

FUR SCIENCE!

A SUMMARY OF FIVE YEARS OF RESEARCH FROM THE
INTERNATIONAL ANTHROPOMORPHIC RESEARCH PROJECT



COURTNEY N. PLANTE, STEPHEN REYSEN, SHARON E. ROBERTS + KATHLEEN C. GERBASI

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ISBN: 978-0-9976288-0-7

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Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

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Cover art by Echo of Justice and designed by Kayla Rohan.

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Acknowledgements

Over the past five years the IARP has received tremendous support for its work, both from within and from outside the furry fandom. To this end, we would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the organizers and staff of Anthrocon, Texas Furry Fiesta, Oklacon, Furnal Equinox, and A-Kon for their support over the years, and to [adjective][species], Furry News Network, Flayrah, WikiFur, Fur What it's Worth, FurCast, and FurAffinity. Their continued ideas, assistance, and enthusiasm have been instrumental in our ongoing project to learn more about the furry fandom and to helping disperse our findings to the fandom. In a similar vein, we would like to thank Karlin "Troj" Bruegel, Laurence "GreenReaper" Parry, and Jason Bausili, for being an invaluable reservoir of ideas and guidance.

We are indebted to the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. It would be impossible to overstate the value of their sagacious advice and its role in ensuring that our participants are kept safe.

We also owe a great deal of gratitude to the many research assistants, advisors, and colleagues who have made light work for us with their many hands over the years: Kimberly Watt, Simona Ghai, Rebekah Churchyard, Kendra Randi Nicole Doyle, Jacklyn Furlong, Jason Lloyd, Jamie Snider, Catherine Schroy, Jessica Gamboa, Amanda Gamboa, Jennifer Shaw, Tanner McCarter, Charlie Aquilina, Janelle Barnes, Michael Benner Dr. Penny Bernstein, Amber Brink, Ashley Borelli, Eric Broeker, Mike Cline, Dr. Laurel Cook, William Miles Conde, Dr. Samuel Conway, Carlos Darby, Emma Verratti DeChellis, Ricky DeFazio, James Ducas, Erika Edwards, Dr. Elizabeth Fein, Caitlin Fulle, Tim Gadawski, Professor Anthony Gullo, Brian Harris, Anthony Hartman, Rebecca Hewitt, Justin Higner, Karl Jorgensen, Dan Kish, Elise Koepke, Christopher LaGreca, Emmett Livingstone, Darryl Lockie, Jared McCaffrey, Brian Mendel, Douglas Muth, Nick Paolone, Anthony Paterno, Adam Privitera, Tristan Puffer, Jennifer Raymond, Brian Rubenstein, Professor Laura Scaletta, Isaia Sciabarrasi, Dr. Burr Settles, Savage Tornclaw, Joe Vullo, and Mel White.

We owe a great many thanks to Malicious Beaver for his months of dedicated work in developing and launching our FurScience.com website. We would also be remiss if we did not thank Renison University College, the University of Waterloo, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for believing in this work and supporting us financially.

Finally, most of all we wish to thank the thousands of participants, furry and otherwise, who generously give their time to complete our surveys online and at conventions. This research would not be possible without you.

And if, in all of this thanking, we missed anyone who deserves thanking, we apologize, and assure you it was due to our oversight, not a lack of appreciation.

Segments of this research were supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

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Introduction

The International Anthropomorphic Research Project (IARP) is, first and foremost, a group of social scientists. As such, our goal is to understand the furry fandom through the scientific process: forming hypotheses, designing studies to test those hypotheses, analyzing data, and determining whether the results support or oppose the original hypothesis. In other words, the IARP's findings are more than mere anecdote—they're conclusions based on the systematic study of more than 15,000 furies over the past decade.

A good scientist recognizes two important points. First, no study is perfect. Because of the trade-offs inherent in any study design (e.g., construct precision vs. survey length), researchers will inevitably be limited in their ability to draw conclusions based on the results of a single study. This leads to the second point—multiple studies allow greater confidence in one's findings. While an individual study may be limited, a multitude of different studies that use different methodologies and different samples allow researchers to more confidently draw conclusions about their findings. In this spirit, we at the IARP strive to answer questions about the furry fandom over a number of studies. Below, we summarize the main studies from which the majority of our conclusions have been drawn. In the data presentations which follow, we use brackets to indicate which study/studies the data are drawn from.

The majority of our studies involve the use of surveys, administered either online or in-person (pen and paper) at furry conventions. Online surveys involve recruiting furies from popular furry websites by providing them with a link to the survey. Once there, furies complete the survey in exchange for entry into a draw for one of several \$50 gift cards. At conventions, furies are recruited by research assistants in white lab coats, typically while waiting in the convention's registration line or in a common area (e.g., dealer's area). Participants are asked to return the survey by the end of the weekend to receive a ribbon for their convention badge and a small prize (e.g., erasers, stickers) or entry into a draw for a \$50 gift card. In both online and convention-going surveys, participants are asked anywhere from 50-250 separate questions, which range in content from demographic questions to questions about attitudes and behaviour toward fandom-specific issues to psychological variables (e.g., well-being, self-esteem).

On other occasions, data are collected using experimental study designs: researchers randomly assign participants to one of several conditions to determine a variable's effect on participants' attitudes or behaviour. This involves multiple versions of a survey handed out randomly to participants or using computer-administered tasks (e.g., reaction time studies).

Our studies also regularly involve the use of control groups – groups against which furry results are compared. Such comparisons make it possible to determine which results are unique to the furry fandom and which are the product of more general human psychological principles. In figures comparing multiple groups, different colored bars (e.g., red, blue, yellow, gray) are used to indicate statistically significant group differences.

To summarize: the IARP strives to obtain accurate and representative data about the attitudes and behaviour of furies through the use of multiple large samples and different types of

study designs to provide converging evidence for our conclusions. As we run new studies and collect new data, the findings will be added to an online repository (FurScience.com), to ensure that the most up-to-date information is available to those wanting to know more about the furry fandom. Below is a guide for the symbols used throughout this book, indicating which study a particular set of data were drawn from.

Symbol Guide

Symbol	Study Description	Sample Size	Other Notes
W11	2011 International Online Furry Survey I	4,338 furries	69 Countries
FF11	2011 Furry Fiesta Survey	219 furries	
S11	2011 Anthrocon & International Online Furry Survey II	1,761 furries	41 countries
W12	2012 Furry Fiesta & International Online Furry Survey III	951 furries	
AC12	2012 Anthrocon & General Population Control Survey	1,065 furries	Included 802 non-furries
FF13	2013 Furry Fiesta & Online Furry Survey IV	455 furries	
AC13	2013 Anthrocon Survey	820 furries	
S13	2013 Online Fursona Survey	369 furries	
FF14	2014 Furry Fiesta Survey	246 furries	Included 3 focus groups
F3	2014 3-Fandom Survey (Furries, Anime Fans, Fantasy Sport Fans)	1,059 furries	Included 901 con-going anime fans, 2,283 online anime fans, 511 fantasy sport fans
FF15	2015 Furry Fiesta Survey & Experiment	245 furries	Included 25 artists and 120 undergraduate students
AC15	2015 Anthrocon Survey	979 furries	Included 69 artists

Section 1: Demographics

1.1 Age

One of the first questions we ask in any of our studies is the age of the participant. The purpose of this is two-fold: first, age can be an important variable, predicting a number of physical, psychological, and social outcomes. Second, due to ethical restrictions, the IARP is unable to study minors (as parental consent would be required, something we cannot reasonably expect to obtain if a person has not “come out” to their family as a furry).

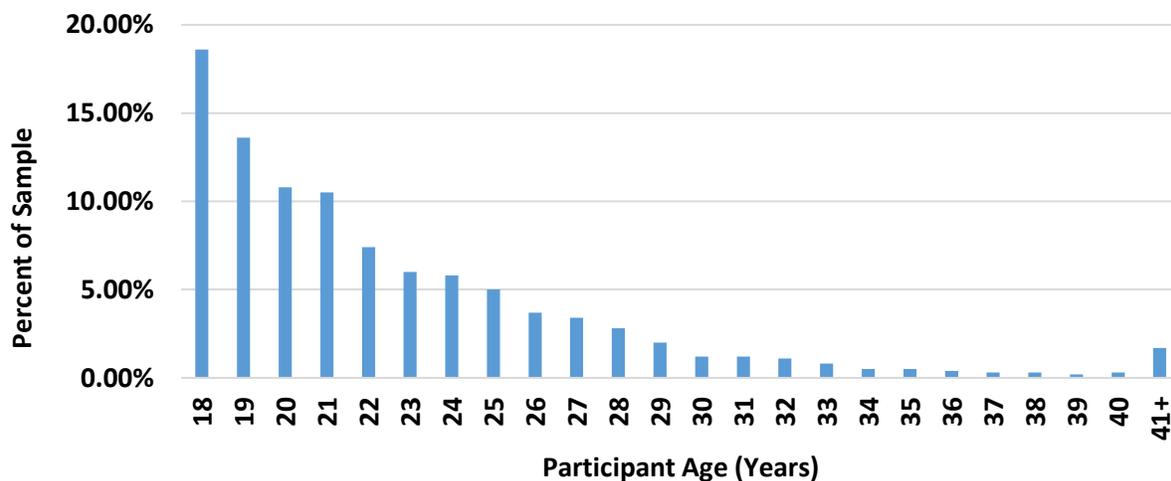
Average Age (Years) of Furry Participants

Study	Con-Going	Online
W11	-	23.0
S11	24.0	25.6
W12	27.1	23.9
AC12	26.0	-
Range	24.0–27.1	23.3–25.6

As the table above and figure below shows, furies tend to be relatively young, with the majority of adult furies (over the age of 18) being in their early-to-mid-twenties, and nearly 75% of furies being under the age of 25 (S11). While the IARP is unable to study minors, converging evidence for this pattern of results has been found in other studies of furies showing that approximately 20% of furies are under the age of 18 and that approximately 55% are between the ages of 18 and 25 (vis.adjectivespecies.com/furrysurvey/overview).

Convention-going furies in our samples tend to be, on average, a bit older than furies in our online samples. This, we believe, is due to the fact that conventions can be expensive to attend (e.g., travel costs, hotel), requiring a level of expendable income and long-distance transportation more available to those with stable careers, who are more likely to be in their mid-twenties than their late teens and early twenties.

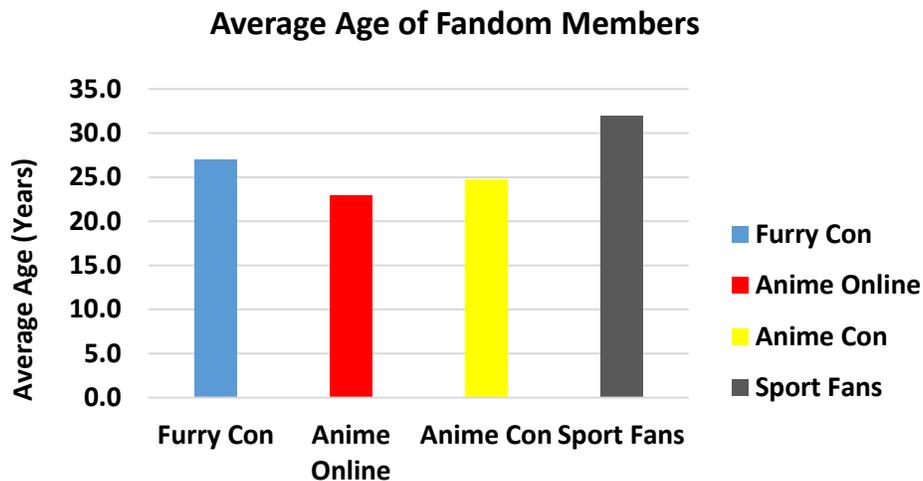
Age of Furies



The term “greymuzzle” is sometimes used by furies who have been in the fandom for significantly longer (12.3 years vs. 6.2 years, on average) or who are older than the average furry (e.g., 42.2 years old, on average; S13). It should be noted that there is debate within the fandom about whether the term “greymuzzle” is appropriate, but the term is routinely used by furies in what appears to be a non-pejorative fashion. Approximately 9% of furies self-identify as greymuzzles (S13). They are comparable to other furies in most regards, not differing in their well-being or in their identification with the furry fandom. Greymuzzles do differ on a few variables:

- a. On average, it took greymuzzles much longer to discover the furry fandom after developing furry interests (9.5 years vs. 4.6 years), likely a product of Internet accessibility (S13).
- b. Greymuzzles are 3-4 times more likely to self-identify as therian (S13).
- c. Greymuzzles are less likely to have an interest in roleplaying activities (S13).

The IARP is currently investigating the reason for a significant drop in the age of furies, particularly after the early 20s. One possibility is that, as people age, factors such as families and careers may reduce the amount of time people can devote to their hobbies. Alternatively, it may be the case that as furies spend time in the furry fandom, they form close friendships and, after a while, find themselves interacting with those friends outside of furry contexts.

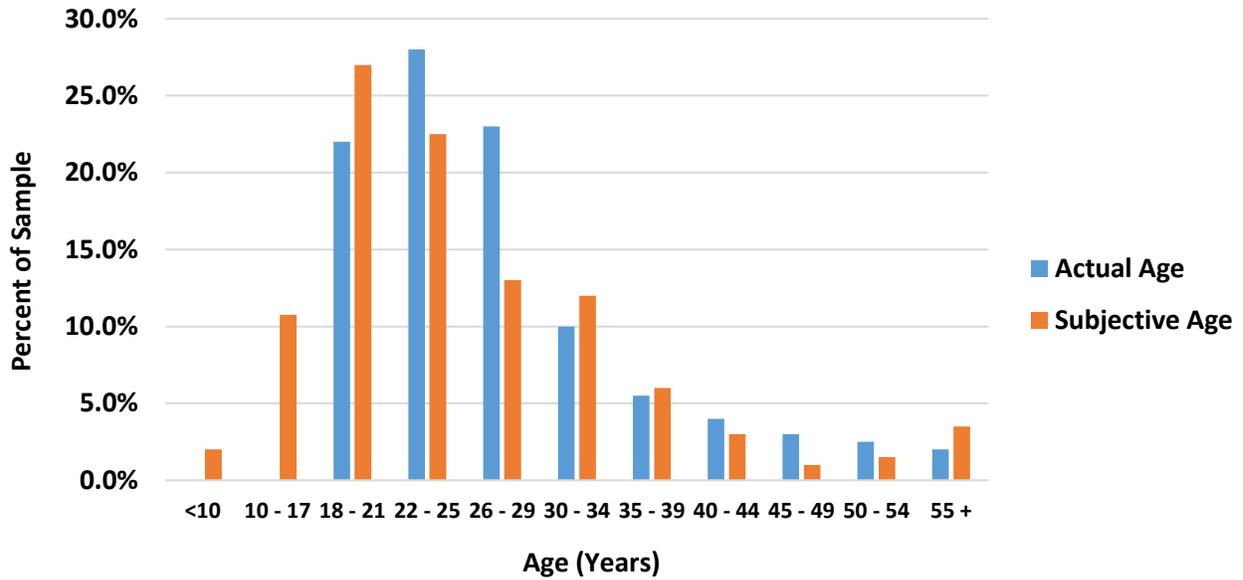


On average, furies are older than anime fans (both convention-going and online), but younger than fantasy sport fans (hereafter “sport fans” in graphs; F3). Whether this is due to the fandoms targeting different age groups, requiring different amounts of resources to enter (e.g., money to spend on fantasy sport leagues), or other factors remains a topic of interest for future research.

In addition to assessing actual age, the IARP has also studied subjective age—the extent to which furies *feel* younger or older than their biological age. As illustrated in the figure below, the “peak” of subjective (felt) age is younger than that of objective (actual) age. While 10% to 15% of

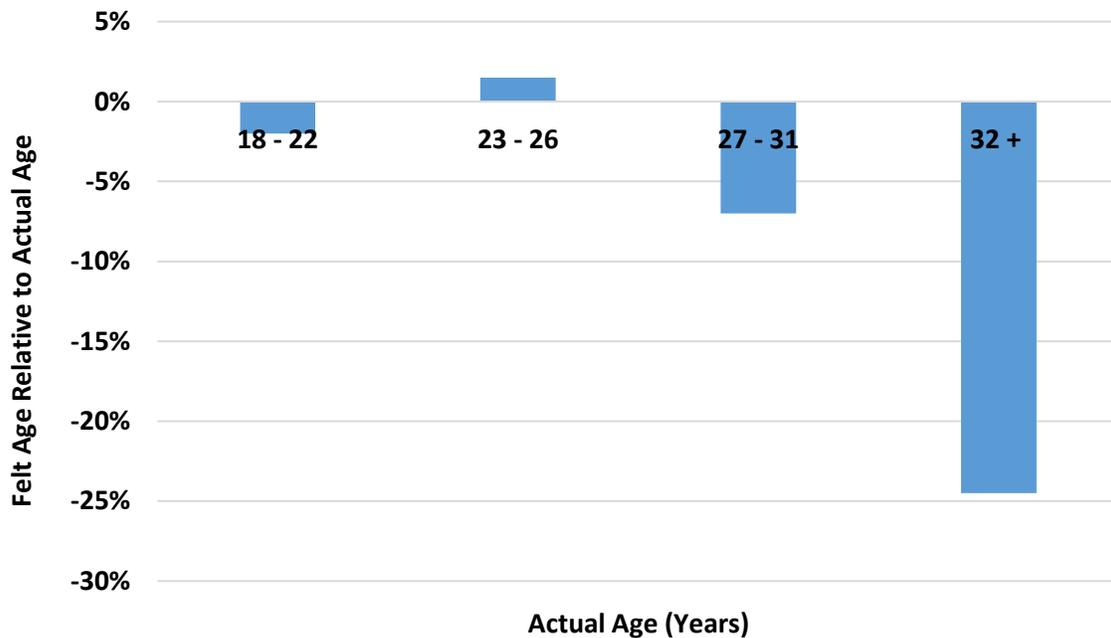
furries identify their felt age as being under the age of 18, comparatively fewer identify a subjective age older than 40. The average actual age of furries is significantly higher than the average subjective age older than 40. The average actual age of furries is significantly higher than the average subjective age of the same furries (28.0 years vs. 25.3 years), about 6.9% higher on average (FF15).

Actual and Subjective Age of Furries



Finally, the figure below illustrates that the oldest 25% of furries feel, on average, 24.5% younger than their actual selves, a much larger difference between actual and subjective age than is observed among younger furries (FF15).

Subjective Age of Furries by Actual Age



1.2 Ethnicity

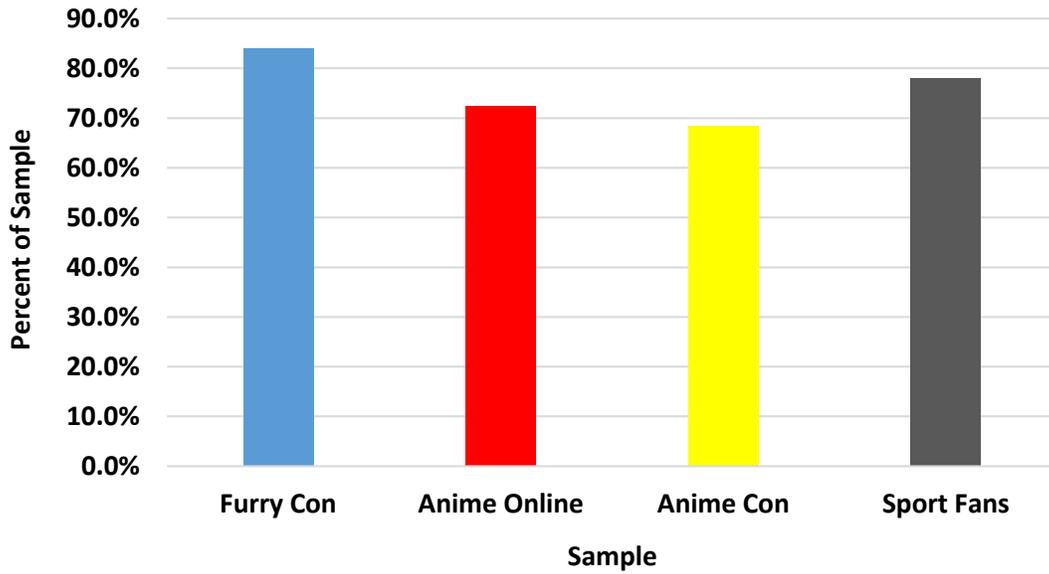
Across samples, the majority of furies self-identify as White, with approximately 15-20% of furies identifying as a member of an ethnic minority (S11). One caveat should be noted, however: the majority of these studies were conducted at North American conventions or, when online, were conducted in English, which may account, at least in part, for these results.

Ethnicity of Furry Participants

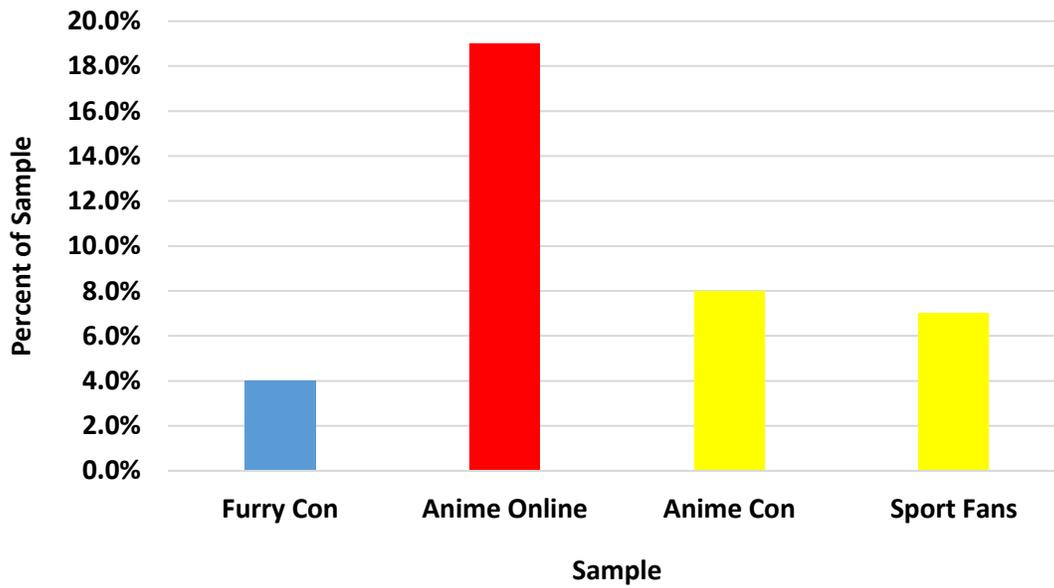
Ethnicity	% of Sample
White	83.2
Black	2.1
Asian	2.0
First Nations/Native American	0.6
Hispanic	3.0
Middle Eastern	0.1
East Indian	3.1
Other	9.0

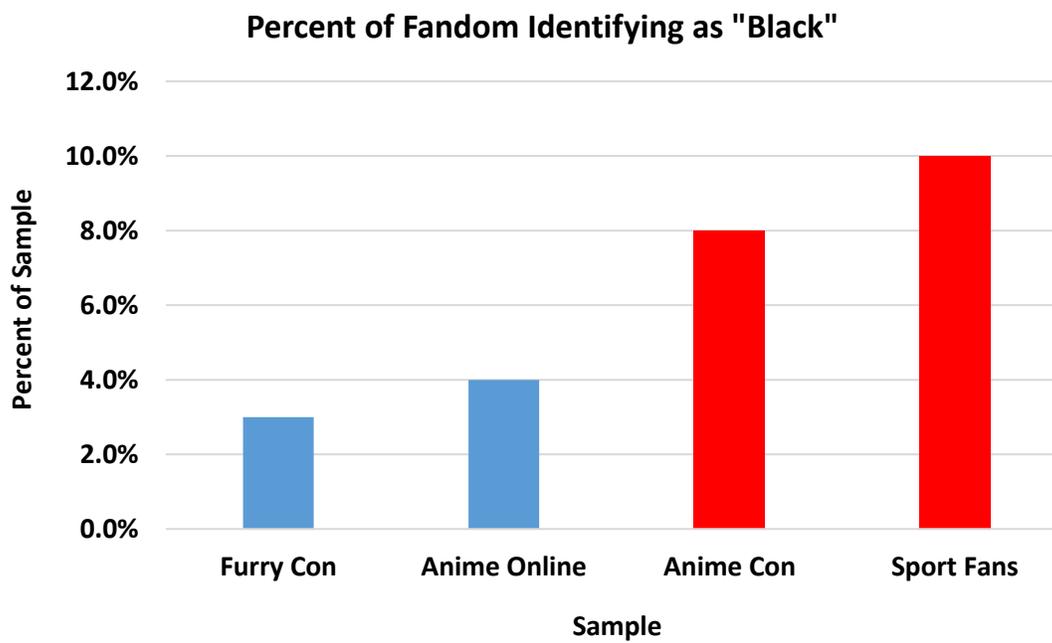
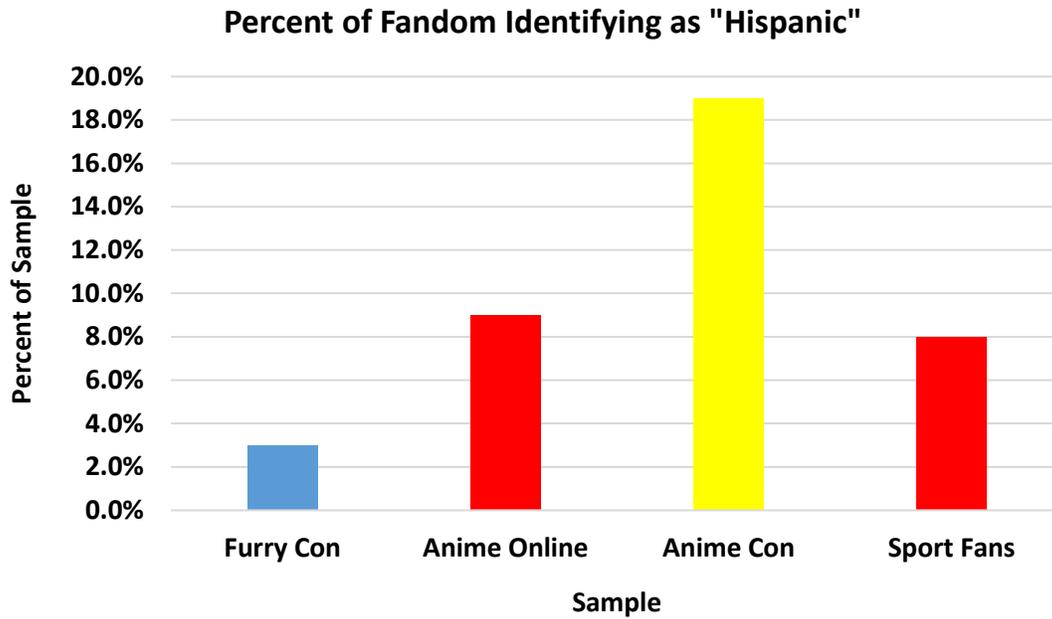
When compared to other fan groups, furies were the most predominantly White (see figures below; color differences indicate significant statistical differences between groups; F3). The reasons for this are unknown, though it may be the case that the historical origins of the furry fandom (grounded in the science-fiction fandom which has also been traditionally White) may partially explain these findings. In comparison, convention-going anime fans had a significant Hispanic population, likely owing to the convention's location in Dallas, Texas, a region with a large Hispanic population relative to other parts of the country. This is supported by the relatively smaller proportion of Hispanic participants in the online anime sample, which represents participants from far more diverse regions. Interestingly, the online anime sample had significantly more Asian participants, something one would expect in a fandom centered on Japanese animation, although there were surprisingly few Asian participants at the anime convention.

Percent of Fandom Identifying as "White"



Percent of Fandom Identifying as "Asian"





1.3 Sex & Gender

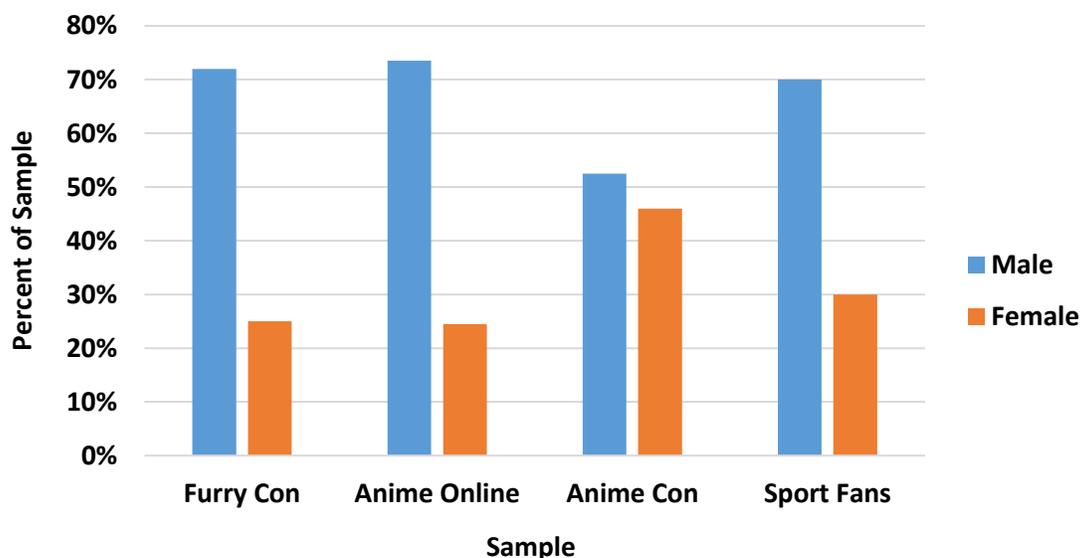
In the social sciences, sex and gender are recognized as distinct concepts. Sex refers to a person's anatomy (e.g., having XX, XY, XO, XXY, XYY chromosomes), whereas gender, which is socially constructed, refers to aspects of a person's psychology (e.g., self-identification as man or woman, behaviour, self-perception). While a person's gender identity is congruent with their sex in many cases (cis-gender), it is possible for their gender identity to differ from their sex (i.e., transgender, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming), or to fluctuate fluidly over time. Because of this, the IARP has begun assessing sex and gender independent of one another.

Sex and Gender of Furies

Category (Choose all that apply)	% of Furies
Sex: Male	72.4
Sex: Female	27.4
Sex: Intersex	0.2
Gender: Masculine	67.1
Gender: Feminine	23.3
Genderqueer/Non-Binary	10.0

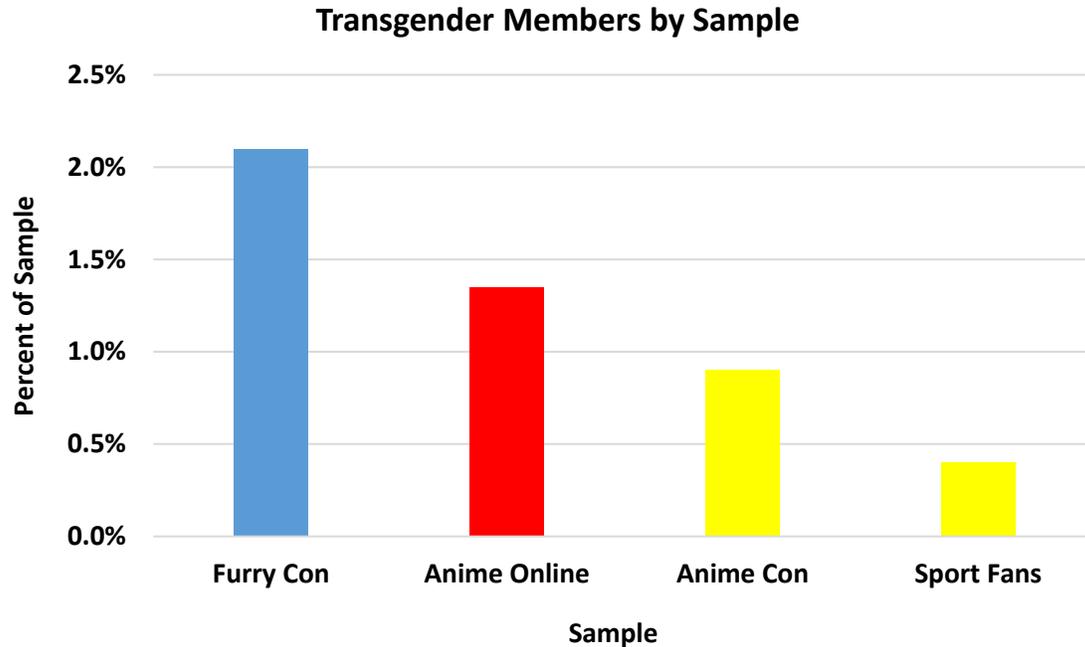
The table above (AC15) illustrates that the furry fandom is predominantly male—comparably so to the online anime and fantasy sport fandoms—but far more male than the convention-going anime fandom (see figure below; F3).

Sex of Fandom Members



A significant number of furies (2.0 – 2.5%) self-identify as transgender (S11, F3, S13) or as genderqueer/non-binary (indicating that their gender identity fluctuates or does not fall on the

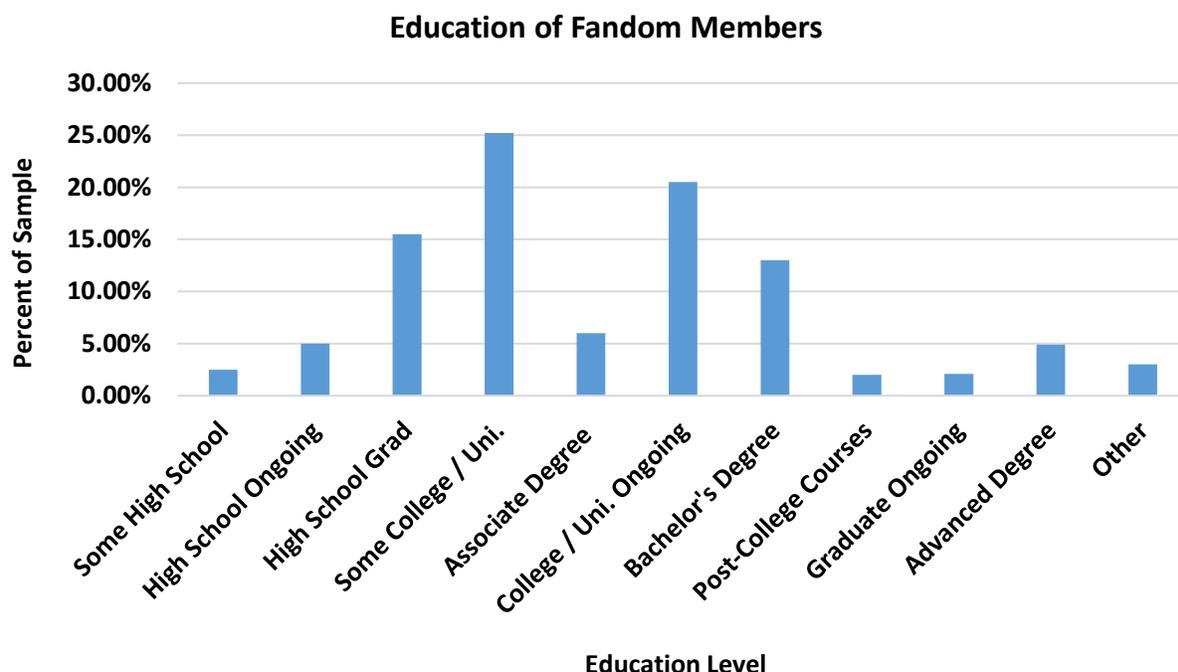
Man-Woman dimension). As the figure below indicates, furries are significantly more likely than members of other fandoms to identify as transgender (F3). Whether this indicates fandom-level differences in the inclusiveness of the two fandoms or perhaps a preferential pull toward some other aspect of the furry fandom remains a subject for future research.



As a whole, the data suggest the possibility that of the studied fandoms, the furry fandom may be the one most open to, or accepting of, people who eschew or challenge traditional gender norms. This may, in part, have to do with the content of the furry fandom, which allows a person's created fursona to be any species, age, or gender, they wish—something that may appeal to people who otherwise feel limited in their ability to express their felt gender identity. This possibility is a topic of interest for future research.

1.4 Education

The trends in the figure below have been observed consistently across a number of samples of furries (S11, W12, F3), and show that more than 75% of furries have taken at least some post-secondary education.

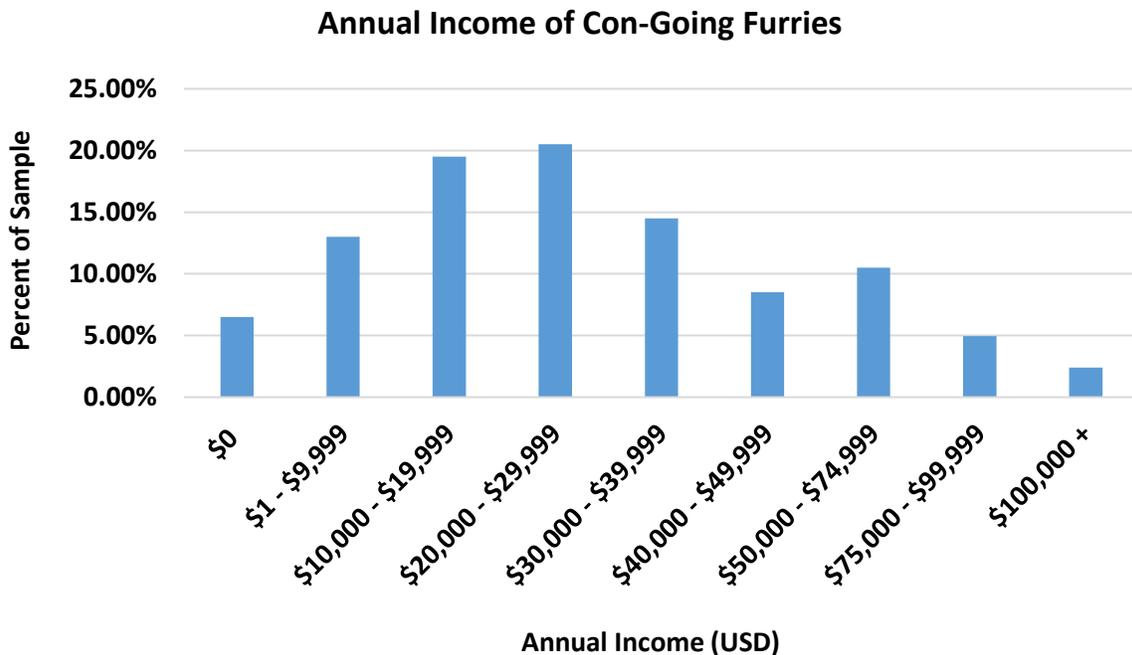


About 26.8% of furries said that they had completed at least one degree (W12). Furries who had completed post-secondary education were also asked to indicate what area/field they had specialized in. Approximately 24.2% of furries had taken “fine art” degrees (e.g., design, graphics, writing), while 27.9% of furries chose fields that directly involved computers (e.g., computer graphics, computing science, information technology, computer engineering). About 11.9% of furries pursued a science degree (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics) and 11.9% an engineering degree (S11).

Furries’ level of education did not differ significantly from the level of education obtained by the comparable anime fandom (F3).

1.5 Income

On average, furies earn an annual income that does not differ significantly from that of a sample of the general American population (furries: \$31,772 USD, non-furries: \$31,470 USD; AC12). When broken down by income bracket, the data in the figure below illustrate that more than half of furries earned less than \$30,000 USD per year, and about 6% of furries had no annual income at all. To compare, 7.5% of furries earned more than \$75,000 USD per year (AC15). These particular samples are based on Anthrocon attendees, who presumably had the resources to attend a convention (which usually includes, travel, hotel, and admission costs), meaning furries who were unable to attend the con for financial reasons were not represented (and, to date, we do not have income information of a non-convention sample of furries). As such, it is likely that the number of low-income furries is higher than what is shown here, due, in no small part, to the fact that many furries are in college and are, as a group, relatively young. In future studies we plan to compare the income of convention-going furries with that of online furry samples, with an interest in testing the possible restricting impact that income may have on convention attendance and other forms of fandom participation (e.g., purchasing a fursuit, going to local meet-ups).



1.6 Employment

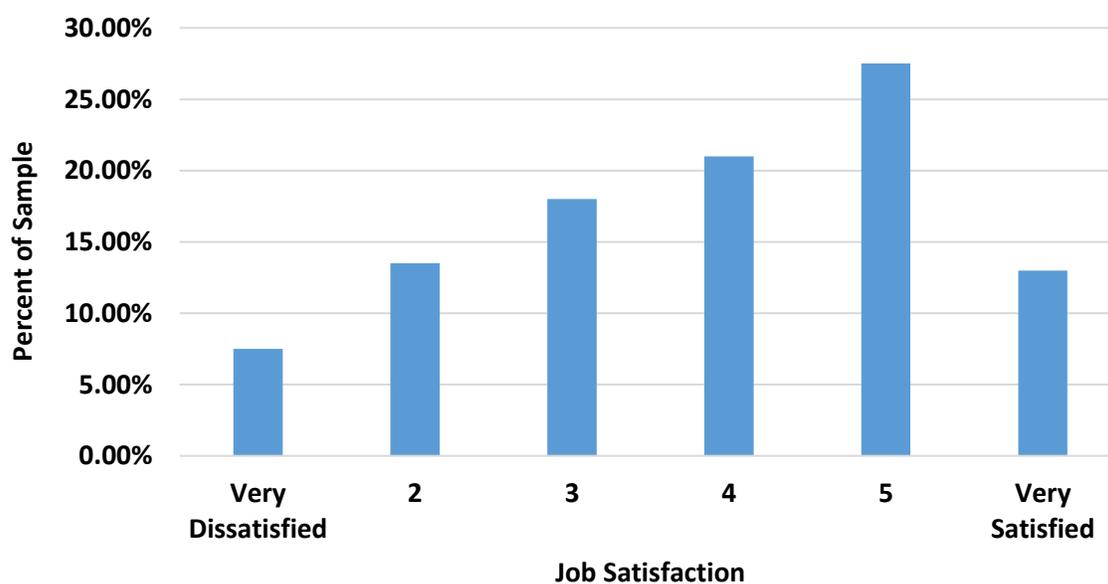
As illustrated in the table below, more than half of the furry fandom works either part-time or full-time, while nearly half reports attending post-secondary school at least part-time. Approximately one third of furries are not currently employed (due, in part, to disability, being a homemaker, travelling, or taking a leave of absence). Approximately one in five furries are unemployed and in the process of looking for a job (FF13).

Employment Status of Furries

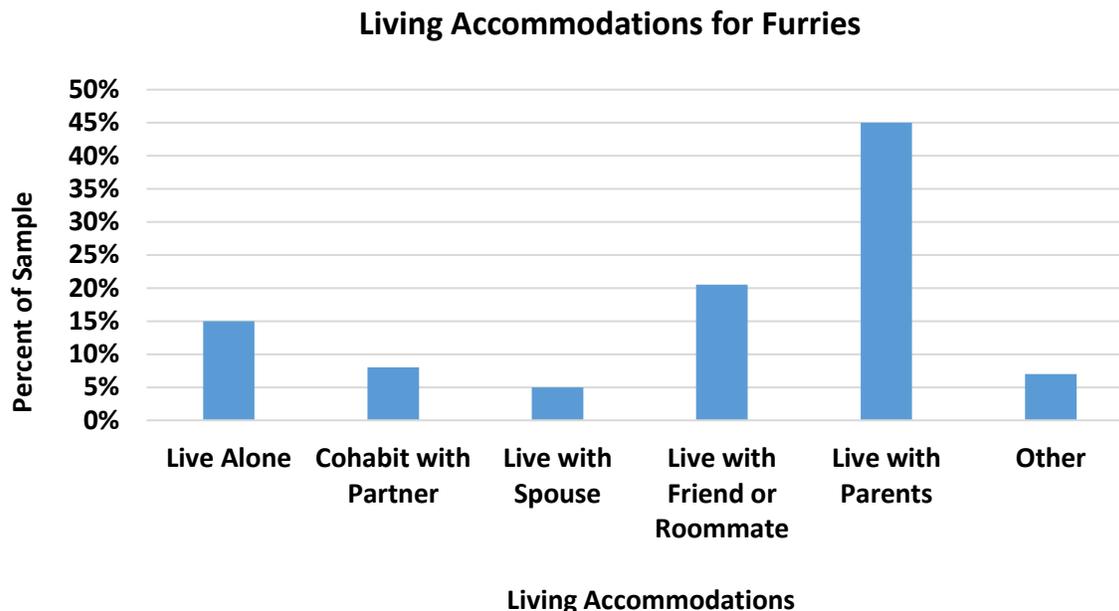
Category (Choose all that apply)	% of Furries
Full-Time	32.2
Part-Time	23.9
Full-time Education	34.8
Part-time Education	11.2
Unemployed, Looking	22.8
Unemployed, Not Looking	6.9
Disability	4.3
Retired	1.1
Other (e.g., Homemaker)	9.1

Furries were also asked to indicate their satisfaction with their current employment status. As you can see from the figure below, while there is tremendous variability on furries' job satisfaction, furries do, on average, seem to enjoy their current employment (FF13).

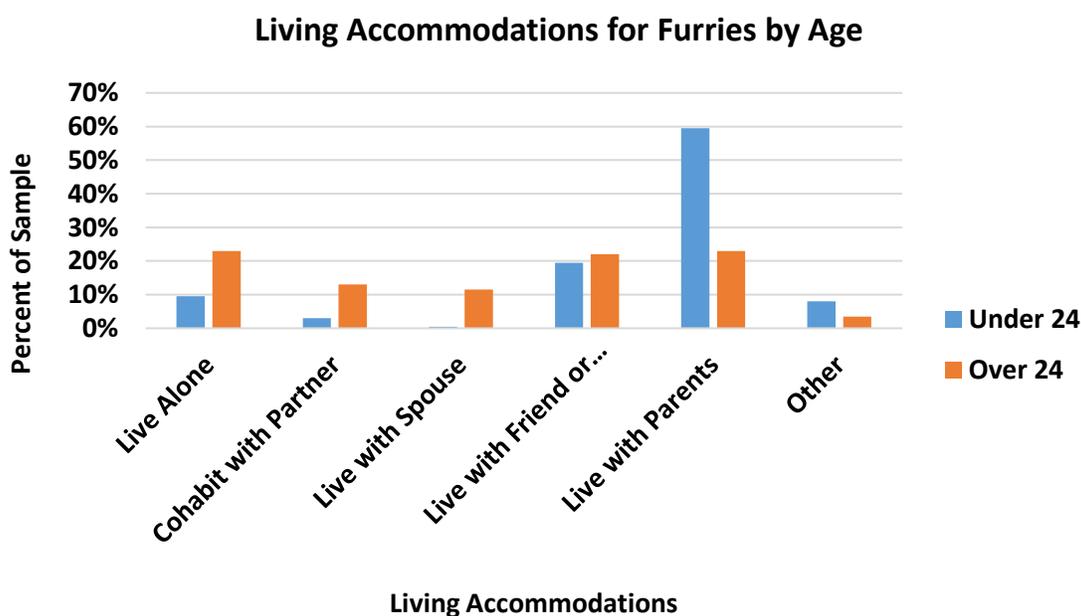
Job Satisfaction of Furries



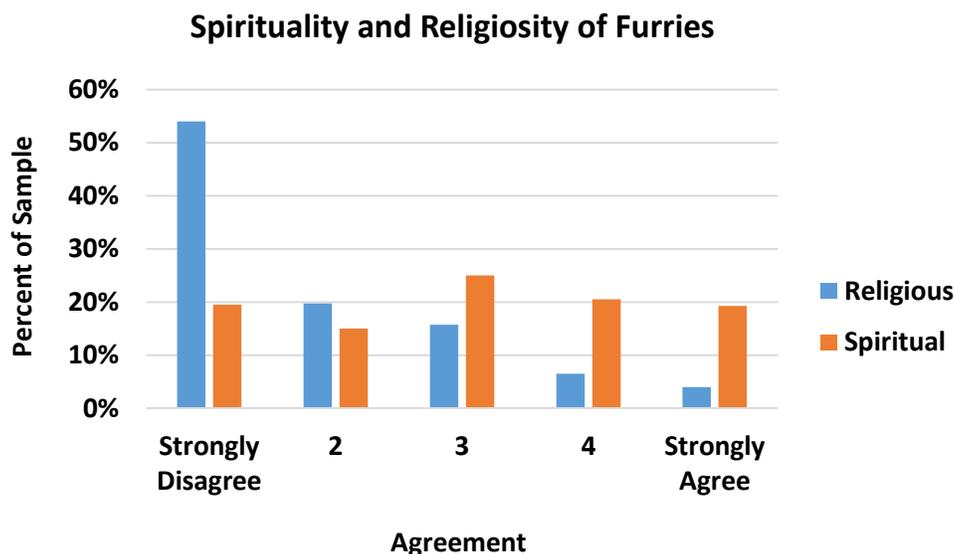
1.7 Living Accommodations



Nearly half of all furrries sampled indicate that they currently reside with their parents (see figure above; FF13). Another 30% or so live with a friend or significant other, 15% live alone, and the rest report other accommodations. The high proportion of furrries living with their parents is thought to be a product of two factors: (1) furrries' relatively young age and (2) their tendency to attend post-secondary education. Both of these factors may necessitate living with their parents for financial reasons. Indeed, as the figure below demonstrates, when the data for older and younger furrries are looked at separately, older furrries seem to move away from their parents and into their own homes or to live with a spouse or relationship partner.

