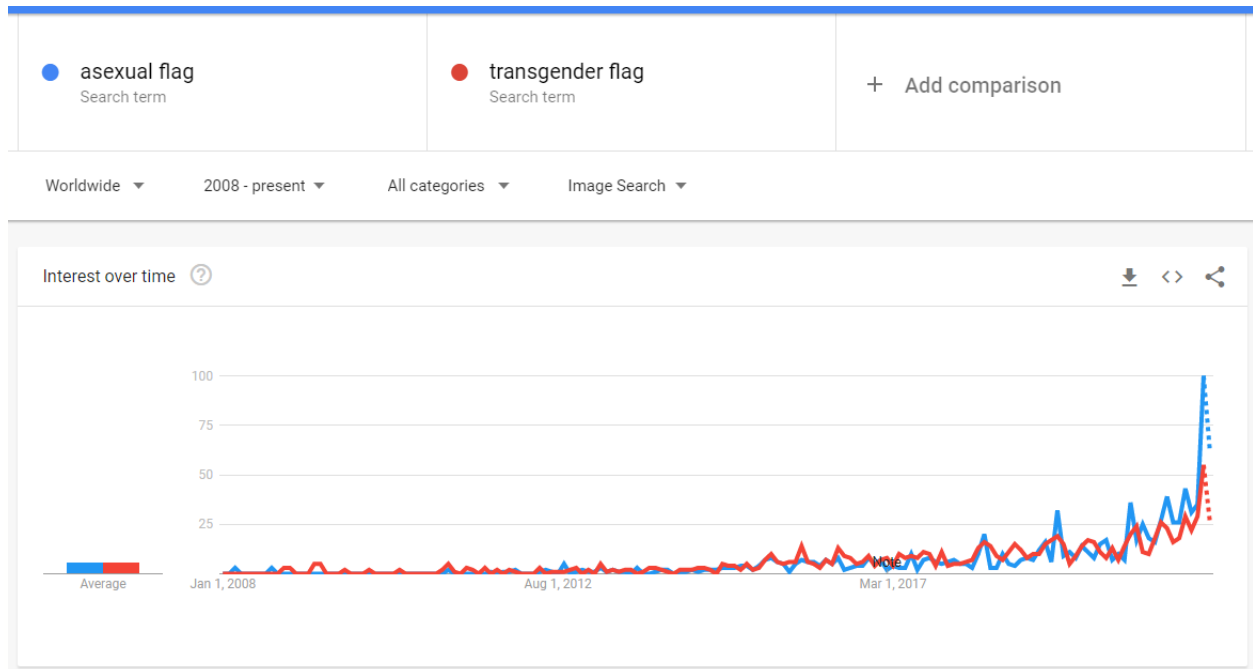
https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all_2008&gprop=images&q=%2Fm%2F014lwr.%2Fm%2F07kbbhf

Repeating the “Asexuality” vs. “Construction Worker” trend search for images, we see that asexuality is gaining interest over time, while construction worker remains largely flat.



https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all_2008&gprop=images&q=%2Fm%2F014lwr.%2Fm%2F047x57

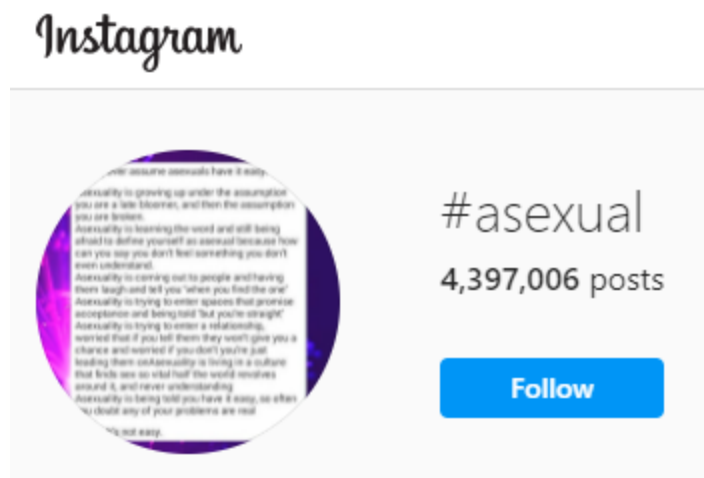
The more specific search term “asexual flag” is of roughly equal interest to the search term “transgender flag”, which was an emoji added in Emoji v13.0. For the past year or so, “asexual flag” has had a higher level of interest than “transgender flag”.



