

## Overview

People on the asexual spectrum (“ace” people) are extremely diverse. Now that there’s some information “out there” about asexuality, there are social ideas & stereotypes about who is and isn’t “really” or “legitimately” ace.

The **Unassailable Asexual** is the ace person who gets to be believed...

- This ace person fits the societal standard for the “ideal normal person”
- Their only “deviance” is their aceness
  - related to social power structures

**Aces are assailable for being not sufficiently:**

- hetero or cis(gender)
- sexually experienced (or for being too sexually experienced)
- repulsed by sex (or being too repulsed)
- involved in the “right” relationships
- compliant about accepting societal-level hypersexualisation or desexualisation...

**Ultimately, all aces are assailable somehow.**

**Aces face many challenges, from living in a heterosexist, ciscentric society.** Many experience homophobia, heterosexism and gender-policing directly, particularly those who are not heteroromantic or cisgender (i.e., cis = having a gender identity that straightforwardly matches the gender assigned at birth).

This society is also structured around **nuclear families** that are “supposed to” be based on **romantic-presumed-sexual partnerships**, and therefore, these relationships are the ones that get social and state recognition. This creates a lot of other problems for many aces.

Additionally, there is a lot of social pressure for people to (eventually) have sex (especially in the context of monogamous, romantic relationships). Aces face a lot of **societal-level and direct interpersonal sexual coercion**.

## Diversity Under the Ace Umbrella

(from the Ace Community Survey, N>14,000)\*

With some overlap, aces self-identified as...

	40% on the Aro spectrum
86% Asexual	30% Aromantic
21% Grey-asexual	15% Grey-romantic
17% Demisexual	17% Demiromantic
	7% WTF/quoiromantic
11% Questioning	25% Questioning

- Bi+/pan/polyromantic.....35%
- Heteroromantic/straight.....16%
- Homoromantic/gay/lesbian).....9%

**Many aces are trans and/or non-binary**

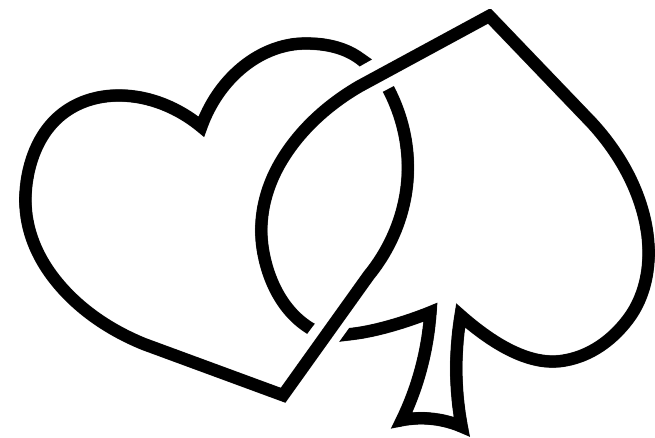
- More than 40% of aces self-identified as something other than just “woman” or “man” in terms of gender (e.g., non-binary, agender, genderqueer, etc.)
- ≈ 4% of aces were trans men
- ≈ 2% of aces trans women
- 15% of aces self-identified as trans and another 10% were unsure (especially aces under the non-binary umbrella)

**Homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, ciscentrism & transmisogyny directly affect many aces.**

**\* Source for all stats cited:**

**2020 Ace Community Survey Summary Report by The Ace Community Survey Team (2022)**  
(Hermann, L., Baba, A., Montagner, D., Parker, R., Smiga, J. A., Tomaskovic-Moore, S., Walfrand, A., Miller, T. L., Weis, R., Bauer, C., Campos, A., Jackson, E., Johnston, M., Khan, S., Lutz, G., Nguyen, H., Niederhoff, T., van der Biezen, T., Ventresca, C. & Volvredra)  
<https://acecommunitysurvey.org/2022/10/27/2020-ace-community-surveysummary-report/>

# Asexual Spectrum Diversity & Ace (Un)Assailability:



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## Hypersexualisation and/or Desexualisation

Hypersexualisation or desexualisation (or both) are routinely used as tools of oppression to support racist, colonial and disablist structures, and to deny many people agency & personhood.

### This particularly affects:

- People from racialised & colonised communities
- People with physical disabilities / disabled people
- People with mental health issues / psychiatric survivors
- Autistic people & others with neuro-cognitive or developmental disabilities
- Survivors of trauma / violence / sexual abuse

People with these experiences face additional barriers to claiming ace identities and might not (or might) identify with ace communities.

### All ace identities are valid & deserve respect.

Also, all experiences of not experiencing sexual attraction or desire, or of not wanting to have sex, are valid (whether or not they are by people who identify on the asexual spectrum). These also need to be respected.

## Grey-asexuality & Demisexuality

There is a complex spectrum of ace identities. Among other things, people in the “grey zone” (i.e., grey-As) may (or may not)...

- identify strongly with asexuality but still sometimes experience sexual attraction
- experience sexual attraction but not sexual desire (and not want to have sex)
- enjoy or desire sex but only under specific or rare conditions

Demisexuals may experience sexual attraction, but only after forming an emotional bond.

There are many reasons why aces identify on the asexual spectrum. Sometimes it's about experiencing little or no sexual attraction and/or (partner-focused) sexual desire. Sometimes it's about not wanting to have sex. Sometimes it's for other reasons.

### Aces have different feelings about the idea of personally participating in Sex (of some kind)

Sex-	Asexuals	Grey-Asexuals	Demisexuals
-averse	40%	30%	21%
-indifferent	30%	39%	33%
-favourable	8%	19%	22%

- Many ace folks have **changing feelings**
- Many (especially grey and demi folks) have **feelings that depend on the context, person or the specific act.**

### Some aces choose to have sex (for a variety of reasons) while many choose not to.

- About 1 in 3 aces have had “consensual sex” *at least once* (sex defined broadly)

### Ace folks may participate in many kinds of relationships & may or may not participate in:

- friendships
- family relationships
- community relationships
- romantic relationships (much more likely for aces who are *not aromantic*)
- non-romantic or quasi-romantic partnerships
- “non-normative” relationships (that are not “romantic”, not typical friends & also do not fit other categories)
  - e.g., “queerplatonic” originated in ace community to help name some

Just over 50% of aces have *ever* had any kind of “partnered or intimate relationship”.

## Romantic Relationships

When ace people do romantic relationships, these might or might not be:

- monogamous or polyamorous
- with ace or non-ace partners
- online or long-distance

These relationships may or may not include sex.

Many aces folks (aromantic and otherwise) choose NOT to centre their lives (or build their families) around romantic partnership(s).

### Sexual “Compromise” & Consent

“Compromising by having sex” is very different from “compromising by not having sex”.

Not having sex doesn't require anyone's consent. Whereas having sex with someone does require their consent. Consent is very complicated for “compromise sex” because the context is already coercive on a societal level.

There are powerful social expectations that pressure people to have sex. Sometimes that pressure comes directly from a partner (i.e., sexual coercion). But even without that, larger-scale coercive social expectations exist.

There are very strong social norms saying that people “owe” sex to their romantic partners or that people are “supposed” to do sexual things in romantic relationships (at least eventually).

There are also ideas that sex is the “price” that aces must pay in exchange for (romantic) love and companionship— messages that if aces don't “compromise” then they will be alone & lonely.

If someone doesn't really feel that they could say no (or decide to not “compromise”) and really believe that it would be okay (without any negative repercussions)... then consent is already “compromised”.