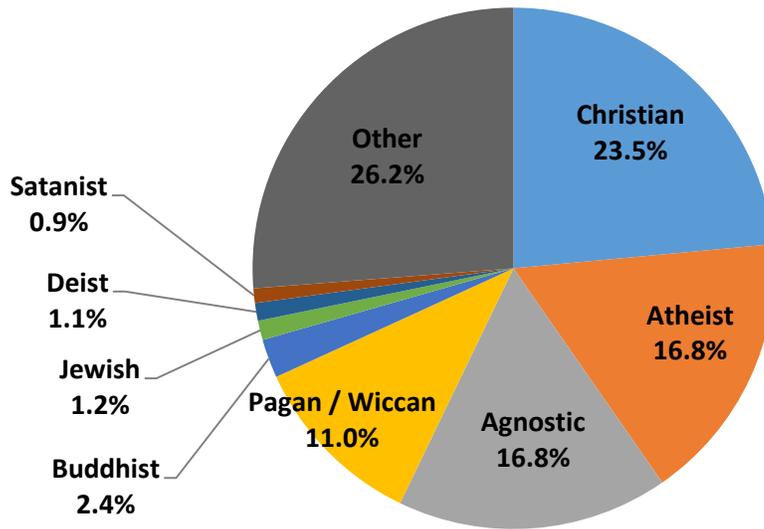


1.8 Religion/Spirituality



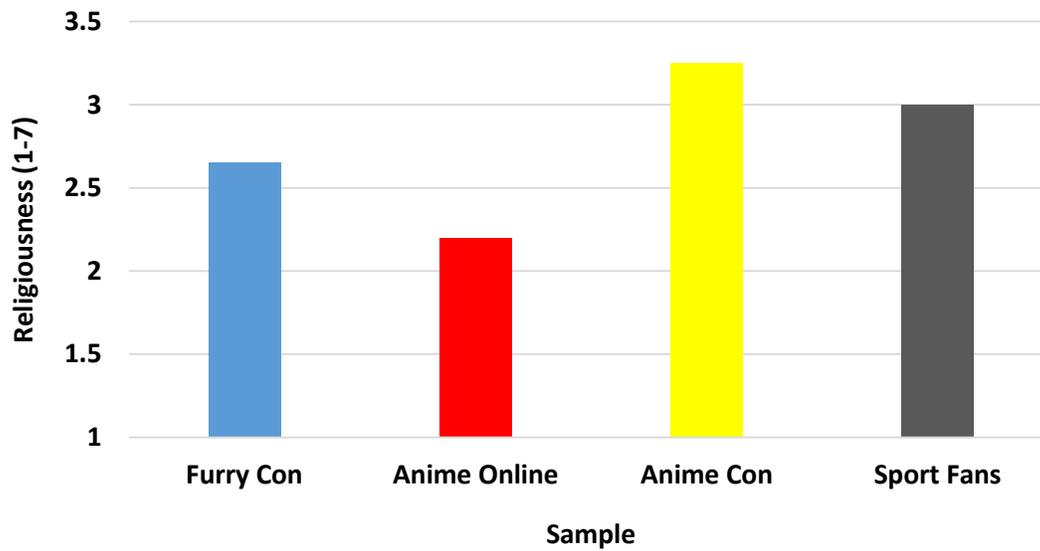
While the majority of furies do not consider themselves to be religious (blue bars above), the fandom is far more diverse with regard to spiritual beliefs; furies are as likely to be spiritual as non-spiritual (orange bars above). When asked about their religious beliefs, nearly one-third of furies identified as either atheist or agnostic (see figure below). About 25% of furies are Christian, though many indicated that they did not regularly practice their faith or attend church. About 11% identified as pagan, shaman, or Wiccan. Finally, the most populated category, “other,” comprised of participants who had their own belief systems, were undecided, refused to answer, or had uncommon belief systems. Taken together, the data suggest that the furry fandom contains a diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs, and it’s worth noting that despite this, religion is seldom a point of conflict for furies (AC15).

Religious Affiliation of Furies



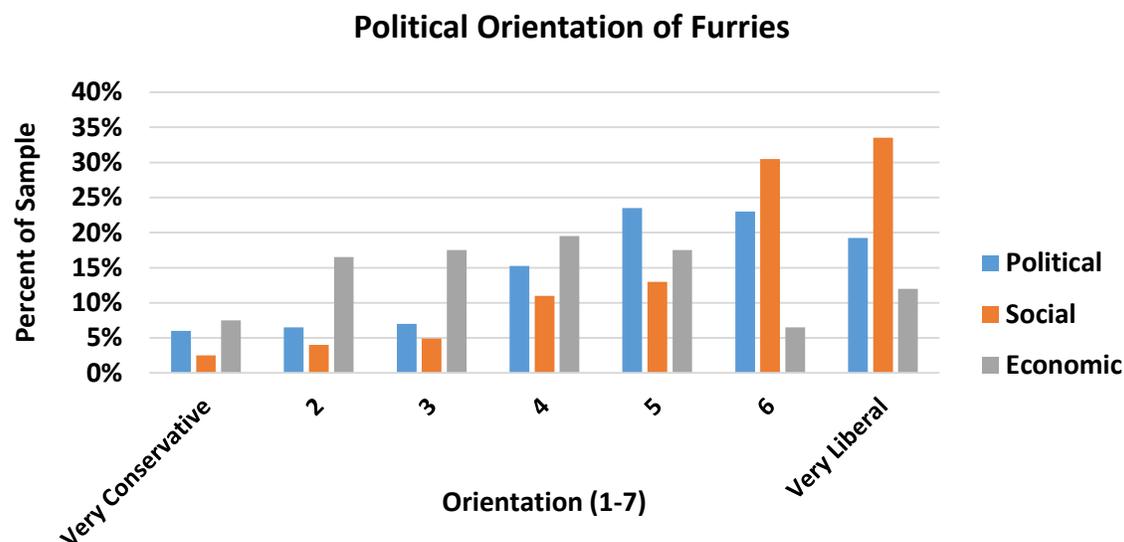
In the figure below, furies' religiosity is compared to other fan groups (F3).

Religiousness of Fan Groups

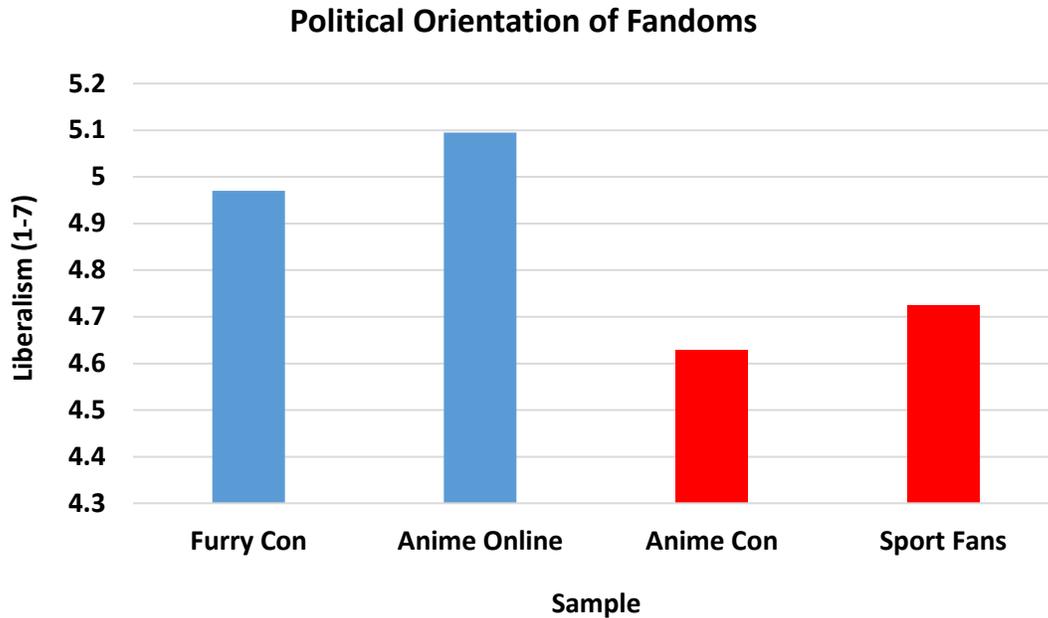


1.9 Political Orientation

In the figure below, social orientation refers to a person's stance regarding social policies (e.g., same-sex marriage, immigration, and abortion). Economic orientation refers to a person's stance on economic policies (e.g., privatized health care, military spending, and welfare). While somewhat related, social and economic orientation are independent constructs. For example, it is entirely possible for a person to be socially conservative (e.g., pro-life) while also being economically liberal (e.g., public health care). Political orientation is more general, and refers to the tendency to identify with a conservative or liberal party.



Furries, as a group, define themselves as quite socially liberal ($M = 6.03$; orange bars; FF13). This is consistent with the diversity and inclusiveness of the furry fandom when it comes to sexual orientation and on issues of gender identity, and the relatively young composition of the furry fandom. Economically, however, furries are much more moderate ($M = 4.93$; gray bars; FF13), and are significantly more conservative when it comes to economic issues than they are when it comes to social issues. Political orientation fell between economic and social orientation, and is likely a composite of the two (blue bars; $M = 5.56$; FF13). Compared to other fandoms (i.e., anime, fantasy sport fans), furries are more politically liberal (see figure below; F3).



In addition to assessing political orientation, we've also assessed global citizenship. Global citizenship is the belief that a person's ingroup—the group of people they belong to—includes all people. It is reflected in items such as concern for people in other countries and consideration of the broader, global consequences of one's behavior. Furies, because of their self-professed open and inclusive nature, scored significantly higher than non-furies the global citizenship scale (5.16 vs. 4.98, $p = .001$).

1.10 Family Structure

When asked whether their parents had ever been divorced, there was no significant difference between furies and non-furies with regard to frequency. On average, furies have 1.7 siblings. Of furies with at least 1 sibling, more reported being the oldest child (47.5%) than either the youngest child (34.5%) or the middle child (18.0%). Approximately 15% of furies reported being an only child. Only 3.8% of furies report having any children, likely owing to their relatively young age or the nature of their relationships (single, non-married, non-committed; AC12). To test this, a potential follow-up question may ask whether furies are interested in one day having children.

Section 2: Fandom Participation

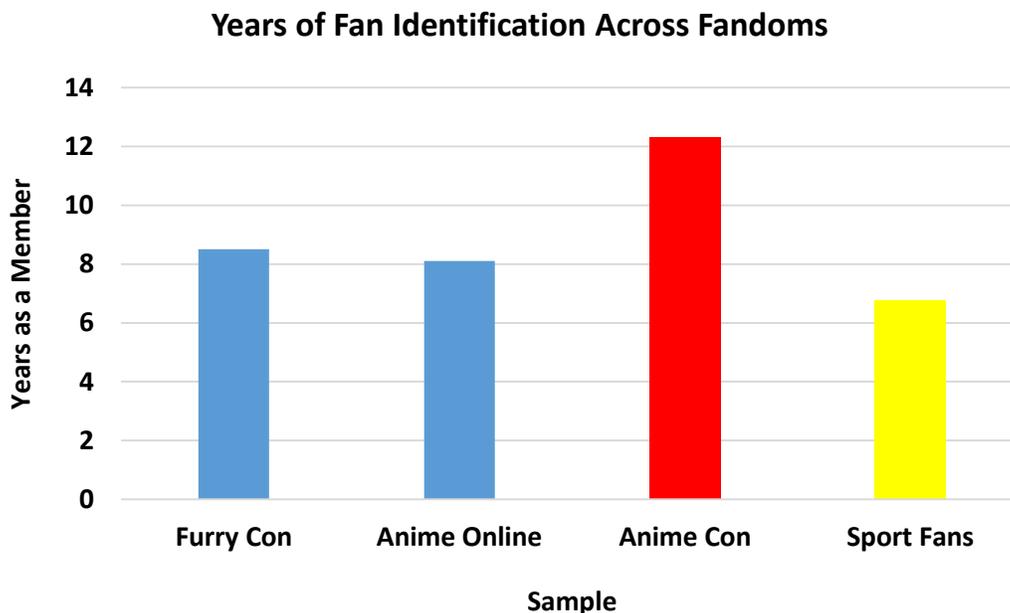
2.1 Time in Fandom

Across numerous studies, we have asked furies three questions pertaining to the length of time they've been associated with the furry fandom: (1) how many years they've self-identified as a furry, (2) at what age did they first self-identify as a furry, and (3) at what age did they discover the furry community? The results of several of these studies are displayed in the table below.

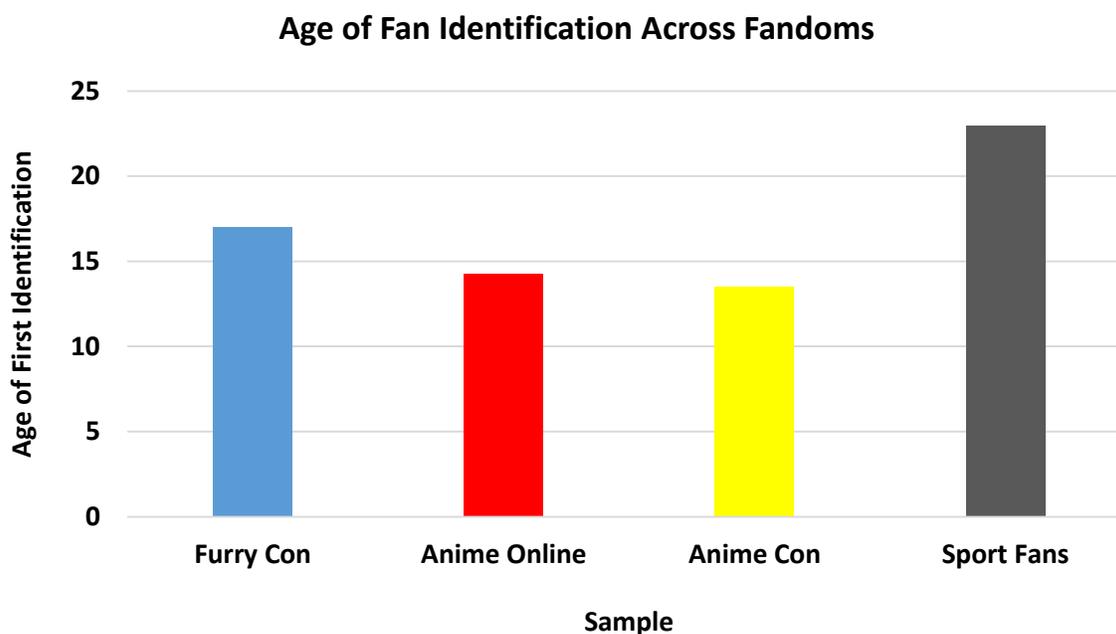
Identification and Affiliation with the Furry Fandom across Multiple Samples

Item	W11	S11	W12	AC12	Range
How many years “furry”	6.6	7.0	7.7	8.6	6.6–8.6
Age first identified as “furry”	16.0	16.8	17.1	17.2	16.0–17.2
Age first found furry fandom	17.1	18.7	19.2	N/A	17.1–19.2

The first row shows that the average furry has been a furry for about 6 to 8 years. This is consistent with the second row, where furies say they began identifying as furies at the age of about 16-17, as well as with our prior findings (see 1.1) that the average furies is in their early-to-mid-twenties. It's also worth noting that the data suggest that there is a 1-3 year gap between the time when many furies discover the fandom/identify as a furry and the time when they become part of the furry community themselves. In focus groups and interviews, many furies report having felt “weird” and “alone” because of their furry interests before finally “stumbling upon” this community of like-minded individuals. We are particularly interested in the immediate and long-term benefits of this discovery on the well-being and self-esteem of those who, up to that point, may have felt stigmatized and alone in their interests, and it is likely to be a topic for future research.

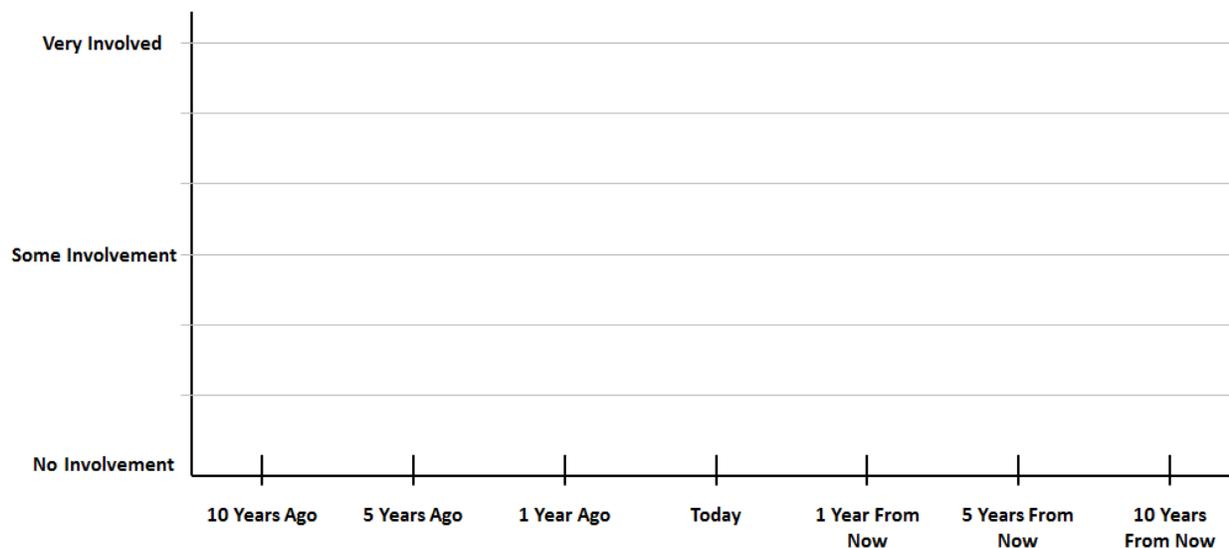


When compared to members of other fandoms (see figure above), furries are comparable to online anime fans with regard to the number of years they've been a fan. These findings can be understood in the context of the below figure: on average, furries become furries in their mid-to-late teens, later than anime fans, who tend to become fans in their early teenage years. This may be due, in part, to the fact that a growing amount of anime television programming is targeted toward a younger audience (e.g., Pokémon), whereas, for furries, the discovery of the fandom is often attributed to stumbling upon it on the internet. In contrast, fantasy sport fans, as a group, don't report becoming interested until well into their 20s (F3).



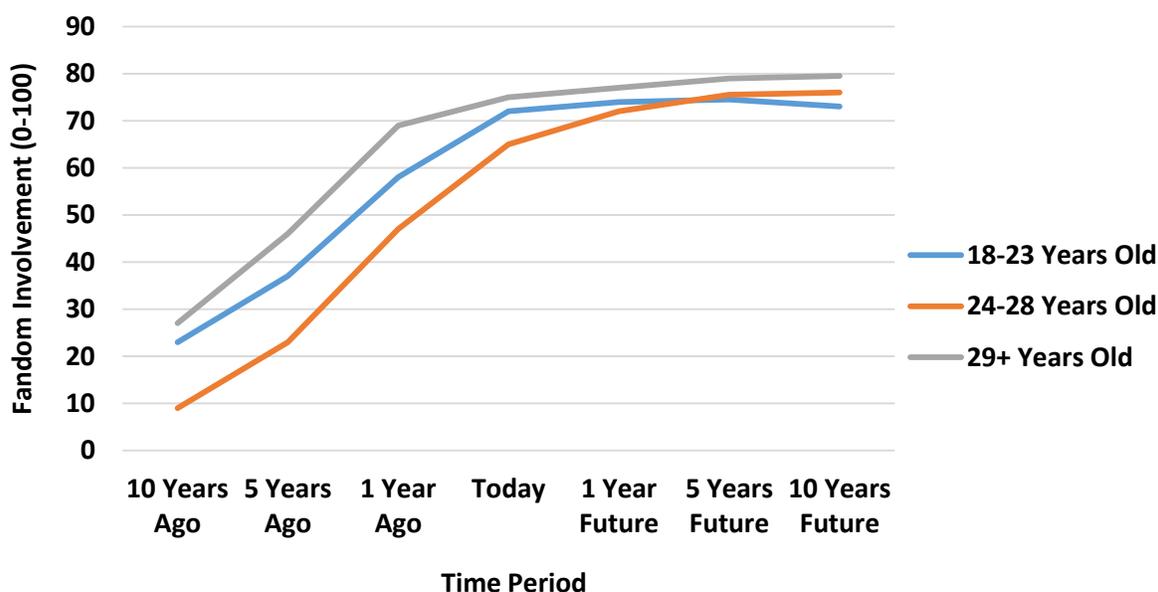
2.2 Fandom Trajectory

In recent years, we've begun asking furrries about their projected trajectory in the fandom. Furrries are asked to draw, on the figure below, a line indicating how involved in the fandom they were at each of the points in time.



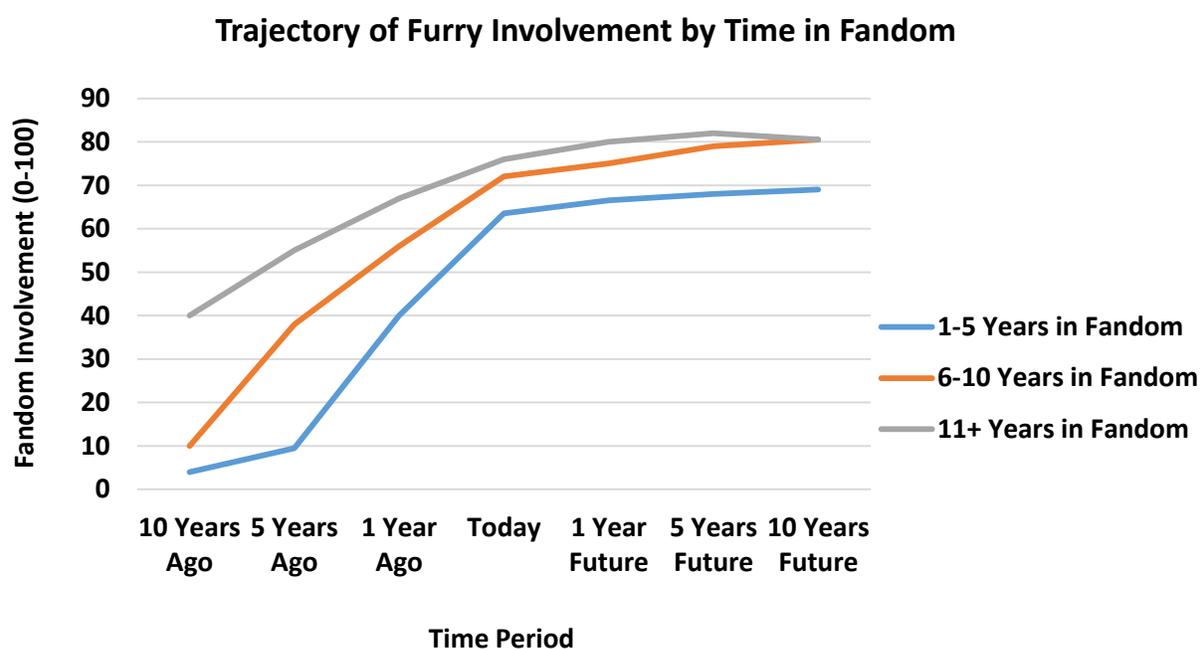
The first uses of this measure were pen-and-paper, requiring our research assistants to use rulers to assign numbers to the level of involvement at each of the seven time points on a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 representing “No Involvement” and 100 representing “Very Involved.” From there, our sample was split into three groups, based on age (see figure below; FF14).

Trajectory of Furry Involvement by Age Group

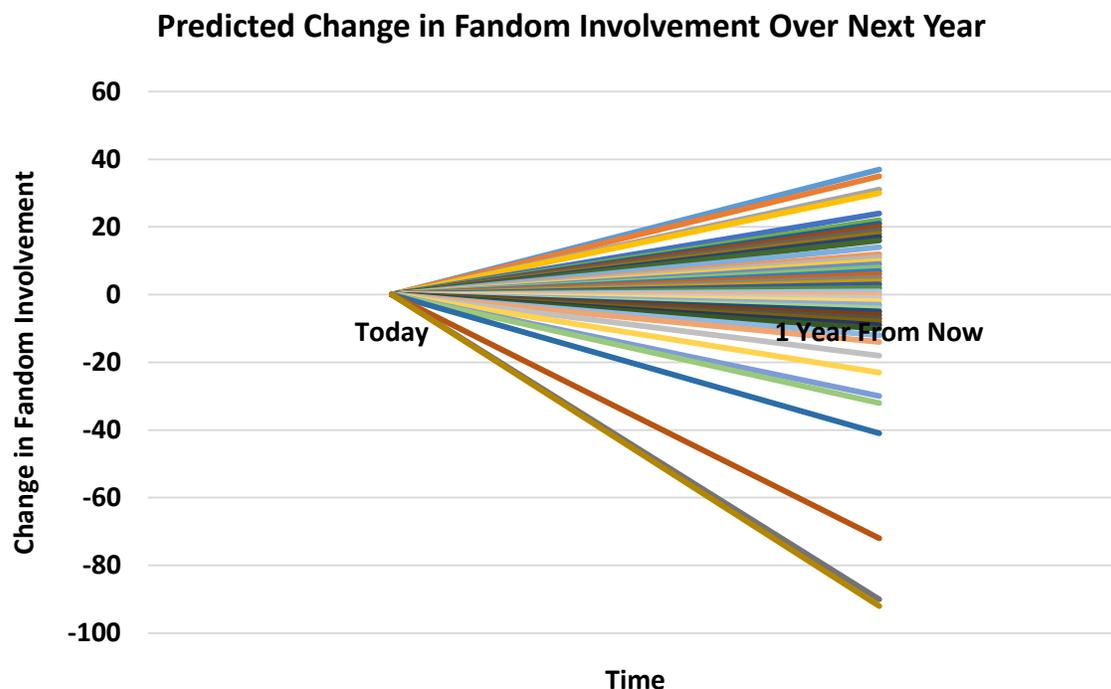


The first noteworthy characteristic of the figure is that most furries are currently highly involved in the fandom. Another is the steady increase in involvement leading up to the present time; most furries indicate some past interest in furry content, which has steadily increased to the present day, regardless of age group. Perhaps most interesting, however, is furries' projection of future involvement: despite evidence suggesting that many furries leave the fandom by their 30s (see 1.1), most furries nevertheless assume that they will maintain their current level of fandom involvement into the future.

We also divided the data based on the length of time participants had been in the fandom (see figure below). A similar pattern was found, with the exception that furries who have been in the fandom for more than 10 years were, unsurprisingly, more involved in the fandom 10 years ago than furries who have been in the fandom for fewer than 10 years (FF14).



On the graph below, we calculated the hypothesized trajectories for all 246 participants in one study. A straight, horizontal line indicates the belief that one's involvement in the fandom will not change in the next year. An upward line indicates a belief that one's involvement in the fandom will increase in the next year, while a downward line indicates a belief that one's involvement in the fandom will decrease in the next year. With only a few exceptions, most furries indicated that they expected their involvement in the fandom to stay about the same or increase in the future (FF14).



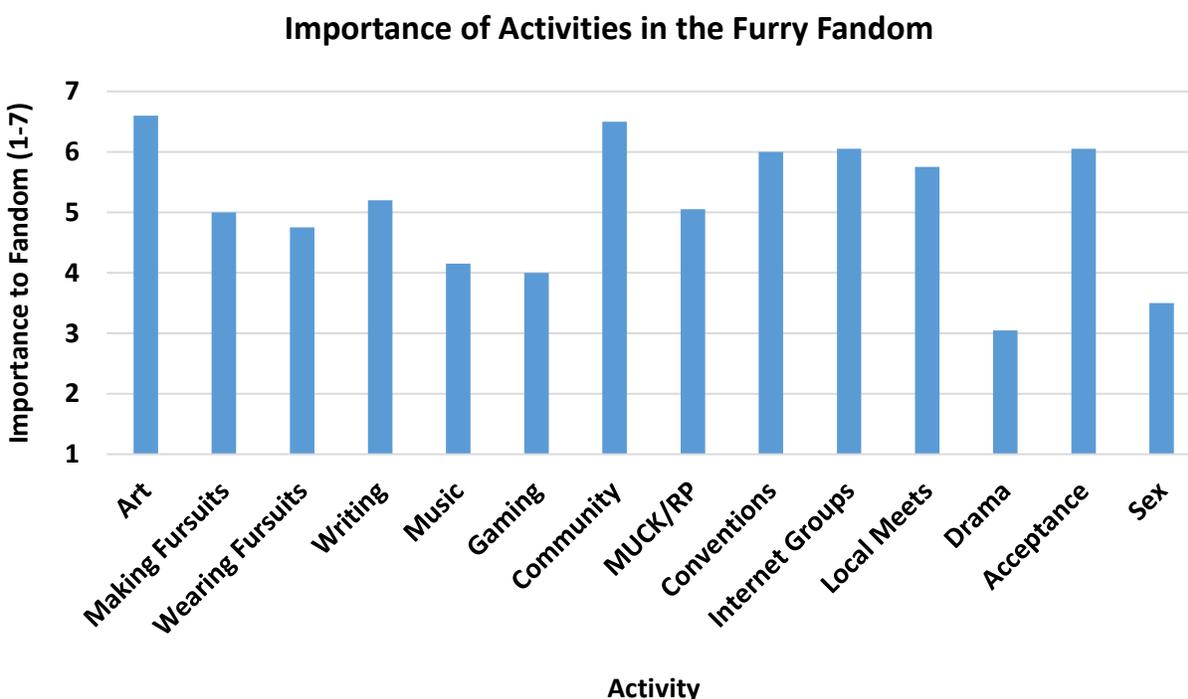
One of the most difficult samples to obtain is a sample of furries who have left the fandom. While we know that many furries do eventually leave the fandom, we have little information about why they do. Given the difficulty of studying furries who have already left the fandom, the next best thing may be to identify furries who anticipate leaving the fandom. In fact, furries' estimates about their anticipated future trajectory positively correlate with their presently-felt identification with the furry community. To put it another way: furries who plan to become less involved in the furry fandom are already identifying less with the furry community (FF14).

In future studies (including our ongoing longitudinal study), we hope to test the accuracy of furries' predictions about their future involvement and to see whether or not expectations of reduced future involvement predict leaving the fandom. To date, we've asked furries in this longitudinal study, over two periods with a year separating them, to indicate how positively or negatively they felt about the fandom on a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating "Very Negative," 100 indicating "Very Positive," and 50 indicating "Neither Negative Nor Positive." There are two competing hypotheses: on the one hand, the data above suggest that furries become more involved in the fandom and anticipate remaining involved in the fandom, which may mean that their attitude toward the furry fandom should become more positive over time. Moreover, psychological theories (e.g., social identity theory) suggest that we are biased to see our groups in a positive manner, which may also lead to more positive attitudes over time. On the other hand, as a person spends more time in the fandom, it may be the case that, like in relationships, they lose the "rose-colored glasses" that bias their perception, and become aware of less desirable aspects of the fandom, which may reduce their evaluation of the fandom over time.

When these competing hypotheses were tested, the data seemed to support the second one: furries in Wave 1 rated the fandom 78.8/100 on average, while the same furries rated the fandom nearly ten points lower, at 69.8/100 approximately one year later, a difference that was statistically significant (FF14). Put simply: furries were more likely to see the fandom less positively the more time they spent in it. However, it's important to remember that furries in Wave 2 did not rate the fandom negative—just “less positive,” supporting the idea that furries “lose the rose-colored glasses,” rather than “starting to hate the fandom.” These findings may contribute to our understanding of why furries may eventually choose to leave the fandom, as having a decreasing opinion of the fandom may make furries less motivated to devote time and energy to it. Ultimately, future research on this subject is needed to test such mechanisms and to discover precisely what affects furries' attitudes toward the fandom.

2.3 Fandom Activities

Given the diversity of the furry community, it is unsurprising that there are disagreements about what constitutes “furry activities”. Based on the suggestions from furries gathered at conventions and fur meets, a list of 14 different furry-related activities was created. We asked participants to identify, on a 7-point scale, the extent to which they believed that each item was a significant part of what furries do (1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*). As the figure below illustrates, there are several activities which are nearly-universal aspects of the fandom (e.g., “Art,” “Community,” “Acceptance;” S11). Contrary to popular stereotypes about the furry fandom, “Drama” and “Sex” were not considered focal or important activities in the furry fandom.



2.4 Popular Artists/Websites

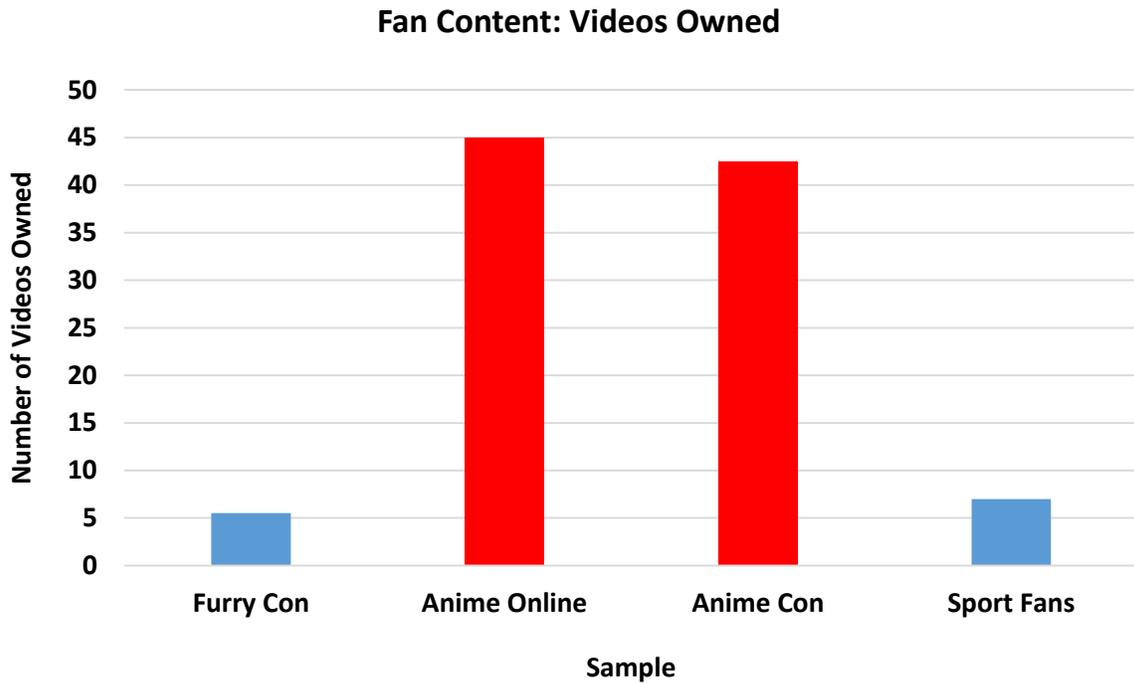
Most Popular Furry Websites and Content Creators

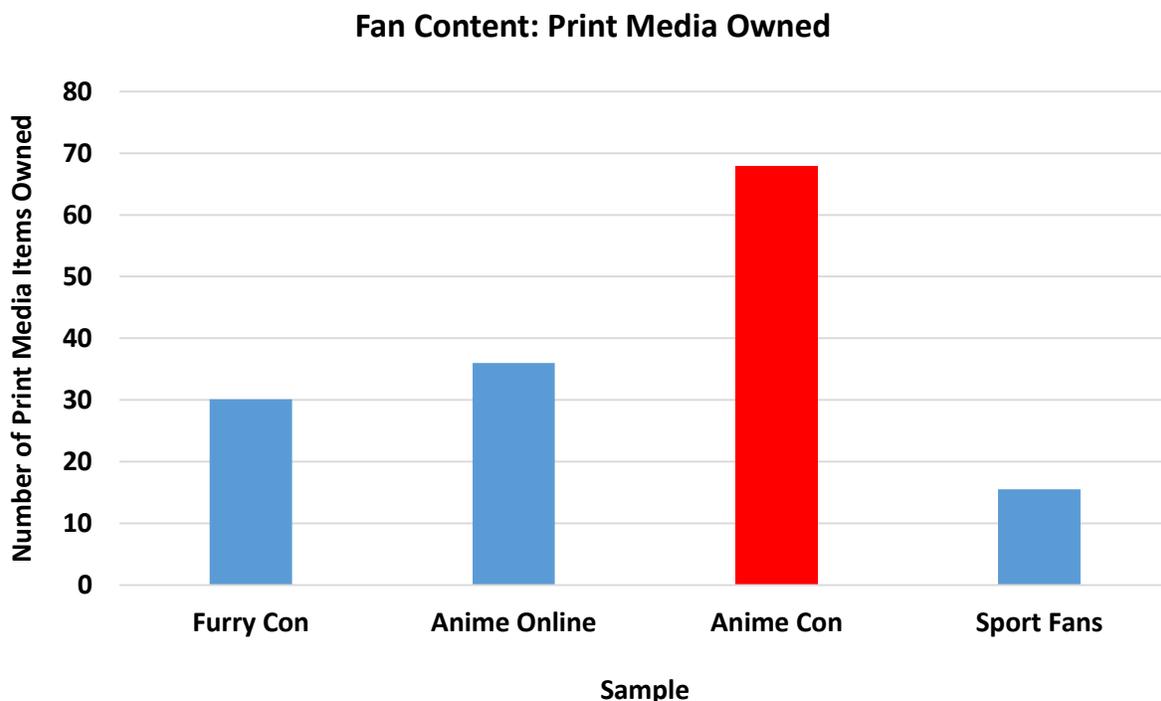
Rank	Website	Artist/Writer
1	Furaffinity	Blotch
2	SoFurry	Dark Natasha
3	e621	Wolfy-Nail
4	DeviantArt	Jay Naylor
5	Inkbunny	Zen
6	Fchan	Red Rusker
7	Wikifur	Tanidareal
8	Funday Pawpet Show	Rukis
9	Bad Dragon	Kyell Gold
10	F-List	Narse

Furries were asked in an open-ended question to write their three favorite furry artists, writers, or websites (AC12). The result was a list of more than 1,100 unique websites and content creators, illustrating the broad range of interests and content in the furry fandom. The 10 most frequently-listed furry websites and content creators from this list is displayed in the table above. The majority of the above websites are art-related, making clear the importance of visual art to many furries. Many of the top sites and artists are also associated with adult-rated material. This is not to say, of course, that the furry fandom is purely sexual or a fetish (for more on this, see 5.4 – 5.7). However, it does provide evidence that adult content is popular in the fandom, rather than something enjoyed by only a small minority of the fandom.

2.5 Furry Media Owned

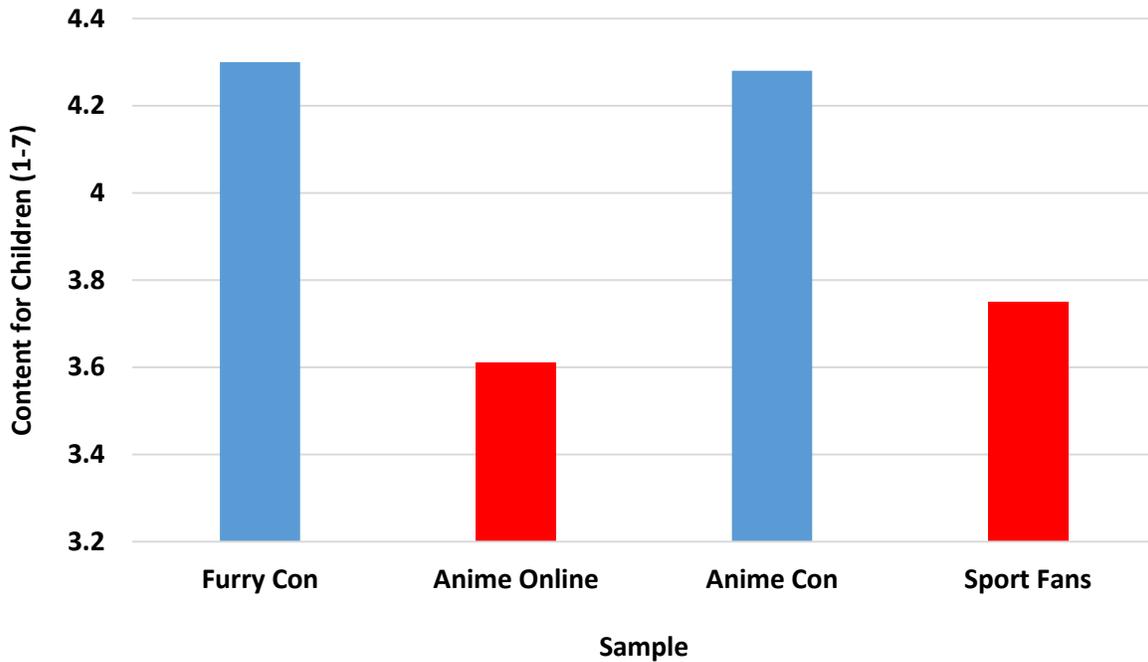
In a series of studies we asked participants from different fandoms (furries, online anime fans, convention-going anime fans, and fantasy sport fans) about the fan-related media they owned. In addition to asking about the amount of each type of media owned, we also asked them to rate the media they owned on several dimensions. The results are displayed in the figures below (F3).





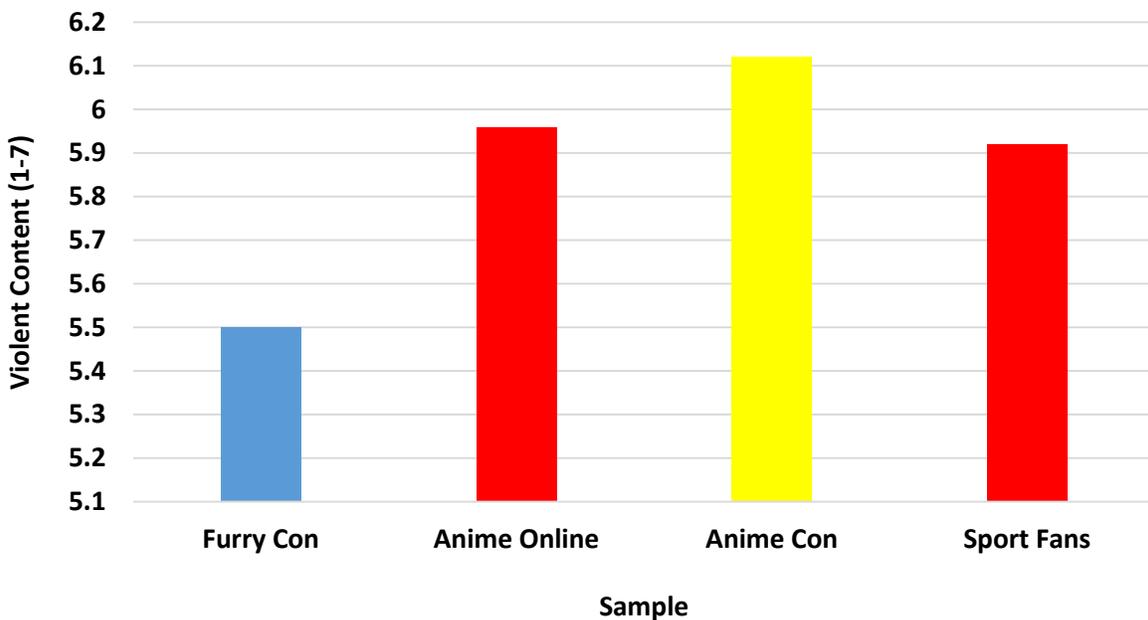
Much of the anime fandom is organized around studios and companies that produce animated television shows and movies. As such, it is unsurprising that anime fans, whether online or convention-going, own far more video-based content than either furies—whose content is largely produced by independent artists—or fantasy sport fans—whose interest in sports manifests as watching games and managing fantasy teams, not collecting and watching videos about sports. In contrast, print media, which includes magazines, books, and visual artwork, are much more prevalent in all three fandoms than videos. In this regard, convention-going anime fans stood out, suggesting that buying manga and artwork may be something more available to convention-going anime fans, who may have more expendable income more than online anime fans. However, this would not account for the difference between convention-going anime fans and furies who, in this sample, were also convention-going. It is possible that the inclusion of “manga” in this category—something present in anime culture but which is largely absent in furry culture accounts for the difference.

Owned Content: Targeted for Children

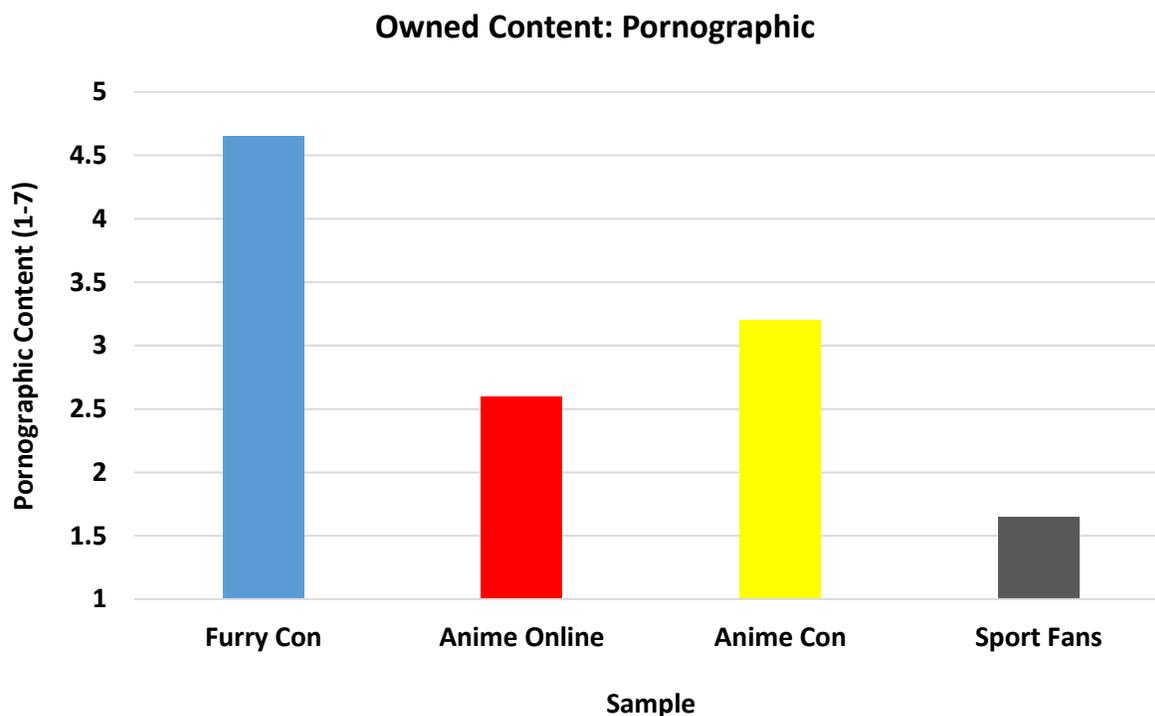


Furries and convention-going anime fans are the most likely to own content that is targeted toward children. Follow-up analyses revealed that, at least for convention-going anime fans, the younger a fan was when they got into the fandom, the more likely they are to own content targeted towards kids. The same was not true for furries. Future research may help to discern the reason for this finding.

Owned Content: Violent



Given the often violent nature of many anime shows (which often feature fighting robots, swords and gunplay, and fighting/martial arts), it follows that, relative to furry participants, anime fans are more likely to own violent content. Similarly, given that aggression is inherent in many sports (e.g., football, hockey), the finding that fantasy sport fans owned more violent content than furies is also unremarkable.