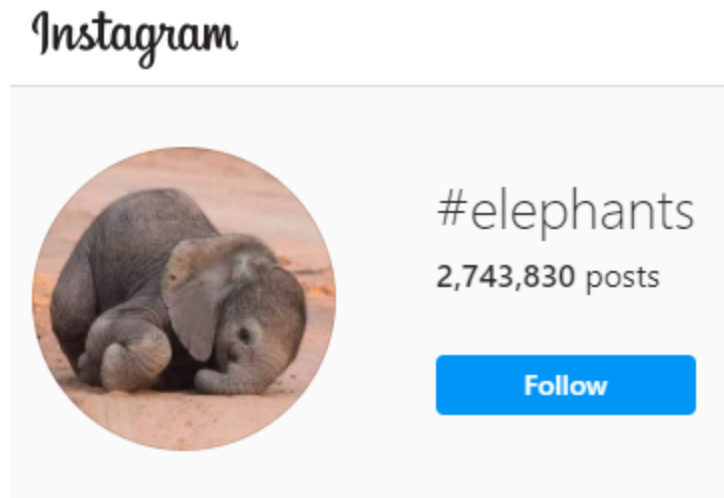
https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all_2008&gprop=images&q=asexual%20flag,transgender%20flag

■ B.1.f Instagram Search

Comparing “#asexual” vs “#elephants”, shows that “#asexual” has has roughly 60% more posts than “#elephants”



<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/asexual/>



<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/elephants/>

■ B.1.g Pride Flags vs. Regional Flags

We understand there is reluctance to add more flags to the emoji set because flags typically rank among the least popular of the existing emojis. However, we believe there are multiple factors around pride flags which lean in favor of approving additional emojis.

First, as noted above, the low end estimate for the prevalence of asexuality is that at least 77 million people in the world are asexual⁷. If asexual people formed a single country, it would be at least the 20th most populous country in the world, ahead of the UK and France.⁸ The flag of such a “country” would be more popular than many other countries, simply because there are more people who would be represented by its use.

Second, by their nature, pride flags are meant to be used to express one’s identity and as a signal to others. People who are proudly asexual will often find ways to include their colors of the flag in various aspects of their life, from clothing and makeup choices, to things like furniture. A quick survey of social media sites show many people using

⁷ As of 7/14/2021, the world population estimate is 7,775,942,370, according to <https://www.census.gov/popclock/world>. 1% of that figure is 77.76 million people.

⁸ According to the population estimates at <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/> as of 7/14/2021

inadequate substitutes who would very likely use an asexual flag emoji instead, were it available.

Third, the popularity of the existing Rainbow Flag emoji can be seen. According to www.emojistats.org, the Rainbow Flag is the second most popular flag emoji, behind only the Flag of the United States. The Unicode Emoji Frequency list for Unicode v12.0 emoji⁹ places the Rainbow Flag emoji above median use, indicating that it is used twice as often as the elephant emoji, despite Google Trends putting its popularity well below that of an elephant.¹⁰

2. Multiple usages

An asexual flag emoji would have a number of potential uses:

- To indicate that an individual is asexual
- To indicate someone supports asexual people
- Showing pride or celebration
- Shorthand representation of sexual orientation
- Usernames and social media profiles
- Reaction to a sexualized situation

We would expect to see similar use cases as are currently seen with the existing rainbow and trans flag emojis.

3. Use in sequences

It is possible to imagine several possible sequences that could include the asexual flag.



⁹ <https://home.unicode.org/emoji/emoji-frequency/>

¹⁰ https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=%2Fm%2F02x5z8q,%2Fm%2F0bwd_0j

4. Breaking new ground

There is currently no unambiguous way to indicate the concept of asexuality in emoji form. While people of other sexual orientations can use emoji formed with gender ZWJ sequences (such as 🧑🧑 or 🧑🧑) to indicate their identity, this method does not work for asexual people.

