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# Gender Discrepancy in Asexual Identity: The Effect of Hegemonic Gender Norms on Asexual Identification

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# Gender Discrepancy in Asexual Identity: The Effect of Hegemonic Gender Norms on Asexual Identification

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## Identifying Asexuality

- Asexual- "someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction" (Mardell 2016).
- Not to be confused with lack of romantic attraction.
- Can be an umbrella term for all identities on the asexual spectrum.
- Cited at 1% of the population (Wellings 1994), but reported high as 4% of individuals aged 18-24 (GLAAD 2017).

## Methods

- Asexual Census data for gender distribution, sex assigned at birth.
- Twelve, 15-45 minute, semi-structured interviews.
- One hour focus-group discussion.
- Data analyzed using a modified grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss).
- MAXQDA to code data for recurring themes.

## Gender Discrepancy

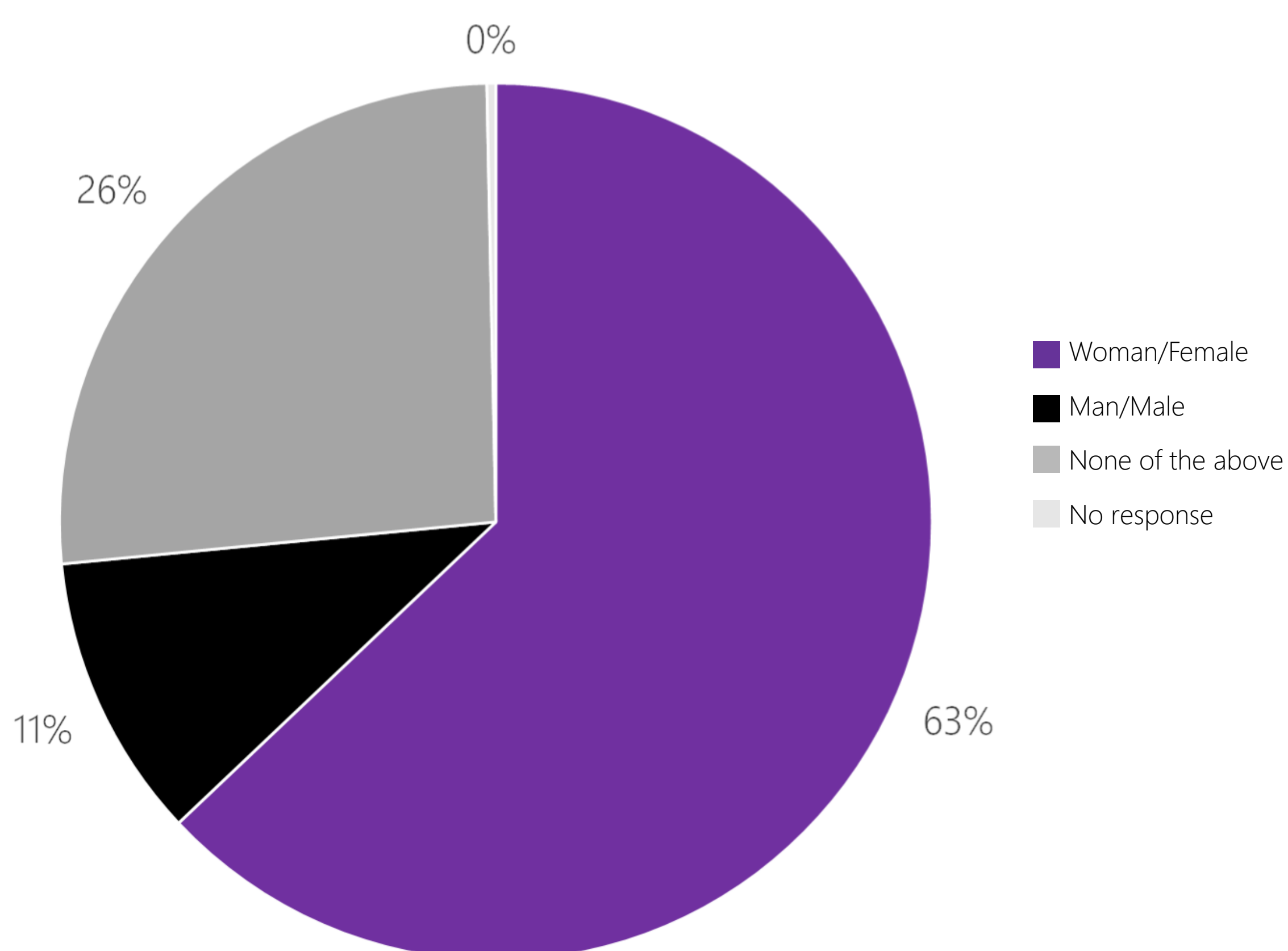


Figure 1. 63% (n=4379) of respondents to the 2016 *Asexual Census*, aged 18-30 identified as "Woman/Female". 11% (n=731) identified as "Man/Male", and 26% (n=1822) identified as neither woman/female nor man/male, choosing "None of the Above" (n=23). Less than 1% of respondents did not respond to the question.