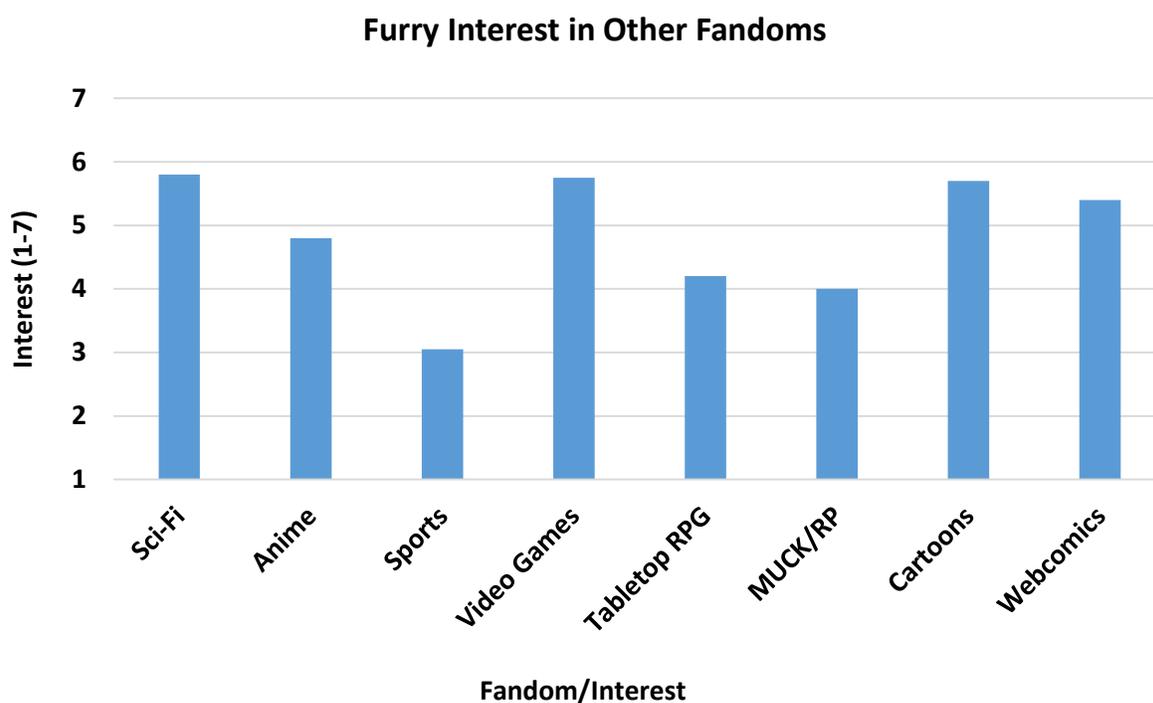


With regard to pornography, furies were significantly more likely than the other groups to own pornography-themed content, nearly always in the form of drawn artwork, often portraying one's own fursona and/or other characters/fursonas. Interestingly, convention-going anime fans are more likely to own pornographic content than online anime fans, perhaps owing to the ability to commission artwork or to being older and more likely to live on one's own (e.g., less parental scrutiny). Given the focus of fantasy sports on sports themselves and team management, it is unsurprising that very little content in this fandom would be deemed "pornographic."

2.6 Related Fandom Interests

Given the diversity of the furry fandom, as illustrated by the number of different panels at furry conventions, as well as the potential for overlap between the furry fandom and related fandoms, we tested the extent to which furries were members of other fan groups or had an interest in other fan groups.

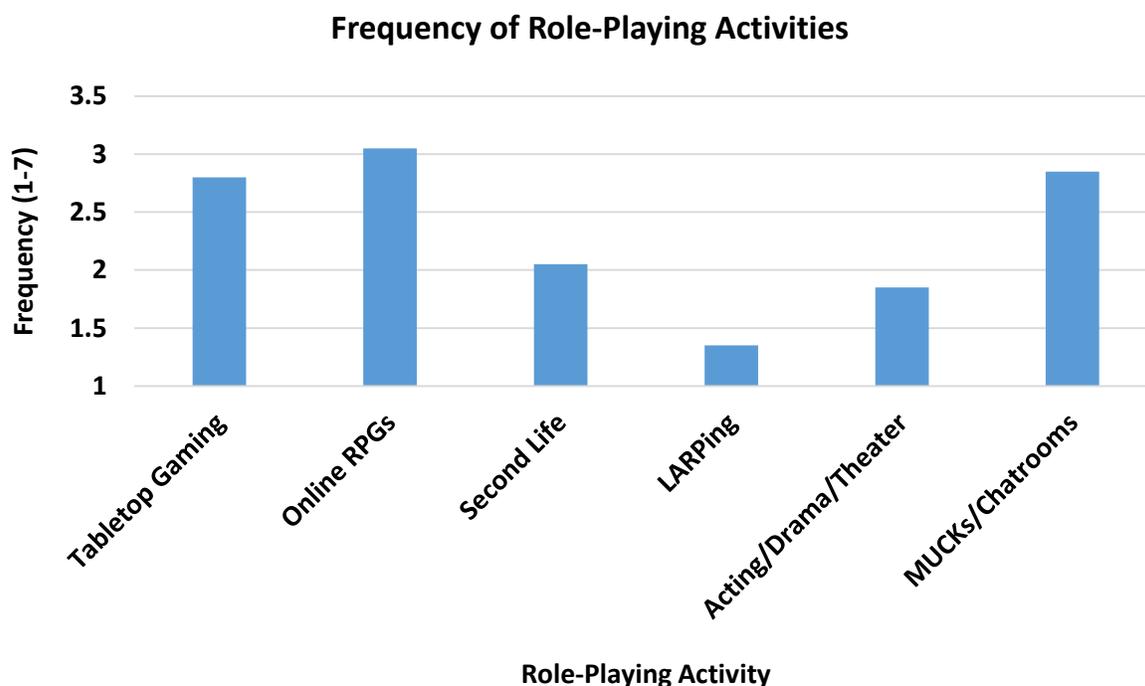
In one study (S11), we asked furries to indicate, on a 7-point scale, their interest in a number of related fandoms (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). As the figure below illustrates, there were a wide range of interests, though some (such as science fiction, video games, cartoons and webcomics) were more common than others (e.g., sports).



In another study (F3) we asked furries whether or not they identified as members other fan communities. Nearly half of furries (44.0%) were anime fans, and about 1 in 5 were bronies (fans of *My Little Pony*, 21.1%). Consistent with the findings above, only 10.5% of furries considered themselves to be sport fans.

2.7 Roleplaying

Given the nearly universal nature of fursonas (see Section 3), which involve creating a character to represent oneself, we were interested in the extent to which furies engaged in other role-playing activities. Specifically, we asked furies to indicate, on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *all the time*) how frequently they engaged in various role-playing activities. From the table below, it's apparent that no one activity was distinctly popular or universally engaged in (S13). That said, tabletop gaming, online RPGs, and role-playing in MUCKs and chatrooms seemed to be among the most popular roleplaying activities for furies.

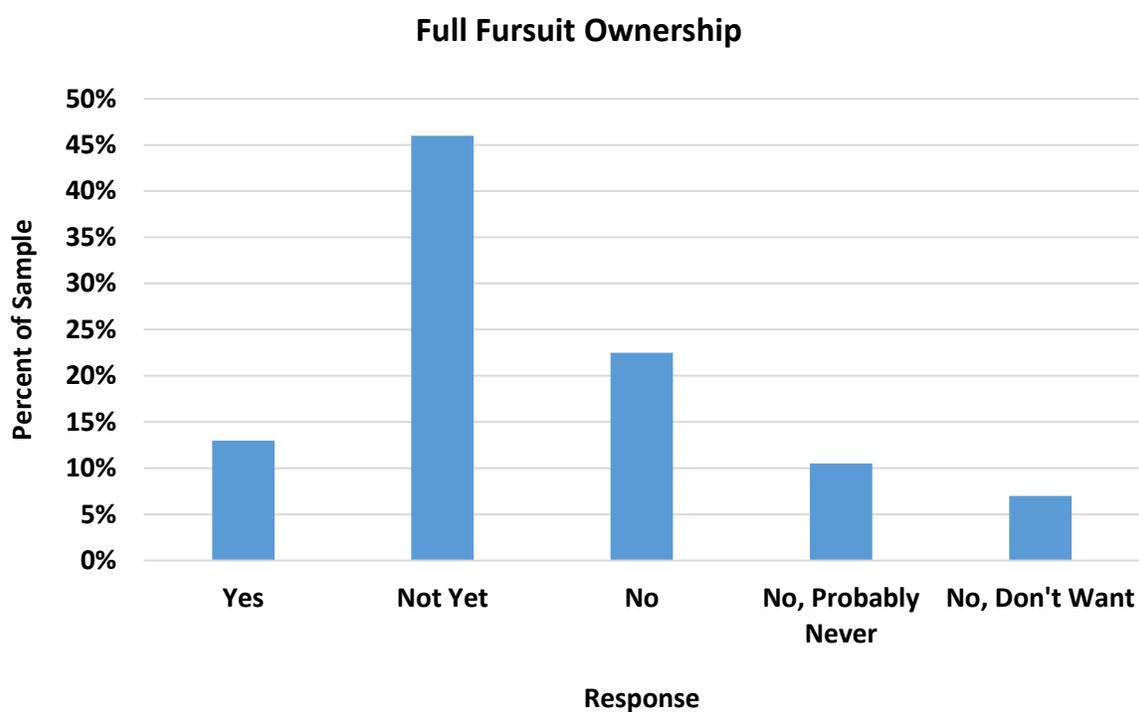


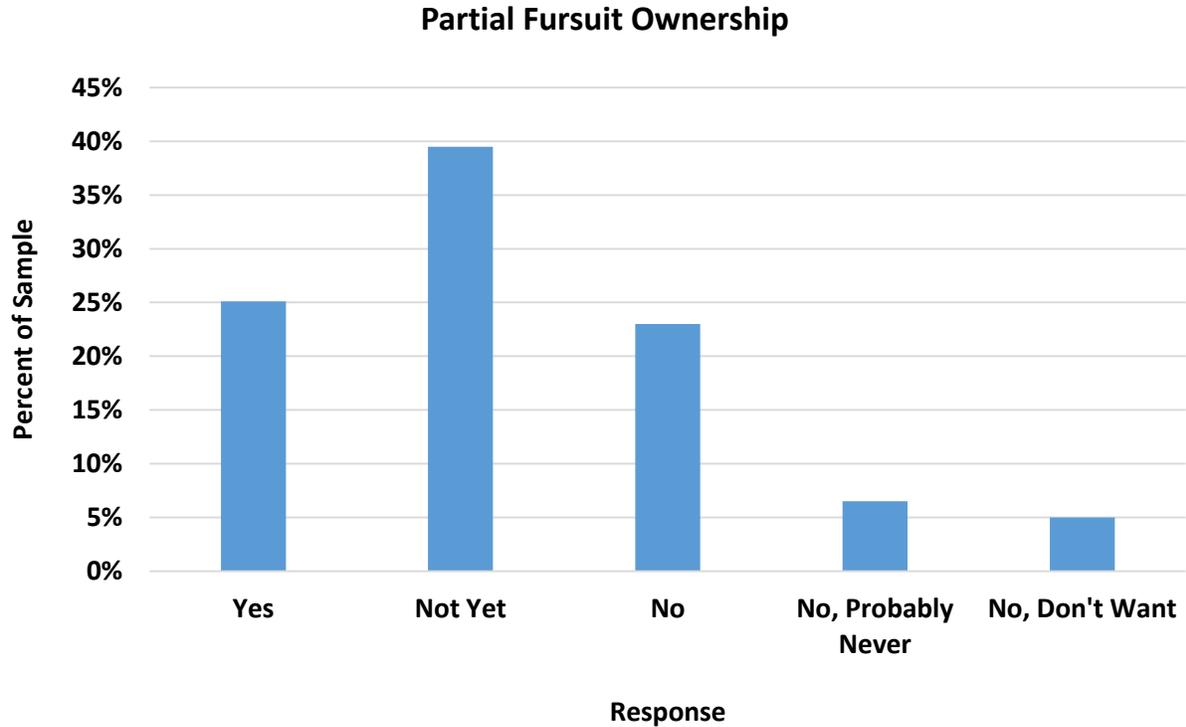
Follow-up analyses conducted found that the more strongly a person identifies as being furry, the more they engaged in roleplaying activities. Those who more strongly identified as a furry were also more likely to say that they were easily transported into the worlds of fictional narratives. Taken together, and in conjunction with other findings (see 9.2), furies, as a group, seem to more readily and often immerse themselves in fiction. This may be due to the regularity with which furies interact with others as their fursonas, although the reverse is also possible: furies may find it natural to put themselves in the mind of their fursonas because they easily immerse themselves in fictional worlds.

2.8 Fursuits

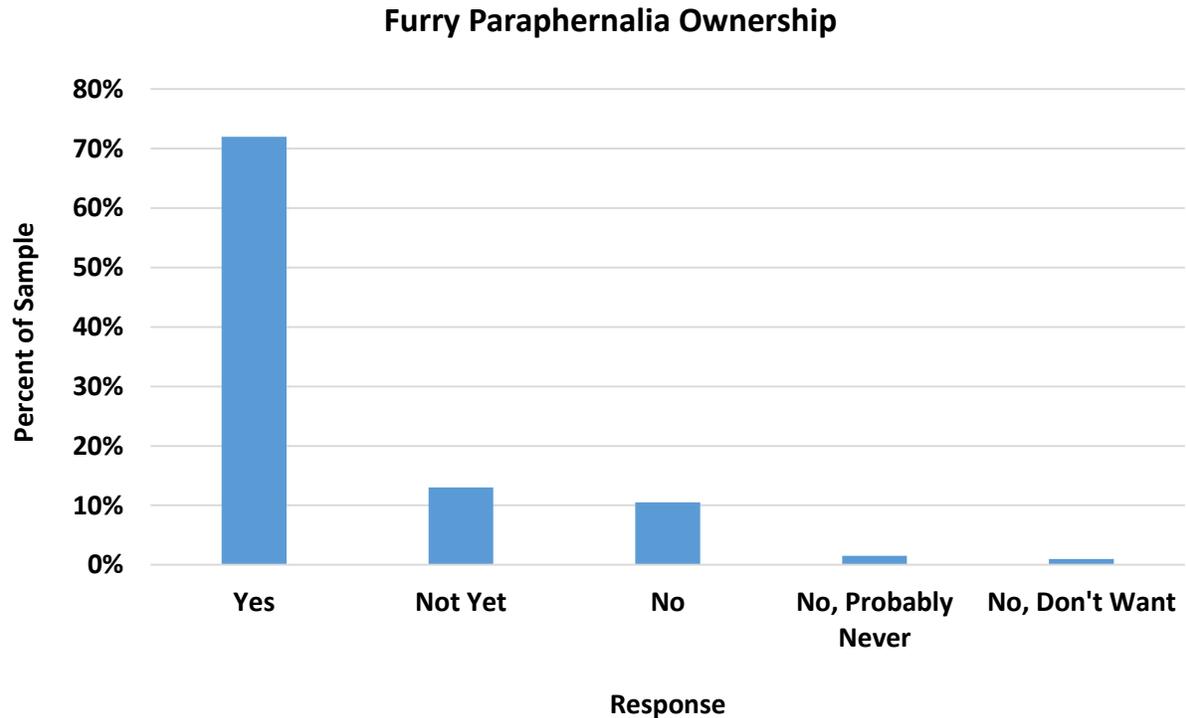
In popular culture (and sometimes in the furry community itself), furies are often reduced to “fursuiting,” with furies being defined as people who wear these anthropomorphic animal suits. It should be noted that fursuits are, for many furies, prohibitively expensive and require intensive time and skill to create and, as such, there are many furies who, despite wishing to own a fursuit, are unable to. Moreover, there are many furies whose interest in furry content simply does not manifest itself as a desire to dress up in a fursuit. Despite this, furies are routinely conflated with fursuiters, a misconception we aimed to test empirically.

In one study (S11), participants were asked whether they owned a full fursuit (defined as including a head, paws, torso and tail, where applicable), a partial fursuit (defined as owning at least two or three of the above items), or owned furry paraphernalia (ears, tail, paws, clothes, buttons, etc.). Specifically, they were asked, for each item, whether they owned it, did not yet own it (but intended to), did not own it, did not own it and probably would never own it, or whether they did not own it and did not want to own it. The results are displayed in the figures below.





The results indicate that only about 10-15% of furries actually owns a fursuit (though the results also indicate that far more—nearly 50%—are interested in acquiring one). Additionally, only about 25% of furries owns a partial fursuit (with many more interested in owning a partial fursuit in the future). The data, therefore, dispel the common misconception that furries are all fursuiters.



The figure above also reveals that while most furies do not own a fursuit, most furies do, however, own wearable indicators of their furry identity (S11). In a subsequent study, we assessed the popularity of specific pieces of furry paraphernalia (FF14). The most popular (and among most frequently worn) accoutrements were tails, though it's worth noting that, even then, fewer than half of furies owned one. Those who owned fursuits wore them regularly (e.g., at conventions/events), which is consistent with the cost and resources required to acquire or create a fursuit.

Ownership of Different Furry-Themed Accoutrements

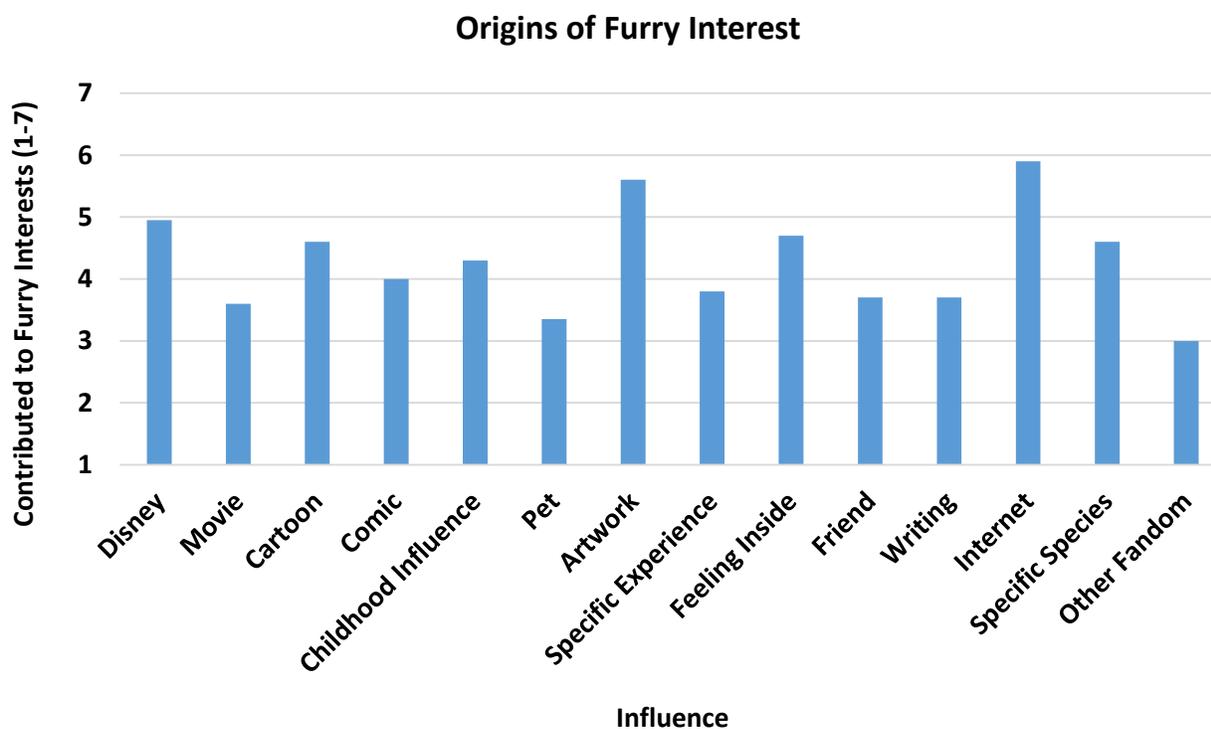
Item	% of furies who own	% of owners who regularly wear
Ears	27.3	62.6
Tail	48.1	78.0
Paws	25.9	50.2
Head	16.7	47.3
Fursona's Clothing	34.3	82.2
Wings	1.9	26.3
Accessories	36.6	79.8
Partial Fursuit	18.5	72.4
Full Fursuit	13.0	85.4

2.9 Origins of Furry Interest

People—whether they’re furries, the media, or inquisitive observers—often ask for an explanation of where furries come from. Specifically, they want to know how a person’s interest in furry (and their willingness to seek out the furry community) came to be. To answer this question, we’ve asked furries about the origins of their interests in a multitude of ways.

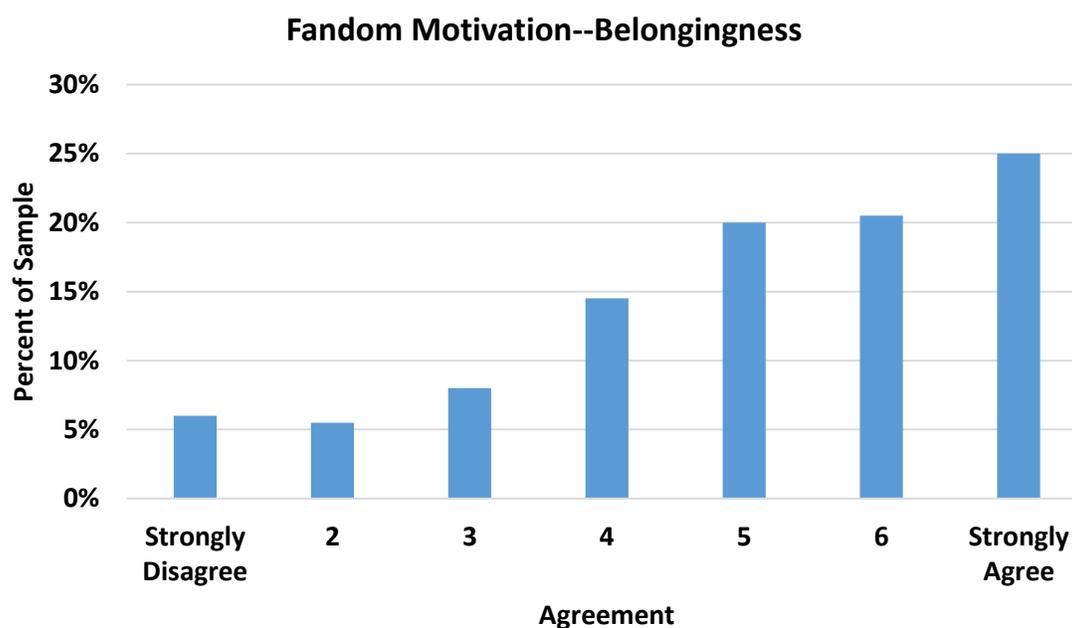
In one study, we asked whether furries’ interests were driven primarily by a feeling inside of them (often expressed by statements such as “I just always was a furry” or “I was a furry, I just didn’t know it”), or whether it was something they discovered based on external influence (often expressed by statements such as “A friend introduced me to it and I was hooked” or “I discovered furry on the internet and wanted to be a part of it;” S11). Results found 45% of furries said it was both—a combination of something within them and a catalyzing exposure to the furry community. About 33% said it was solely an outside influence, while 22% said their interests came solely from within them (3% said it was neither).

Some furries were able to identify a specific instance, experience, or influence that sparked their furry interests. For these furries, we asked them to indicate, on a 7-point scale, the extent to which different factors influenced their furry interests (1 = *not at all an influence* to 7 = *very important influence*; see figure below; S11). While some factors were more common (e.g., the internet, a feeling inside, exposure to artwork) or far less common (e.g., having a pet, another fandom), it seems that there are a myriad of forces that spark furries’ interests, and that no one factor “causes” furries to be furries.



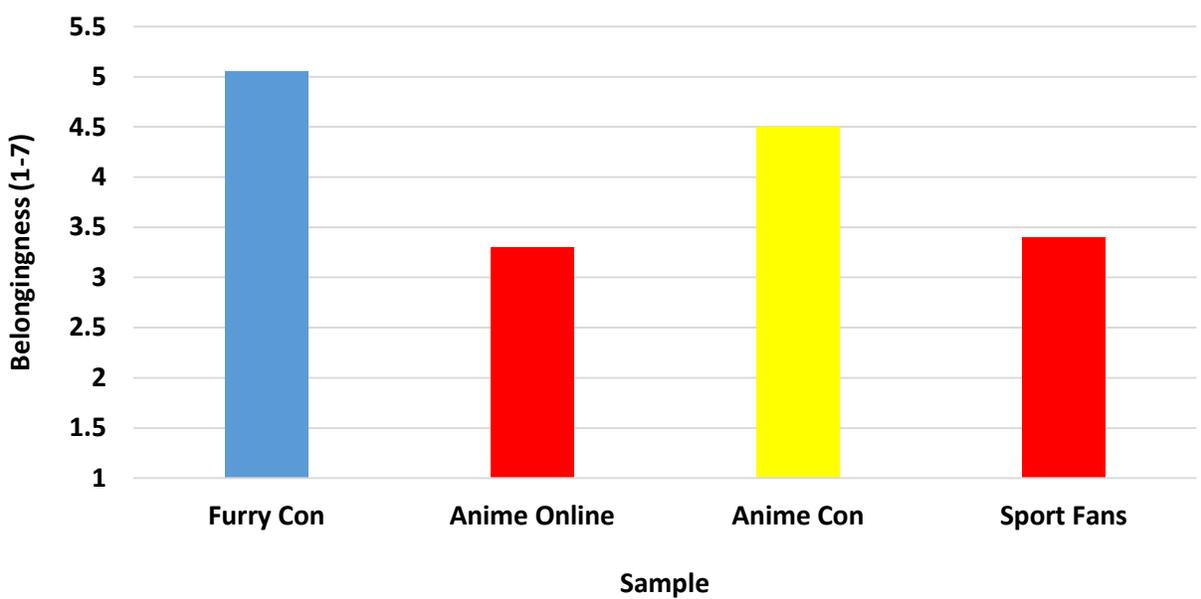
2.10 Furry Motivation

There are numerous reasons to participate in the furry community, and if you asked furries why they participate in the fandom, you would get dozens of explanations. Fandom researchers argue, however, that fandoms fulfill many different psychological functions, and that fandoms with dramatically different content (e.g., sports vs. science fiction) may, nevertheless, fulfill similar functions: the need to belong, self-esteem, entertainment, attention, even a psychological need for sex. To test this hypothesis, we asked furries whether they agreed or disagreed that each of several different factors contributed to their motivation to participate in the furry community (W11). The results are displayed in the figures below, with each figure representing a different psychological need, and the bars representing the percent of participants who agreed, to varying degrees, that fulfilling that need was an important component of their fandom participation. Figures with very high bars on the right side provide strong evidence that satisfying that particular need is a powerful motivator for most furries.

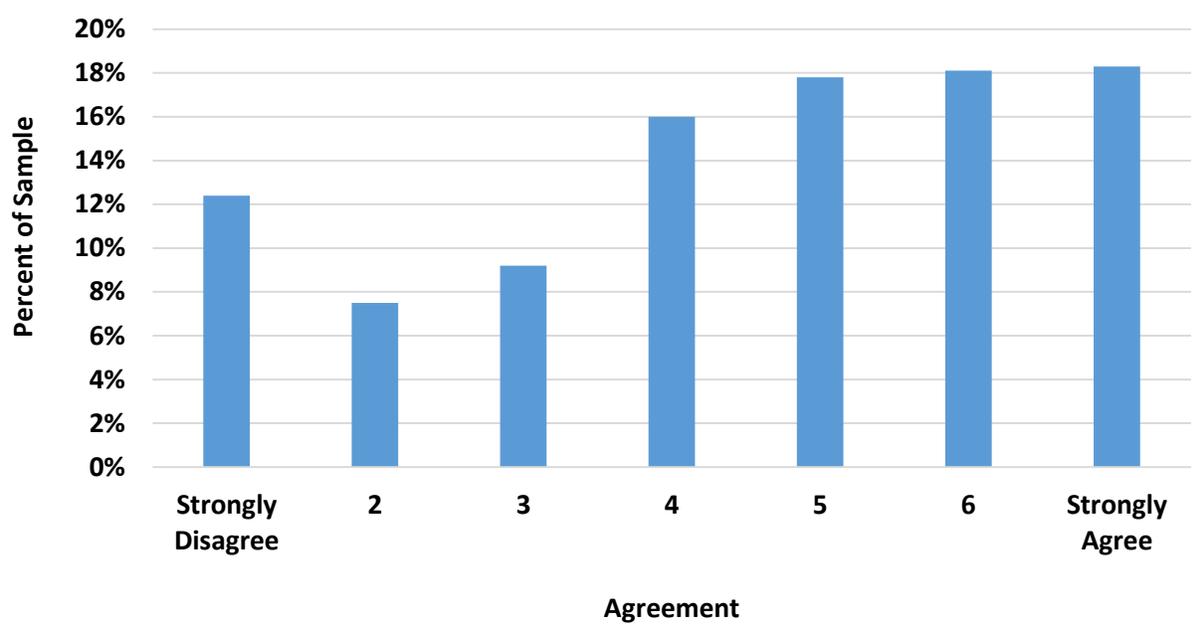


For the most part, furries agree that the furry fandom fulfills a need to belong to a group (S11). In fact, the figure below suggests that belongingness is a stronger motivator of fandom participation for furries than for members of other fandoms (F3).

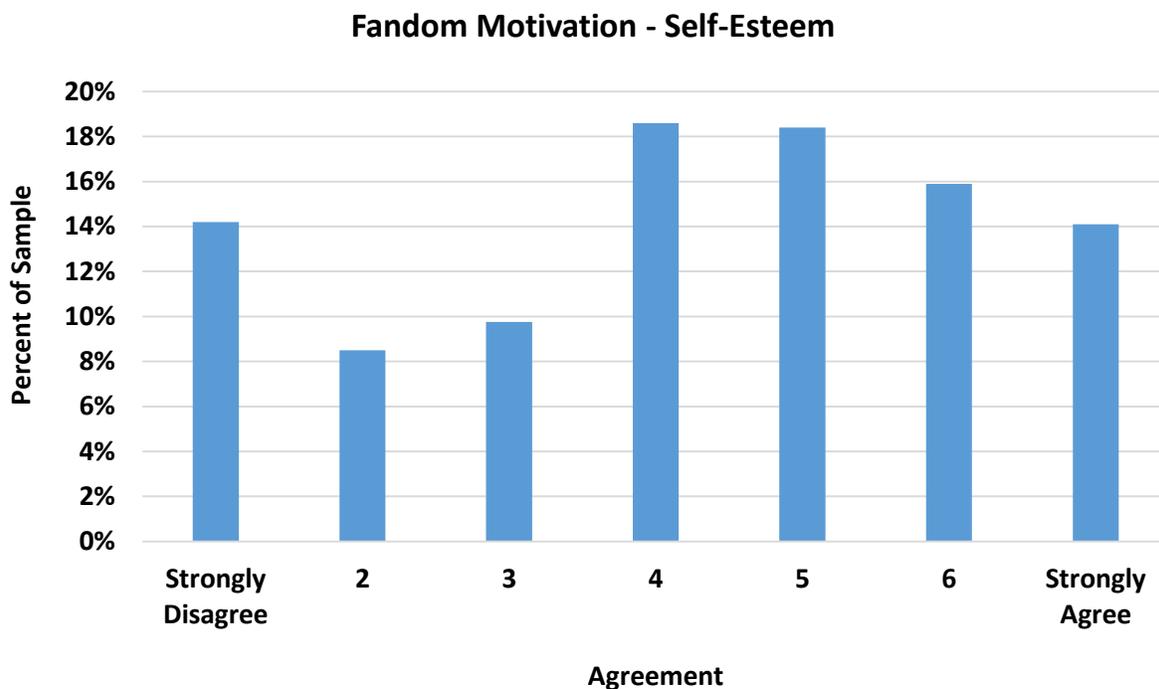
Fandom Motivation - Belongingness



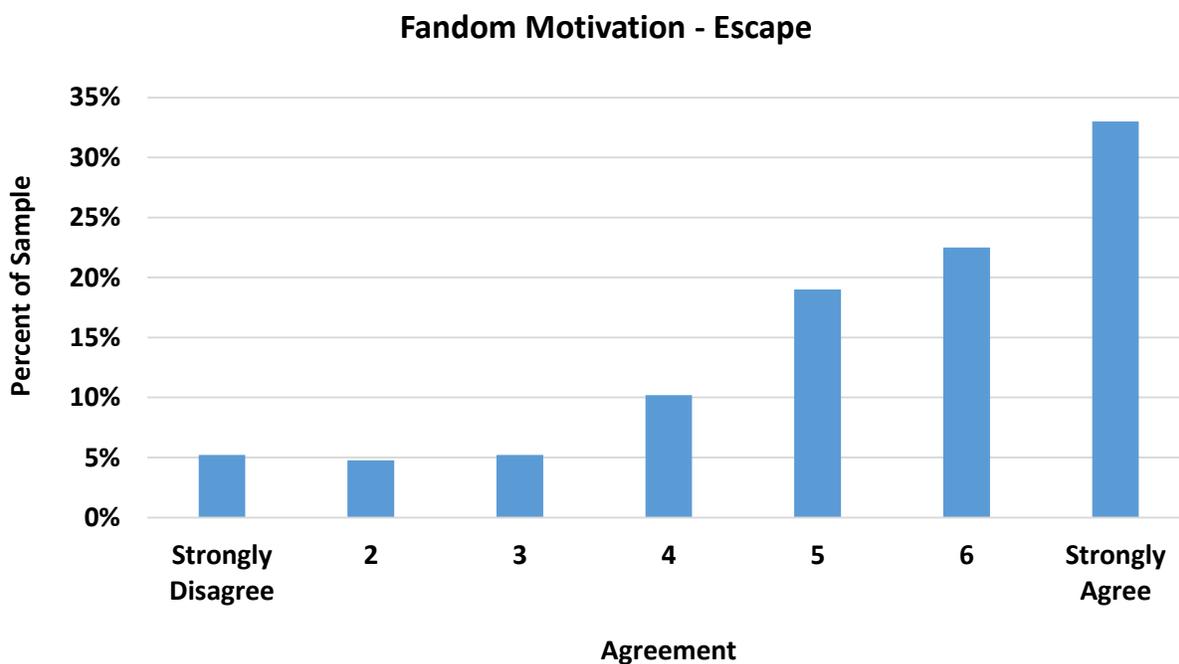
Fandom Motivation - Aesthetic (Beauty)



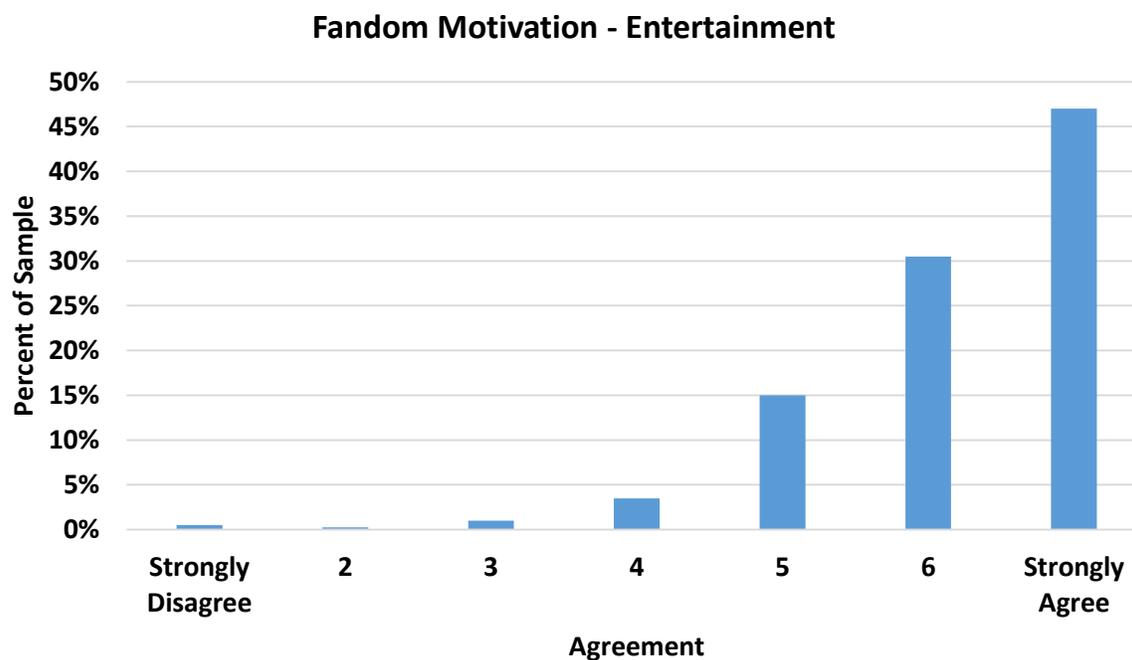
Whether the fandom fulfills a need to appreciate beauty seems to be contentious; about 50% of furries agree that being a furry provides a sense of beauty and aesthetic to their lives (most likely in reference to the art, writing or other creative works of the fandom). The spike on the left side of the figure, however, suggests that 10-20% of furries strongly to moderately disagree with this idea. This may represent therians or others for whom artwork is not the main draw of the community, but who are instead drawn to by the opportunity to be with like-minded individuals (S11).



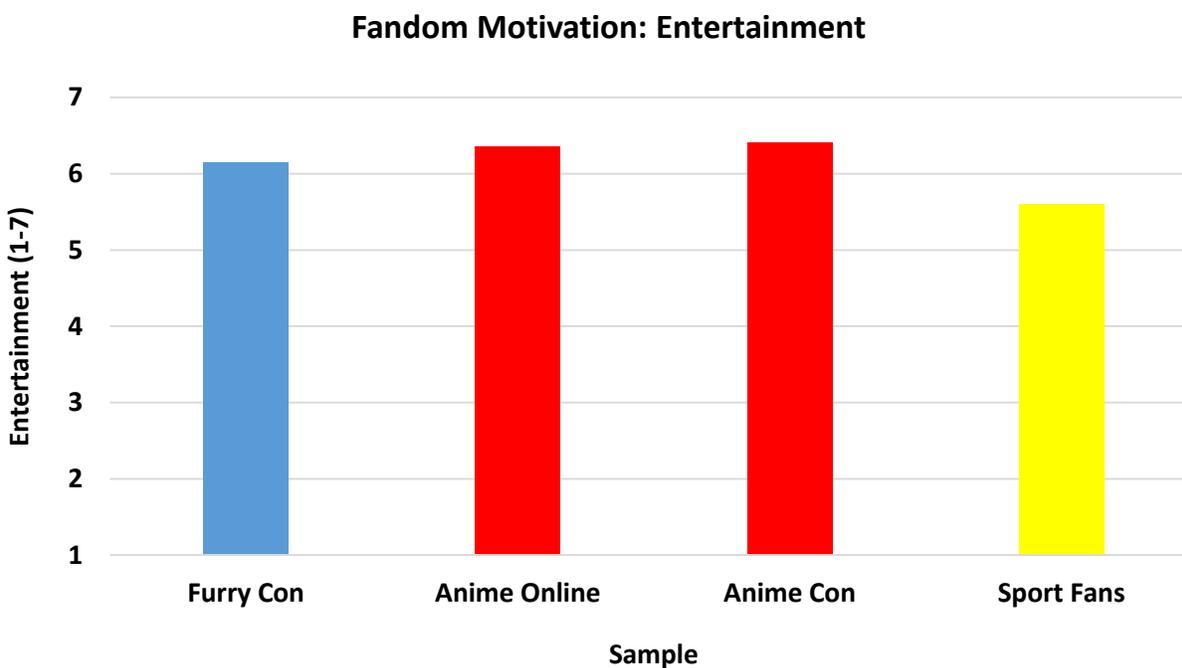
Similarly, there is a lot of variability about whether the fandom's relationship to their self-esteem is a motivator for their participation. For many furies, participation in a community seems to be motivated, in part, by its association with their self-esteem (presumably improving it). However, for almost as many furies the opposite is true—that participation in the furry community is not at all motivated by their self-esteem. It's possible that the stigma associated with being a furry (see 10.2) may make it difficult for the fandom to positively contribute to some furies' self-esteem (S11).

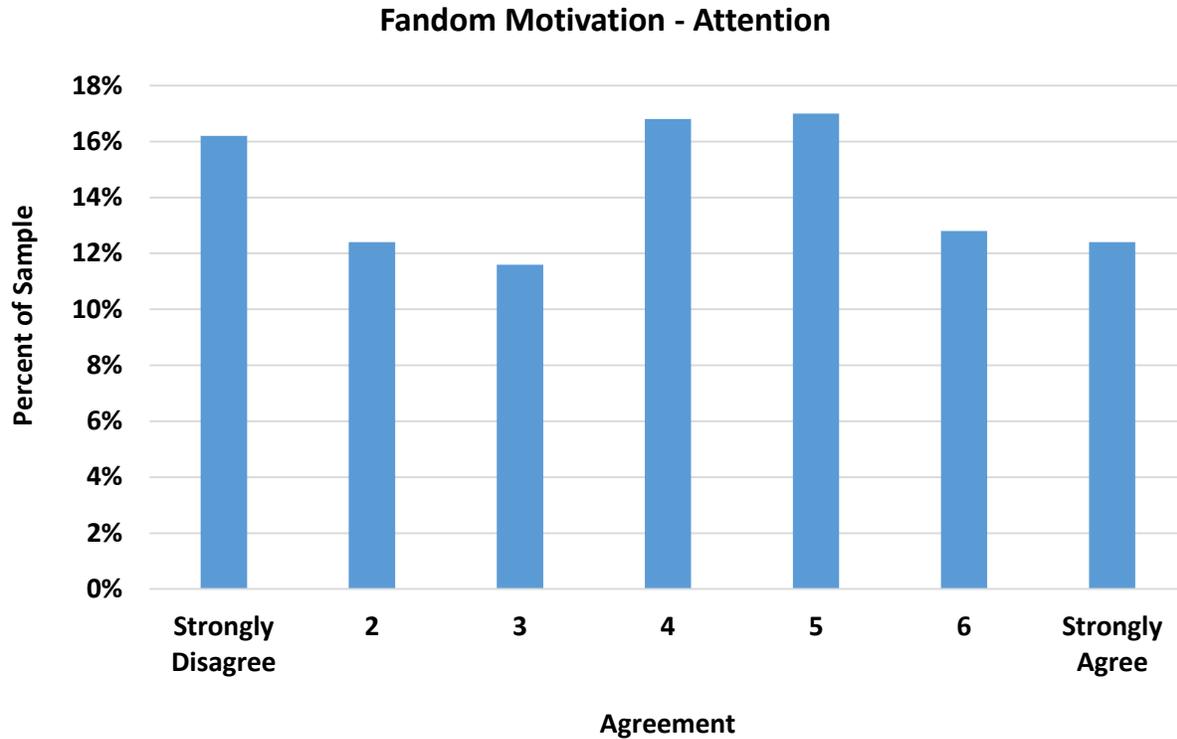


Most furries agree that their fandom participation is motivated, at least in part, by the fact that it allows them the chance to escape the routine, possibly “boring” nature of day-to-day life (S11).

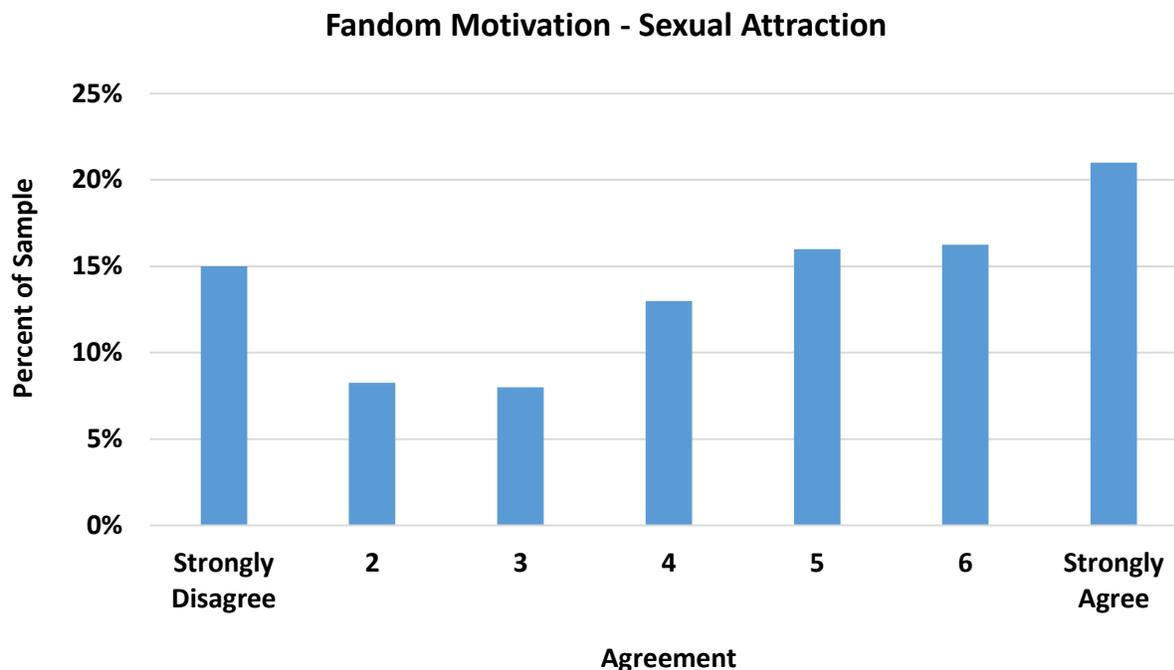


There is little disagreement from furries about the fact that the fandom’s recreational nature is a significant motivator for participation (S11). These findings are comparable to other recreational fandoms, although furries are slightly less motivated by the fandoms entertainment value than anime fans (F3).



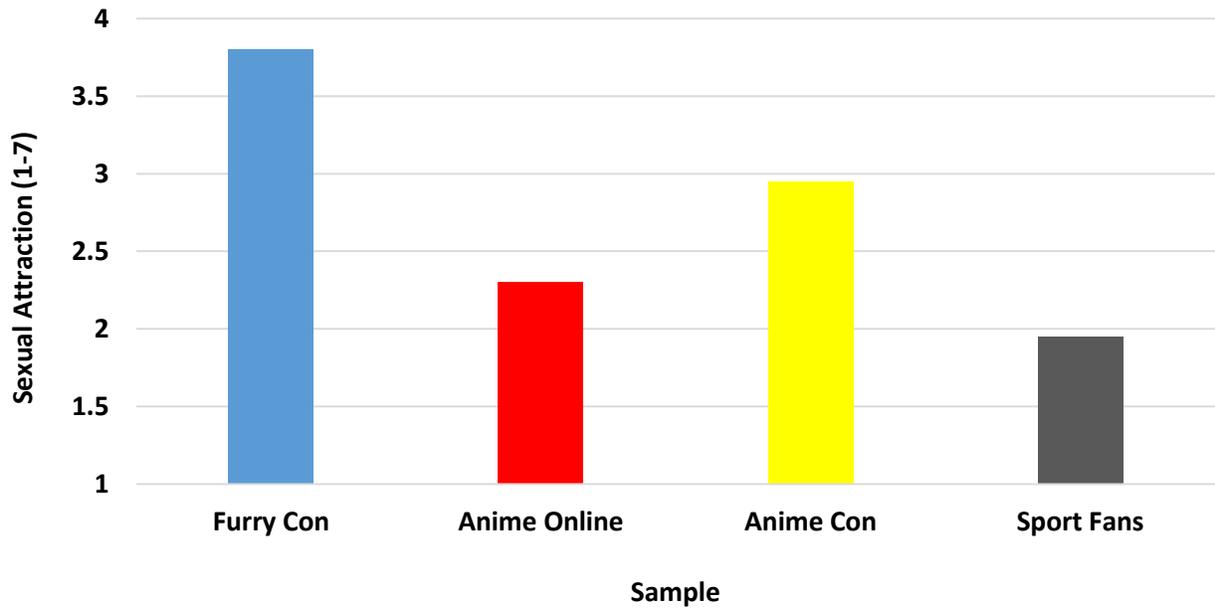


Some stereotypes of furries claim that they are people who crave attention. The figure above suggests, however, that this is not necessarily the case. Furries demonstrate great variability in their assessments of whether or not getting/seeking attention is an important motivator of their furry interests, with nearly 30% of furries strongly or moderately disagreeing that attention has nothing to do with why they are a furry, while 25% agree or strongly agree that attention is an important part (S11).