On a similar note, there are many emoji which can be used to express sexual interest, attraction, or activity (such as 🍆 or 🍆), but there is no way to express a lack of interest or attraction.

c. Distinctiveness

The asexual flag is distinct and recognizable, even at very small display sizes. No other commonly used flags have a similar color pattern of stripes.

d. Completeness

The inclusion of the asexual flag will fill a gap within the Flags / flag category, which currently only includes the rainbow and transgender flags, out of a number of common and well-recognized LGBTQIA+ pride flags.

Including the asexual flag, as well as other pride flags, would further the Emoji Subcommittee's expressed intent to increase diversity represented in the emoji set.

11

Selection Factors -- Exclusion

E. Petitions or "Frequent Requests"

In accordance with the emoji proposal form guidelines, we are not submitting petitions or evidence of frequent requests.

The authors of this proposal are affiliated with the #MorePrideEmojis campaign. That campaign was designed to raise awareness of the lack of pride flag emojis,

¹¹ "[O]ne ongoing goal is to increase the diversity of the RGI emoji sequences in a consistent and steady manner." <https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2019/19019-esc-report-q1-2019.pdf>

to inform people about the emoji proposal process, and to recruit people to help with the proposals themselves. The campaign was not intended to influence committee members or collect data for use in the proposal.

F. Overly specific

The asexual flag image is as specific as it needs to be to represent the concept of asexuality. Asexuality is a separate and distinct sexual orientation, therefore it needs a separate and distinct emoji. Existing emoji, such as the rainbow flag, do not adequately represent asexuality.

G. Open-ended

The asexual flag is one of many common and well-recognized LGBTQIA+ pride flags, but as it specifically represents asexual people, its inclusion is warranted alongside those other flags.

H. Already representable

As noted in the “Breaking New Ground” section above, there is no current method of unambiguously representing asexuality in the current emoji set.

A user cannot merely use existing emojis to adequately represent the concept. There has been a suggestion to use a sequence of hearts, but there is currently no gray heart emoji, forcing the user to substitute some other gray emoji in its place, leading to absurd sequences such as 🖤🐘💜💜, which can be invalidating and hurtful. Even if there were a gray heart, the use of heart related emojis would not be appropriate for asexual people who are also aromantic.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, specific landmarks, deities

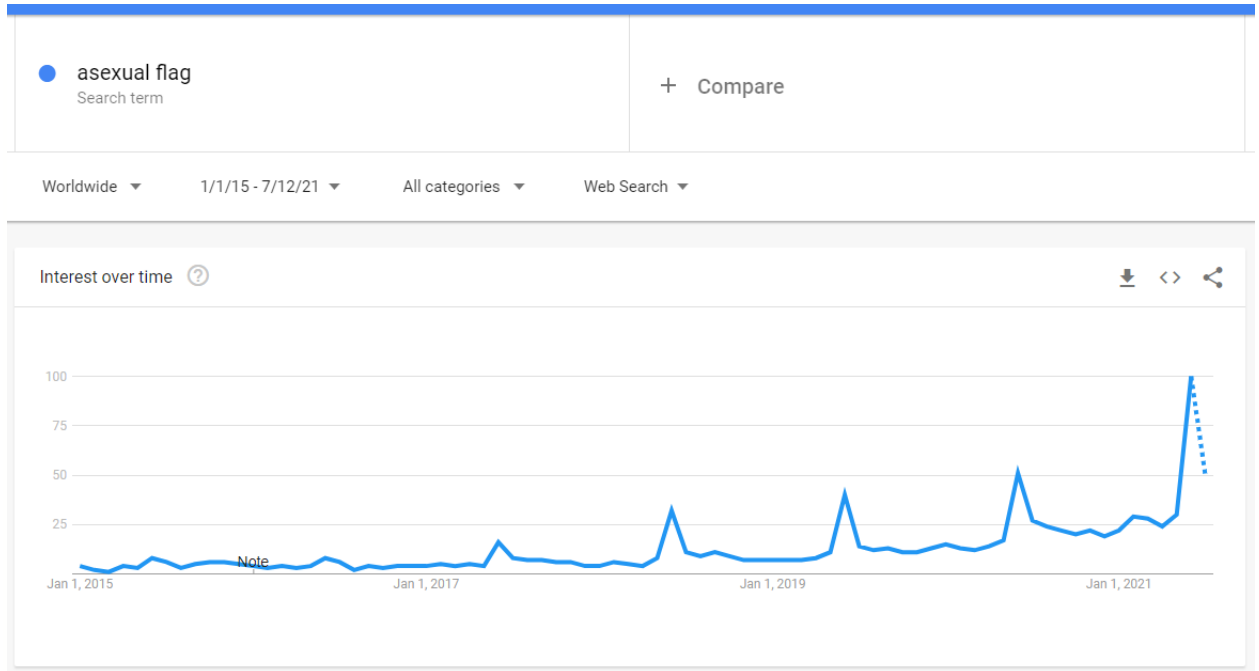
N/A. The asexual flag is not in one of these categories.