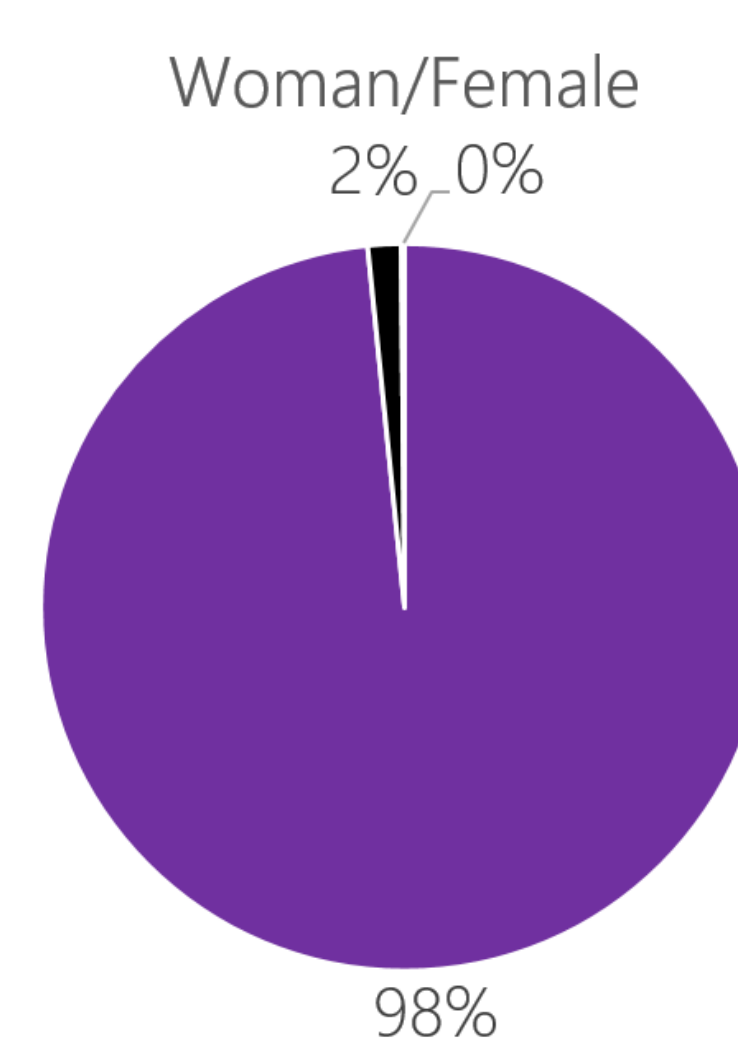


Figure 2. 98% (n=4308) of respondents to the 2016 *Asexual Census*, aged 18-30 identifying as "Woman/Female" were assigned female at birth. 2% (n=65) were assigned male at birth. Less than 1% (n=20) had no response.