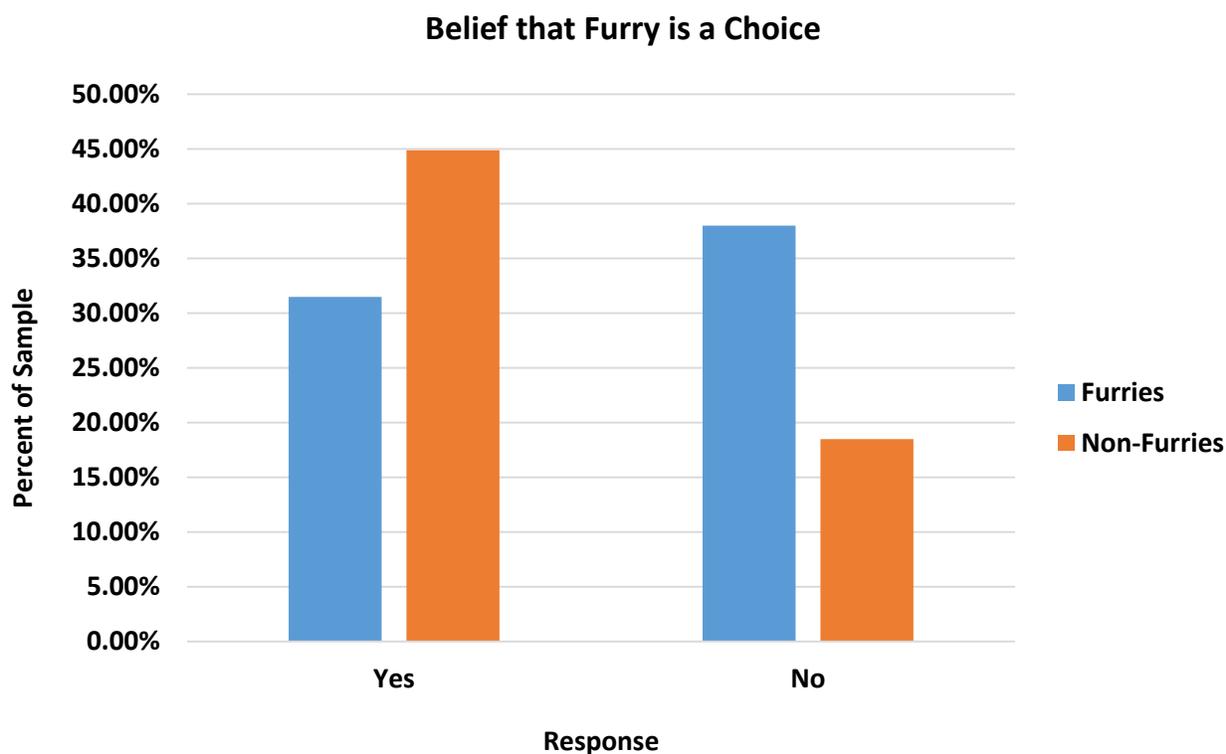
While stereotypes often exclusively portray furries as people with a fetish, the data (figure above) suggest more variability of responses; while about 23% of the fandom states that sexual attraction has nothing or very little to do with their furry interests, about 37% of respondents stated that sexual attraction to furry content is a motivator of their participation (S11). The figure below also illustrates that, compared to other fandoms, furries are more likely to be motivated by sex (F3). However, two caveats should be noted: first, the importance of sex is below the midpoint of the scale (less than 4 out of 7), suggesting that “more important” is not the same as being “very important.” Second, and perhaps more importantly, sex, as a motivator, was far lower for furries than either belongingness or entertainment, suggesting that while sex is certainly a motivator for some furries, it is not the primary motivating factor for *most* furries. This is also why it is factually incorrect to define the furry fandom as a “fetish”—were this the case, one would expect sex to be a primary motivator of furry interests with little variability in the data (like the response distribution for entertainment).

Fandom Motivation: Sexual Attraction



2.11 Furry as a Choice

We asked furies and non-furies whether they believed that someone has control over whether they are a furry or not, with the options of “yes,” “no” or “I don’t know.” In the figure below, furies were twice as likely as non-furies were to say that furry was *not* a choice (W11). This may highlight a potential point of tension between furies and non-furies who may hold negative attitudes toward furies: to the extent that non-furies believe that a person who chooses to be furry could simply “stop being furry” to avoid social stigma, they may feel even more negatively about that person. Conversely, to the extent that a furry feels that they are unable to change who they are (i.e., what they find interesting), they may feel powerless against stigma or feel compelled to conceal their furry identity (see 10.1).

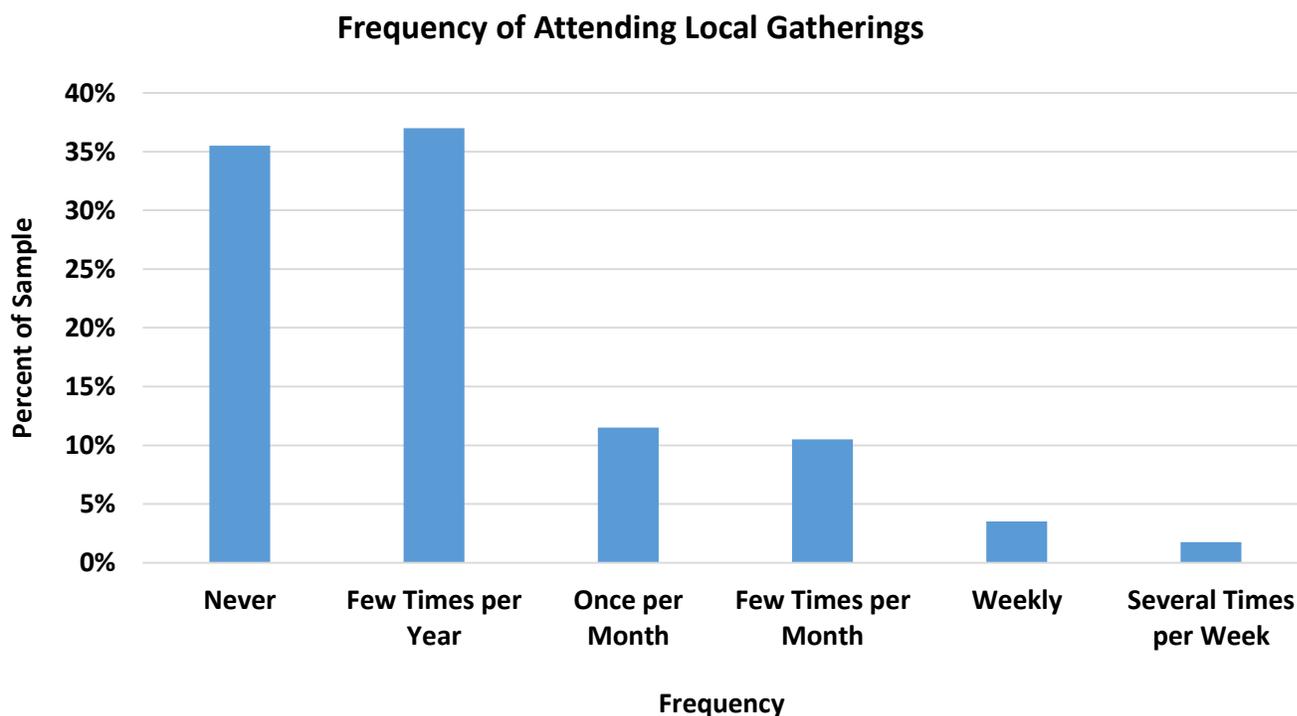


2.12 Social Interaction

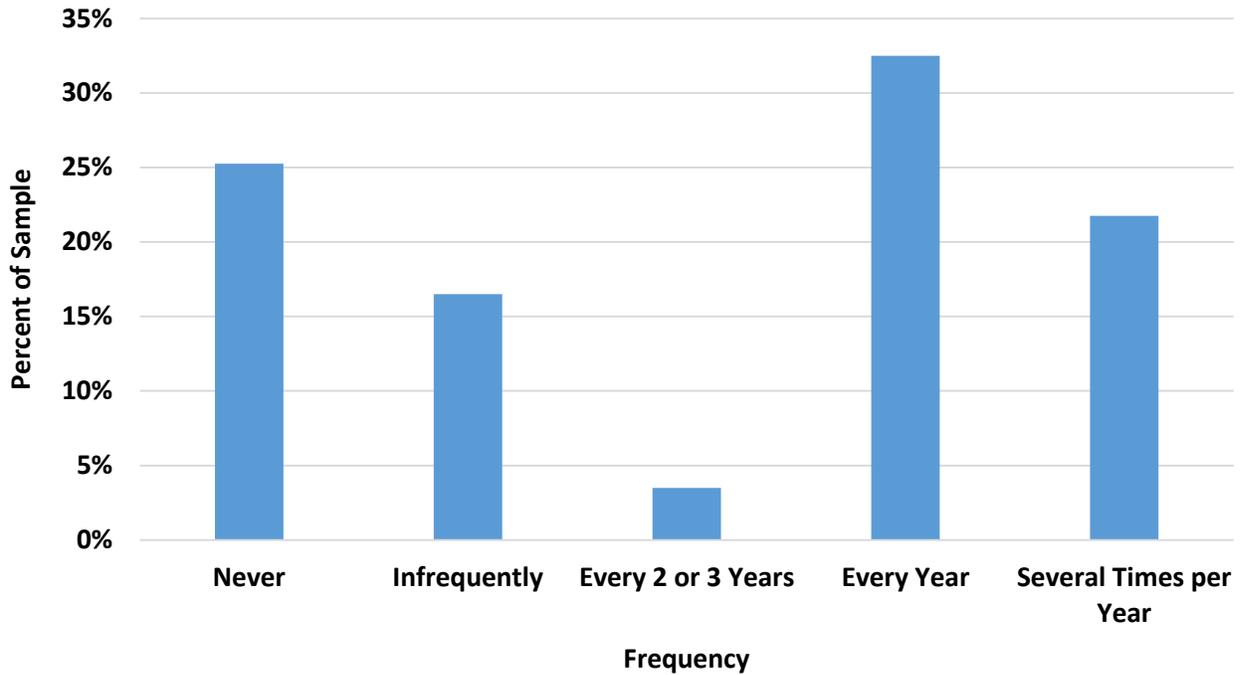
Given the importance of belongingness and community to the furry fandom (see 2.3, 2.6, 2.10), we felt it was important to study the ways in which the furry community maintained this sense of community—that is, the way they interacted with one another. After all, despite the relative rarity of furies (compared to the population in general) and the geographical diversity of the fandom (international in scope), furies nevertheless maintain a strong, closely-knit community.

In one study, participants rated their agreement on a 7-point scale with a number of items (1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*) about the nature of their interaction with the furry community (S11). They indicated that the majority of their interactions with other furies were online ($M = 5.55$) as opposed to at local furmeets ($M = 2.98$) or conventions ($M = 3.16$). Additionally, many furies agreed that the majority of the furs they knew did not live in the same city as they did ($M = 5.08$).

The same participants were also asked a series of questions assessing the frequency with which they interacted with furies in a number of different contexts. About 25% of furies regularly attended a local furry meet-up, while 50% of furies regularly attended furry conventions, though the sample was obtained from a combined online and convention-going population.

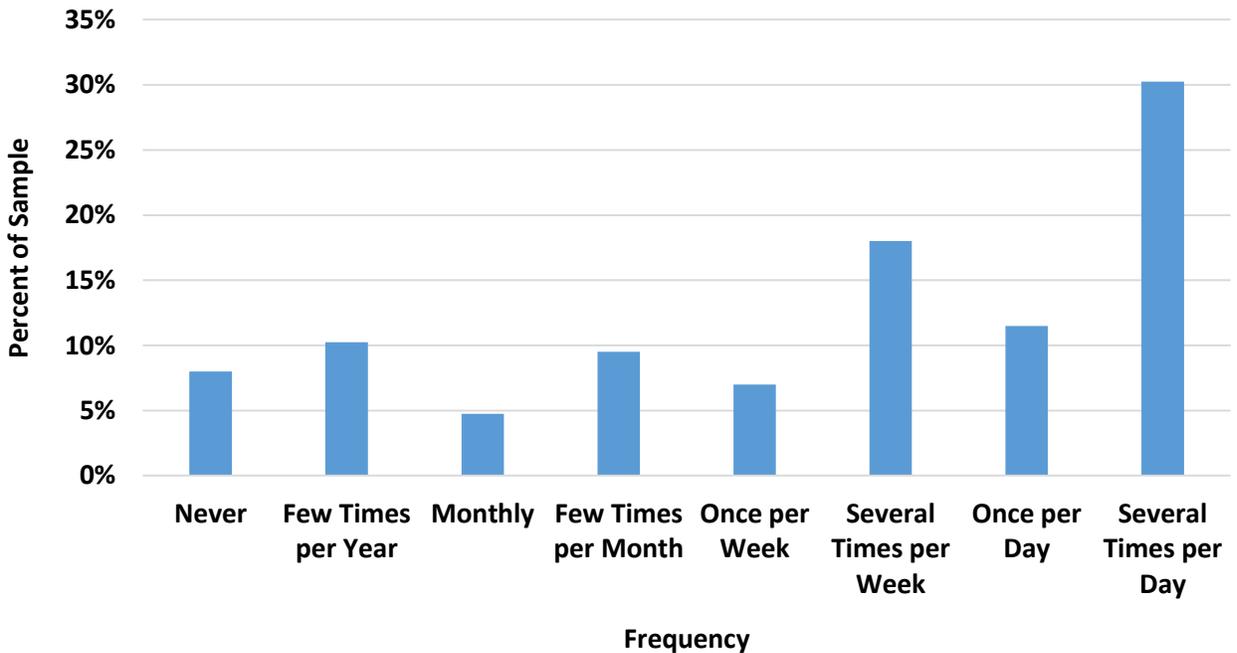


Frequency of Attending Furry Conventions

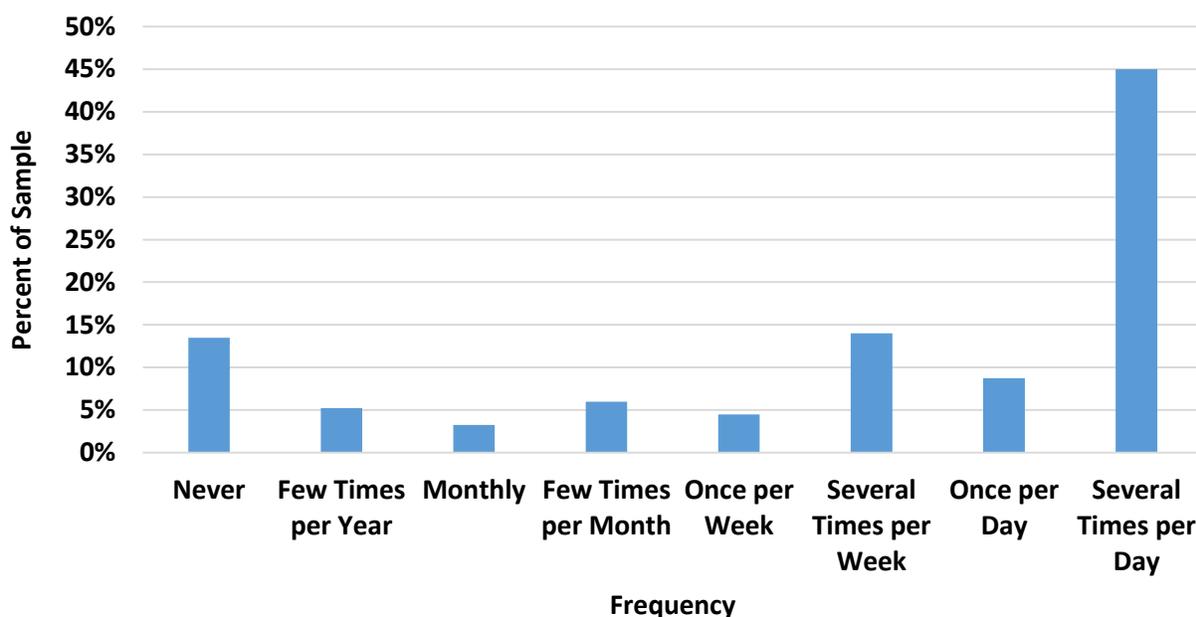


Evident from the tables below, the majority of furies' interactions are online, either through instant messaging programs, or online forums.

Frequency of Online Interactions with Furies

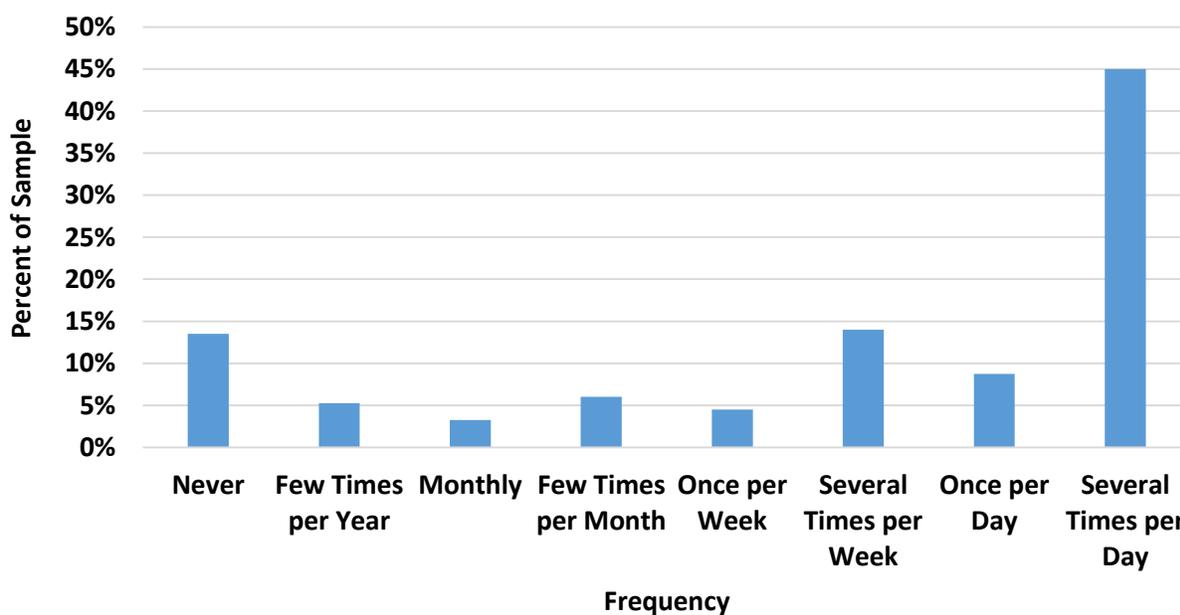


Frequency of Instant Messaging with Furies



Finally, we found evidence that approximately 40% of furies interacted with one another with at least some frequency on sites such as Second Life or IMVU; daily online interactions were a part of the social lives of 15-20% of furies.

Frequency of IMVU or Second Life with Furies

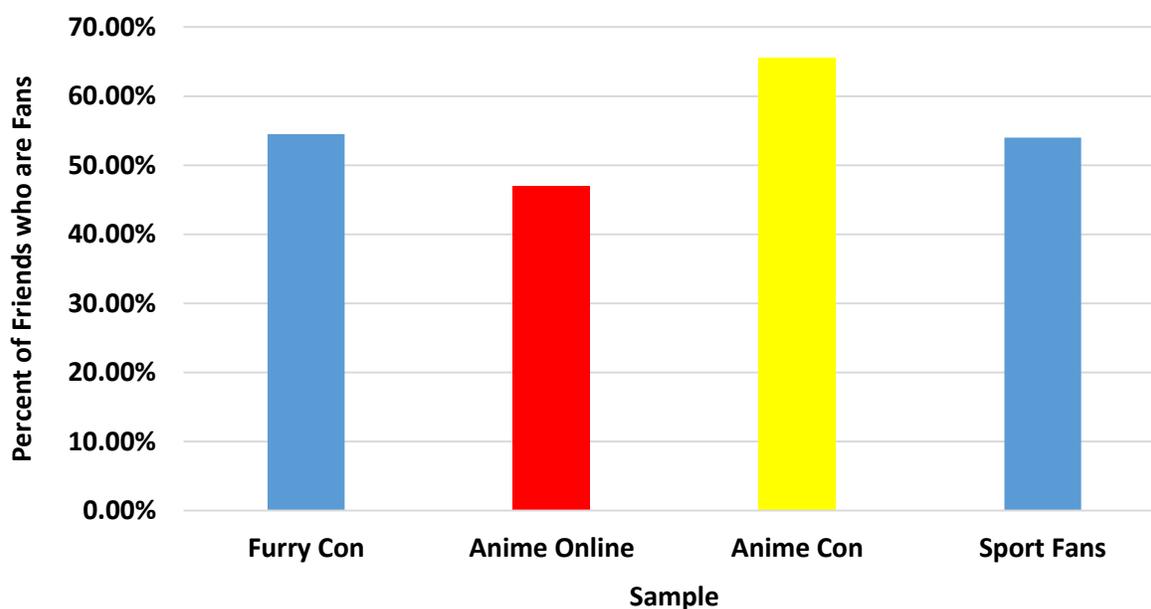


In sum, these data suggest that the furry fandom has a strong, vibrant presence on the internet and that, for many furies, online interaction is a crucial part of their interaction with the furry community.

2.13 Friends in the Fandom

On average, about half of a furry's friends are furies as well. This is comparable to members of other fandoms, although convention-going anime fans report having significantly more friends who are also anime fans. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the interests of anime fans are more mainstream than those of furies, making it easier to find friends in the fandom and publicly share one's interest in anime (F3).

Percent of Friends who are Also Fans



Follow-up analyses suggest that furies and convention-going anime fans did not differ in the *number* of friends that they had (and, indeed, both groups reported having significantly *more* friends than online anime fans or fantasy sport fans). As such, the difference in proportion of friends who are fans between the two groups may be driven by the fact that convention-going anime fans have more anime fan friends, not by simply having fewer friends.

Section 3: Fursonas

3.1 Species Popularity

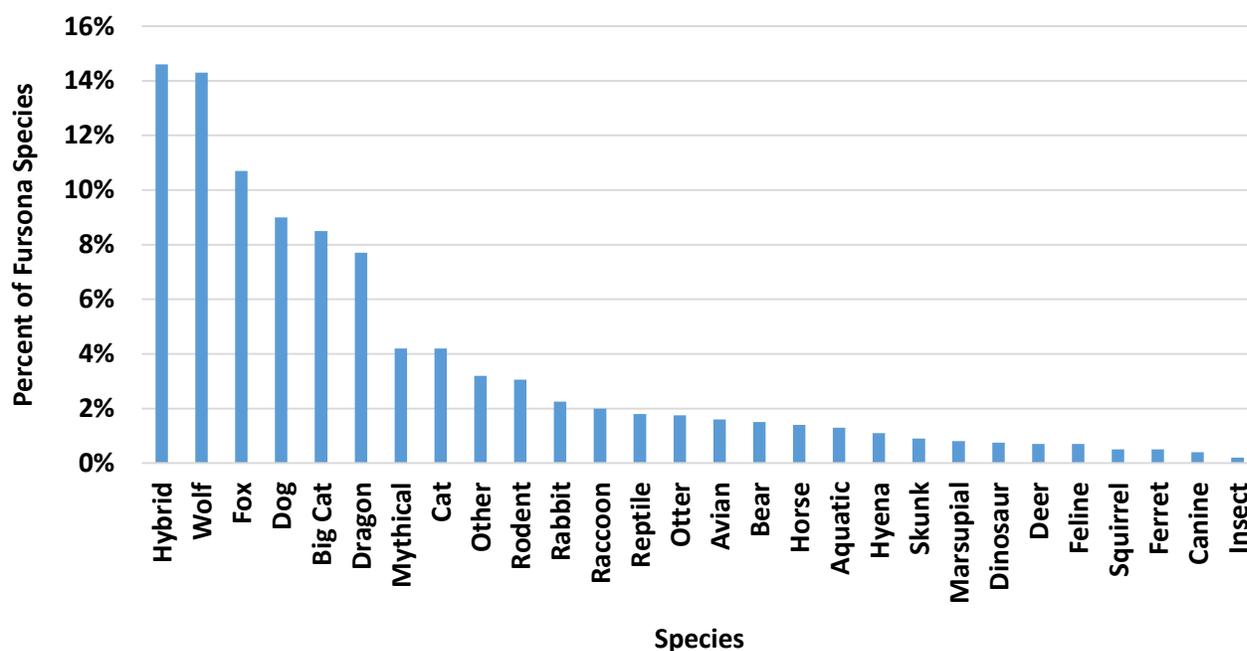
Creating a fursona is one of the most universal behaviours in the furry fandom (see 3.8). Defined as anthropomorphic animal representations of the self, furries interact with other members of the fandom through the use of these avatars, both in-person (e.g., badges at conventions) and online (e.g., profile pictures, forum handle). Fursonas can differ dramatically in the amount of detail they entail, and can include distinct personalities, histories, relationships, and attitudes. At a minimum, however, most fursonas include a name and a species.

Furries and non-furries alike frequently ask about fursona species, usually asking about the most unusual species or wondering what the most frequently chosen species are. In an online study, we collected information on more than 6,000 distinct fursonas, which were categorized into 852 unique species (which were subsequently organized for ease of presentation; W11). Many of the species listed were unique and, as such, cannot be presented in order to preserve the anonymity of our participants. In the figures that follow, such species are aggregated in the “other” categories for the most relevant group.

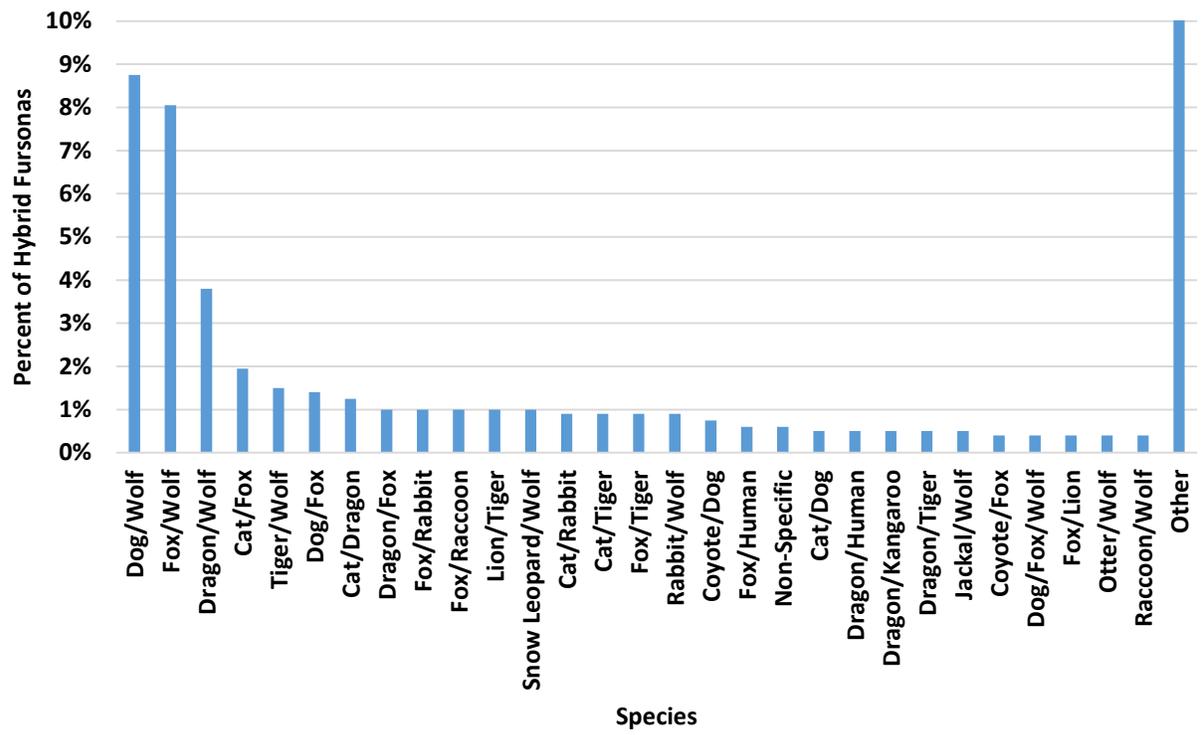
First, we present the data for all species. We then proceed with a group-by-group breakdown of popular categories. Within each category, “unspecified” means that the species was simply identified as the category (e.g., within the “wolf” category analysis, “unspecified” refers to people who just put “wolf” rather than any specific breed/type of wolf).

Please note that this category breakdown is not meant to reflect biological taxonomy or cladistics, but is instead meant to be a close approximation of how groups of similar species “clustered” together.

Most Popular Fursona Species

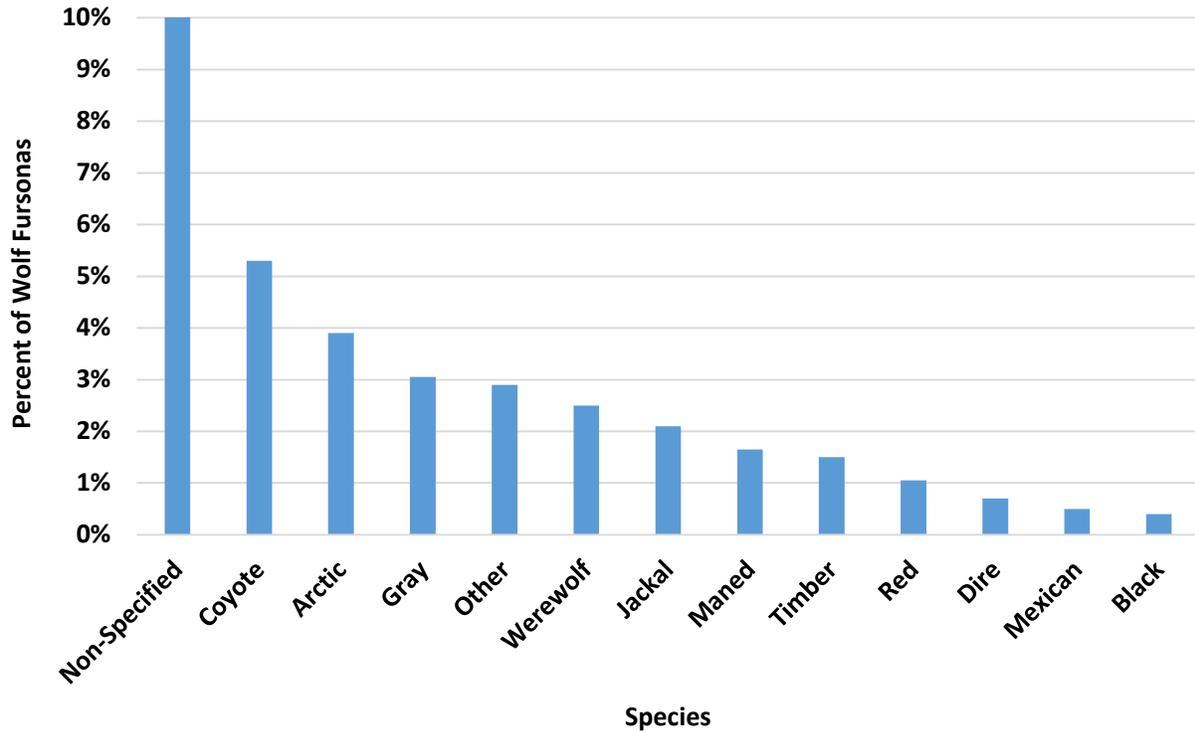


Most Popular Fursona Hybrids



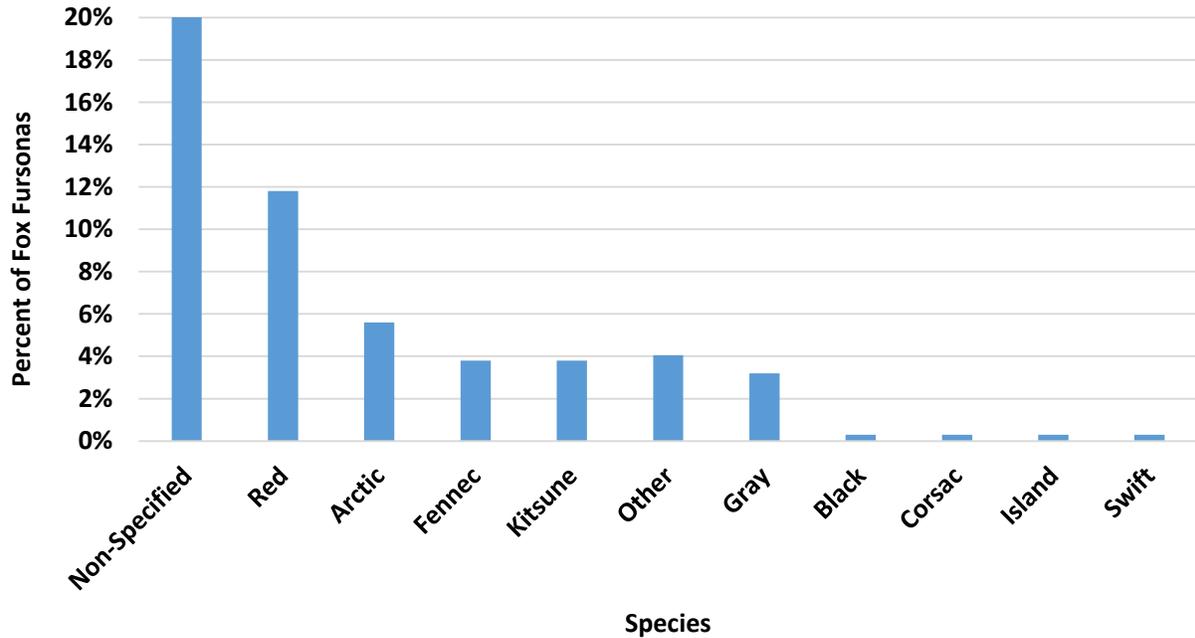
Note that the “other” category here represents 52.1% of all the listed hybrids, representing unique or exceptionally rarely identified hybrids.

Most Popular Wolf Fursonas



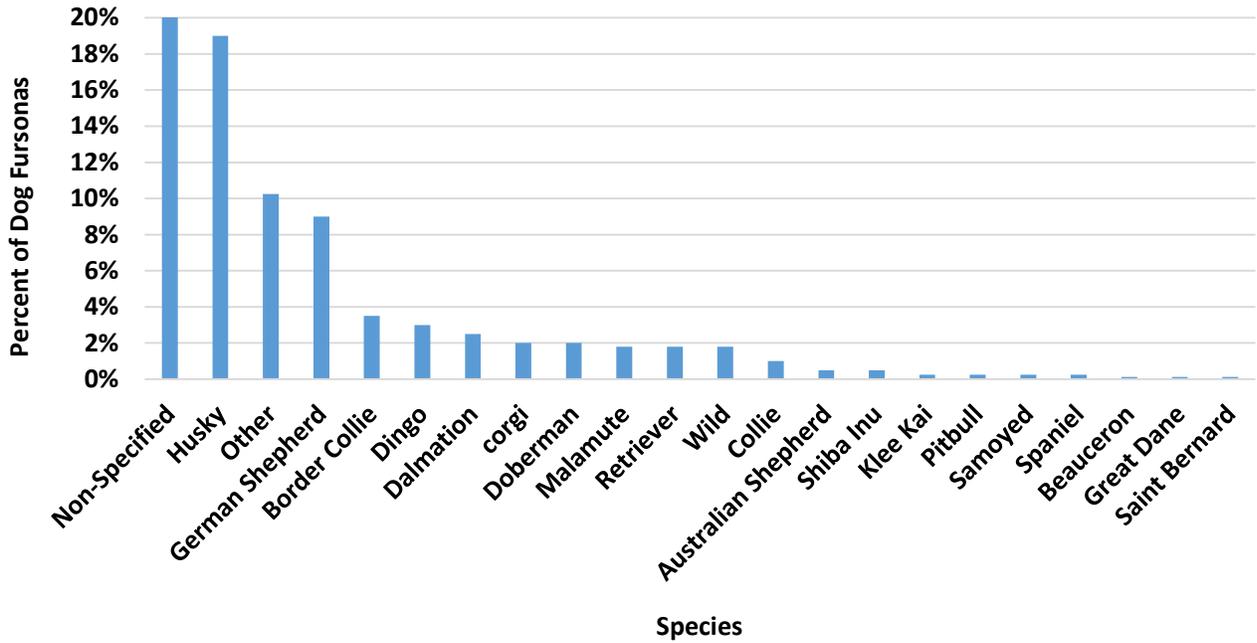
Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 74.1% of all wolves.

Most Popular Fox Fursonas



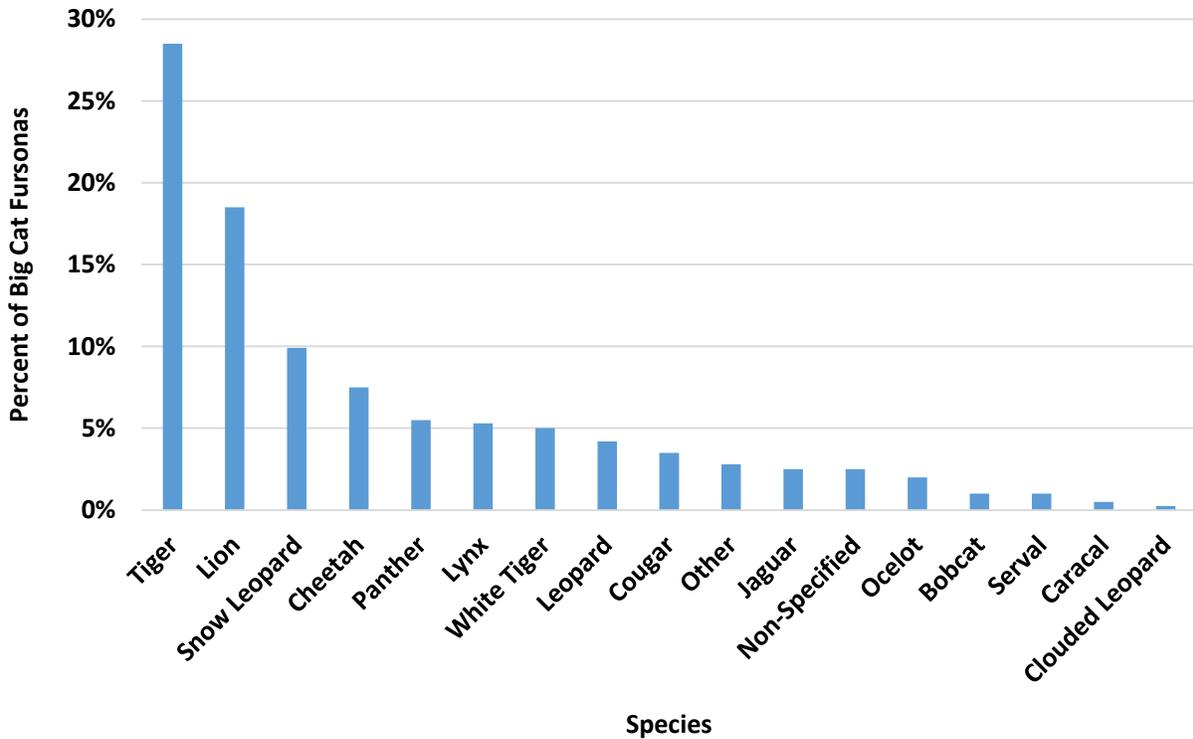
Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 68.3% of all foxes.

Most Popular Dog Fursonas



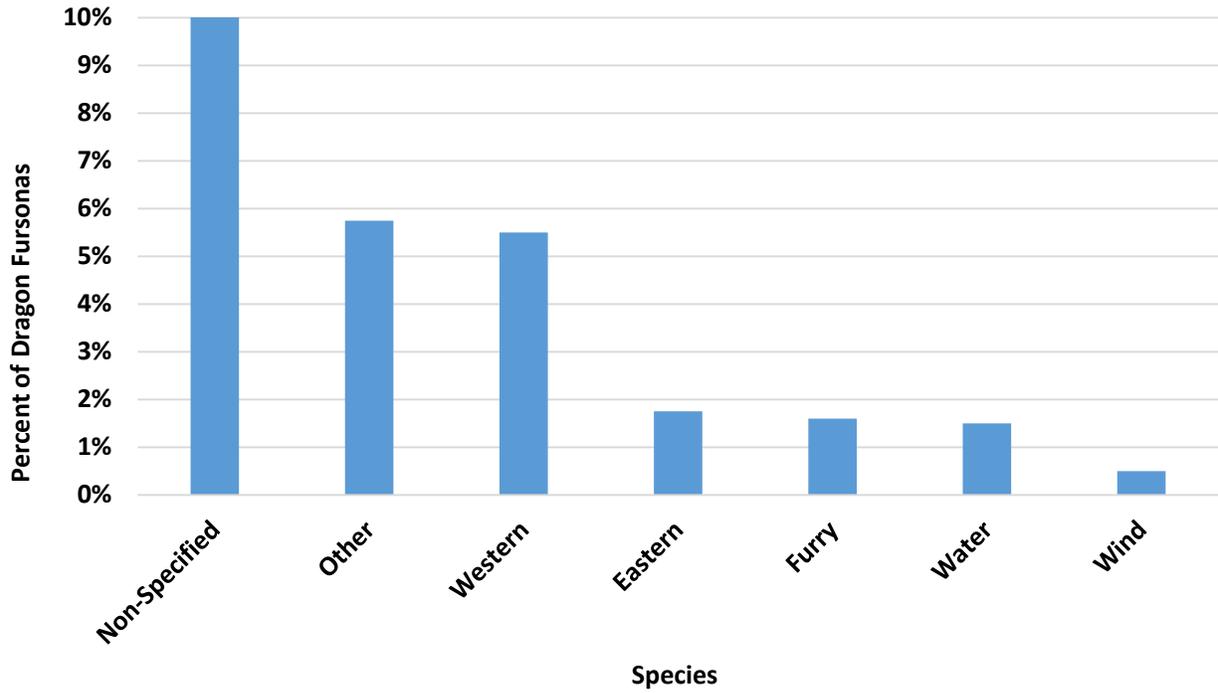
Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 37.5% of all dogs.

Most Popular Big Cat Fursonas



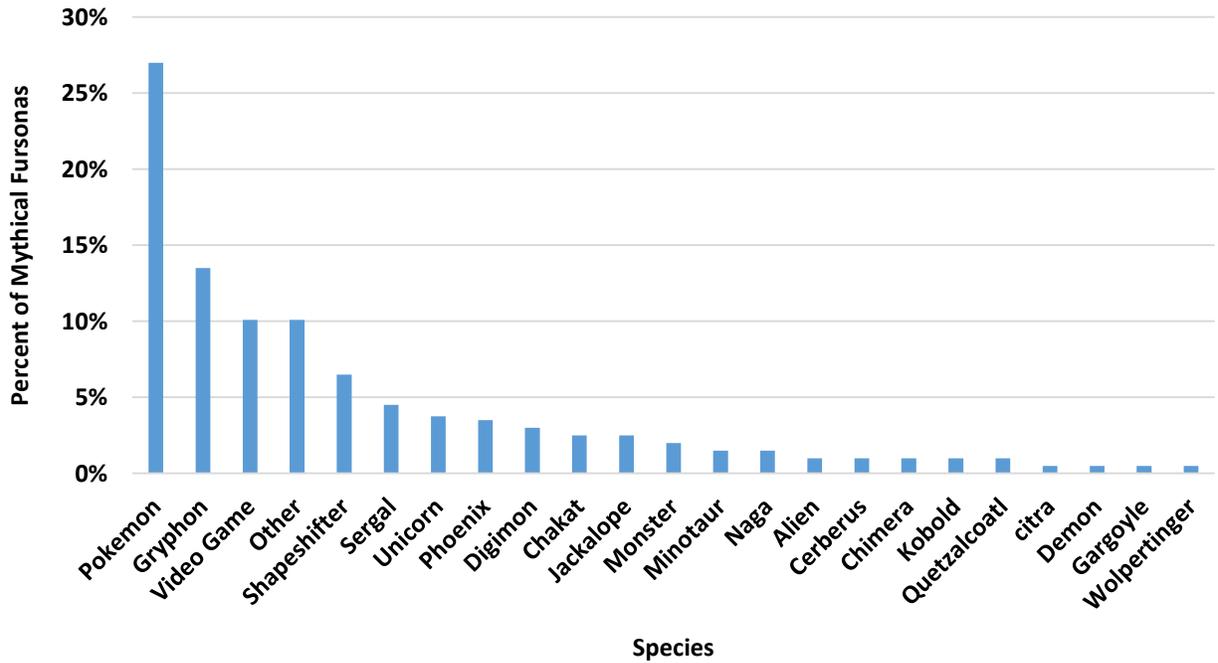
Note: The authors recognize that many of these are not “big” cats so much as they are “wild” cats.

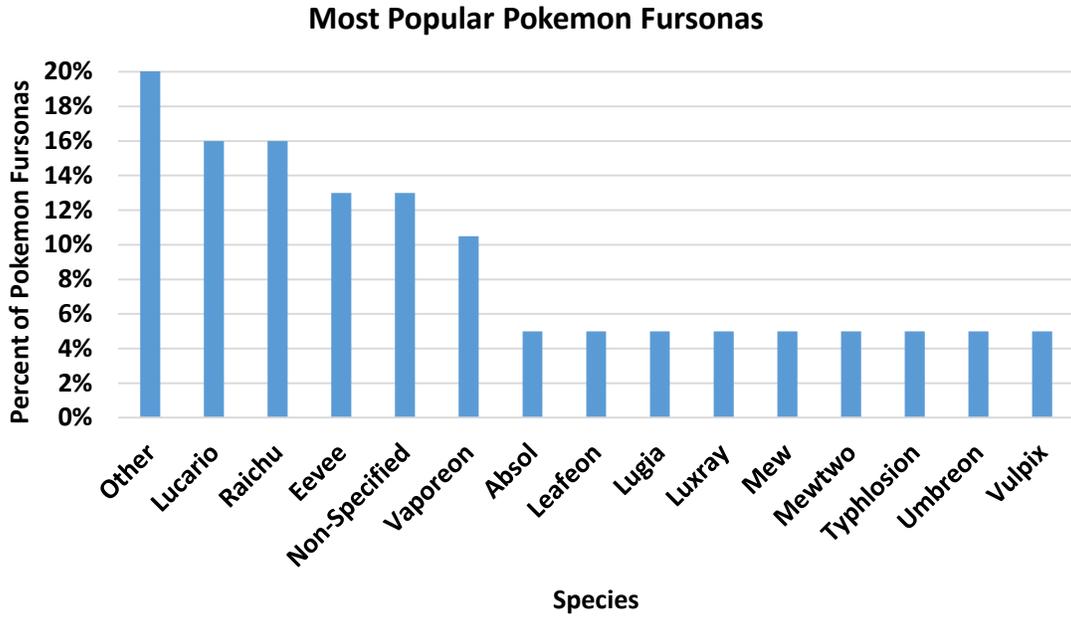
Most Popular Dragon Fursonas



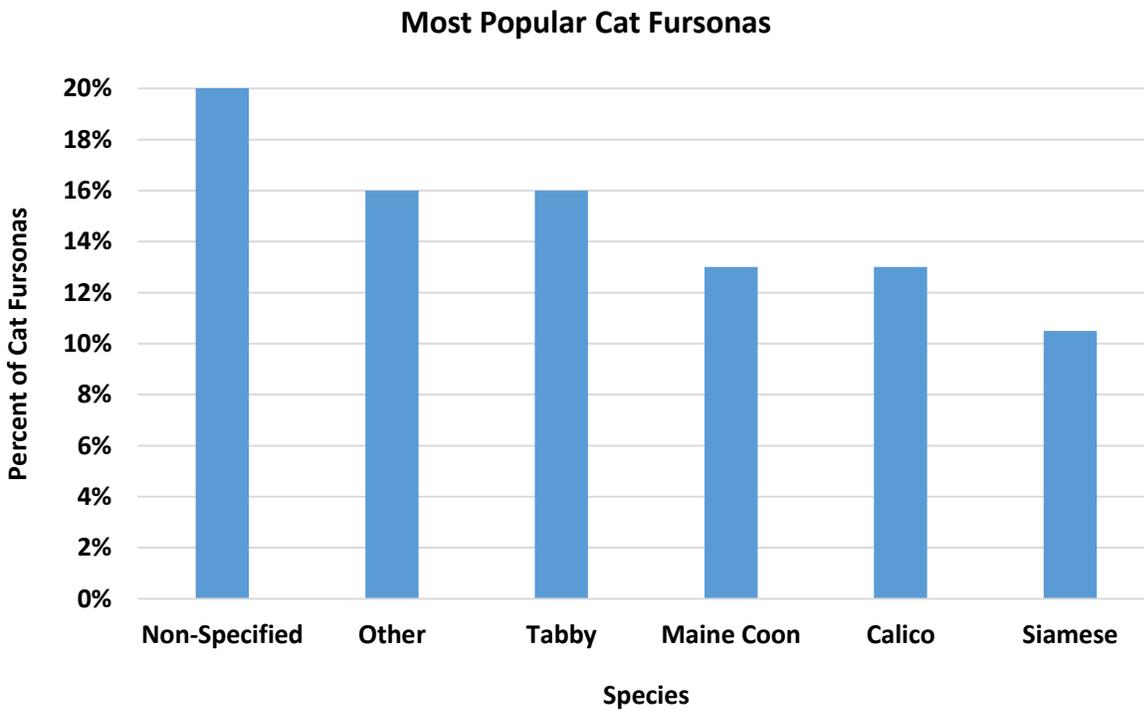
Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 84.7% of all dragons.