J. Transient

With a general trend of increasing recognition and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people, as well as trend towards increased willingness to be “out” and openly

declare a person's sexual orientation and gender identity, pride flag use is also on an increasing trend.

Furthermore, the usage and recognition of the asexual flag specifically has been steadily increasing over time. (The peaks in this chart correspond to the annual June Pride Month period.)



<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2015-01-01%202021-07-12&q=asexual%20flag>

κ. Faulty comparison

N/A: The asexual flag is not related to the existing compatibility emoji and is fully distinct from existing emoji.

L. Exact Images

N/A: The asexual flag emoji would represent a flag, therefore it could be represented in a number of different ways. An exact image is not required.

M. Region Flags Without Code

N/A: The asexual flag is not a flag that represents a geographic region.

N. Lack of required rights or license for images

The image is public domain.

O. Variations on direction

N/A: The proposed emoji is not a directional variation of an existing emoji.

P. Includes text

N/A: The proposed emoji does not include text.

Other Information

The asexual flag is a symbol which is used worldwide, by groups small and large. The following provides a sampling of its use.



Asexuality Archive @AceArchive · Jun 24, 2019

@OneWTC Loving the #WorldPride light show tonight! Just one thing: The Ace Flag is upside down! The black stripe should be on top, with gray, white, purple after.



During part of Pride Month 2019, as part of the WorldPride50 celebration in New York City, the lightshow on the base of One World Trade Center included an asexual flag as part of a collection of various pride flags.¹²

¹² <https://twitter.com/AceArchive/status/1143329212599885824>

Hace 1 mes el @MADRID retiró los bancos pintados con los colores de la 🏳️ de Villa de Vallecas. Esta noche les vagues y maleantes han tomado los barrios, cansadas d violencia, xque la calle y la noche es nuestra. Las invertidas luchan! No callan! No aguantan! 🗣️🗣️🗣️🏳️ #BancosInvertidos

Translate Tweet



4:10 AM · Feb 25, 2020 from Madrid, Spain · Twitter for iPhone

In February of 2020, protesters in Madrid, Spain painted a number of benches the colors of various pride flags, including the asexual flag.^{13 14}

¹³ <https://twitter.com/OrgCriticoMad/status/1232276565209362432>

¹⁴ <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/lgtbiq/madrid-amanece-bancos-invertidos-denuncian-transfobia>



Asexuales Chile
@AsexualesChile



Y lo mas importante, solo tú sabes lo que realmente pasa en ti.

♥ Atrévete a descubrirte ♥

Atte. @AsexualesChile para la comunidad #Asexual y #LGBT

[Translate Tweet](#)



5:34 PM · Jun 28, 2019 · [Twitter for Android](#)

The asexual flag is shown here in multiple forms (sign, heart, colored lettering, unicorn horn headgear, and being flown) during a pride parade in Santiago, Chile.¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/AsexualesChile/status/1144766095364165632>



「アセクシャル PRIDE」

2018年5月、東京レインボープライドより。

In the Tokyo Rainbow Pride parade in 2018, there was an asexual contingent that included a float and numerous asexual flags.¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://queerascats.tumblr.com/post/174760379213/アセクシャル-pride-2018年5月東京レインボープライドより>



A scene from *BoJack Horseman* season four. | Netflix

The Netflix series *BoJack Horseman* featured an asexual meetup which uses the colors of the asexual flag on their sign in the episode "Hooray! Todd Episode!".^{17 18}

¹⁷ https://bojackhorseman.fandom.com/wiki/Hooray!_Todd_Episode!