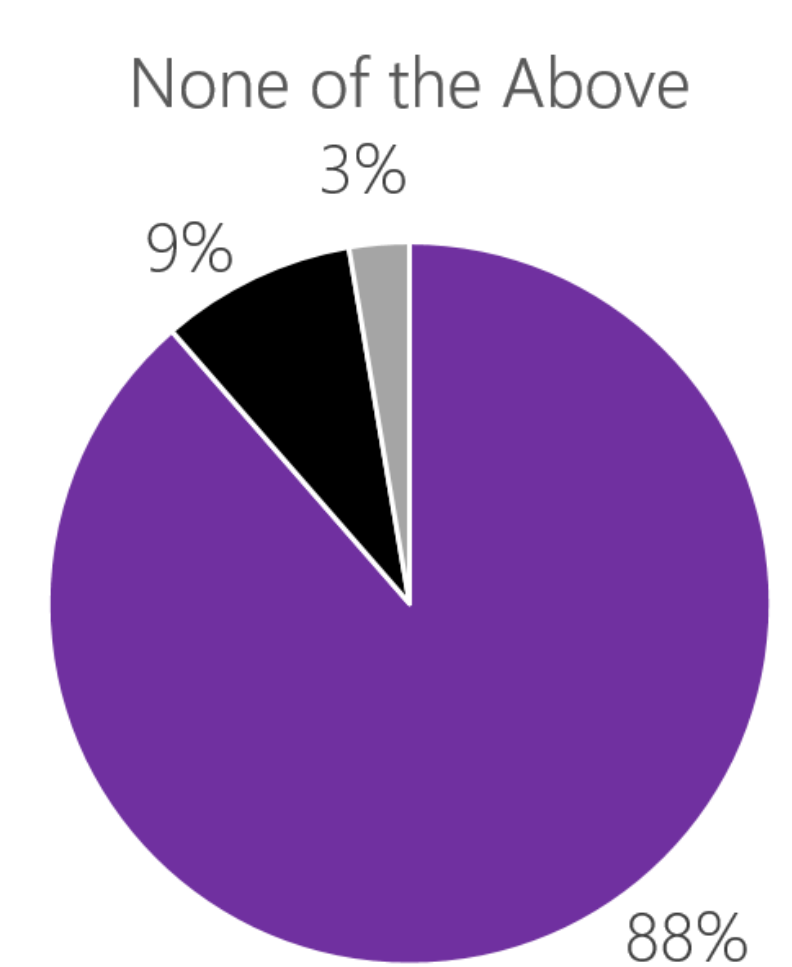


Figure 4. 88% (n=1614) of respondents to the 2016 *Asexual Census*, aged 18-30 selecting "None of the Above" were assigned female at birth. 9% (n=159) were assigned male at birth. 3% (n=49) did not respond to the question.