Most Popular Mythical Fursonas



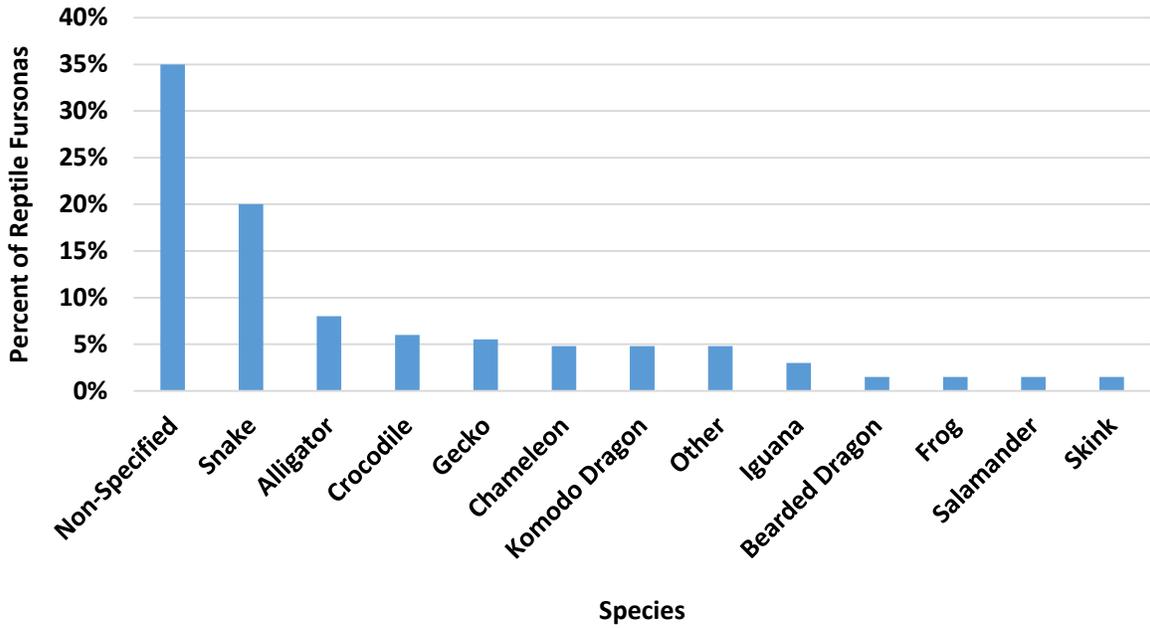


Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 63% of all Pokémon.

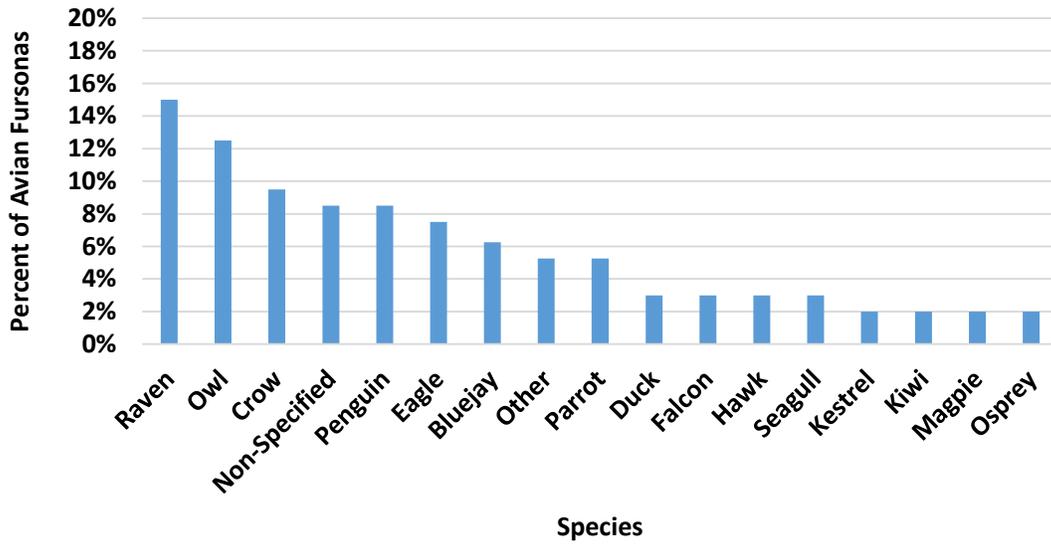


Note that the “non-specified” category here represents 85.3% of all cats.

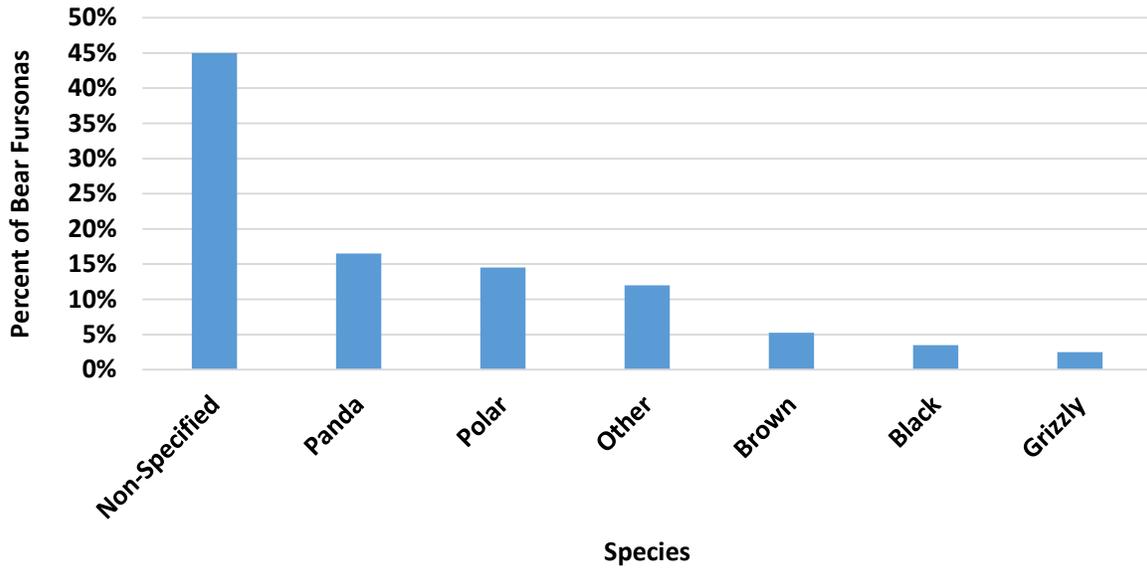
Most Popular Reptile Fursonas



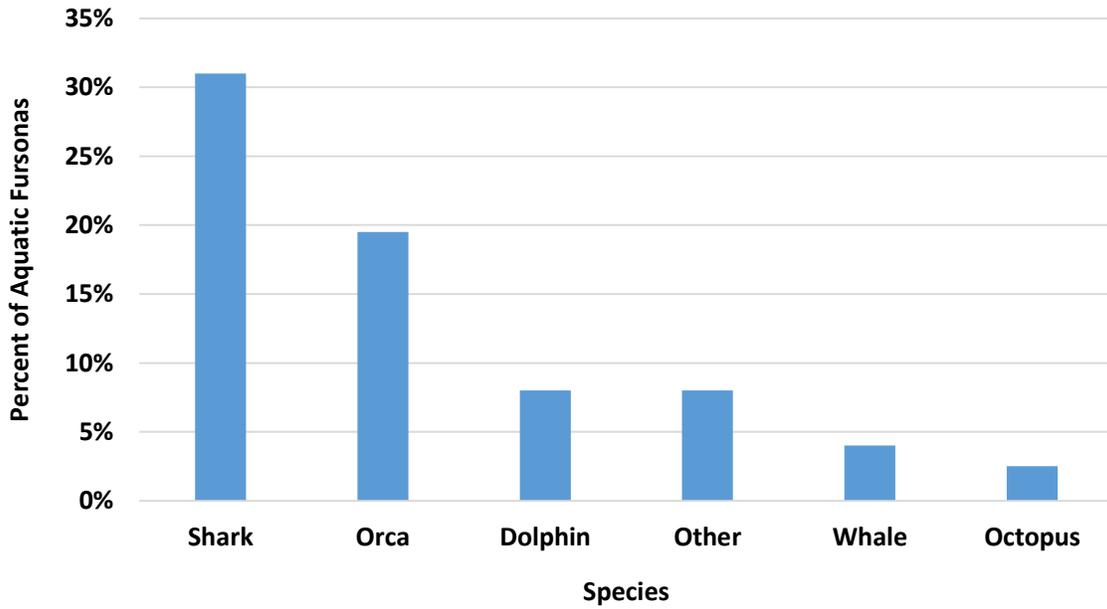
Most Popular Avian Fursonas



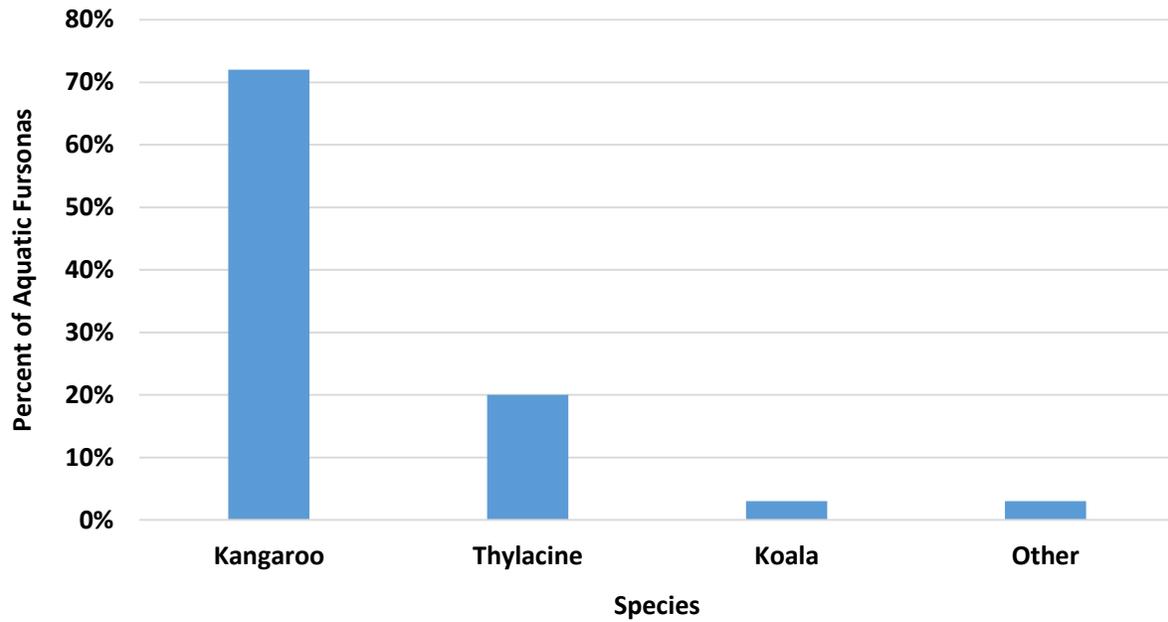
Most Popular Bear Fursonas



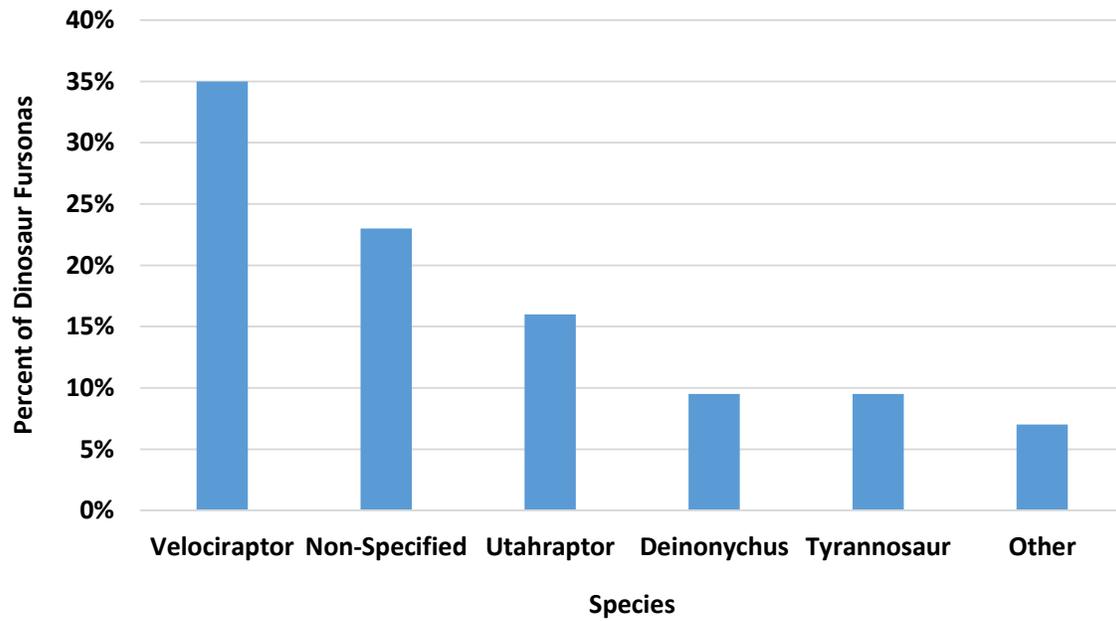
Most Popular Aquatic Fursonas



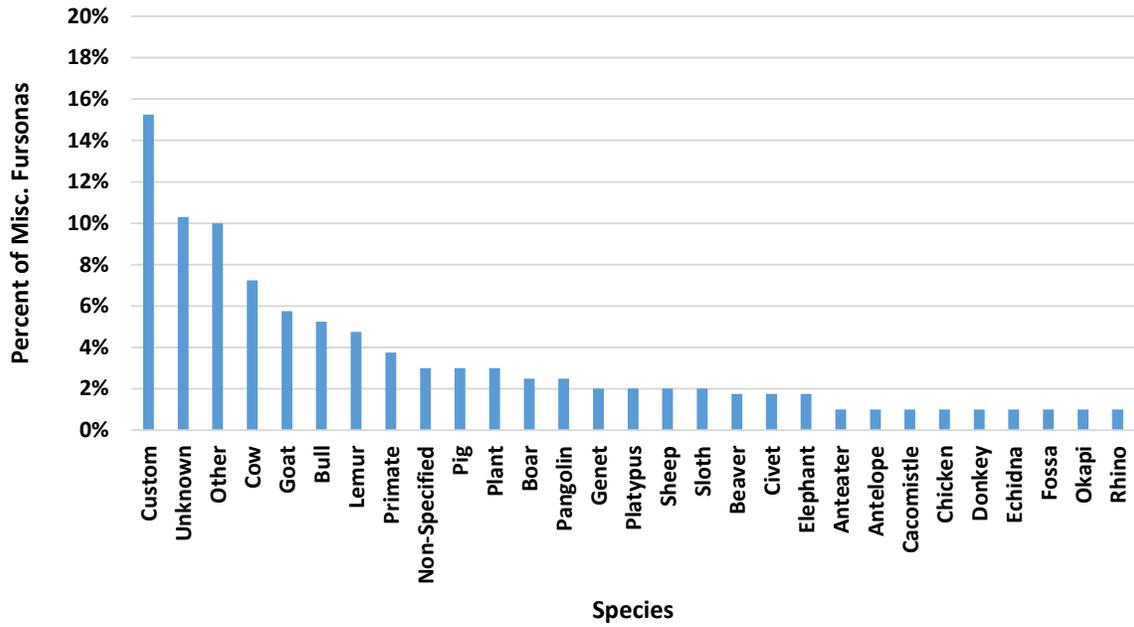
Most Popular Marsupial Fursonas



Most Popular Dinosaur Fursonas



Most Popular Miscellaneous Fursonas



Note that the “Custom” category represents non-existent species created by participants.

3.2 Predator/Prey Distinction

Given that fursonas are, in many cases, thought of as “idealized” versions of the self (see 3.12), and given that some traits associated with predators (e.g., assertiveness, strength) may be desirable, we were interested in testing whether furies were more likely to choose predator species over prey species for their fursonas. Rather than classifying the species ourselves, we asked participants to indicate whether they considered their fursona species to be a predator, prey, both, or neither. The results are presented in the table below (S11).

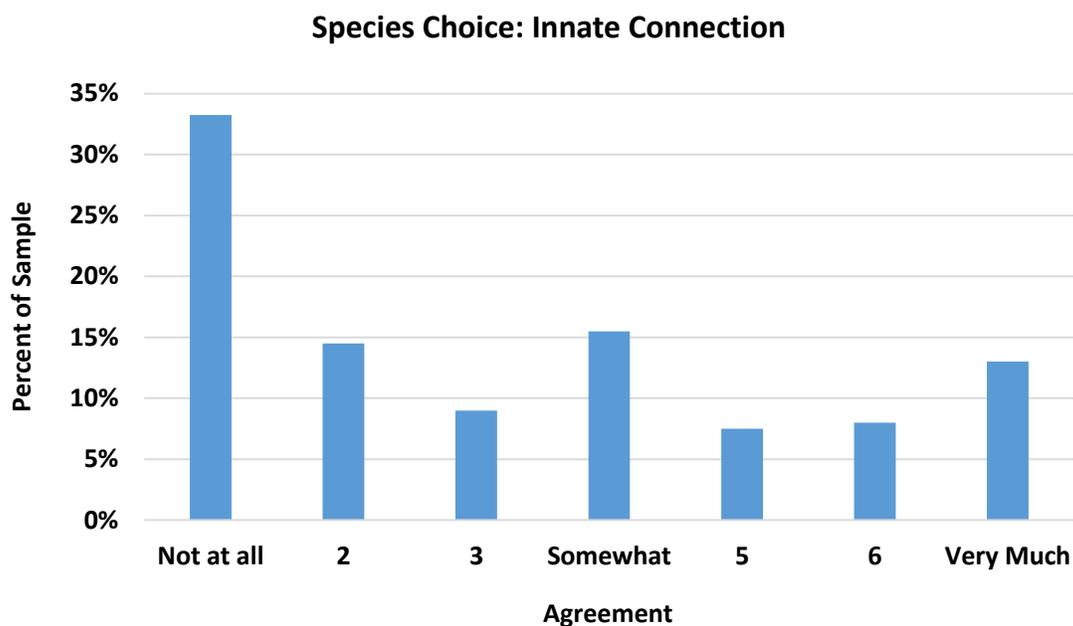
Classification of Fursona Species as Predator or Prey

Sample	Predator	Prey	Both	Neither
Furries	39.5%	8.0%	21.9%	27.2%
Otherkin	50.0%	6.1%	24.4%	19.5%
Therians	53.4%	4.3%	27.3%	14.9%

Predator species were nearly five times more common than prey species were among fursonas. The distinction was even more pronounced among therians and otherkin (see Section 7 for more information about therians). We then tested whether people with predator or prey species differed in personality: furies whose fursonas were predator species were significantly more extroverted than those whose fursonas were prey species. This suggests that there may be an association between fursona species and personality (see 3.10 for more about fursonas and personality).

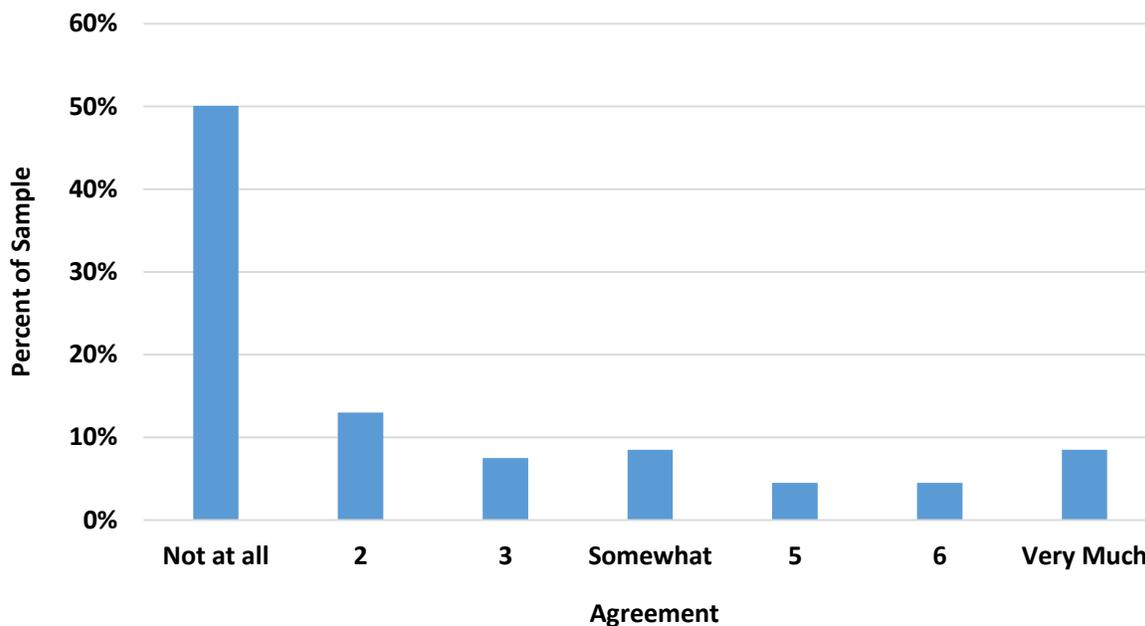
3.3 Reason for Species Choice

In addition to knowing what a person's fursona species is, people (furry and non-furry) often want to know why a person's fursona is the species that it is. These stories are often unique, and it would be impossible to fully capture the numerous variables that contribute to the species that a furry's fursona manifests as. To avoid this intractable problem, we instead asked furries to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that each of a number of possible factors influenced their fursona's species. While this is by no means a complete list of factors, it does at least capture the variety of factors while also illuminating some of the more popular ones (W11).



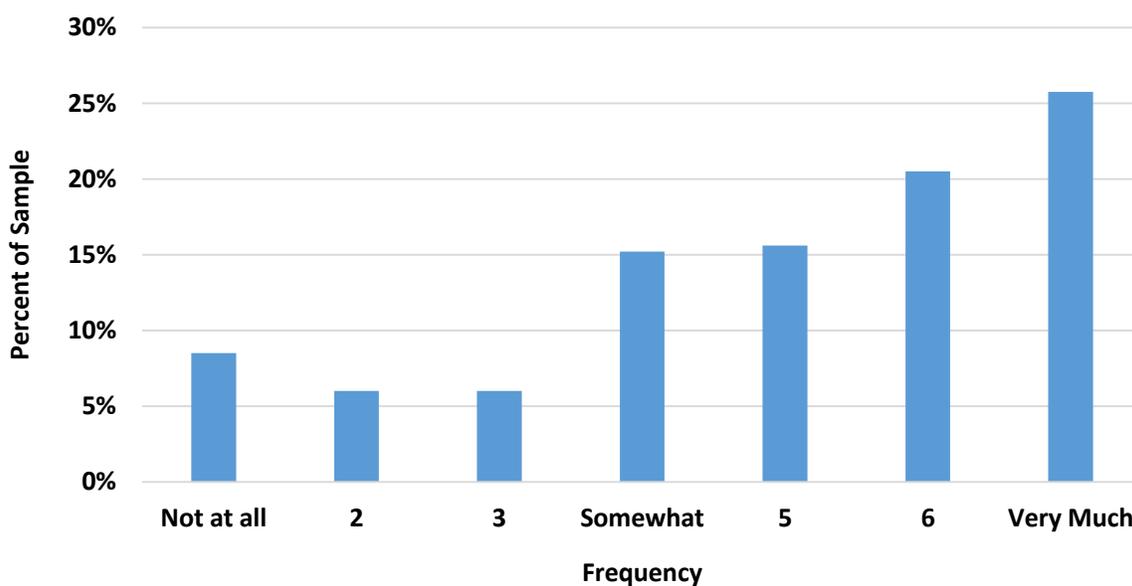
It appears that there is quite a bit of variance in responses to this item. Almost half of furries strongly or very strongly disagree that they have an innate connection to their species, but just over 20% of the fandom strongly or very strongly agrees with the statement.

Species Choice: Trapped in a Human Body



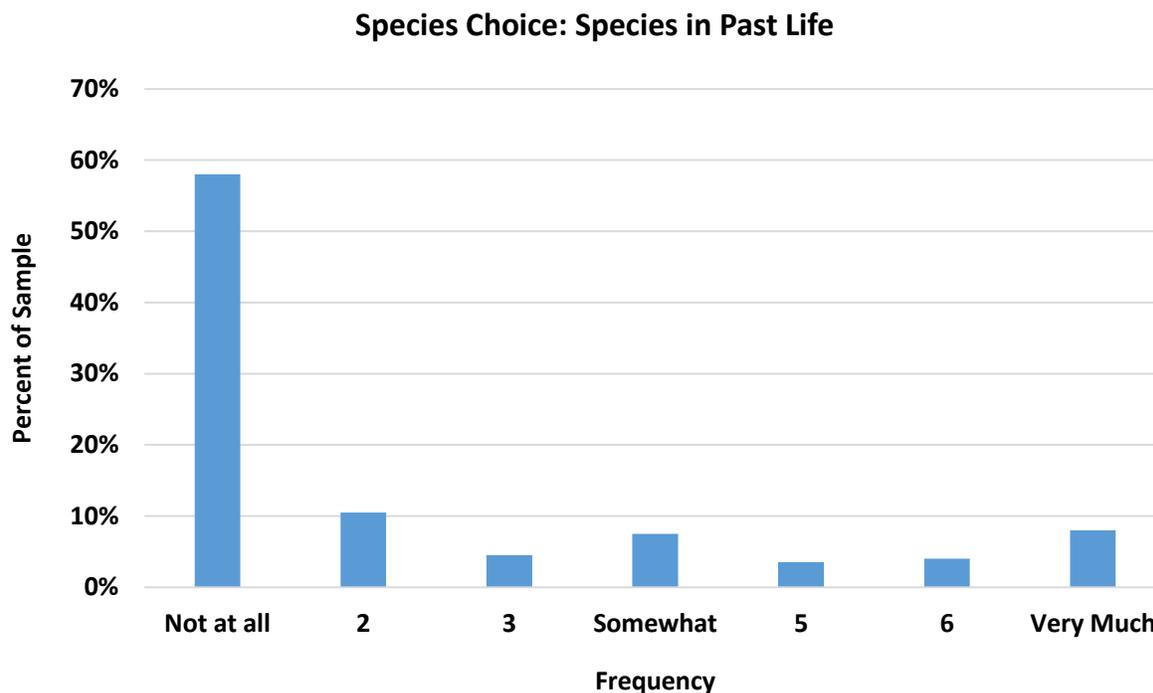
Over 60% of the furries in our sample strongly or very strongly disagreed with the notion of feeling like their species trapped in a human body, with only about 14% strongly or very strongly agreeing. This item, along with the preceding one, is likely tapping into elements of therianthropy (see Section 7).

Species Choice: Shared Characteristics



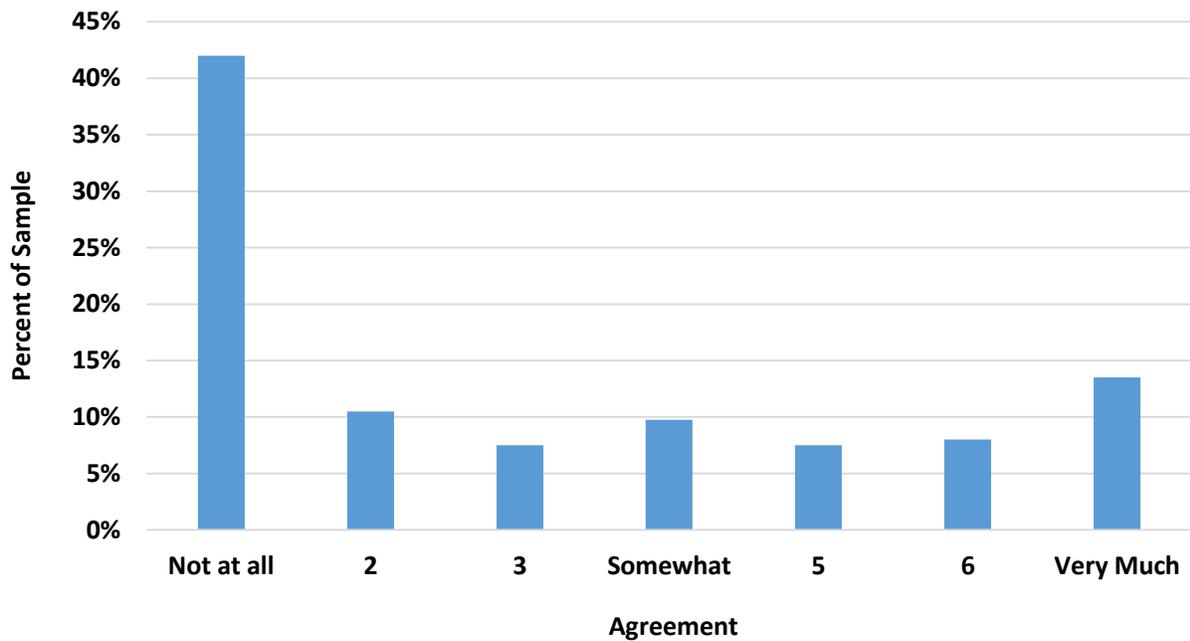
In general, furries tend to agree with this item—more than 75% state that it is at least somewhat true that they share characteristics with their fursona species. Conversely, about 15-

20% of furries say that shared characteristics have little to nothing to do with their fursona species.

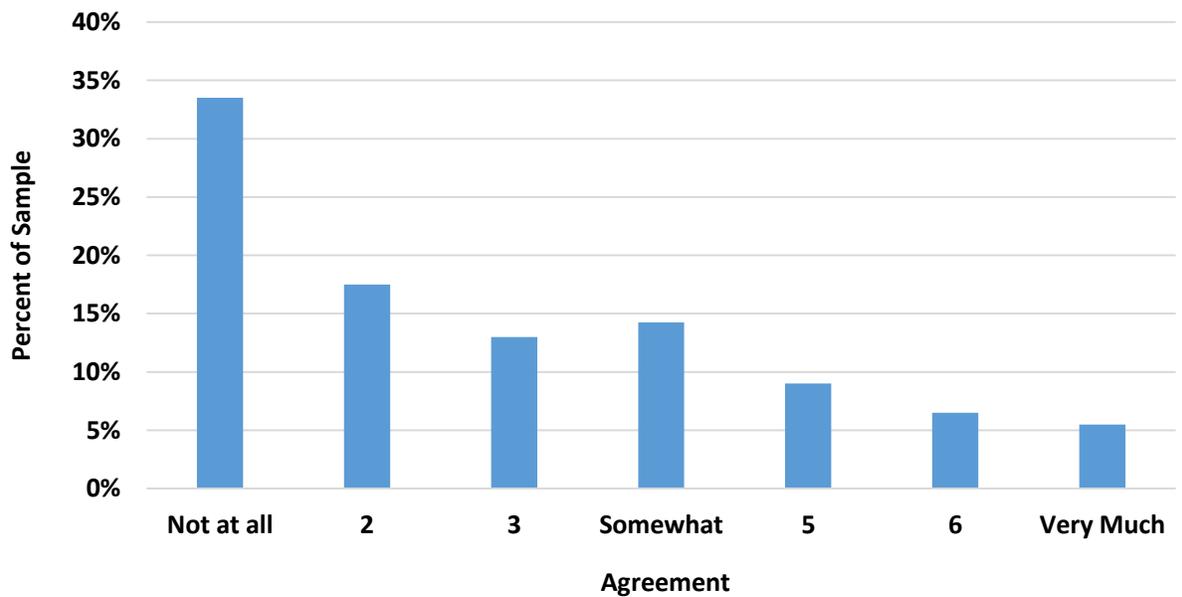


The vast majority (just under 70%) of furries strongly or very strongly disagree that they were their fursona species in a former life. Further, more than 50% strongly or very strongly disagree that their fursona is a spirit guide (graph below). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that these items tap into a spiritual connection with animals, while furries, as a group, are not particularly religious or spiritual (1.8). As with some of the items above assessing identification with one's animal species, those participants who are strong in their agreement with these statements may be identifying as therianthropy (see Section 7).

Species Choice: Spirit Guide



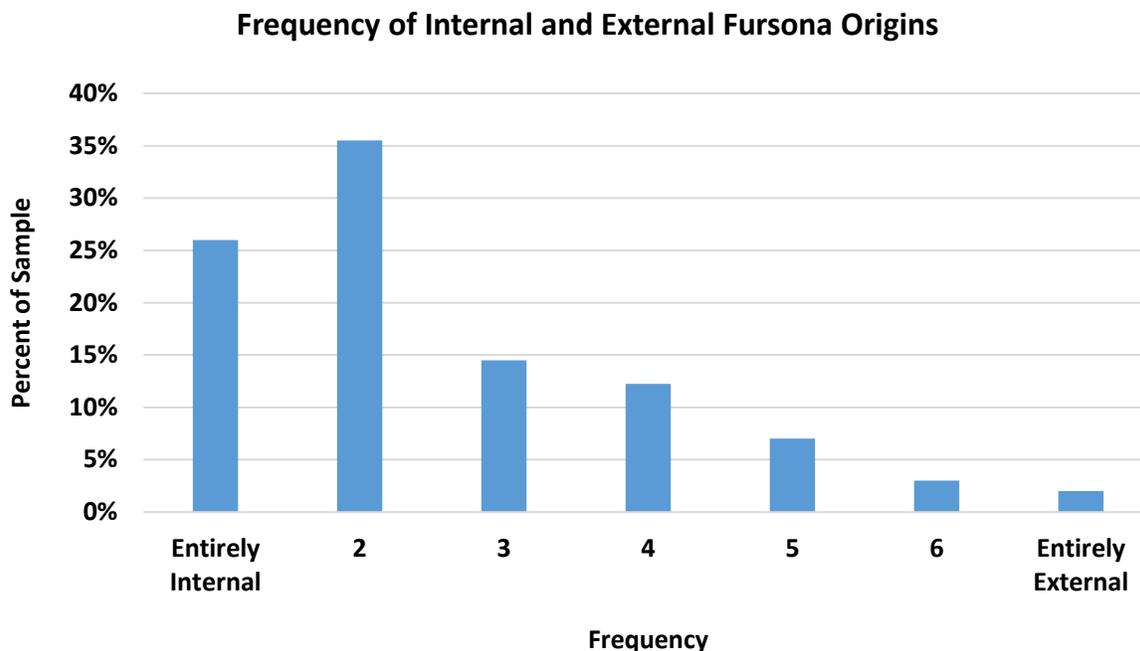
Species Choice: Physical Resemblance



In general, furries disagreed that their fursona species was the result of a physical resemblance, with one-third to one-half of furries disagreeing with this item. Approximately 11% of furries strongly or very strongly agreed that physical resemblance is an important part of the relationship they have with their species.

3.4 Fursona Origin

Relatively little is known about the process of fursona creation. For example, while many furries describe their choice of fursona species as inspired by a particular show, character, story, legend, or exemplar of a species (e.g., a famous animal, a pet, etc.), many furries feel that their fursona came from within them in an act of creation (as opposed to “merely copying” a character from a show). To study fursona creation, we asked furries to indicate, on a 7-point scale, the extent to which they felt that their fursonas came from entirely within themselves, from entirely outside themselves, or somewhere in the middle (S13).



It's apparent from the figure above that, for most furries, their fursonas come primarily from within themselves ($M = 2.53$). About 60% of furries said that their fursona came *entirely* or *almost entirely* from within. It should also be noted that very few furries said that their fursonas came entirely from outside of them. Contrary to misconceptions that furries simply dress up as characters from shows or stories, it seems that most fursonas involve an element of personal creation. One could also interpret a fursona species that came entirely from outside oneself as meaning that the person felt they had no choice in how their fursona manifested itself (e.g., a spirit guide).

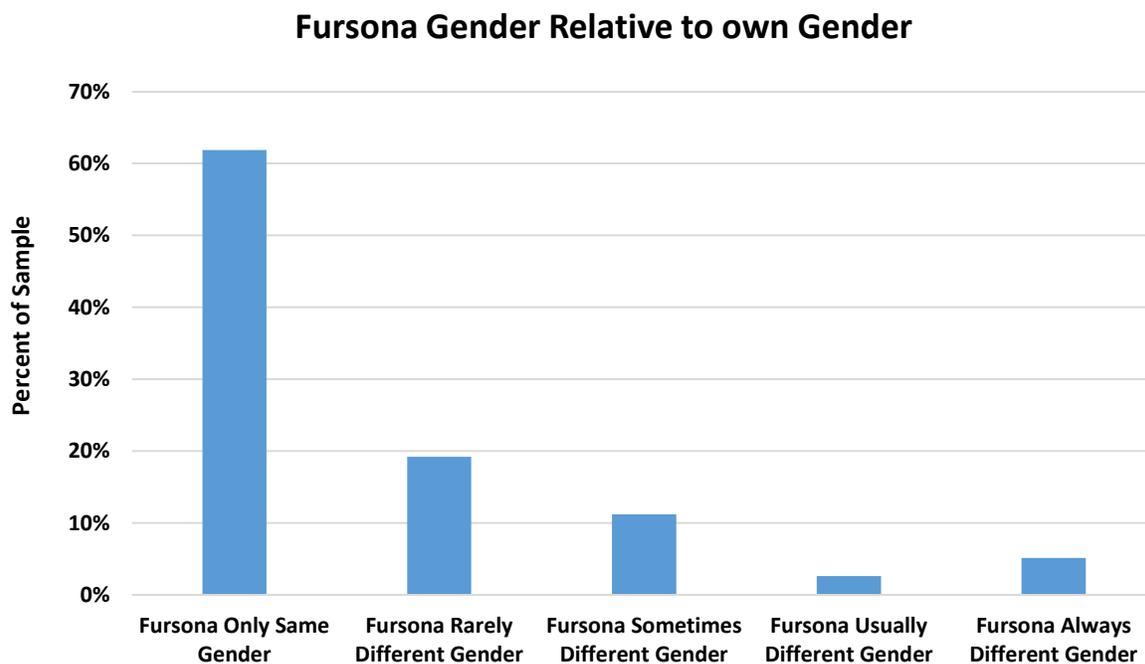
A subsequent analysis revealed that people whose fursona came from an outside source experienced significantly lower well-being, lower self-esteem, and less of a sense of having a coherent and developed sense of identity. This association does not mean, of course, that the former caused the latter, and further research is needed to explain this relationship (S13).

3.5 Species Perception

We asked furies to rate their fursona species, as well as several other species, on a number of traits, expecting to find that different species scored higher on different traits (W11). However, regardless of the participant’s actual species (dragon, fox, wolf, etc.), they were more likely to see their particular species as more masculine *and* feminine than the other species, more sociable, more fun, and admirable than others. They were also more likely to see their species as less aggressive than others, even if it was a member of a species commonly assumed to be aggressive (e.g., a lion or a dragon). In short, furies are biased to see “their” species as better than others do, regardless of the stereotypes of that species. It may be the case that by identifying with a species held in a positive light may serve a useful self-esteem bolstering function for furies (a topic addressed in greater detail in 3.12).

3.6 Fursona Gender

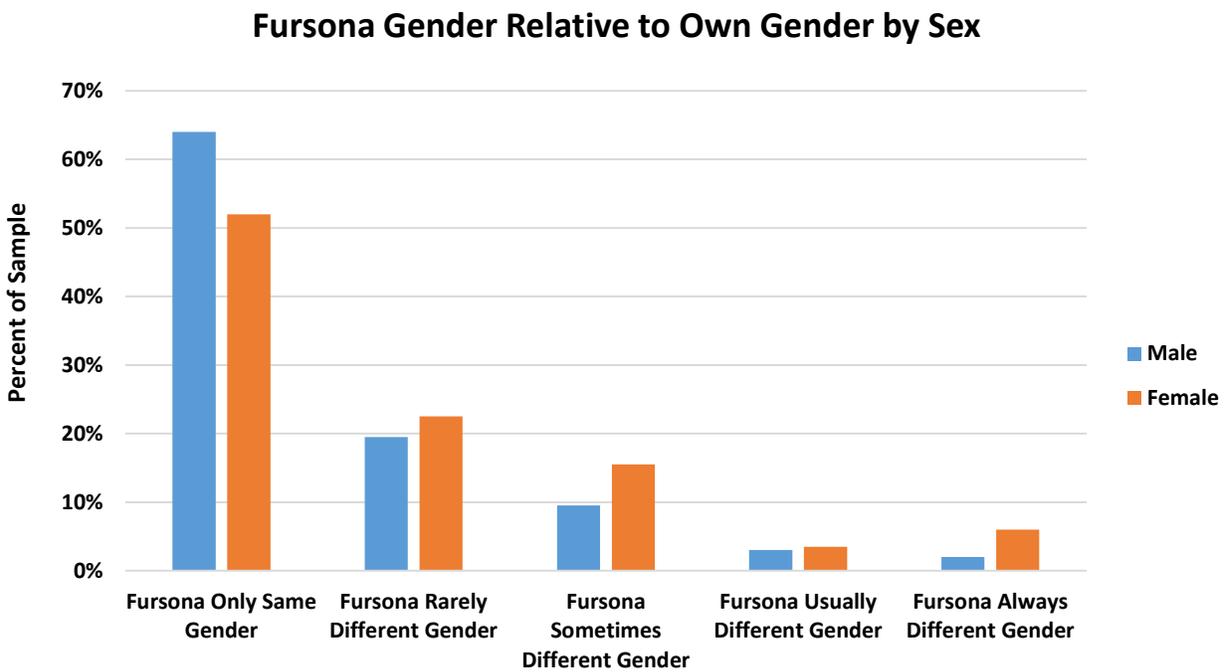
In studies asking about fursonas and gender, we’ve often asked furies to not only identify their own gender, but to also indicate, on a 1-5 scale, the extent to which their fursona’s gender identity is similar to (“my fursona is only ever the same gender as I am”) or differs from (“my fursona is always a different gender than I am”) their own (W11).



The data suggest that about 62% of furies report that their fursona’s gender is the same as their own. This also means that approximately 38% of furies are, at very least, open to the idea of having a different-gender fursona; in fact, fully 5% of furies have a fursona whose gender is always different from their own. It remains to be seen whether, for these people, their fursona is a form of self-expression of a different-gender part of themselves (a way to “play out”

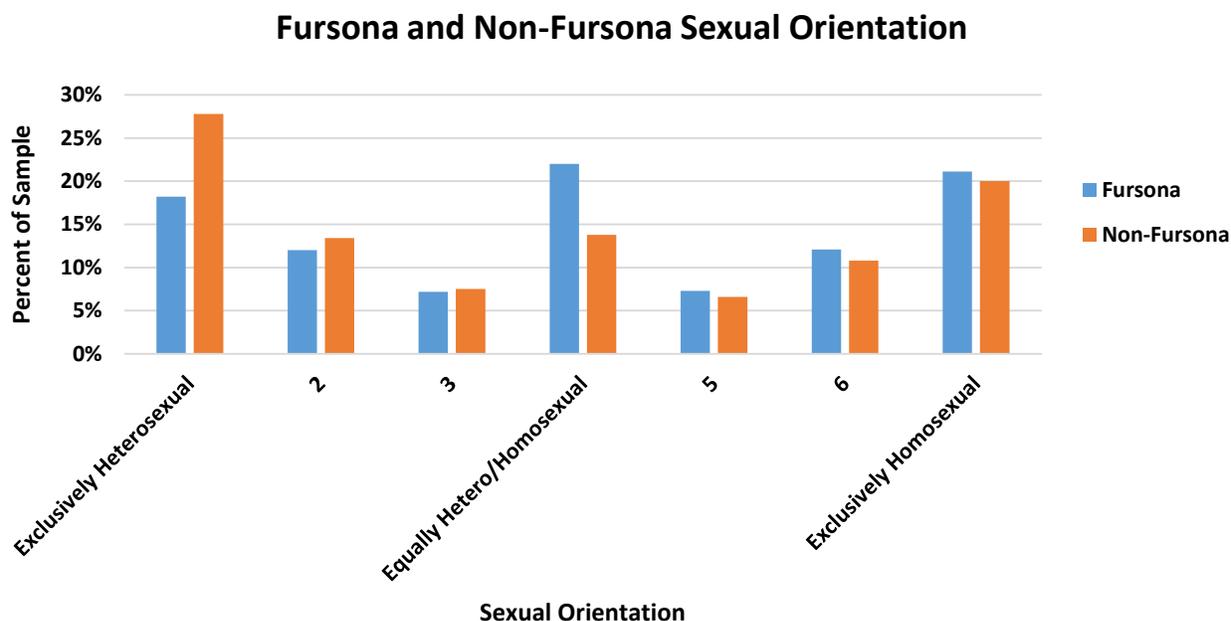
another facet of their identity), or is simply a way for them to experiment with an identity different from their own—a form of role-playing.

In another study, we looked at whether there were gender differences in the extent to which furries' fursonas differed from their own gender (see figure below; S11). Results indicated that furries whose gender identity was more female were significantly more likely to have a fursona whose gender differed from their own.



3.7 Fursona Sexual Orientation

Analogous to the way we looked for self-fursona gender differences in 3.6, we also asked furries to provide not only their own sexual orientation (see 5.1), but to indicate the sexual orientation of their fursona as well. For ease of analysis, participants whose data fell onto a traditional Kinsey-style 7-point scale (heterosexual to homosexual) were used. The data are presented in the figure below, with non-fursona data (orange bars) plotted alongside the same furries' fursona data (blue bars; W11).

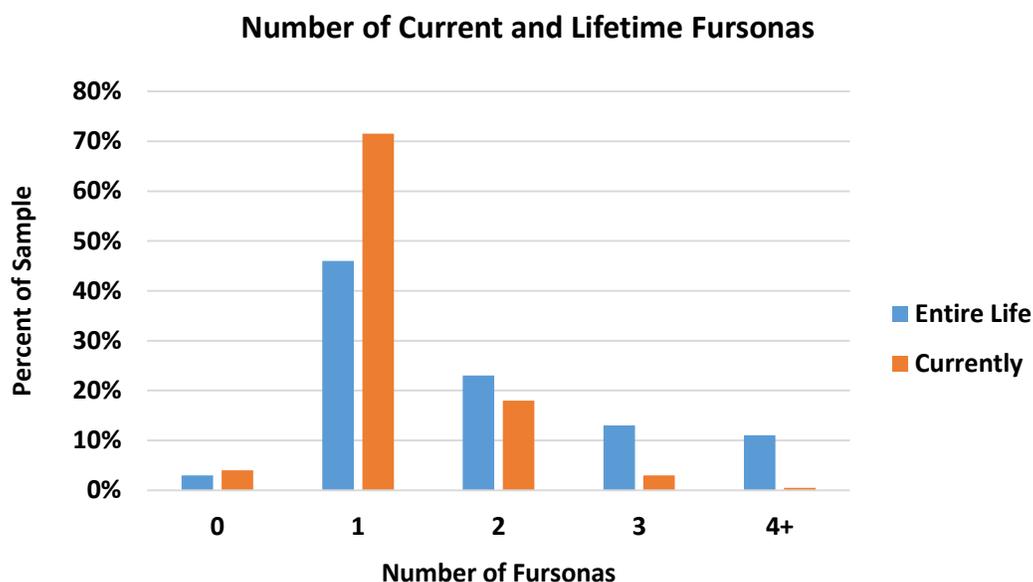


Looking at the left-most pair of bars (“exclusively heterosexual”), it is apparent that fursonas are significantly less heterosexual than their creators. There is an approximately equal magnitude increase in “equal parts homosexual and heterosexual” responses for fursonas. This suggests that for some furries (particularly heterosexual furries) their fursona is bisexual, which may reflect their own bisexuality. Given that homosexuality is still stigmatized in many regions, it may be the case for at least some of these people, being able to say “I am not gay, my fursona is” is a way to express this aspects of their identity while simultaneously distancing themselves from the stigma it carries. It may also be a way for furries to “test the waters,” experimenting with homosexual feelings or gauging the reception if they were to come out as bisexual themselves. It’s possible that either of these explanations, or neither, may account for these observations, and it remains for future research to test these hypotheses.

3.8 Number of Fursonas

To test whether furies' fursona species change over time, the IARP have been asked whether furies change their fursonas frequently (e.g., waking up and deciding that they feel like a cat today). Results suggest that, for many furies, their fursonas are personally significant and meaningful (3.4, 3.11, 3.12) and, as such, are not likely to change on a whim.

To test this hypothesis, we've asked furies on several occasions to indicate how many fursonas they have had in their entire life, and how many fursonas they currently have. The results are displayed in the figure below (S13).