¹⁸

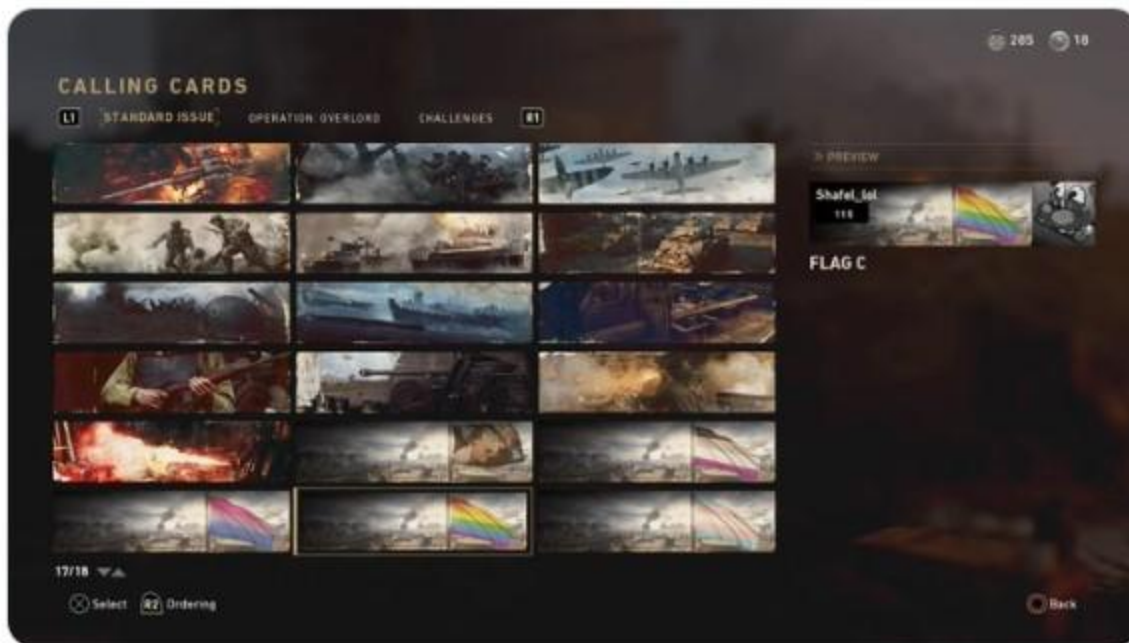
<https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/3/26/16291562/asexuality-tv-history-bojack-shadowhunters-game-of-thrones>



Shannon
@_Shafel_



The new Call of Duty has a calling card with the pride flag and the trans flag! #WW2 #cod #PS4share



8:56 PM · Nov 6, 2017 · PlayStation(R)4

The Activision video game Call of Duty: WWII included an asexual flag “Calling Card” which players could use to customize their player profile. (Right column, fifth row.)¹⁹

¹⁹ https://twitter.com/_Shafel_/status/927761611749650432



The “50 Years of Pride” Google Doodle includes a person in a wheelchair holding a sign with a spade on it to indicate asexuality, as this doodle does not include pride flags with colored stripes. Other figures in this doodle are holding signs with double Venus “female” symbols, double Mars “male” symbols, and the transgender symbol.²⁰ This spade design is the same as our proposed black and white representation for this emoji.

²⁰ <https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-50-years-of-pride>



Microsoft's official marching contingent in the Seattle Pride Parade carried an asexual flag (visible here between the "F" and "T" balloons)²¹, and Microsoft has also launched an extensive corporate Pride campaign which includes the asexual flag, among others.²²

²¹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/BkdCCSIHji5/>

²² <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/pride>