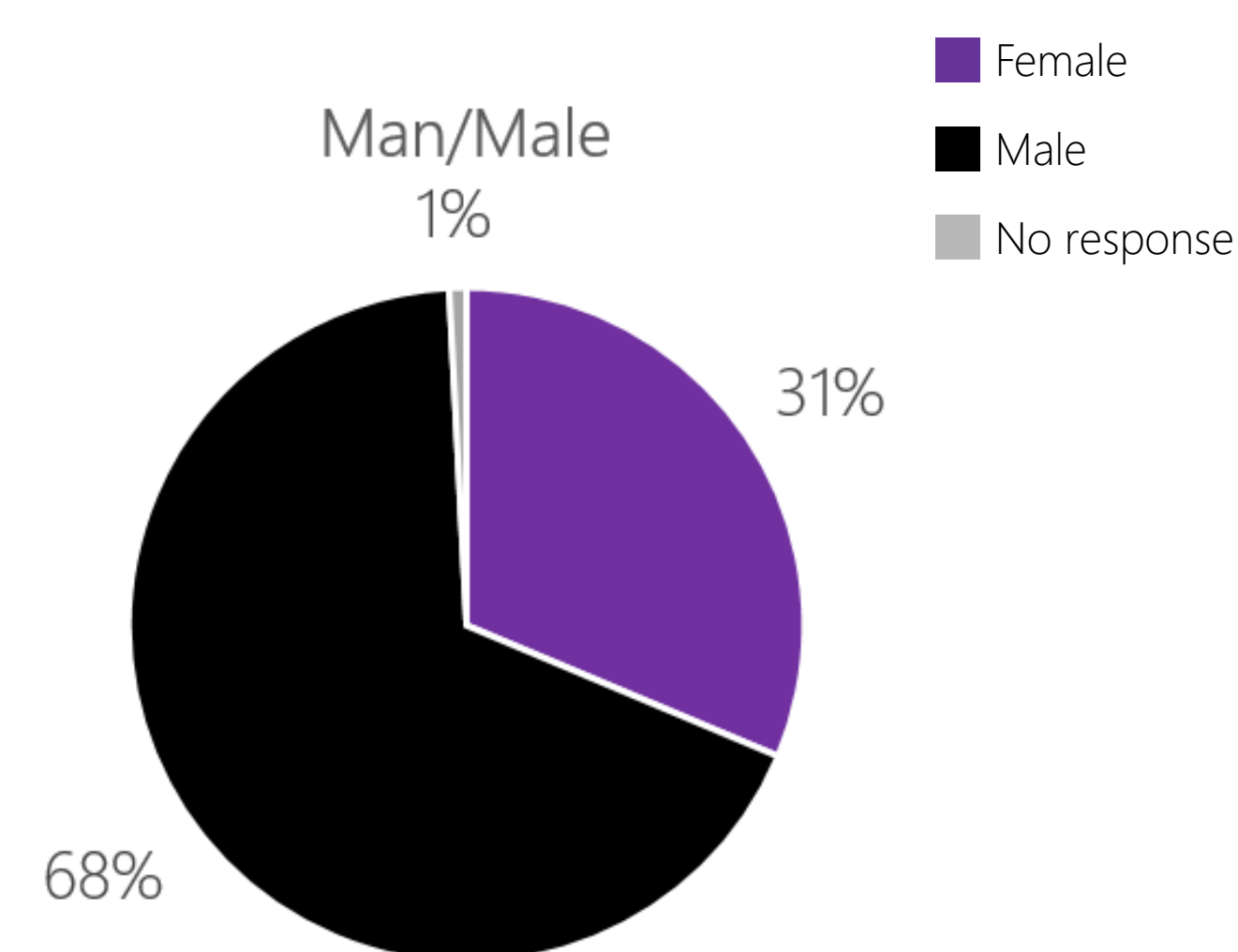


Figure 3. 31% (n=229) of respondents to the 2016 *Asexual Census*, aged 18-30 identifying as "Man/Male" were assigned female at birth. 68% (n=496) were assigned male at birth. 1% (n=3) did not respond to the question.

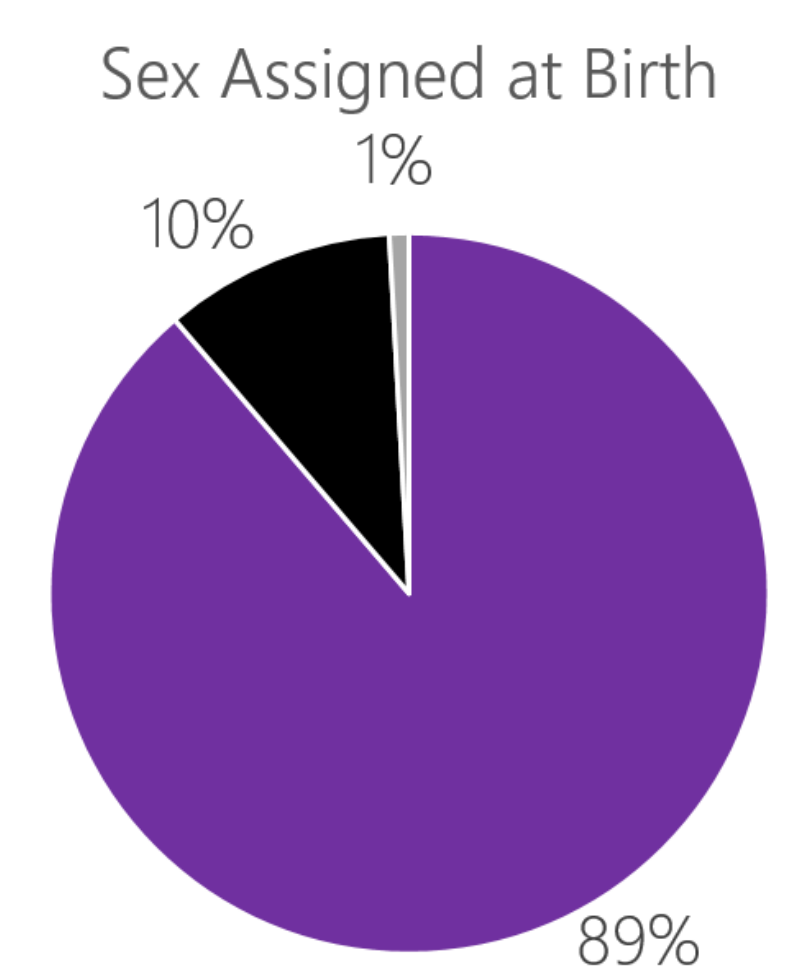


Figure 5. 89% (n=6171) of respondents to the 2016 *Asexual Census*, aged 18-30 were assigned female at birth. 10% (n=723) were assigned male at birth. 1% (n=61) had no response.

## Why do more women and genderqueer people identify as asexual?

- Lower stigma for not having sex, sometimes expectation that feminine people do not want/desire sex
- Greater communication/discussion of identity → more likely to be exposed to asexuality
- For genderqueer people: exposure to identities from queer community

## Do masculine stereotypes dissuade individuals from identifying as asexual?

- Asexuality is often not considered compatible with masculinity
- Social pressure to be masculine → (hetero)sexually active
- Less communication about identity → less likely to learn about asexuality

## How do gender expectations affect individuals identifying as asexual?

- Little attachment to gender norms, especially related to masculinity
- Do not want to be sexualized according to outward presentation
- Pressure to conform to sexual standards, especially before discovering asexuality

## In Progress

- Further analysis of interviews
- Coding and analysis of 600+ collected surveys
- Completion of discussion and conclusion of honors thesis paper

## Future Work

- Account for more variables such as race, country, age, etc.
- Greater depth of recording individual experiences
- Capture perceptions of non-asexual identifying people of how asexuality fits with gender norms.

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