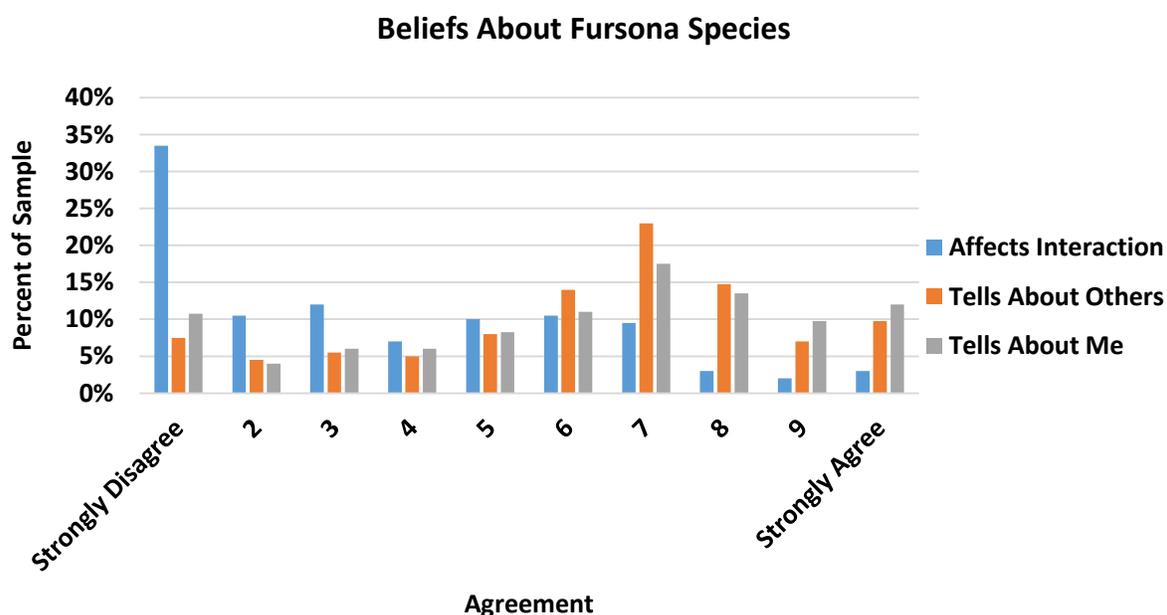
While one fursona is the most common number of fursonas to have had over the course of one's life, about 25-50% of all furies (depending on the sample, W11/S13) say they have had more than one fursona. This means that a significant portion of the furry fandom has changed their fursona at some point in their life. Future research will hopefully shed some light on the reasons that furies change their fursonas, including testing the possibility that significant life changes or changes in self-image may lead furies to change their fursonas over time.

About 25% of furies say that they currently have more than one fursona, often alternating between them. It would be interesting, in future research, to determine the function of having multiple fursonas (e.g., for self-expression, in different contexts, to represent different genders/orientations).

3.9 Fursonas and Social Judgment

Given that many conventions include meet-ups based on fursona species (e.g., wolf or feline meet-ups), and given that we, as researchers, had overheard comments about interacting with members of different fursona species (e.g., “ugh, he’s a fox, you know what *they’re* like”), we wanted to test the hypotheses about fursonas and social judgment.

First, we tested whether furies believed that another furry’s fursona species would affect their decision to interact with that person (W12). This involved asking furies, on a 10-point scale, how much they agreed or disagreed that a person’s fursona species could influence how well they expected to get along with that person (1 = *disagree* to 10 = *agree*). The results suggest that furies largely disagreed with this statement ($M = 3.15$). Therians, despite identifying more deeply with their species, might be expected to consider another person’s species in this context, but they did not differ significantly from furies.



These results were replicated and extended in a second study (blue bars in the figure above; S13). In addition to asking furies whether another’s fursona would influence how well they expected to get along with a person, we also asked furies whether they believed that a fursona species could tell you anything about a person. Indeed, many furies believed that a person’s fursona species could tell you a lot about them, and, in fact, the more a furry thought their own fursona species was informative, the more they believed that others’ fursonas species were similarly informative. Finally, we found that furies who more strongly believed that their fursona species was informative were more likely to say that someone else’s fursona would influence how well they expected to get along with them.

3.10 Fursona Personality

On several of our surveys, we've given participants a measure called the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; W12). It assesses five of the most well-studied, validated personality dimensions/traits in the psychological literature: extraversion (the extent to which a person is outgoing/energized by social activities), agreeableness (the extent to which a person seeks harmonious, non-confrontational interactions), conscientiousness (the extent to which a person is dependable, self-disciplined and careful), emotional stability (resistance to emotional outbursts and neurotic/pathological thoughts), and openness to experience (the extent to which a person favors and embraces new experiences). Participants are asked to rate both themselves and their fursonas on these items. We are then able to compare the personality traits of furries and their fursonas to one another, as well as with previously-established norms on each of these five traits (based on the responses of thousands of participants from other research). These data are presented in the table below (W12).

Personality Traits of Furries, Fursonas, and Established Norms

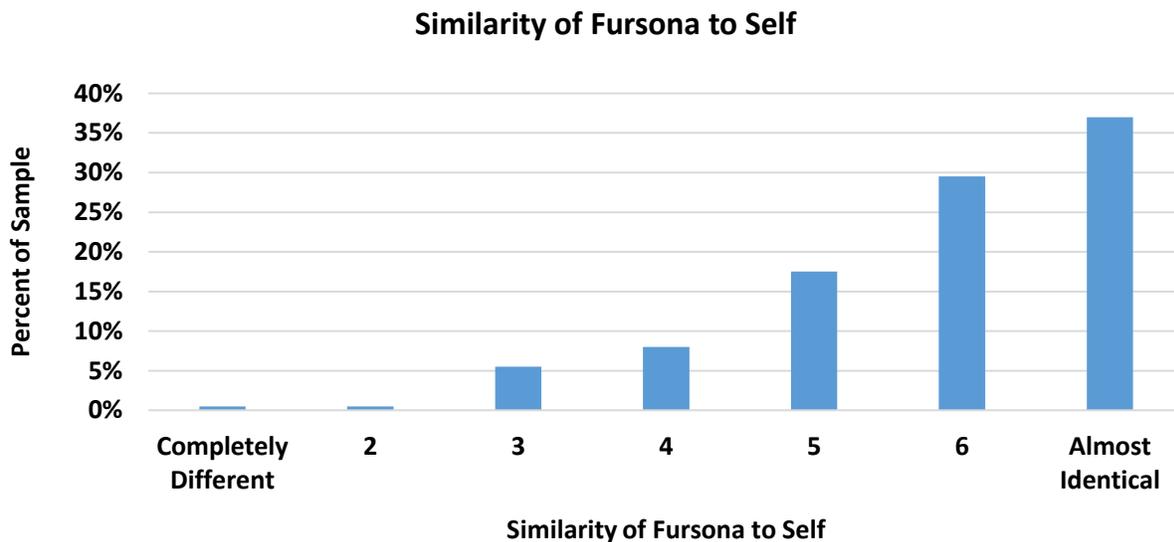
Trait	Furries	Fursonas	Established Norms
Extraversion	3.44	4.74	4.44
Agreeableness	4.89	5.36	5.23
Conscientiousness	4.73	4.93	5.40
Emotional Stability	4.55	5.17	4.83
Openness to Experience	5.43	5.09	5.38

Across all five traits, furries rated themselves significantly different from their fursonas, who were more extraverted, more agreeable, more conscientious, more emotionally stable, and less open to experience than they were. Counter-intuitively, with the exception of openness to experience, furries' fursonas seem to have a "normalizing" effect: they are closer to established personality trait norms than furries themselves. This suggests the possibility that some furries use their fursona (and interacting with others through their fursonas) as a way to "improve" their personality by normalizing it, a finding consistent with other work suggesting that fursonas often represent idealized selves (3.12). These findings are a bit ironic, given the fantasy nature of fursonas and the stereotype that they are an indicator of dysfunction (see 10.1, 10.2).

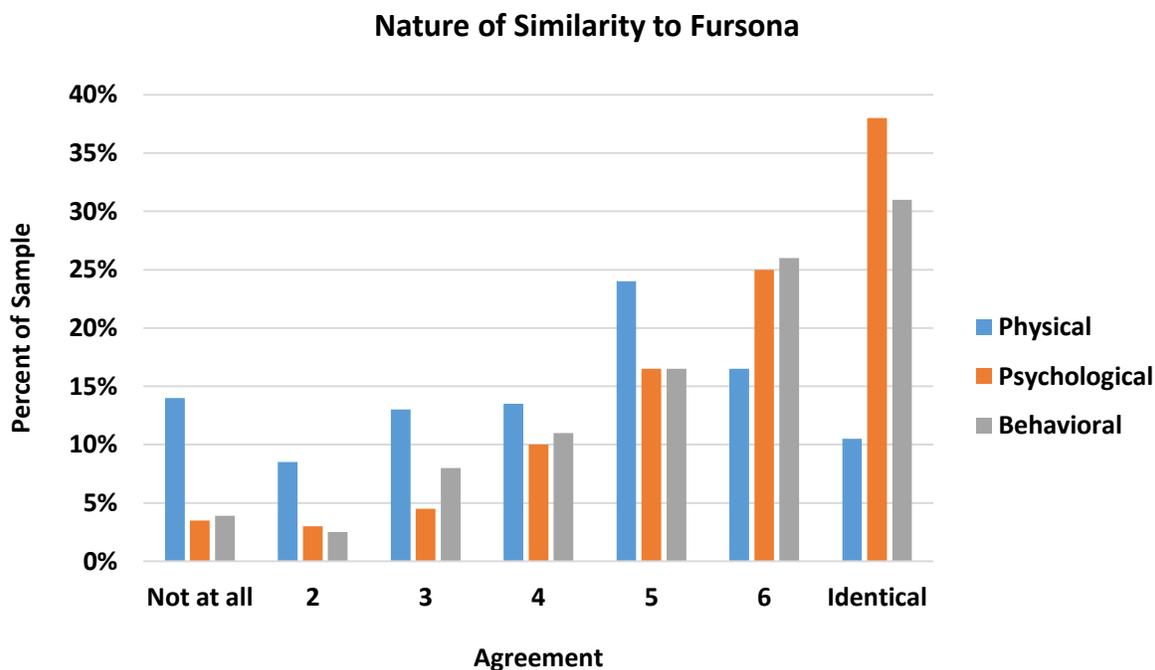
3.11 Self-Fursona Similarity

Given that many furies indicate that their fursonas come, at least in part, from within themselves (3.4), we have tested the extent to which furies perceived their fursonas as being similar to themselves.

In one study, furies indicated that their fursona's personality was very similar to their own, with 35% of furies saying that they were virtually identical (see figure below; S13).



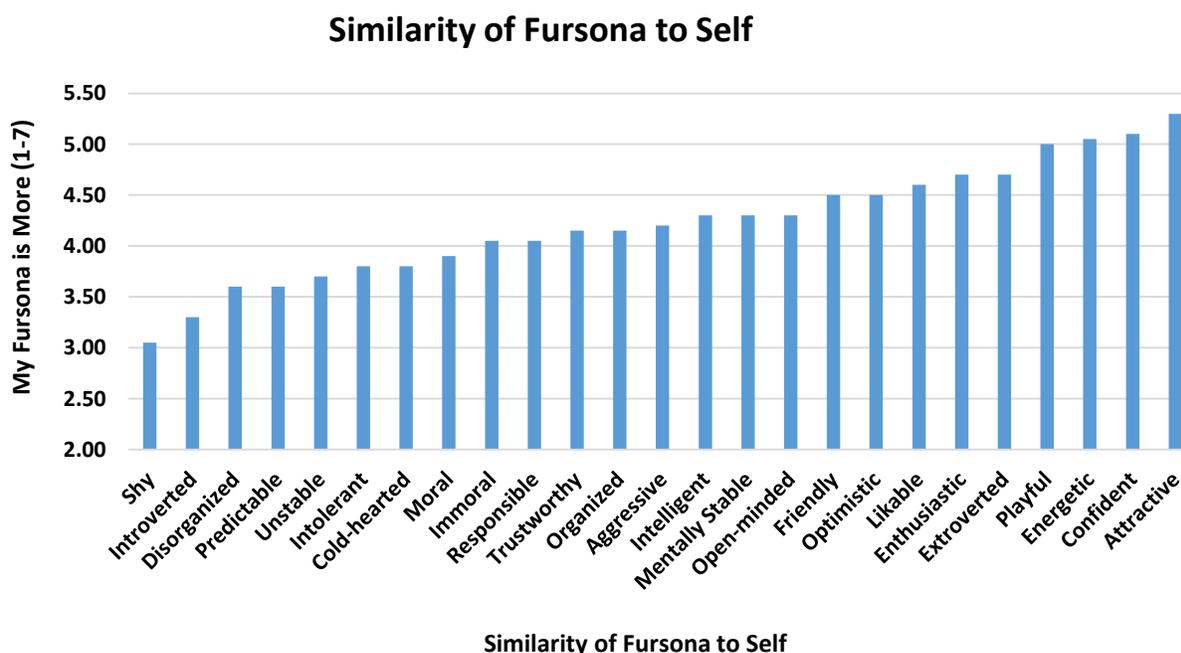
In another study, we asked furies to distinguish between physical similarity, psychological similarity, and behavioural similarity (AC15). The results, displayed in the figure below, show that furies feel psychologically and behaviourally similar to their fursonas, though the similarities apply far less when it comes to skin-deep physical similarities.



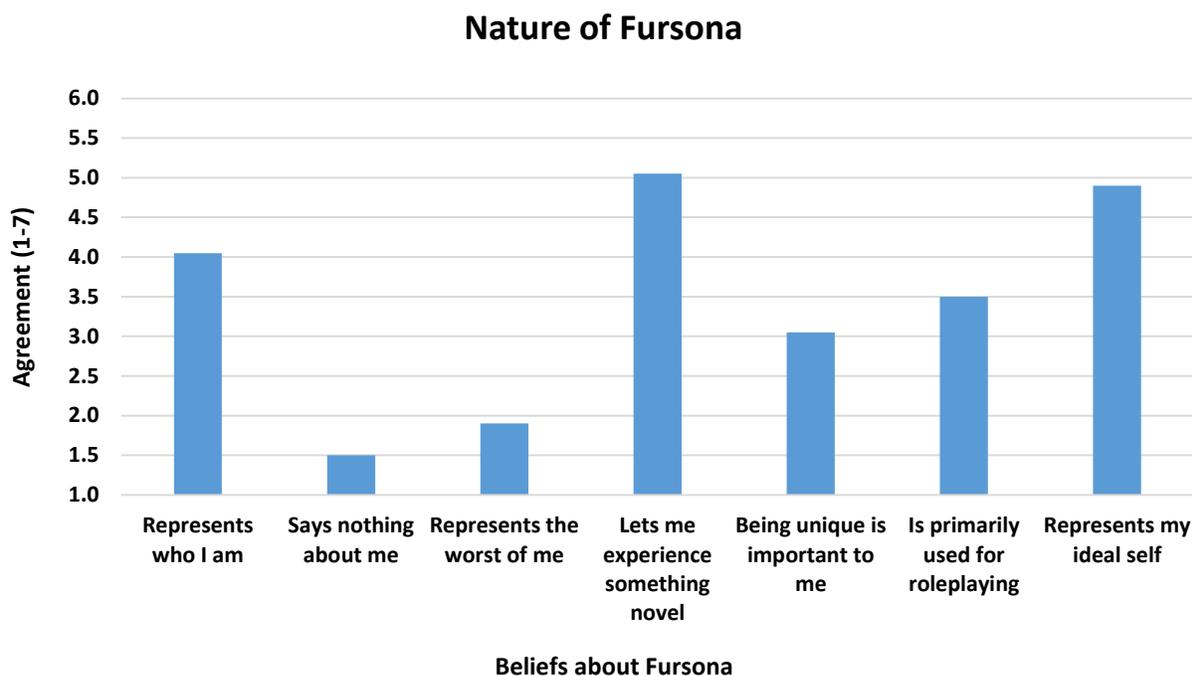
3.12 Fursona as Ideal Self

Given that fursona creation involves a fantasy element, it's worth asking what sorts of fursonas people choose to create for themselves. After all, largely unbound by the constraints of reality, it's possible to create almost any kind of fursona one wishes. Given that psychological theories about self-esteem generally predict that people are motivated to see themselves positively, and given that fursonas are at least somewhat inspired by the self (3.3, 3.11), we tested the hypothesis that furies generally create fursonas that represent better, idealized versions of themselves.

One way we did this was to ask furies to indicate whether their fursona would score higher or lower than they would on a number of traits—some desirable, some undesirable. The results, displayed in the figure below (S13), show that furies see their fursonas as having more desirable traits than they do (indicated by higher bars for attractive, confident, energetic, and playful) and fewer undesirable traits than they do (indicated by the lower bars for shy, disorganized, and unstable).



In the same study, we asked what furrries' fursonas represented, and many indicated it was their ideal self and a chance to experience something novel (see figure below).



Furrries generally agreed that their fursonas represented idealized versions of themselves, even more than they believed that their fursonas represented who they actually were (the data also show that another one of a fursona's primary functions is to allow them to experience something novel that they would otherwise not get to experience in day-to-day life). We're interested in the implications of this finding. Research on ideal selves suggests that people generally strive to become more like their ideal selves. As such, we believe that furrries may be striving to become more like their fursonas. For example, if you are a shy person, having an outgoing, extraverted fursona may give you an opportunity to "try out" being an extraverted person within a relatively safe and supportive community. While doing this, you not only get practice being a more assertive, outgoing self, but you may begin to change the way you see yourself—no longer as a shy person because, after all, you spend time being outgoing among others.

There is another possibility: if one's fursona represents an ideal version of who you are, could it actually be depressing? After all, if your fursona is ideal, but is very different from who you are, it may reinforce the fact that you are not your ideal self. The data generally support this assertion: furrries who stated that their fursonas represented their ideal self, but that they were very different from their fursonas, were more frustrated with themselves, had lower self-esteem, and lower overall well-being than furrries who said they were similar to their fursonas, which represented their ideal selves. We tested a similar hypothesis in another study (FF14), and found that the extent to which furrries both identified with their fursonas and felt that their fursonas represented their ideal self, they were also more likely to have a higher self-esteem.

Taken together, the data suggest that a fursona, far from being trivial, can be deeply meaningful for furries. In particular, the combination of what their fursona represents for them and how similar they see themselves to their fursona is significantly associated with their well-being and their overall positive sense of self. These data are only correlational, so it remains for future research to determine whether discrepancies between the self and one's fursona cause these decreases in well-being or whether they are a symptom of pre-existing low self-esteem and poor well-being. Nonetheless, this research suggests that fursonas may play an important role in a furry's sense of self. And, generally speaking, the healthiest fursonas seem to be the ones that represent a composite of who you would like to be and who you are right now.

Section 4: Animals: Attitudes, Beliefs, & Behaviour

4.1 Feeling Human

One common misconception about furies is that they believe they are non-human animals. This definition more precisely describes therians and otherkin (see Section 7) than it does furies, who, while regularly representing themselves through the use of anthropomorphic animal avatars known as fursonas (see Section 3) are not necessarily defined by their beliefs about, or identification with, non-human animals.

In nearly every survey of furies that the IARP has conducted, we ask two “yes” or “no” questions. First, we ask furies “Do you consider yourself to be less than 100% human?” Responses consistently show that the majority of furies do not: depending on the sample, responses range from 25-44% agreement with the item (W11, S11, W12, AC12). To compare, in a sample of the general American population, about 7% of people agree with this question (AC12).

The second question asks “Would you be 0% human if you could?” While more likely to say yes to this question than to the first question, furies tend to say no, with 38-53% saying yes, depending on the sample (W11, S11, W12, AC12). By comparison, 10% of the general population agree with this sentiment.

Taken together, the data suggest that most furies do not consider themselves to be non-human animals. Many of those who do are likely therian in addition to being furry, and it is the “therian” label, not the furry one, that best describes this phenomenon.

4.2 Knowledge about Animals

Many furies feel a sense of attachment to their particular fursona species (3.3, 3.4, 3.11), and in many instances believe, often truthfully so, that they know more about their species than the average individual does (e.g., researching the species, spending time learning their habits, interacting with animals). Given that many furies would be expected to have knowledge about their own fursona species, and given that furies spend time with other furies who presumably know a significant amount about their own fursona species, we tested whether furies know more about animals than the average. We tested this with a 33-item trivia quiz about general animal knowledge (AC12).

The quiz was marked such that 1 point was given for each correct answer, a point subtracted for each incorrect answer, and a score of “0” was given for an answer of “I don’t know.” As predicted, furies scored significantly higher than the sample of the general population (11.5 vs. 8.9). Furies out-scored non-furies on 30 out of 33 of the test items.

In general, the data provide the first evidence that furies do, indeed, have a greater knowledge about animals, as a group, than the general population. Whether it’s the case that participation in the fandom increases one’s knowledge about animals, or whether those with greater knowledge of animals are drawn to the furry fandom, is a question we may be answered through longitudinal research. The data are consistent with findings that furies are also better

than non-furries at recognizing non-human faces (e.g., fursuits, anthropomorphic animal characters), suggesting that there may be cognitive mechanisms underlying these effects.

4.3 Support for Animal Rights

We predicted that furries would feel strongly about animal rights, given their interest in anthropomorphic animals and given that psychological research has shown that anthropomorphized representations of non-human things increases empathy and compassion toward them. As such, we assessed furries' attitudes toward animal rights, and compared them to non-furries who took the survey and to therians, who, as a group, identify with non-human animals. About 83% of furries reported that they supported animal rights, while 7% said that they considered themselves to be an animal rights activist; these numbers did not differ significantly from the responses of non-furries. Therians, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to both support animal rights (94%) and to self-identify as an animal rights activist (19%; W12).

We also asked participants the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (on a 1-5 scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) with 28 different animal rights issues. Furries strongly showed strong concern about the displacement of animals for land use, the use of animals in laboratory research, pain and suffering in animals, wearing of animal fur, and cosmetics testing on animals. They were comparatively less bothered by items assessing the morality of eating animals or the use of animal products. When it came to their score on the scale overall, therians scored significantly higher than furries on concern for animal rights.

4.4 Pet Ownership

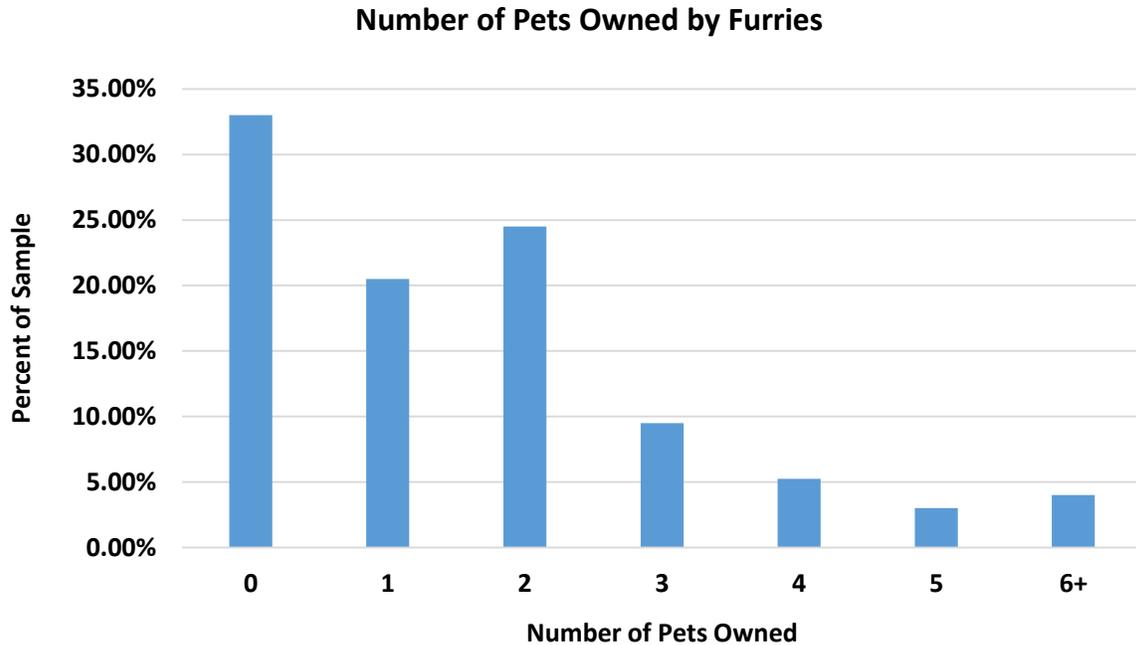
Given the furry fandom's affinity for animals, over the years we've asked participants several questions about pet ownership, including whether they had ever owned a pet, currently owned a pet, and the number and type of pets currently owned.

The table below outlines the frequency of pet ownership by furies, organized by pet species (W12).

Pet Ownership in Furies

Pet	% of Furies Owning at Least One
Cat	13.5
Dog	13.6
Fish	2.0
Ferret	0.5
Mouse	0.2
Rat	0.5
Other Rodent	0.6
Snake	1.2
Lizard	1.1
Bird	1.5
Tarantula	0.1
Horse	0.7

98% of furies have owned a pet at one point in their lives, while 68% of furies currently own a pet. Among those who own pets, furies own an average of 2.72 pets (see table below; FF13).



It would be worth looking, in future research, at the extent to which furies want to own a pet; these numbers might help to distinguish—among the one-third of furies who do not have a pet – those who genuinely do not wish to own a pet from those who, while wanting a pet, may be unable to do so due to various reasons: allergies, current living conditions (e.g., living with their parents—1.7, living in an apartment which does not allow pets) or being unable to afford a pet—1.5).

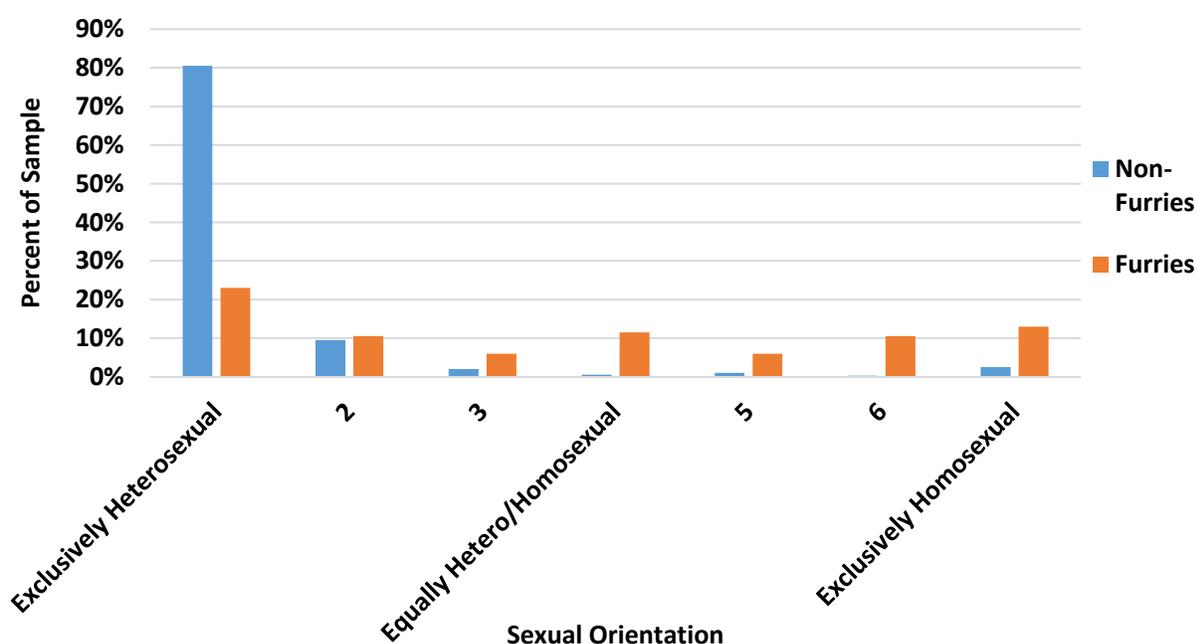
Section 5: Sex, Relationships, & Pornography

5.1 Sexual Orientation

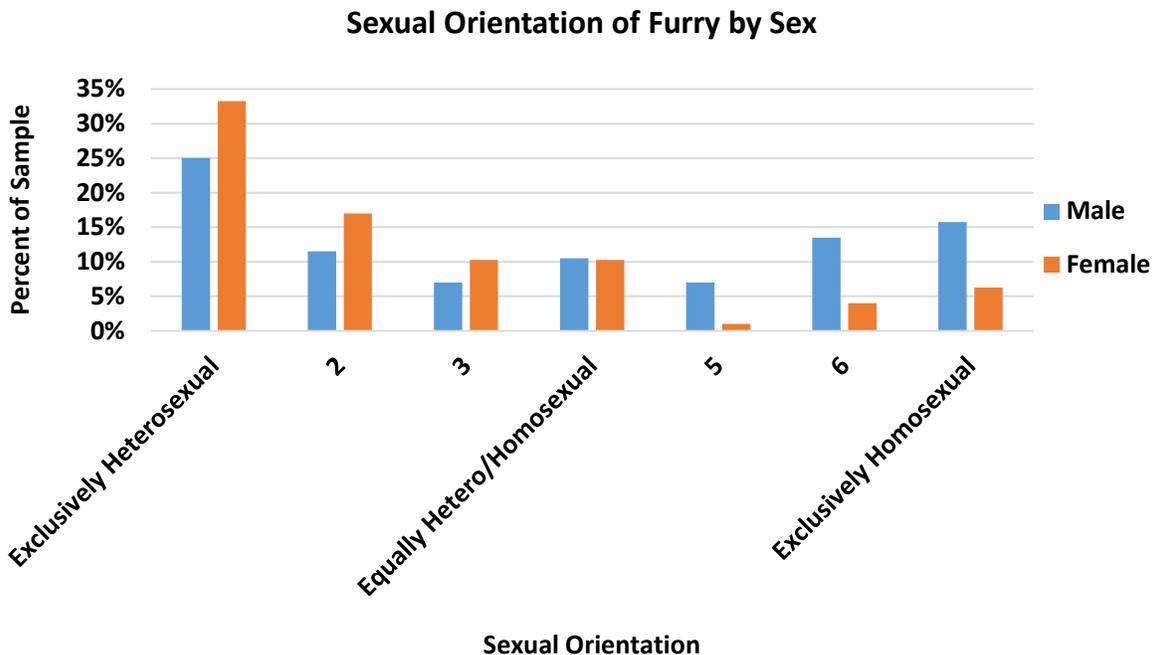
In a number of studies we've asked participants to indicate their sexual orientation. The 7-point scale, adapted from a traditional Kinsey scale, ranges from “exclusively heterosexual” to “exclusively homosexual” along a single dimension. Recognizing that many people do not consider their sexual identity to fall within this single dimension, we provided additional options (i.e., asexual, pansexual, and an option to write in their own option). It should be noted that many of the following analyses require continuous variables and, in such instances, only the data from the 1-7 scale is used. This is not a statement about alternative sexual orientations, but rather, is a byproduct of the type of analysis used and, wherever possible, we present data on other sexual orientations. In some instances, rarer sexual orientations are presented as an aggregate “other” category to protect the identity of those who may otherwise be identifiable for having provided a unique or rare response.

The data in the figure below represent the responses of furries and a non-furry sample of the general American population on the 7-item sexual orientation dimension. Furries were far less likely to report being exclusively heterosexual than the general population (wherein 90% reported predominantly or exclusively heterosexual as their orientation; AC12). Furries were approximately 7 times more likely to be predominantly or exclusively homosexual. Not shown in the figure, furries were more likely to report “other” as their sexual orientation (15.0% vs. 2.4%), which included pansexual, asexual, and a variety of self-provided orientations). To summarize, furries are far more likely to be non-heterosexual than non-furries, though it would be inaccurate to characterize the furry fandom as homosexual, as the most frequently-occurring single sexual orientation among furries is still “exclusively heterosexual.”

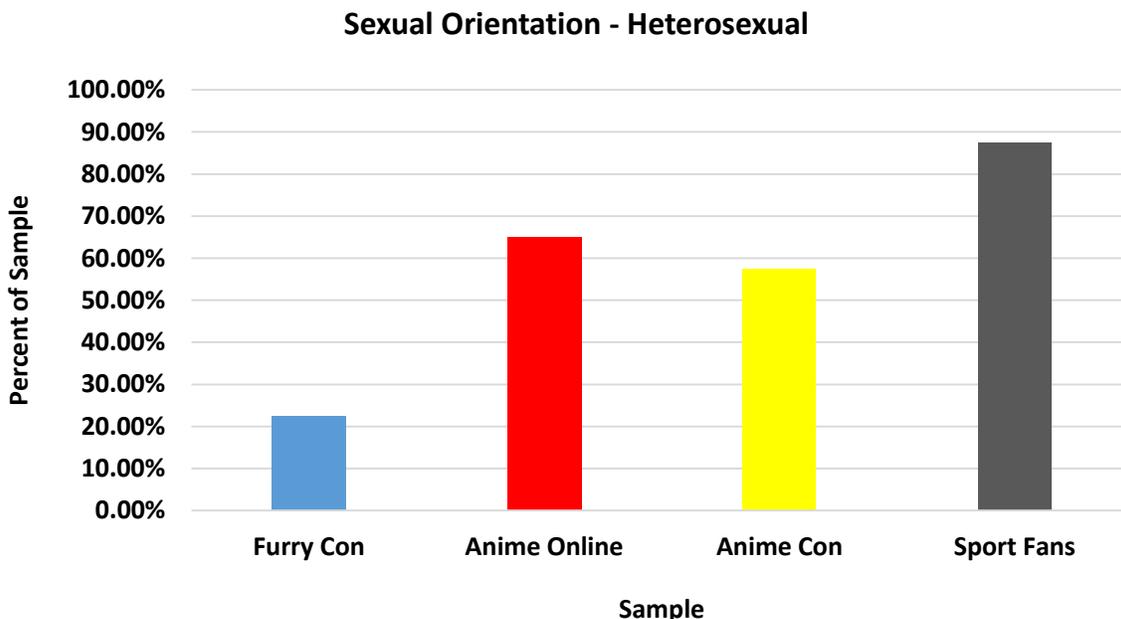
Sexual Orientation of Furry by Sample



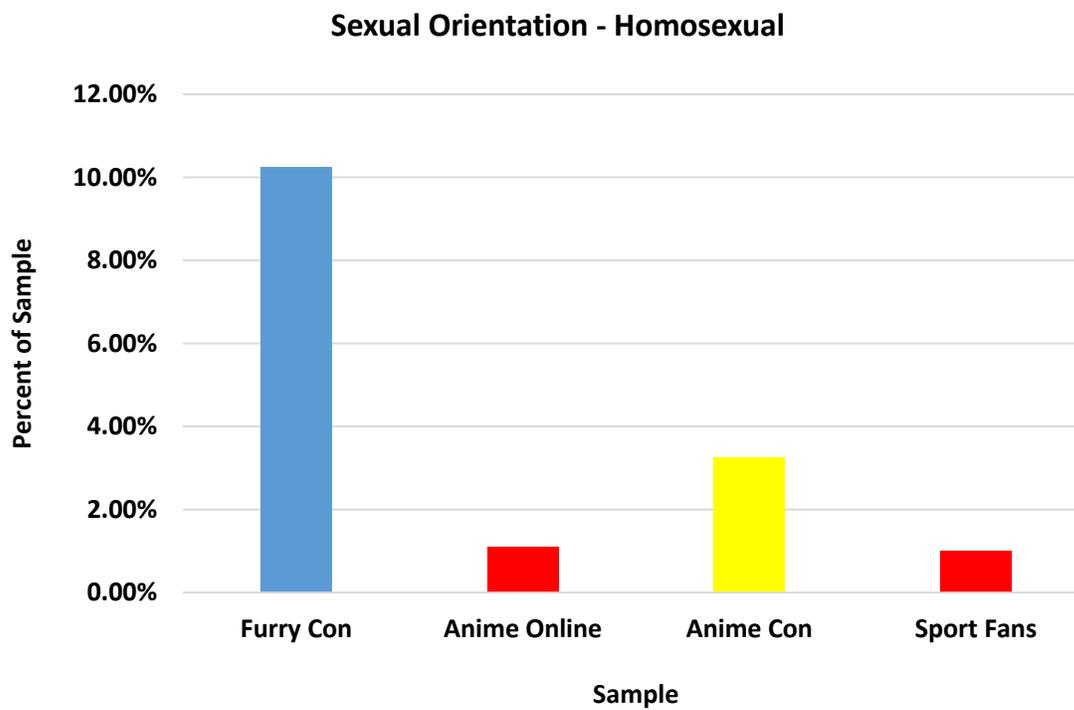
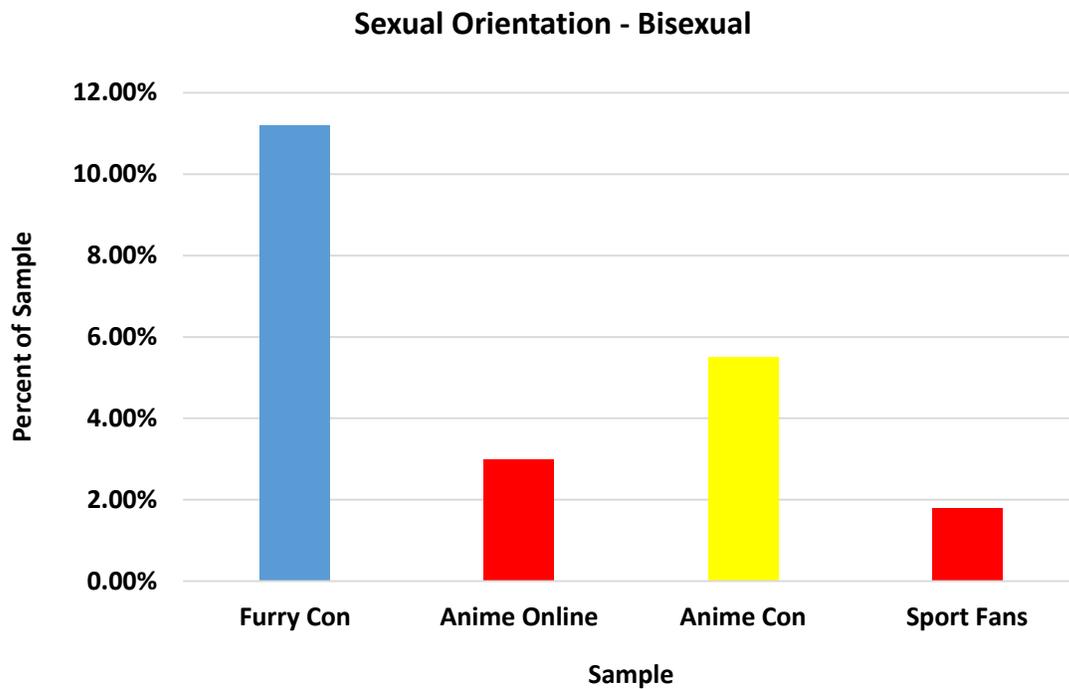
In another study, we assessed whether there were sex differences in sexual orientation. Female furies were significantly more likely to be heterosexual than male furies (see figure below; S11).



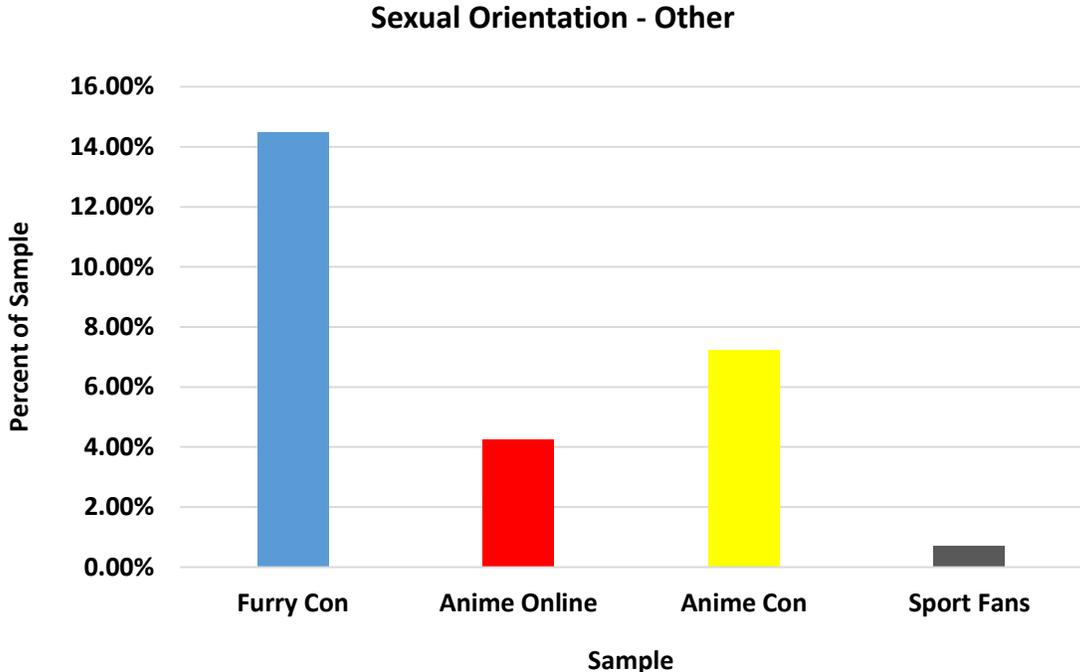
Other studies have compared the sexual orientation of furies to members of other fan groups (F3). In the figure below, more than half of all fantasy sport fans, convention-going anime fans (A-Kon), and online anime fans identified as exclusively heterosexual. Furies, by comparison, were the only group where less than 25% of the sample identified as heterosexual.



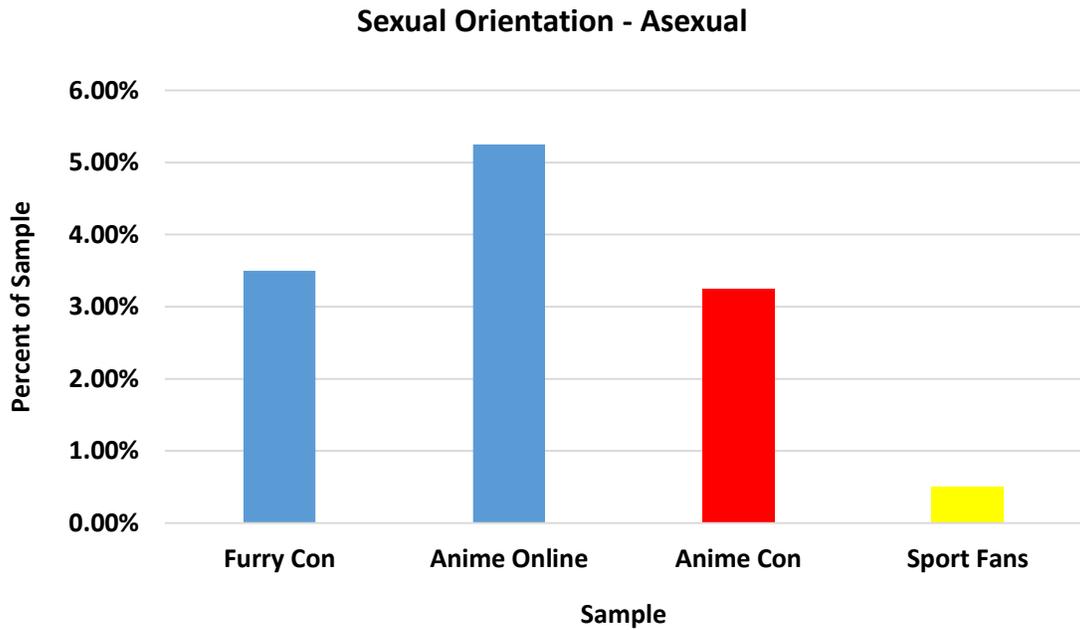
In addition, furies were 2-6 times more likely to self-identify as bisexual and 3-10 times more likely to self-identify as exclusively homosexual than members of the other fandoms.



Furries were also more likely to self-identify with an “other” sexual orientation.



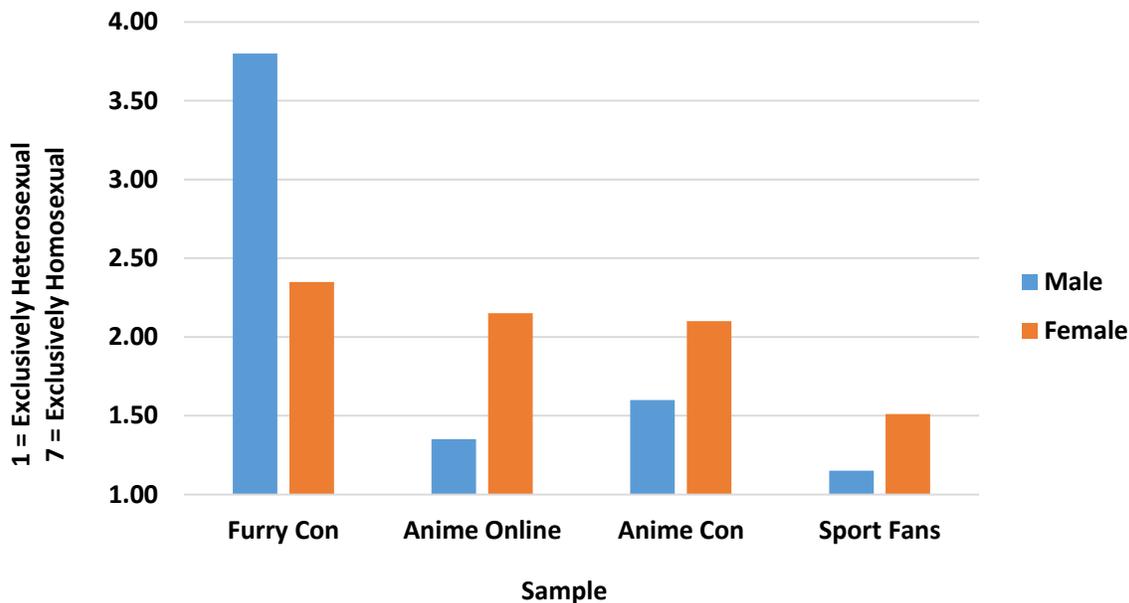
While furies were more likely to self-identify as asexual than convention-going anime fans and sport fans, they did not significantly differ from online anime fans in this regard.



In a final analysis, the fan groups differed in the nature of the relationship between sexual orientation and sex (that is, people assigned “male” or “female” at birth). In the fantasy sport

group and both anime fan groups, females were more likely than males to self-identify as homosexual (as indicated by higher numbers on the sexual orientation scale). In contrast, in the furry fandom, males more strongly identified as non-heterosexual than females.

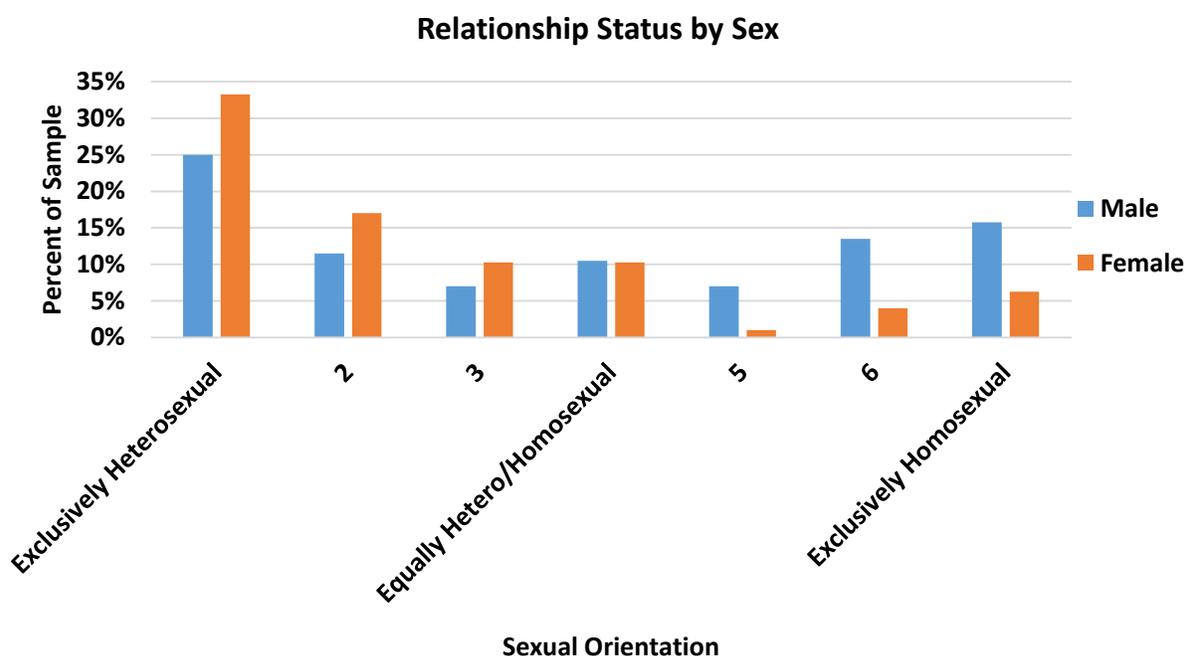
Sexual Orientation by Sex and Sample



It may be the case that the furry fandom, which espouses openness and acceptance as its central virtues, may be a particularly welcoming place for members of sexual minorities. Alternatively, the openness and acceptance of the furry fandom may allow people who consider themselves to be exclusively heterosexual to explore aspects of their sexuality they may otherwise not consider in other contexts. Ultimately, future research is needed to clarify the nature of these interesting sex and fandom differences in sexual orientation.

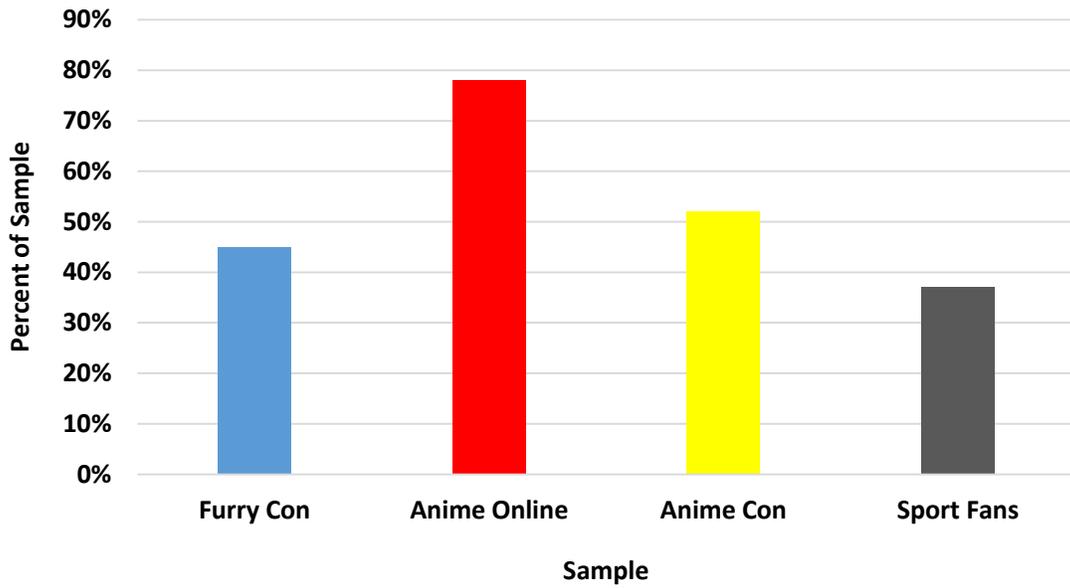
5.2 Relationship Status

We assess relationship status of furies by asking participants to indicate, by checking from a list of all that apply, their current relationship status. The results below are fairly representative of results obtained in any given study (S11), and show that there are significant differences in the relationship status of males and females (as assigned at birth): males are three times more likely to be single than females, while females are 2-4 times more likely to be dating, engaged, married, or in another type of relationship. One hypothesis for this difference is based on the idea that furry women are more likely to enter the fandom by way of a significant other; given the high proportion of men in the fandom (1.3), women may feel they need to justify their presence in the fandom (i.e., being an artist or friend of a furry), an issue discussed in greater depth in Section 12.

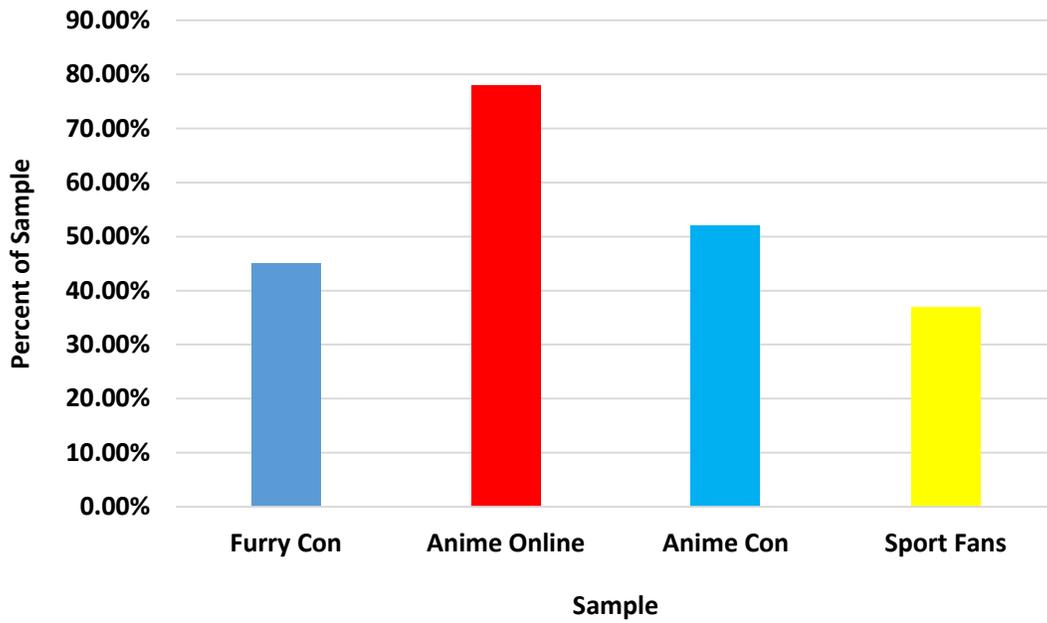


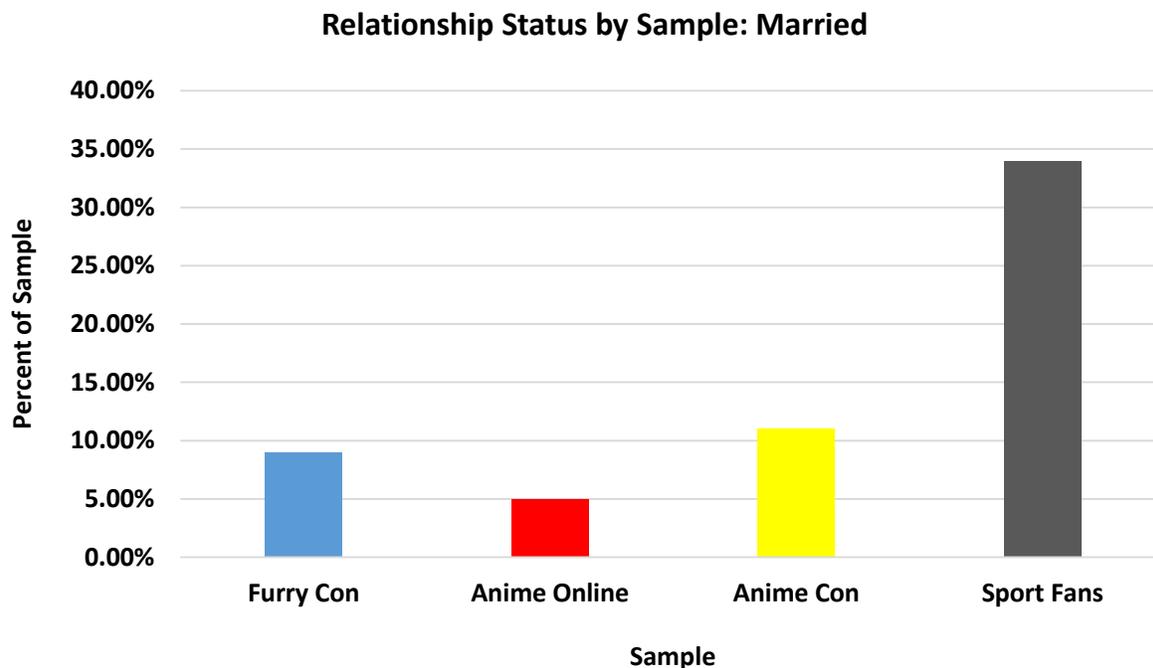
When interpreting differences in relationship status across fandoms, age likely plays a significant factor in these results; older participants are more likely to be married, particularly when the age difference between the fandoms amounts to the difference between people in their early 20s and their early 30s. This would explain why fantasy sport fans, the oldest fan group in the sample (see 1.1) are the most likely to be married and, by extension, the least likely to be single. This similarly explains why online anime fans, the youngest group, are the most likely to be single and not in a long-term dating relationship. Furies (a convention-going sample), and convention-going anime fans were comparable in their rates of dating, although the A-Kon sample was more likely to be single than furies were (F3).

Relationship Status by Sample: Single



Relationship Status by Sample: Dating

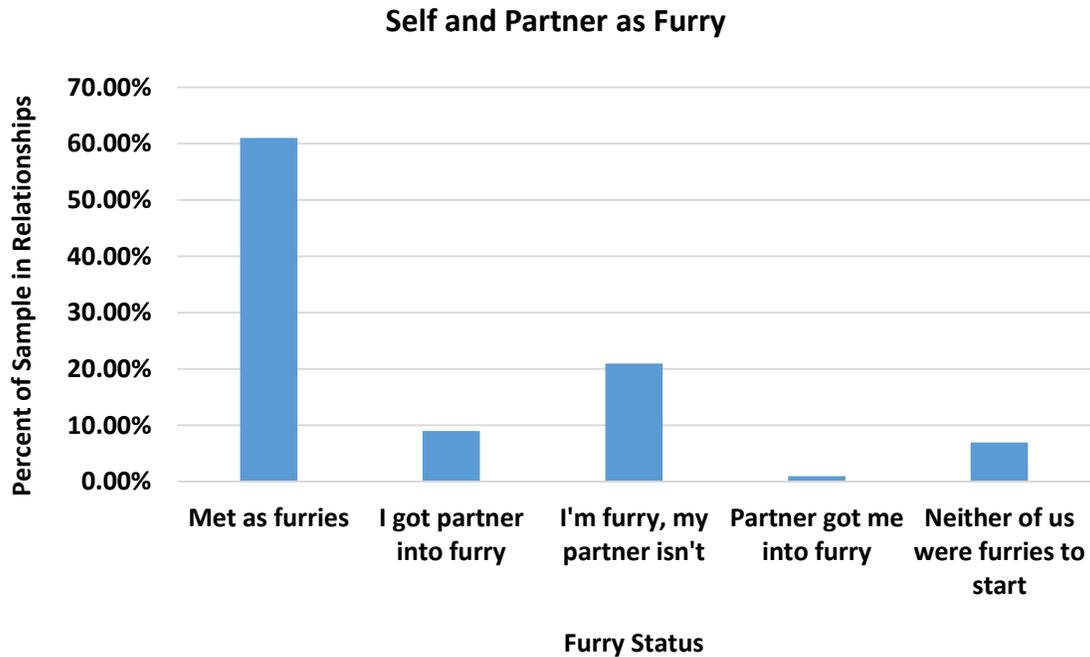




This brings us to another category of interest: open and polyamorous relationships. While we acknowledge that these are two distinct (if related) phenomena, results for the two items were comparable, and so they were grouped together in the following figure. As a group, furries are far more likely to engage in open relationships or polyamory than the other groups. One possible explanation for the high rates of polyamory in the furry fandom is that the fandom encourages norms of openness and acceptance (see 1.9, 2.10), which may make it a particularly appealing, non-judgmental place for people who are in polyamorous or open relationships (which are often stigmatized in the general population). Alternatively, the open and accepting nature of the furry fandom may lead furries to consider open relationships and polyamory where, in other contexts, they might otherwise not. Further research is needed to clarify the possible mechanisms underlying these differences.

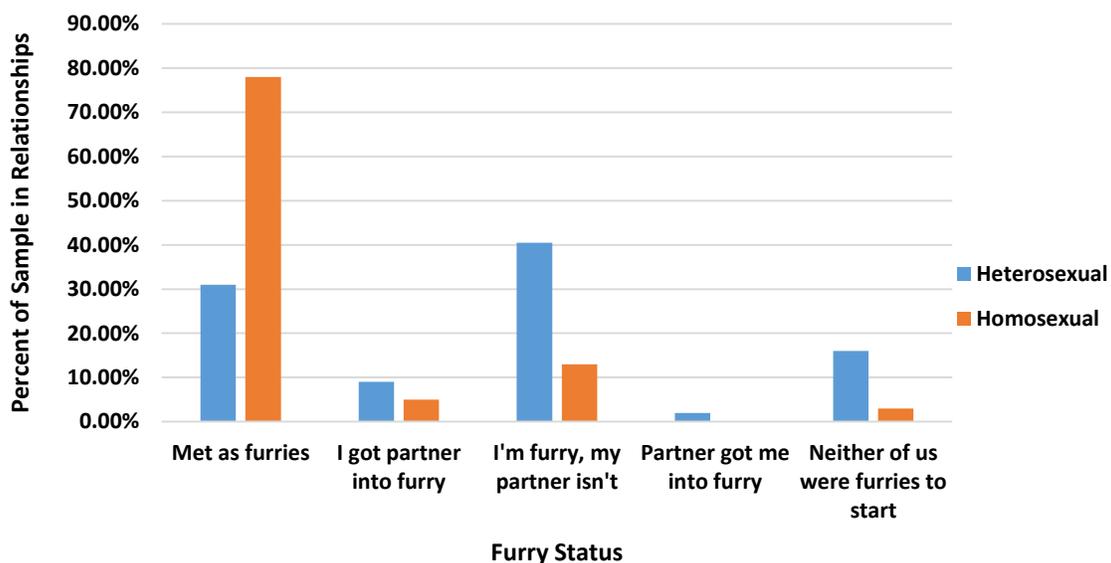
5.3 Meeting Significant Other

Given the importance of the furry fandom as a source of social interaction for many furries, we have studied whether furries who were currently in relationships met their partners in the fandom, brought non-furry partners into the furry fandom, or were brought into the fandom as a result of their partner. The data below clearly illustrate that most furries in relationships met their significant other through the fandom (S13).



As the figure below makes clear, however, these trends differ dramatically, depending on participants' sexual orientation (S13). Homosexual furies are far more likely to find a relationship partner in the fandom, whereas the reverse is true for heterosexual furies, who were actually more likely to find their partner outside of the fandom. This is consistent with the finding that men are more prevalent in the furry fandom than women (1.3), making it easier for homosexual furies to find same-sex partners in the furry fandom, especially given that the furry fandom has a much higher prevalence rate of homosexuality than in the general population (see 5.1).

Self and Partner as Furry by Sexual Orientation



5.4 Frequency of Porn Use

Given the prevalence of negative stereotypes about furies (e.g., association with sexual deviance, presumption that the fandom is a fetish), the issue of pornography is a controversial one in the fandom. We began by assessing the frequency with which furies view pornography. Furry men were significantly more likely to view furry-themed pornography (96.3%) than furry women (78.3%). Furry men and women both significantly underestimated these figures (84% and 70%, respectively; FF13).

We also assessed other aspects of pornography use, summarized in the table below (all differences between men and women were significantly different from one another; FF13).

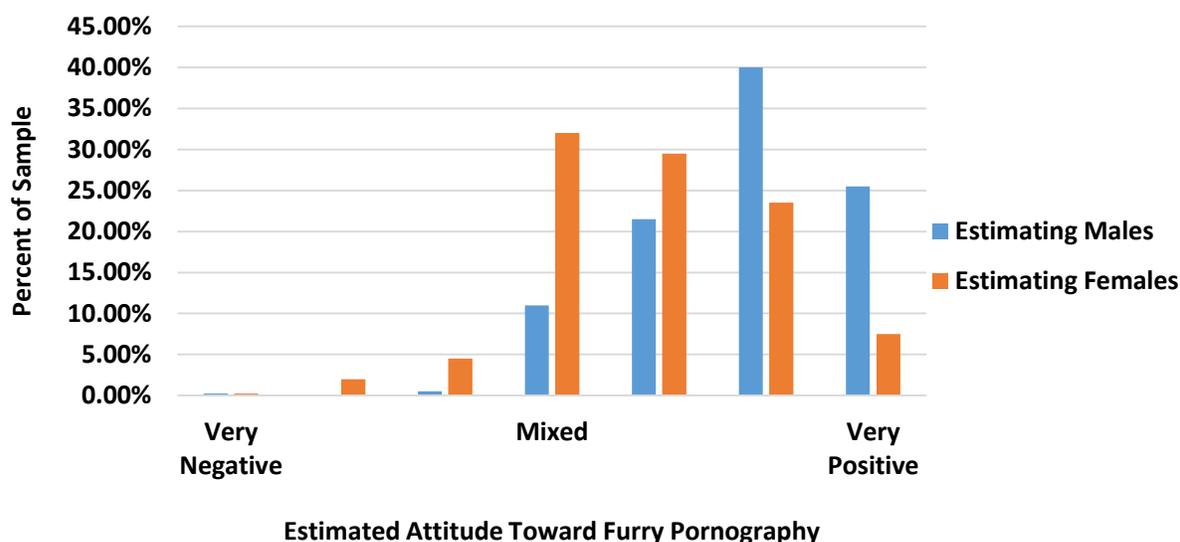
Items Assessing Other Aspects of Furry Pornography Use

Question	Response	
What percentage of the furry art that you view is pornographic?	Men: 50.9%	Women: 30.7%
What percentage of the furry art that you own is pornographic?	Men: 20.9%	Women: 8.7%
When you roleplay online, what percent of the time is it sexual?	Men: 34.0%	Women: 21.4%
In the last month, how many times did you view furry pornography?	Men: 43.5	Women: 10.5

5.5 Attitudes toward Porn

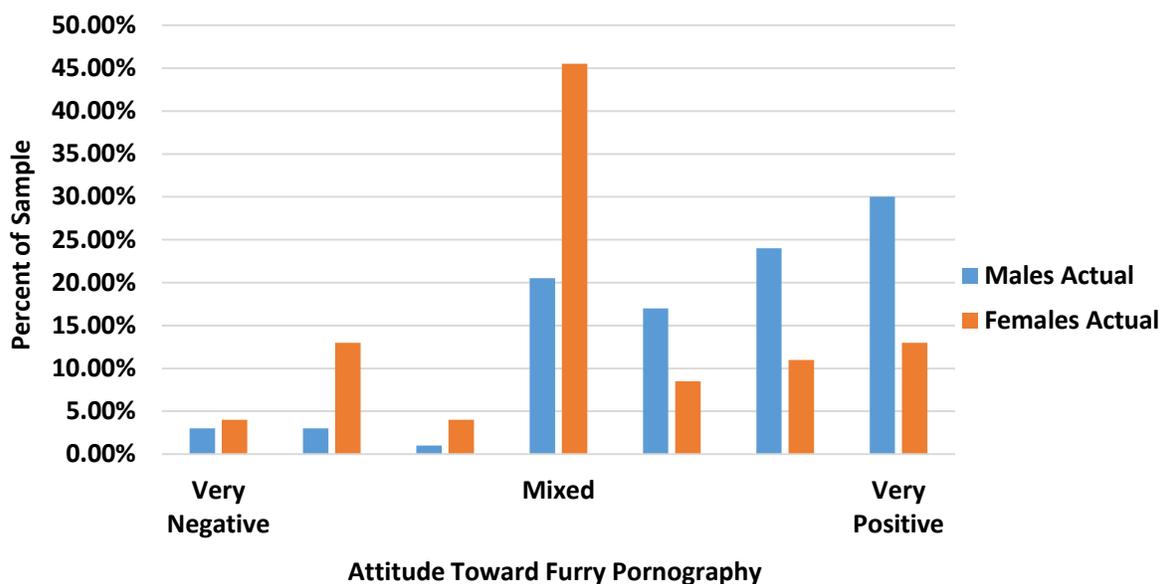
Furries were asked to estimate the attitudes of male (blue bars) and female (orange bars) furries in the fandom toward furry-themed pornography (participants identifying as male and female did not significantly differ in their estimates, and so their combined estimates are presented together). The figure below shows that male furries were estimated to have a more positive attitude toward furry pornography than female furries, though, in general, both were predicted by participants to hold relatively positive views toward furry pornography (FF13).

Estimating Male and Female Attitudes Toward Furry Pornography



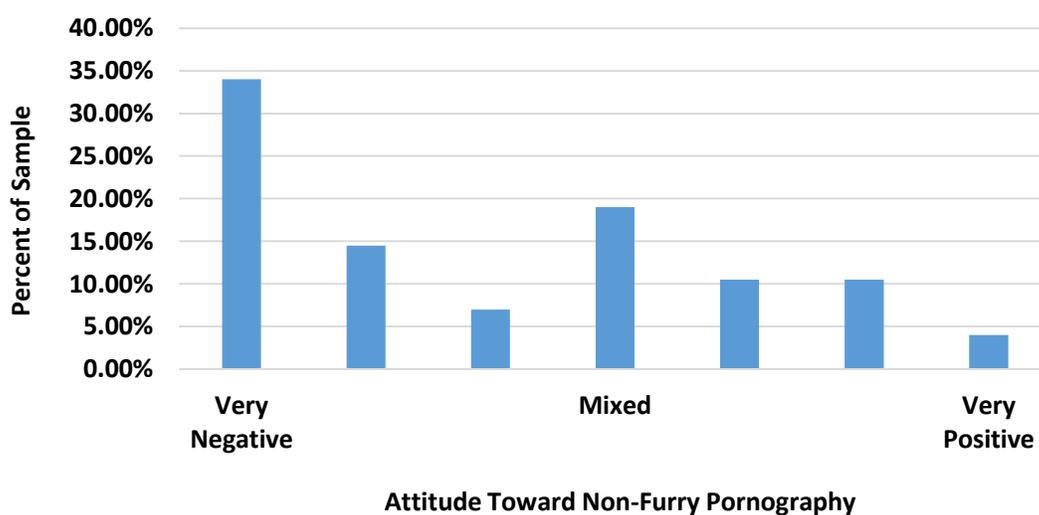
In the figure below, participants were then asked to indicate how comfortable they actually felt about furry pornography, revealing a very different trend emerges. Male furries ($M = 5.37$) held a significantly more positive attitudes toward furry pornography than female furries ($M = 4.26$). What's more, female furries were found to hold far more mixed feelings toward pornography than was estimated, with nearly half of females reporting mixed feelings, and nearly as many females opposing pornography as supporting it (FF13).

Male and Female Attitudes Toward Furry Pornography



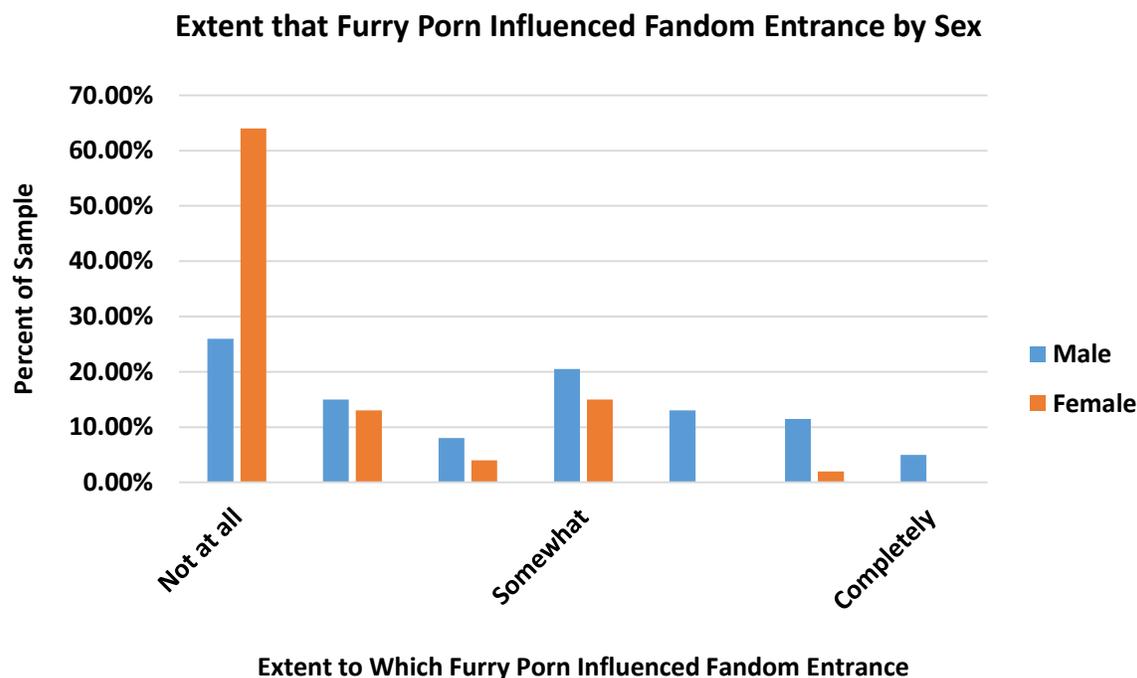
To this point, the data have referred to attitudes toward furry-themed pornography. In the figure below, we assessed attitudes toward non-furry pornography. There were no sex differences between participants' scores, so they were combined. The figure below suggests that more than a third of furries have a relatively negative attitude toward non-furry pornography, and only about a quarter of furries feel quite positive toward it. These data suggest that for many furries, if they do use pornography, it may be limited to furry pornography. Another question tested this, asking male and female furries to indicate the extent to which the pornography they viewed (if they viewed it at all) was limited exclusively to furry pornography. Male furries were far more likely to view exclusively or near-exclusively furry pornography than females were (17.1% vs. 2.2%; FF13).

Furries' Attitudes Toward Non-Furry Pornography



5.6 Porn as a Draw to Furry

Furries are often referred to as a “fetish” group (a label which is shown to be inaccurate in 2.10). To further test the extent to which furries are predominantly drawn to the furry fandom by furry-themed pornography, we asked furries identifying as male and female to indicate the extent to which exposure to furry-themed pornography was a factor that contributes to their involvement in the furry fandom (FF13).

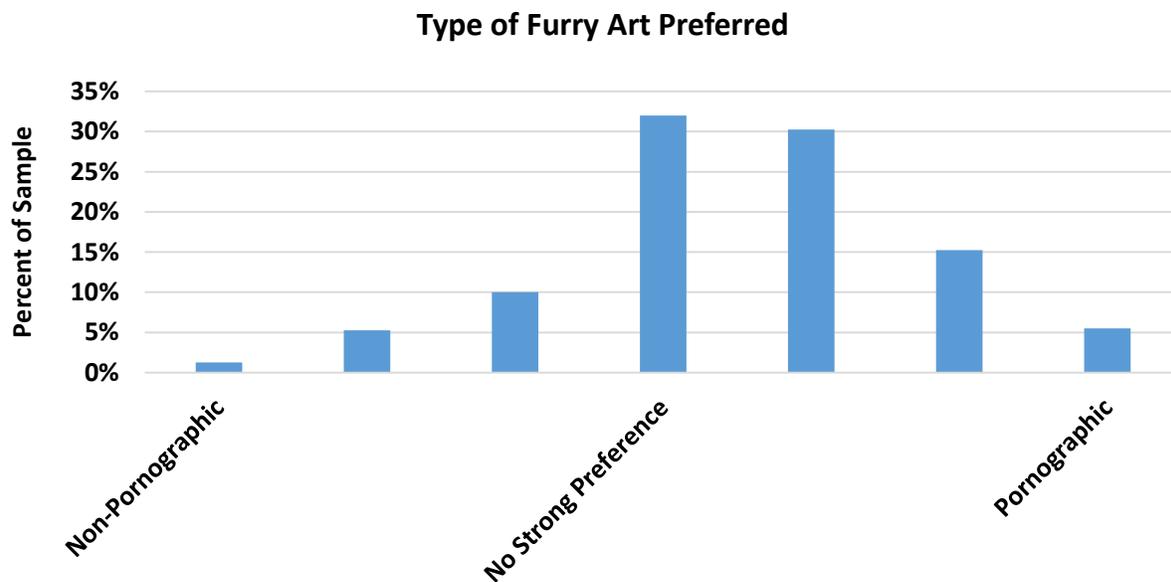


Were it the case that the furry fandom was predominantly a fetish, one would expect the majority of participants to indicate that furry-themed pornography plays a very strong role in drawing them to the fandom. As the figure clearly reveals, however, only a small proportion of furries, male or female, indicate that this is the case. Male furries are significantly more likely than female furries to be drawn to the fandom by furry pornography ($M = 3.36$ vs. $M = 1.80$) but, even so, almost half of male furries say that furry pornography had little to no influence on them entering the fandom and only about 15% strongly or completely agree that it was the definitive factor which got them into the fandom.

An ongoing longitudinal study of furries provides converging evidence for these results. If the furry fandom were, indeed, a fetish, one might expect interest in furry-themed pornography to increase over time as furries become more involved in the fandom. Analyses suggest, however, that over the course of a year, there was no discernible change in furries’ felt positivity toward pornography (FF14).

5.7 Preference for Erotic Furry Media

Given the prevalence with which furries look at furry-themed pornography (see 5.4), and given stereotypes about furries as a fetish group, one might expect furries to overwhelmingly prefer erotic furry content to non-erotic furry content. To test this hypothesis, participants in one study were asked to indicate the extent to which, when viewing furry artwork, they preferred it to be pornographic versus non-pornographic. There were no sex differences in responses, and so they are presented combined in the figure below (FF13).

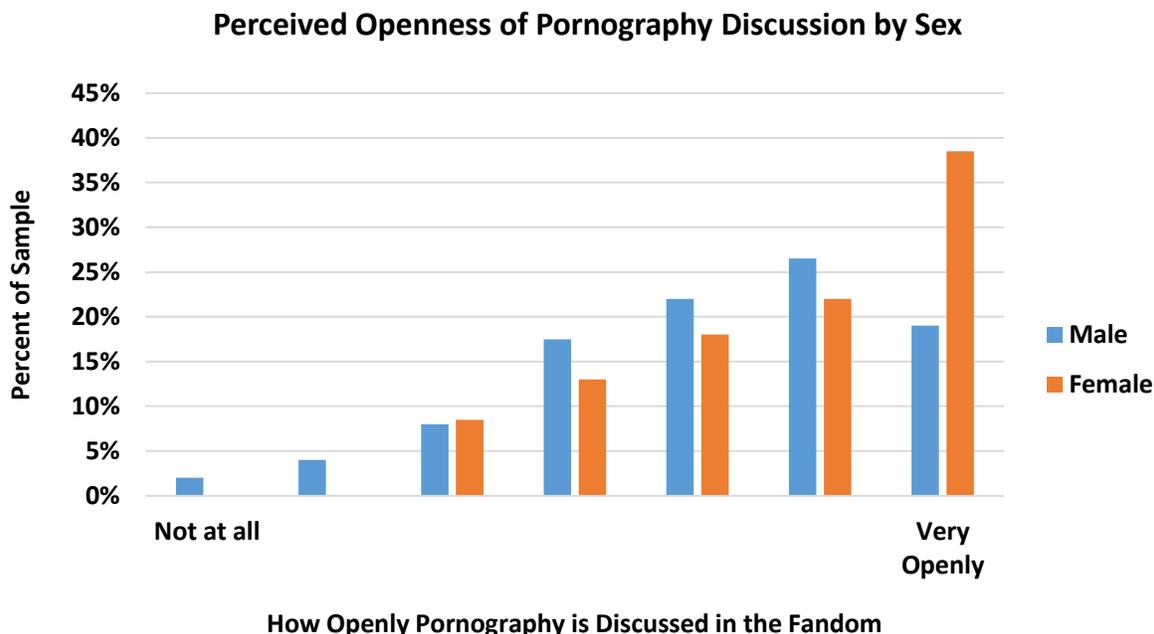


Preference for Non-Pornographic and Pornographic Furry Art

The data suggest that most furries feel ambivalent, or at most a slight preference for pornographic over non-pornographic furry art. This lends support to the notion that for many furries, a naturally-occurring sex drive may lead them to an interest in erotic furry artwork, but, in general, they seem to enjoy furry art regardless of whether it contains erotic content.

5.8 Openness of Porn Discussion

The figure below displays the responses of furies to being asked how openly they felt the fandom discussed pornography, organized by participants who identified as male (blue bars) and female (orange bars).

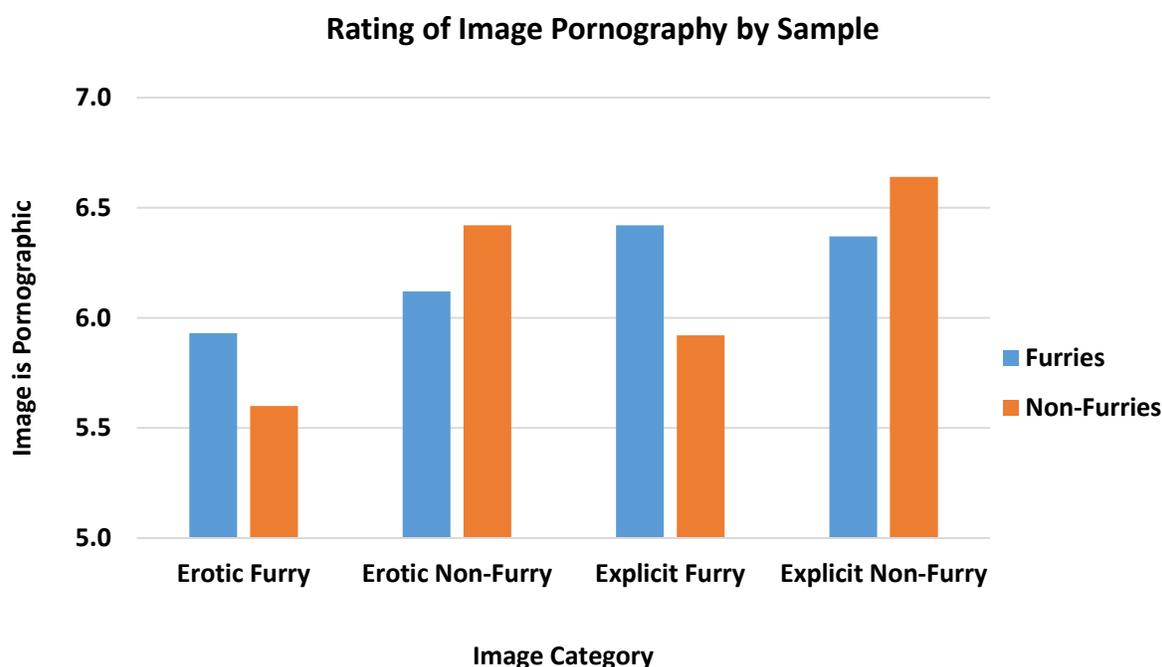


As you can see, female furies were significantly more likely than males to say that pornography was very openly discussed in the fandom ($M = 5.70$ vs. $M = 5.13$). Put another way: for nearly half of all female furies, the fandom is seen as a place that talks very openly and very frequently about the topic of furry sexuality (right-most bar), something which many males in the fandom don't see themselves. This difference in perception may reflect the fact that females in the fandom, sensitive to cues that they may not belong (Section 12) and feeling far less positive about pornography than they're told they ought to feel (5.5), perceive pornography within the fandom as being a very salient topic.

For more information on the psychological theories grounding this topic, you are encouraged to look up the social psychological phenomena of Stereotype Threat (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype_threat) and Pluralistic Ignorance (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluralistic_ignorance).

5.9 Porn Perception

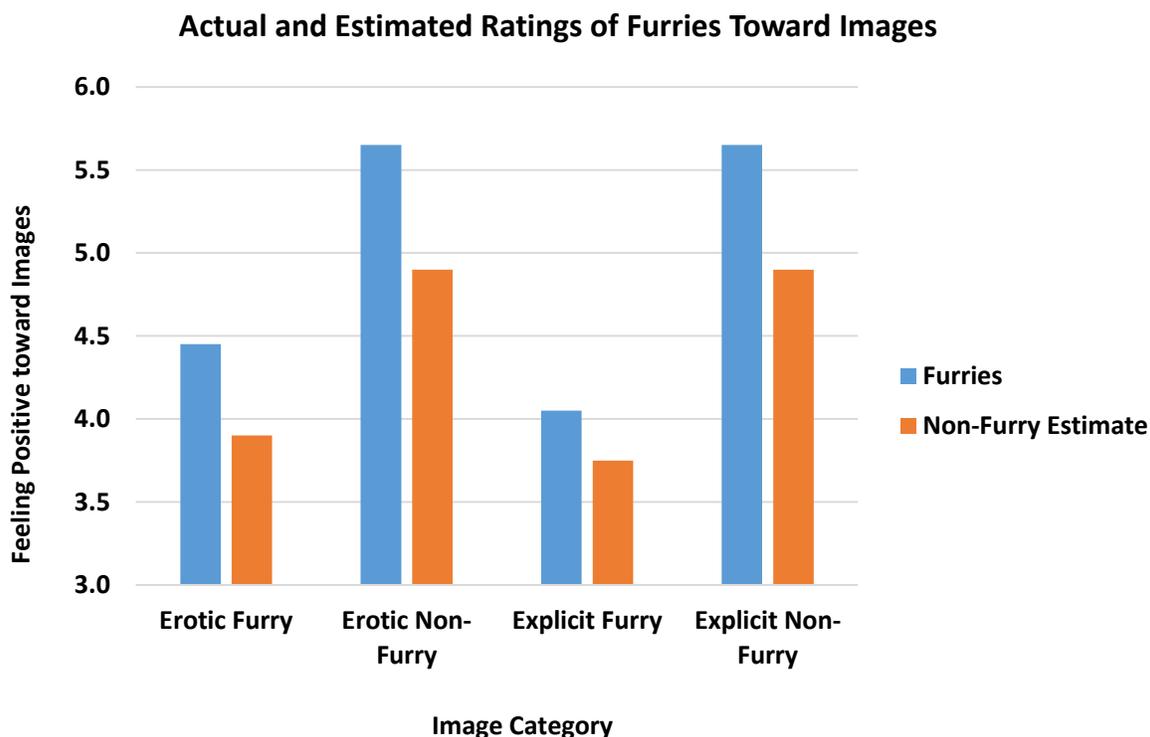
Because of the stigma experienced by furries from non-furries around them, it is possible that furries expect non-furries to disapprove of furry content, particularly erotic furry content. This would lead one to hypothesize that non-furries would rate furry-themed erotica more pornographic (explicit) than furries, due to considering it to be more deviant or inappropriate. To test this hypothesis, we had furries and non-furries rate furry and non-furry themed pornographic images in a computer-based study (FF15). Participants viewed both furry and non-furry images that were either “clean,” mildly erotic (e.g., nude characters), or explicit (sexual intercourse). Images were balanced to include an equal number of heterosexual and homosexual images, as well as an equal number of male and female characters. Participants were asked, for each image in the set, to rate how “pornographic” the image was.



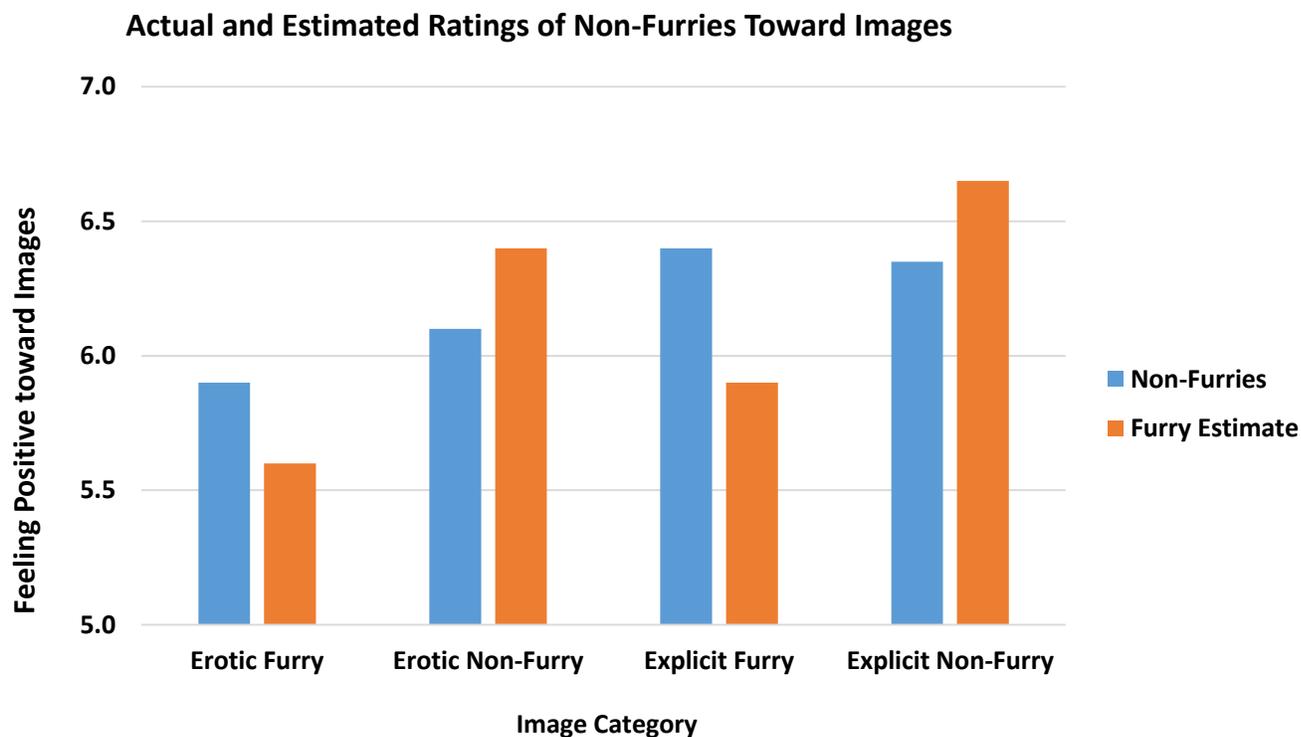
Furries rated the erotic furry images as being significantly more pornographic than non-furries did, with the opposite pattern of results for non-furry erotic images. The effect was even stronger when it came to explicit images, where furries called the explicit images significantly more pornographic than non-furries did. The groups did not significantly differ when it came to categorizing explicit non-furry images.

In the same study, furry and non-furry participants were also asked to rate how positive they felt about the images, and to estimate how positively the other group felt about the images. The figure below shows how furries felt toward the images (blue bars), and how non-furries estimated that furries would feel toward the images. Given that the orange bars are all lower than the blue bars, non-furries *underestimated* how positively furries actually felt about the erotic and explicit material (in contrast to the fears of many furries that non-furries assume them to be sexual deviants and perverts). Non-furries correctly inferred that furries would be preferentially

positive toward furry artwork compared to non-furry artwork (as indicated by the “furry” bars being higher than the “non-furry” bars).



A near-perfect reversal of the above phenomenon happens in the figure below (FF15), which shows how non-furies responded to the images and how furies predicted that the non-furies would respond. Of greatest importance in this figure are “Erotic Furry” and “Explicit Furry” categories, where we see evidence of furies’ expectation of non-furry disapproval: furies significantly underestimated how positively non-furies would feel toward furry images. Moreover, furies overestimated the extent to which non-furies would feel positively toward non-furry material (though, like non-furies, furies did get the pattern correct, where non-furies preferred non-furry art to furry art). Taken together, the data suggest that furies overestimate how negatively non-furies perceive the furry fandom and its content. While non-furies certainly show greater preference for non-furry pornography as compared to furry pornography, the anticipated revulsion toward furry artwork that many furies anticipate from non-furies seems to be overblown.

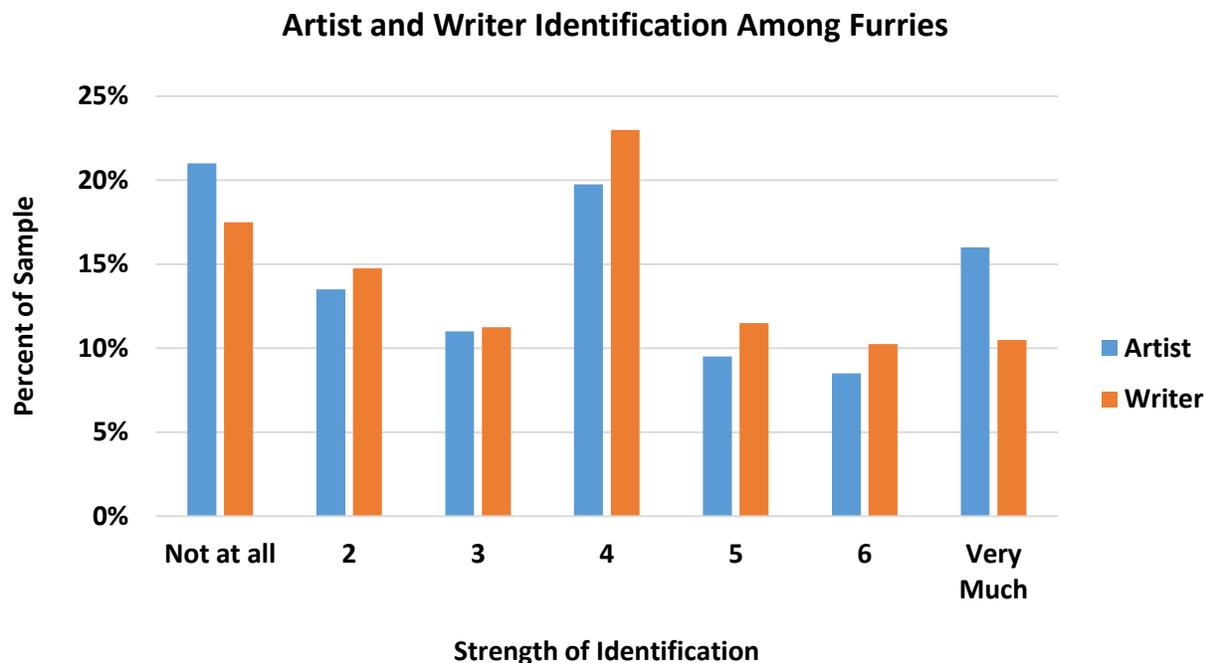


In short, the primary difference between furries and non-furries in the study seems to be that non-furries were not seeing erotic and explicit furry content as being pornographic to the same extent that furries were. Follow-up analyses suggest that this effect was driven predominantly by arousal. Put simply: if participants found the material arousing, they considered it pornographic. Since non-furries did not find the non-furry artwork as arousing as furries did, they did not consider it to be as pornographic as furries did. Unexpectedly, furries also rated fursuit pictures (non-erotic) as more pornographic than non-furries did, though it's worth noting that the average score for furries on this measure was 1.2 out of 7, suggesting that, generally speaking, furries do not find fursuits, in and of themselves, to be particularly pornographic (FF15).

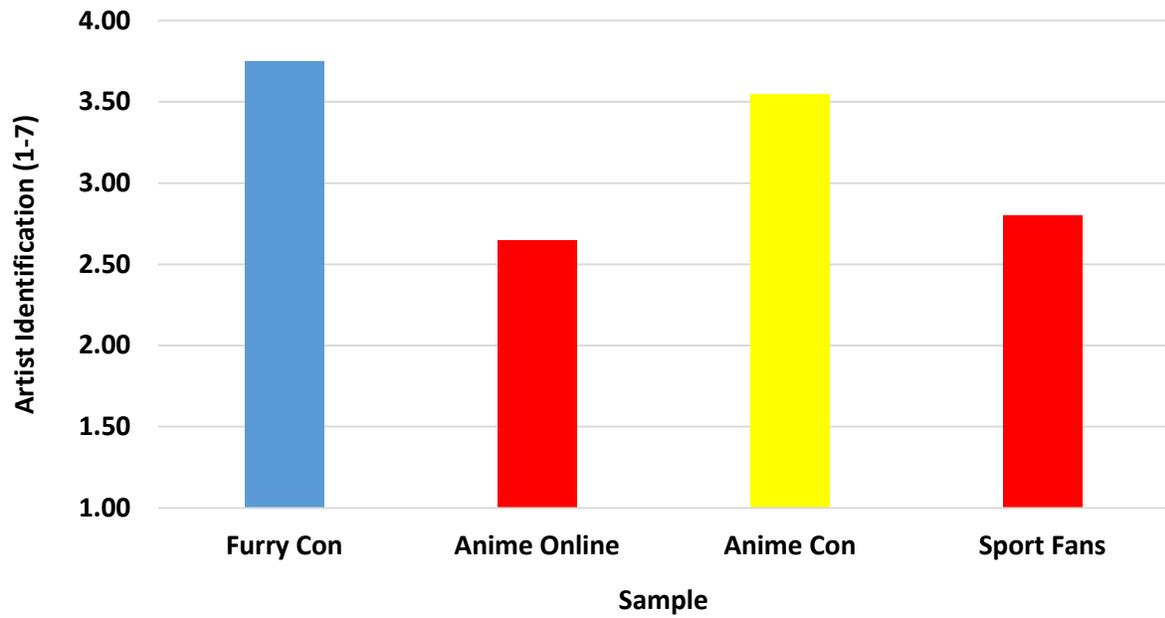
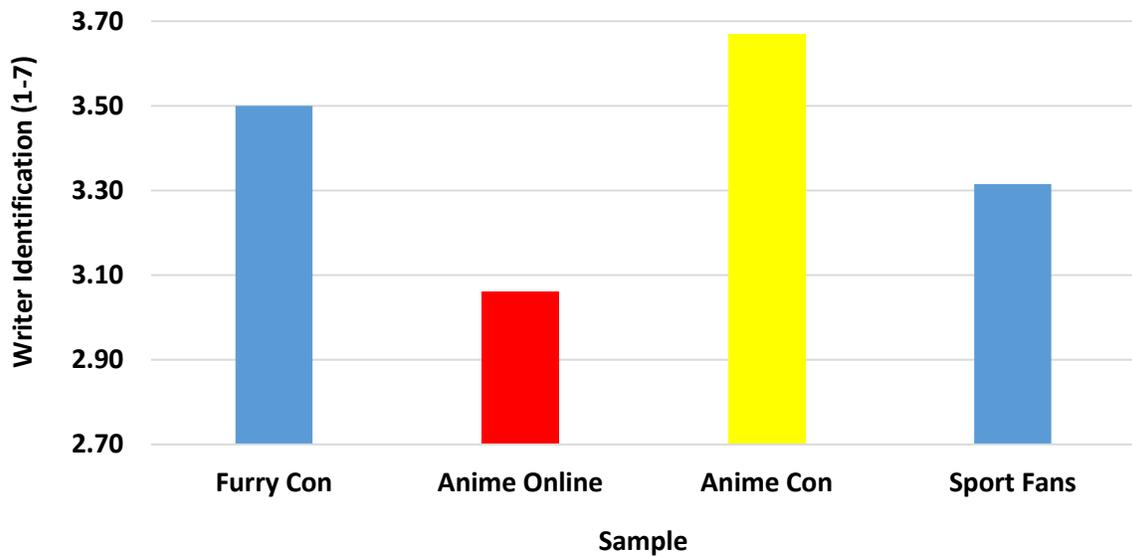
Section 6: Artists & Writers

6.1 Prevalence

Given the importance attributed to artwork within the fandom and the popularity of art/artist websites within the community (2.3–2.5), we wanted to know what percentage of furries considered themselves to be artists and writers. We asked participants to indicate, on a 7-point scale, the extent to which they considered themselves to be an artist and a writer (1 = *absolutely not* to 7 = *very much*; S11). The table below shows that about 35% of the fandom does not identify as either artists or writers, while another 25% or so strongly identify as artists or writers.

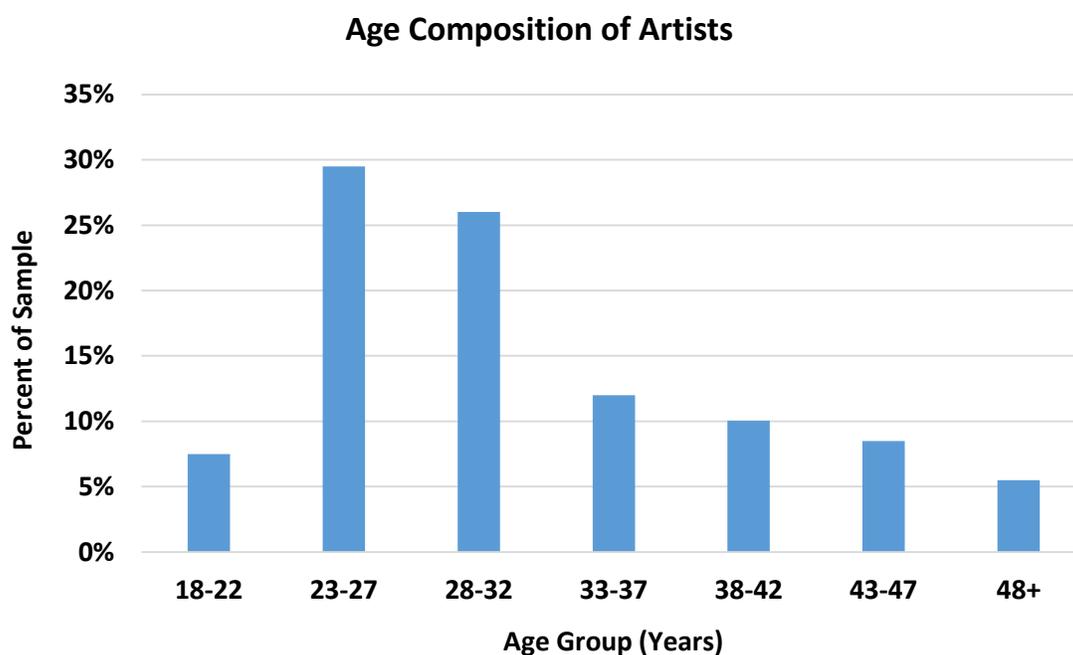


To test whether these rates of content creators in the furry fandom differed from other fandoms, we asked the same questions to convention-going (A-Kon) and online anime fans, as well as fantasy sport fans (see figures below). Given that the furry fandom is a predominantly visual art fandom, and given that the fandom's content centers on independent artists (as opposed to large studios), it is unsurprising that furries were the group most strongly self-identifying as artists, a distinction that seems to be unique to visual art, as furries were not the fandom most likely to self-identify as writers (F3).

Self-Identified Artists by Sample**Self-Identified Writers by Sample**

6.2 Demographics

On average, furry artists are older than non-artist furies (see figure below; FF14, AC15). However, the shape of the age distribution is comparable to that of the broader furry fandom, with the exception of 18-22 year old furies, which may be a product of sampling bias: artists recruited in these samples were those who had tables in their respective conventions' dealer areas, which means they were established enough in their careers to justify the cost of their table. As such, our sample likely draws upon artists who have been in the fandom for a while or who have spent many years honing their craft. Going forward, we plan to study artists in the fandom with online studies, to see whether this tendency for artists to be older than the general furry population holds outside of a convention setting, with a broader, more representative sample of artists.



The table below (AC15) shows that artists in the fandom have a very different sex/gender composition than the rest of the fandom—they are far more likely to identify as female than male (almost reversing the proportions entirely), and, at least among artists who self-identified as furies, were twice as likely to self-identify as genderqueer or non-binary. We are, as of yet, unsure why artists show such a dramatically different sex/gender composition compared to the rest of the furry fandom, and future research will be investigating this issue. However, data suggest the possibility that the furry fandom as a whole, being predominantly male, may seem like a “boys club” to some women (Section 12), which may discourage women from joining the fandom or preferentially select for people whose gender identity is more in-line with traditionally masculine traits. For females who have an “in,” however (e.g., “I’m an artist, I belong here”), it may be easier to fit into the fandom. It remains for future research to these hypotheses.

Sex and Gender among Artists and Non-Artists in the Fandom

Category	Artist (Furry)	Artist (Non-Furry)	Furries
Intersex	0%	0%	0.2%
Sex: Male	29.5%	20.8%	72.4%
Sex: Female	70.5%	79.2%	27.4%
Gender: Masculine	34.1%	29.2%	67.1%
Gender: Feminine	50.0%	66.7%	23.3%
Genderqueer/Non-Binary	20.5%	4.2%	10.0%

Across two samples of artists, the data suggest that while many convention-working artists make at least a portion of their income through their art, less than one in three said art was their sole source of income, suggesting that most artists in the fandom—even among those who sell art at conventions, supplement their pay with other jobs (FF14, AC15). Artists also indicated that most of their friends in the fandom (45.5% to 61.3%) were also artists, suggesting that there may be some merit to considering “artists” to be a distinct and cohesive subgroup within the fandom (FF14, AC15).

6.3 Furry Identification

Female-identifying artists are more likely to have been artists before they were furries (60%); in contrast, male-identifying artists are far less likely to have been artists before they were furries (20%). This suggests that female artists are more likely to be artists who were inspired by, or found their way into the furry fandom, whereas male artists are more likely to be furries who were inspired to become artists, though future research is needed to test these hypotheses. It’s worth noting, however, that among artists who self-identify as furries, they do not differ significantly from furries with regard to how strongly they identify with the fandom or with their personal furry fandom (see 9.4 for more on the fandom/fanship distinction; FF14).

6.4 Content Produced

Given that many negative stereotypes about the furry fandom suggest that it is a fetish or is predominantly associated with sexuality, we asked our sample of furry artists to estimate the percent of the content they produced which was erotic in nature. On average, they estimated that 25% of the work they produced was “adult” (FF15), and 17.6% said that more than half the content they produced was explicit, although 32.4% indicated that they produced artwork with no erotic content at all (AC15). Approximately 75% of artists stated that they had been asked at least once to create something that they were not personally comfortable with and 22% said that

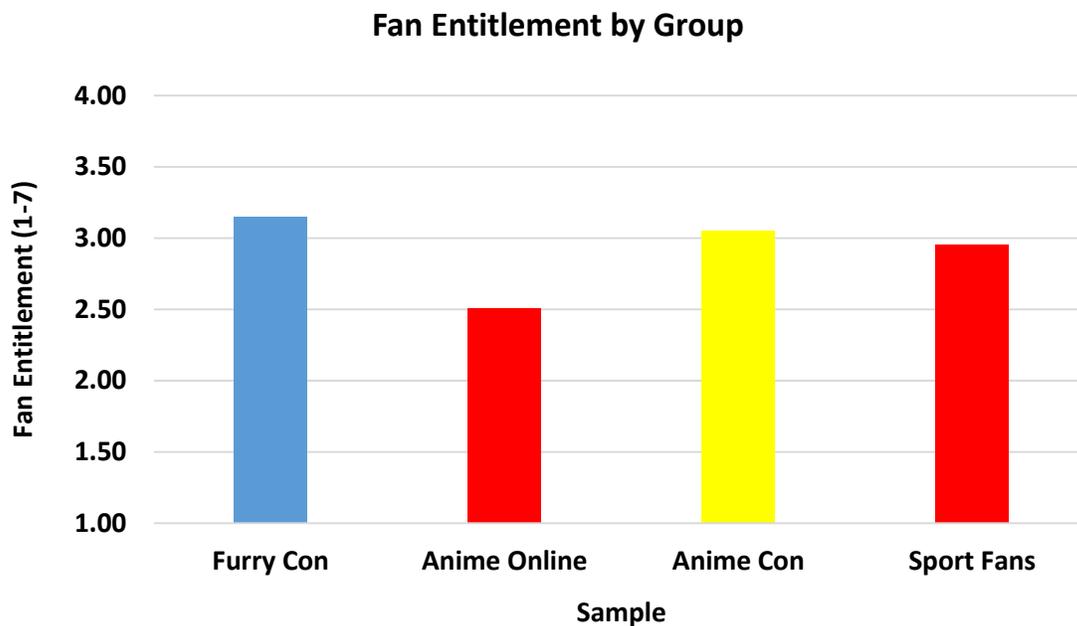
they actually went through with it and produced the content despite their reservations. About 67% of stated that they try to avoid such issues by posting a list of content that they would not produce (e.g., particular fetishes or themes; FF15).

6.5 Entitlement

The furry fandom is unique from other fandoms for many reasons. One of the most prominent reasons, however, is its largely independent and decentralized nature: in comparison to other fandoms (e.g., science fiction, fantasy) where content is driven primarily by a few large, professional sources (e.g., movie studios, publishing companies), the furry fandom's content is almost entirely user-generated. Nearly every furry has a unique fursona, many furies commission art from, or are themselves, independent artists, and while some shows/large studios are the source of some of the fandom's content (e.g., Pokémon, My Little Pony, Disney movies), they do not comprise the bulk of the fandom's content.

As a result of this fan-driven, independent-artist culture, we wondered whether this would have an effect on the relationship between content creators (artists) and furies. For example, in the sci-fi fandom, it is much more difficult for fans to insist what shows like *Dr. Who*, *Star Trek* or *Battlestar Galactica* should do, given how little influence they have over the professional studios that produce the shows. In contrast, for small, independent artists, who are far more readily approachable at conventions or accessible online, it may be the case that furies feel a greater sense of entitlement toward them. In fact, one survey of artists revealed that 95% agreed that furies were moderately to excessively demanding of them (FF14). To more systematically test furry entitlement, we used an entitlement questionnaire, which assesses the extent to which members of a fandom agree that they are entitled to special treatment from artists (e.g., they should be met in person, they should take my suggestions, they should always reply to my e-mails). The extent to which participants agreed with each item was indicated using a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

When compared to members of other fandoms (convention-going anime fans, online anime fans, fantasy sport fans), furies scored the highest with regard to entitlement (see figure below; F3). These data support the hypothesis that the relatively smaller size of the furry fandom and the approachability of content creators may lead to a greater sense of entitlement among fans, though this mechanism needs to be specifically tested in future studies.



The table below includes a summary of the seven questions on the fan entitlement questionnaire. The questions were given to two separate samples of participants. In 2014, the questions were asked of furies attending Anthrocon (the “Furries think” category). In 2015, artists at Anthrocon were asked how *they* personally felt about each of the issues (“Artists believe”), and were also asked to estimate how the average furry scored on each item (“Furry Estimate”). The right-most column indicates what percent of furies scored as high as artists predicted; if artists were perfectly accurate, this would be 50% (indicating that half of furies reported themselves as being as bad as the artist’s estimate of the average furry).

Artist and Furry Ratings of Entitlement among Furies (F3, AC15)

Item	Artists Believe	Furry Estimate	Furries Think	% “As Bad”
Meet fans in person	5.12	5.40	3.69	14.7
Go above and beyond	3.60	5.50	3.03	8.1
Email me back	5.77	6.63	4.45	15.7
Special treatment for devotion	3.41	5.27	2.22	7.8
Listen to fans	4.30	5.83	3.84	14.2
Let them know work is sub-par	3.97	4.42	3.43	47.7
Deserve special treatment	2.36	5.06	1.75	4.7

While artists themselves score below the midpoint on many of these items, furies actually score even lower than artists on every item, and score far lower than artists’ estimates. For all but one item (let them know their work is sub-par), artists vastly overestimated how entitled furies felt. One possibility for these findings is based on a phenomenon called the

availability heuristic: when estimating how frequently something occurs, people’s estimates are significantly impacted by very poignant, extreme events that stand out in their memory. As such, if an artist is trying to estimate how entitled furies are, examples of particularly entitled commissioners (who are, as we can see, statistically rare) may spring to mind first, entirely because they are unusual. This might lead artists to overestimate how entitled most furies are. Alternatively, it’s possible that furies, being biased to see themselves in a positive manner, are underestimating the extent to which they behave in entitled ways, which would account for why artists may be experiencing entitled behaviour from them that they are otherwise unaware of. Future research needs to be done to test the extent to which both (or neither) of these mechanisms explain these results.

6.6 Issues Facing Artists

Given that artists deal with what’s perceived to be significant fan entitlement (see 6.5), we decided to further assess some of the major issues faced by artists who regularly interact with fans—typically through commissioned work. The idea was to assess some of the problems that commonly arise in the course of commissioned work and to raise awareness among other artists (and the fandom as a whole) of some of the broader issues faced by artists.

Across multiple focus groups, artists summarized some of the biggest concerns they had (FF14):

- Worry about a “mob mentality” on websites that aim to publicly shame or discredit artists. Many artists expressed fear that one bad review on these sites could destroy their reputation in the fandom.
- Felt pressure to draw copyrighted characters (legal concerns about copyright infringement) and pressure from commissioners to draw things on the artist’s “will not draw” list.
- Worry that having a more cartoonish style, or using a digital medium, will result in their work being valued less or requiring less skill than more realistic art or using traditional media.
- Taking on too much work, being unable to organize their workload, and ultimately being unable to deliver a quality, finished product on time.

They also summarized some of the more common issues that arose during commissions (FF14, FF15):

- Commissioners underestimating the time needed to complete a commission or having unrealistic expectations of the final product.

- Commissioners undervaluing a piece of work, arguing about prices, or expecting free art.
- Lack of clarity about what commissioners want, including a lack of reference pictures or a lack of clear ideas/expectations, leading to multiple revisions and commissioner disappointment.
- Failure of commissioner to read the artist's terms of service, or lack of clarity/visibility of terms of service, and requesting content the artist is unwilling or unable to produce.
- Failure of commissioners to pay for work or difficulty communication with commissioner (e.g., no response via e-mail).
- Commissioners behaving in an unprofessional manner.

In a final set of questions, artists were asked to indicate the extent to which they worried about specific issues. Artists worried most about being too busy to fulfill their obligations, followed closely by concerns about ensuring that they had enough work and concern about their reputation in the fandom (AC15).

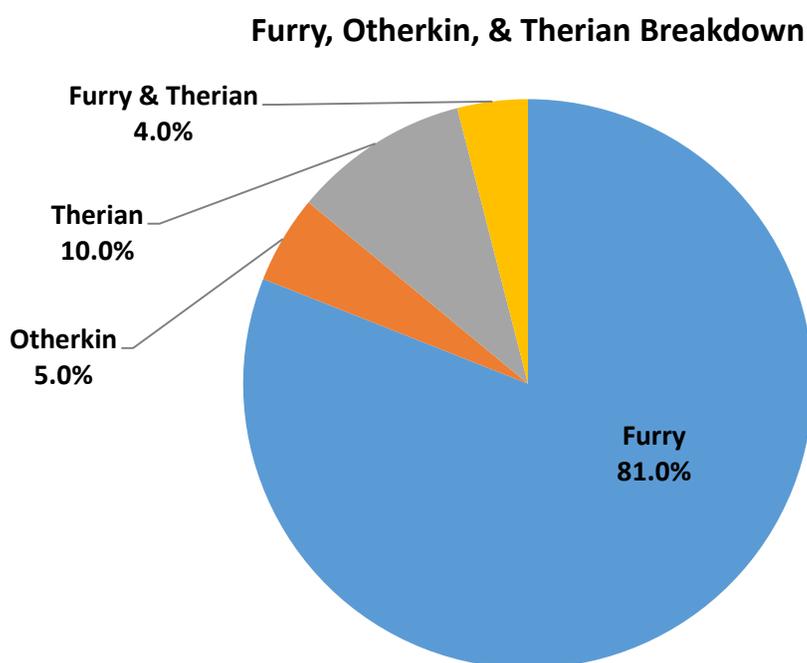
Section 7: Therians and Otherkin

7.1 Prevalence

While the definitions of therian and otherkin may differ depending on who you ask, they can be loosely defined as people who identify as non-humans (see 7.2 for more on this). Knowing the prevalence and characteristics of therians and otherkin is important in our research on furies, as furies, therians and otherkin are often conflated in media discussions of furies, which frequently leads to misconceptions about what furies actually are (see 4.1).

In our studies, we typically avoid imposing a definition on participants, allowing them to decide for themselves if they identify with the term, whatever it means to them. We present participants with lists of terms (e.g., furry, therian, otherkin, brony) and ask them to check off any boxes that apply to them. The result is a sample consisting of furies who do not identify as therians or otherkin, furies who also identify as therian and or otherkin, and therians and or otherkin who do not identify as furies.

Across samples, the proportion of participants who identify as therian typically ranges from 11% to 17% (S11, W12, S13, FF13). Further breakdown of the data, such as that in the figure below (S11), illustrate that the therians in our samples (e.g., online or at conventions) are 2-3 times more likely to not identify as a furry as they are to identify as a furry. It should also be noted that approximately 5% of respondents also identify as otherkin, a group comparable to therians, with the exception that the range of entities they identify with is different and includes non-existent species/entities (e.g., dragons).

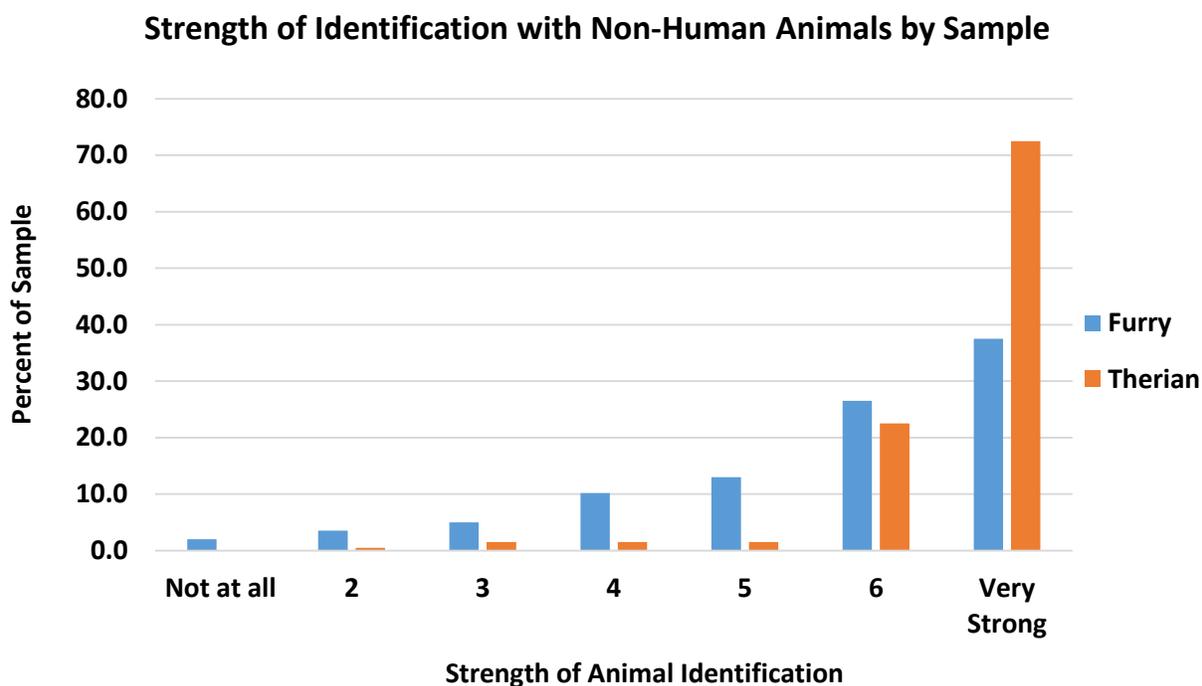


Other studies suggest that the number of therians in the furry fandom may be underestimated; the 11%-17% estimate of therian prevalence in the fandom is about half of what one would expect based on data showing the number of furies who don't feel completely human (see 4.1). This may be explained, in part, by the fact that 27.1% of participants in one study

indicated that they did not know what a therian was; as such, it's possible that some of these participants may fit the definition of a therian without knowing about the term (and, anecdotally, this has been the case—at several of our data presentations, we've been approached by people afterward telling us that they've been a therian without knowing that there was a word to describe it; W12).

7.2 Animal Identification

Therians often define themselves as people who believe they are at least in part some species of non-human animal which does or has existed on earth, a definition which is distinct from that of furies, whose interest in anthropomorphic media does not necessitate identification with non-human animals. (Otherkin typically identify as mythical or imaginary species, e.g., dragon, fairy, elf). To test whether furies and therians differ significantly on their identification with non-human animals, we've asked participants a number of questions about the nature of their attitudes toward their favorite animal species (e.g., fursona species, spirit guide).



In one study, furry and therian participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they identified with their fursona/special animal species on a 7-point scale. The figure above (W12) shows that therians identified significantly more with this species than furies did ($M = 5.60$ vs. $M = 6.60$), providing some evidence that therians, more than furies, are defined by the strength of their identification with non-human animals.

Non-Therian Furies' and Therians' Responses to Animal Identification Items

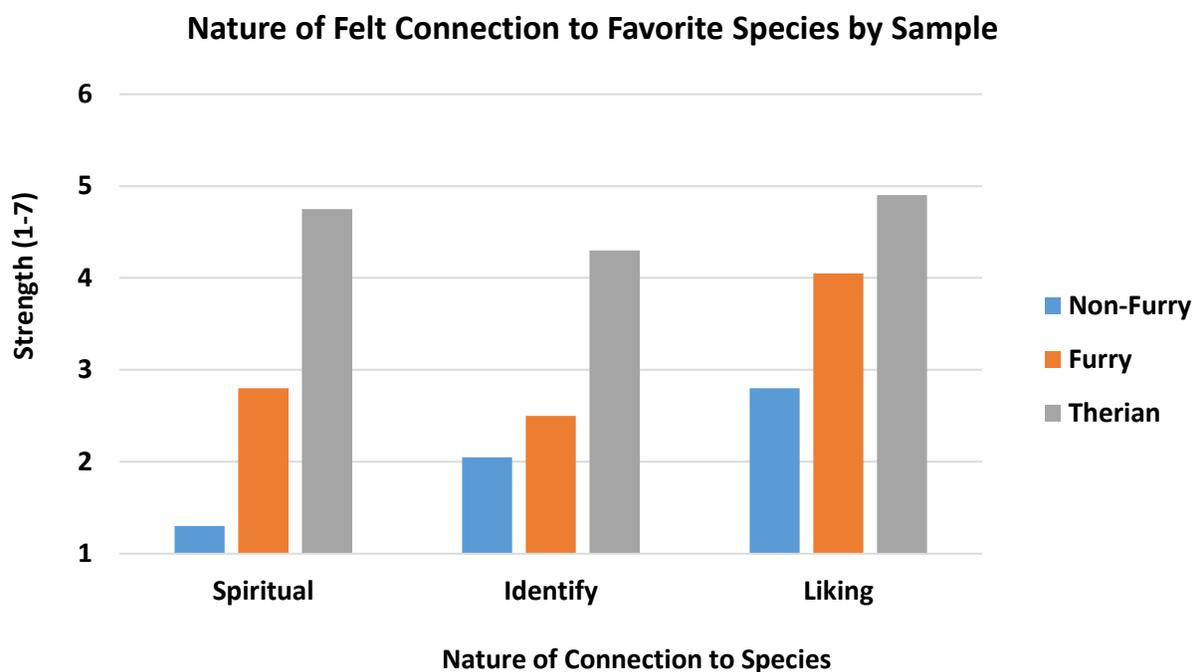
Group	Feel Less than 100% Human?	Physically Less than 100% Human?	Mentally Less than 100% Human?	What % Non-Human Do you Feel?	Would you be 0% Human if you Could?
Non-Therian Furies	35.1%	13.1%	94.3%	31.2%	39.2%
Therians	85.5%	30.2%	95.3%	47.5%	58.6%

* Note that in the above table, “Physically < 100% Human,” “Mentally < 100% Human,” and “% Non-Human” responses are displayed ONLY for participants who responded that they felt less than 100% human.

In the same study, participants were asked questions pertaining to their feeling that they are less than 100% human and their wish to be 0% human if they could. The results above (W12) suggest that there is a dramatic difference between therians and non-therian furies: a genuine belief in a connection to animals that may include feelings of being not entirely human (or, at very least, of having aspects of one’s fursona within oneself). Therians report significantly stronger feelings than furies that they are less than 100% human. It should be noted that this isn’t delusion; therians aren’t necessarily looking down and “seeing paws” in place of their hands (more on this in 7.3). Nearly everyone who felt less than 100% human reported that it was primarily feeling mentally less than 100% human, and far fewer said that it was a feeling of being physically non-human (although, therians were 2-3 times more likely to state that they felt physically less than 100% human). Finally, therians reported feeling more “non-human” than furies and a greater desire to be 0% human than non-therian furies.

7.3 Nature of Connection to Species

Given that therians feel a sense of connection with a non-human animals species (see 7.2), we asked participants (furry, non-furry, and therian) questions about the nature of their felt connection to their favorite animal species (e.g., fursona, animal one identifies with). These questions asked about three different dimensions: how much participants liked the species, how strong a spiritual connection they felt with the species, and the extent to which they identified with the species (each indicated on a 7-point scale, 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

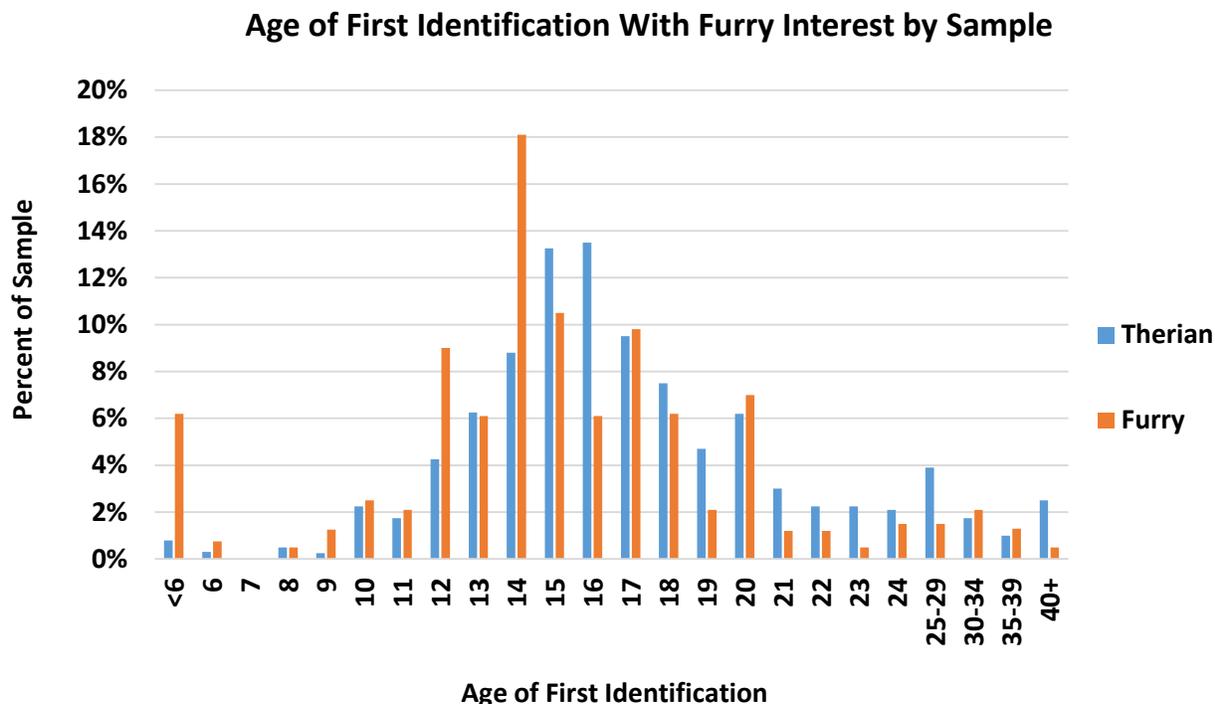


In the figure above (S11), it's clear that therians were found to have greater connections to their species than furries and non-furries, and that the nature of their connection was distributed pretty equally across the three dimensions. Most important, however, the distinction between furries and therians was stronger for the “spiritual” and “identity” dimensions than on the “like” dimensions, suggesting that the most defining difference between the two groups isn't necessarily their liking of animals, but rather the extent to which they feel a deeper spiritual/identity connection to them.

7.4 Age of Origin

In an earlier chapter, we found that, on average, furries are in their early twenties and have been in the fandom since their mid-to-late teens (1.1). Given that the experience of many therians is that a felt connection to animals was a feeling they had inside, rather than an interest that needed to be “discovered” by many furries, we tested the hypothesis that therians would experience an interest in anthropomorphic animal content at a younger age than furries.

On average, therians reported having had an interest in anthropomorphic animals for a significantly larger proportion of their life (34.1%) than furies (29.9%; W12). And while the average furry has been a part of the furry fandom for 7.65 years, the average therian has been a furry for significantly longer—8.67 years. Finally, the figure below shows that therians develop an interest in furry content at a significantly younger age than furies (18.3 vs. 19.2). Taken together, the data are in line with therians’ claims that the feelings of identification with animals and associated interest in anthropomorphic content they experience have been a part of them for much of their lives, more so than for furies, who often stumble into their interest.



7.5 Phantom Limb

In a recent study of furies and therians (AC15), we asked participants to indicate whether or not they had ever experienced the phenomenon of phantom body parts—that is, sensations from a limb or body part that was non-existent. Many people who have had amputations experience sensations as though the limb were still present. As many therians report discomfort with their human body, and some suggest feeling that they are physically not 100% human (7.2), we tested whether the experience of phantom limbs was more prevalent in therians. Sure enough, therians were significantly more likely than non-therians to experience phantom body parts. Follow-up questions revealed that for those experiencing the phantom limbs, 70.4% found it to be “sometimes” or “always” distressing. For therians who said that they experienced a variety of other therianthropic experiences (e.g., “shifts” into a non-human animal mindset), 54.7% found it “sometimes” or “always” distressing, while 43.4% said that they never found it distressing.

Section 8: Bronies

8.1 Prevalence

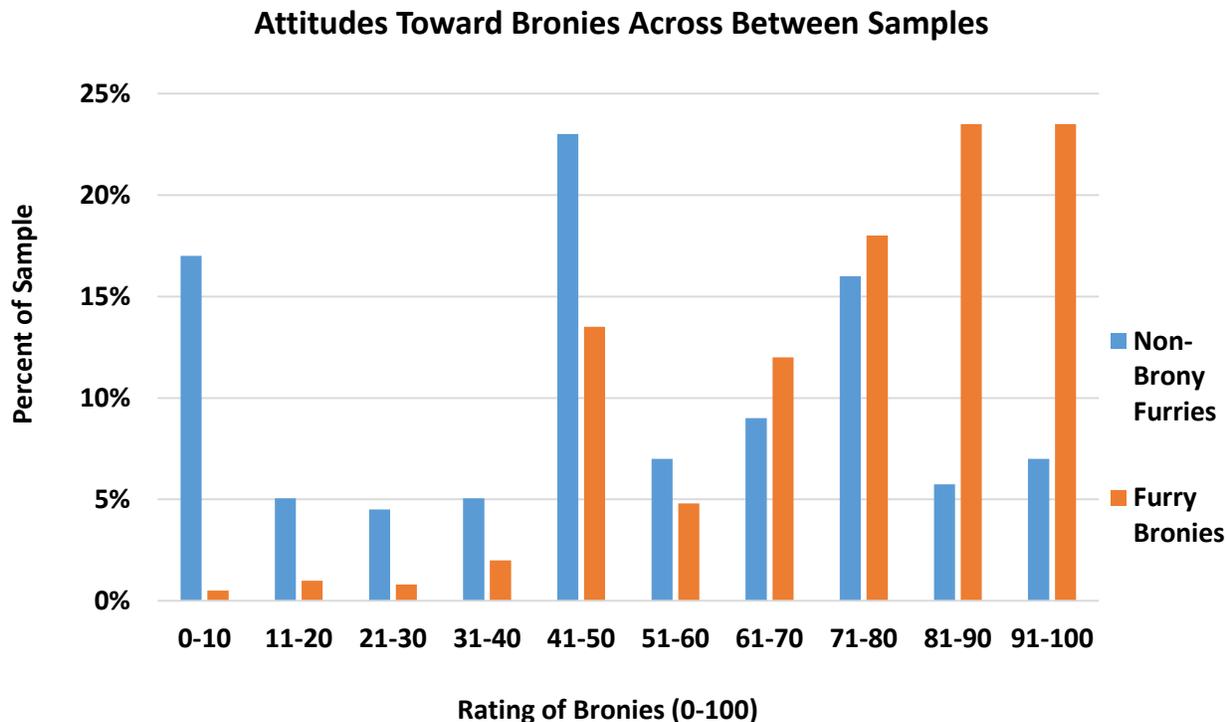
Bronies are fans of the animated television series *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. The brony fandom is, in many ways, comparable to the furry fandom for its interest in anthropomorphized animal characters (not unlike the furry fandom's association with series such as *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Disney movies such as *The Lion King* or *Robin Hood*, etc.). In fact, based purely on its content, some argue that *My Little Pony* is an example of furry media, and that, by extension, bronies are furies. Conversely, others argue that since some bronies' interest in anthropomorphism is specific only to *My Little Pony*, the fandom should be considered related to, but distinct from, the furry fandom.

There has been a tremendous demand, from both bronies and from the broader furry fandom, for research on bronies (so much so, in fact, that another research team has conducted extensive research on the subject from a non-furry perspective: <http://www.bronystudy.com/>). The reasons for this demand differ greatly; they often involve the perceived similarities and differences between furies and bronies. Regardless, the IARP has sought to address this interest in information about bronies, beginning by assessing the prevalence of bronies in the furry fandom.

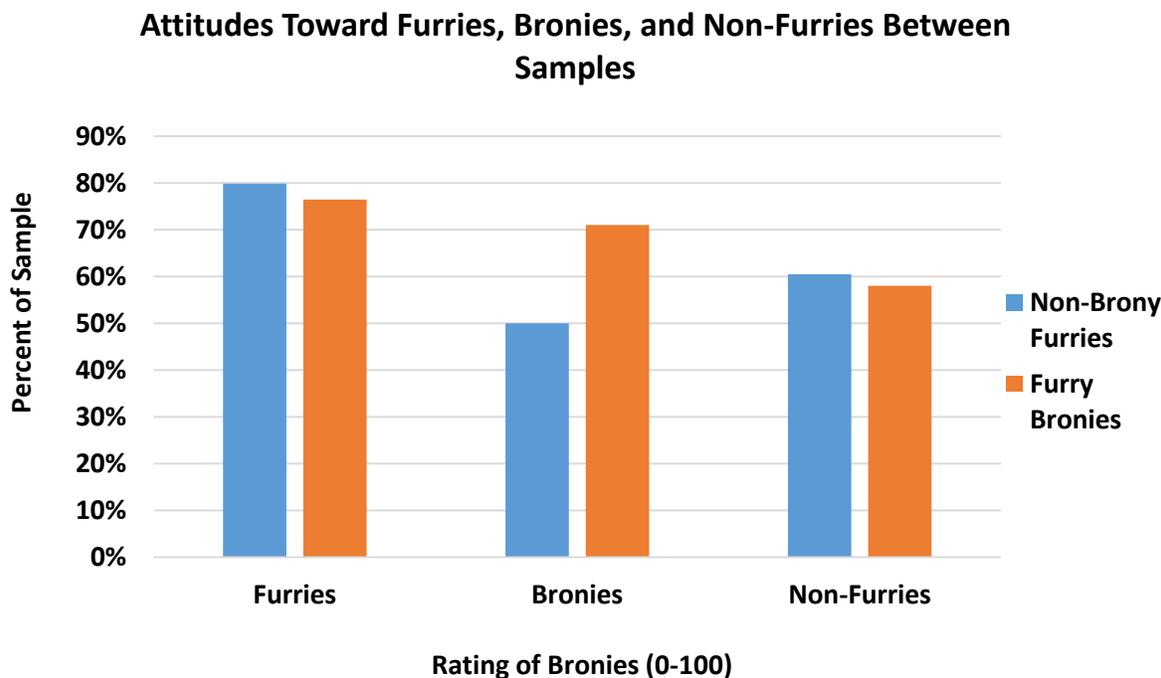
With the popularity of *My Little Pony* in recent years, many furies have observed that there seems to be an influx of bronies into the furry fandom. Studies have suggested that in recent years, between 16% and 25% of furies self-identify as bronies (AC12, FF13, S13). While it is possible that the majority of these furies are "new furies," it would represent a fairly significant influx of furies into the fandom (a growth of nearly 25% in just the two or three years since the most recent version of the show began airing). And, in fact, the data seem to challenge this hypothesis: the average brony in the furry fandom has, in fact, been a furry for significantly longer than the average non-brony furry (9.4 years vs. 8.3 years) and became a furry at a younger age than non-brony furies (16.4 years vs. 17.4). Taken together, the data suggest that the prevalence of bronies in the furry fandom is not due to bronies "invading" the furry fandom from the outside, but rather the popularity of the show seems to have resonated with a significant portion of the furry population.

8.2 Attitudes toward Bronies

Given that upward of one-quarter of the furry fandom may self-identify as a brony (8.1), and given that furies, themselves, experience a significant amount of stigma from the general population (see 10.2), it's worth asking whether bronies and furies hold negative attitudes toward one another, or whether they get along due to a shared experience of stigma from popular culture (bronies are often mocked for their tendency to eschew traditional gender norms and their interest in a show targeted toward a younger female audience).



This first figure presents the results of one study where furries and bronies were asked to rate how positively or negatively they felt about bronies, as a group (AC12). They were asked to provide this rating on a scale of 0 (*extremely negative*) to 100 (*extremely positive*). The data show that while bronies (unsurprisingly) felt positively about bronies, furries had mixed feelings: 17% rated bronies extremely negatively, 23% felt very ambivalent, and 7% felt extremely positively. While the average rating was “50” for the furry participants, this was the product of very polarized views, not of overall ambivalence of the fandom toward bronies. The graph below represents the percentage of positive feelings felt toward bronies by various groups.



In another study (FF13) we asked furies and bronies to rate their attitudes toward furies, bronies, and non-furies (i.e., the average person). This would allow us to test whether the negativity furies indicated toward bronies was directed at bronies in particular or toward any non-furry group specifically. The data show that furies and bronies did not significantly differ with regard to their ratings of furies and non-furies. Replicating the above finding, furies rated bronies significantly more negatively than bronies did. Most relevant, however, was the fact that furies also rated bronies significantly more negatively than they did the average non-furry, suggesting that their negative attitudes were specific to the brony fandom, and not just to anyone who was not a furry.

8.3 Stigma Justification

While there are many furies who hold positive opinions of bronies, it raises the question of why so many furies feel negatively (or at least ambivalent) toward bronies. We asked participants, if they held a negative attitude toward bronies, to indicate why they felt that way (AC12). These responses were coded and fell into a few commonly held themes:

- 17.4%: They're obnoxious, excessive, or attempt to force their culture on others
- 15.0%: They're just not the same as furies
- 13.0%: Just a general dislike for them
- 12.3%: Don't dislike the culture itself, but dislike specific bronies
- 11.9%: It's unimaginative, a fad, shallow, or one-dimensional
- 11.5%: It's silly, dumb, or immature

It seems that there are at least a few commonly held complaints or opinions regarding bronies and brony culture. In future studies it may be possible to test the tenants of some of these beliefs, to determine whether there is any merit to the complaints or stereotypes of the brony fandom. In the meantime, it is worth noting, ironically, that many of these same complaints are complaints that have been leveled at the furry fandom by non-furries (demonstrating that it is still quite possible for members of a stigmatized minority group to, themselves, stigmatize others).

8.4 Furry/Brony Distinction

As mentioned elsewhere (8.1, 8.3), part of the animosity felt toward bronies may have to do with the belief that bronies as “invading” the furry fandom, a fandom which, past research has shown, is particularly important to the identity of many furries (2.10, 9.3, 9.4). Evidence suggests there may be some truth to this claim: about 22% of furries claim that there is absolutely no overlap between the furry fandom and the brony fandom—that they are two distinct entities. In contrast, 28% of furries say that there is at least some overlap between the furry fandom and the brony fandom, and fully 50% of furries claim that the brony fandom is a part of or subset of the furry fandom (AC12).

These data suggest that, far from being a clear-cut issue, many furries may disagree about the location of the brony fandom relative to the furry fandom—a non-trivial distinction. Research in social psychology suggests that seeing a person or a group as belonging to a group that you, yourself, belong to (your “ingroup”) leads you to hold a more favorable impression of that group. Whether or not bronies are considered furries may have a considerable impact on the positivity felt toward them; one analysis revealed that the extent to which a person considered bronies to be a part of the furry fandom also predicted how positivity they felt toward bronies, lending support to this idea (AC12).

8.5 Furry/Brony Similarities & Differences

The controversy surrounding bronies in the furry fandom has led some to discuss whether the two groups are distinctly different or whether they have more in common than they have differences. To put it another way, it’s worth asking whether the distinction between a furry and a brony is a meaningful one, or whether it is simply a description of a difference in taste.

The data support at least three statistically significant differences between furries and bronies (AC12). First, it seems that, compared to furries, bronies are, on average, rate themselves as being in worse physical health. Admittedly, the reasoning for this difference in physical health was unexpected and, for the moment, has escaped our ability to explain, though future research may help shed light on this difference (and whether it is a consistent one). A second difference is that, compared to furries, bronies have a less-formed sense of identity, though this difference is

quite small. Finally, the data suggest that, on average, bronies experienced greater amounts of bullying than did furies, although both groups experienced significant bullying, especially in their childhood years (see 10.3). While the differences in bullying between furies and bronies are consistent throughout their lives (under age 10, during the teenage years, and into adulthood), the difference is most prominent during the ages of 19-24. Whether or not a history of being bullied is one of the factors that drove bronies to self-identify with other bronies remains to be seen in future research.

While the data have shown that there are small differences between furies and bronies, the vast majority of analyses revealed that, for the most part, furies and bronies are similar in many ways. There are no age or sex differences between the groups, nor are there differences in sexual orientation, relationship status, relationship satisfaction, or education level between furies and bronies. The groups do not differ in the extent to which they identify as a furry, identify with other furies, or identify with their fursona species. Furies and bronies do not differ in the extent to which they believe they are less than 100% human, nor are they differently likely to wish they were 0% human. Both furies and bronies in the furry fandom hold the furry community in equally high regard, and they do not differ in terms of their psychological well-being or self-esteem.

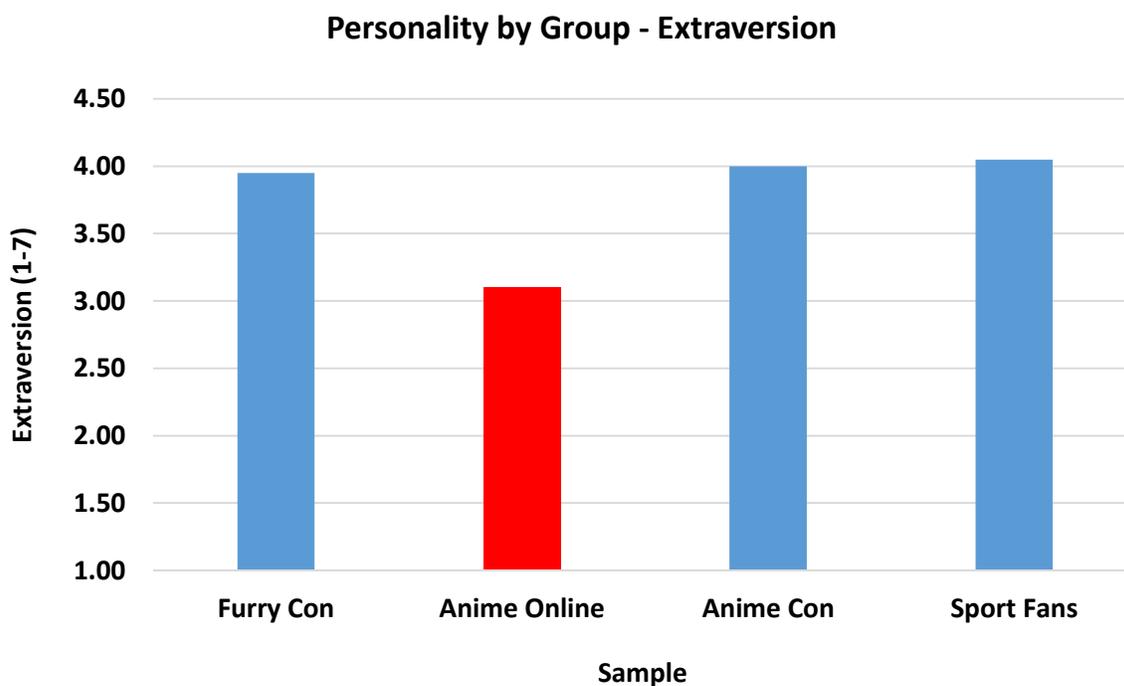
In sum, with only a few minor exceptions, furies and bronies are relatively indistinguishable from one another beyond the differences in the content of their fandom and their self-identification as furry or brony.

Section 9: Furry Psychology

9.1 Personality Traits

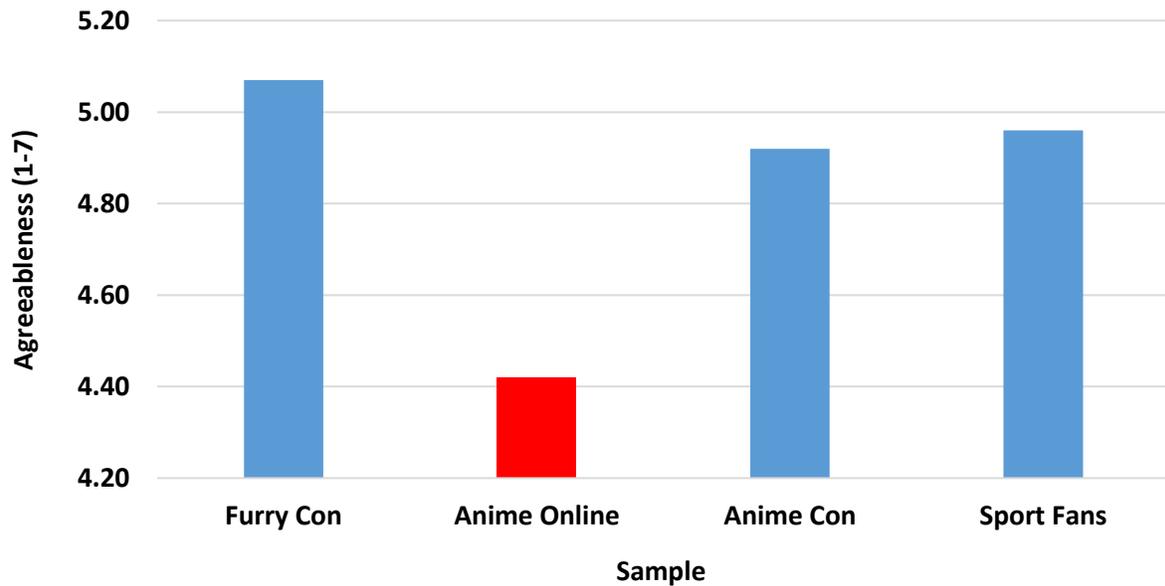
There are a number of different models of personality in the psychological literature, but one of the most frequently cited is the “Big 5” model of personality, which proposes that there are five major dimensions along which people’s personality differ: (a) Extraversion: the tendency to be energized by and seek out the presence of others, (b) Agreeableness: being of friendly, cooperative, and social nature, (c) Conscientiousness: the extent to which one is dependable and careful (d) Emotional Stability (inversely known as neuroticism or anxiety): confidence and resilience, lack of susceptibility to negative emotions, (e) Openness to Experience: A curiosity or interest in what is unconventional, or a desire to see, taste, hear and immerse oneself in a variety of sensations and situations.

We assessed each of these items in furries and in members of different fandoms (e.g., con-going and online anime fans, fantasy sport fans) using Gosling’s brief, 10-item personality scale (TIPI). For each item, we tested whether identifying as a furry predicted higher scores on that trait (S11), and whether furries, as a group scored higher than members of other fandoms on that trait (F3). Results are displayed below, with different colored bars representing significant differences between the groups. In general, however, furries’ scores were comparable to those of the other fan groups.



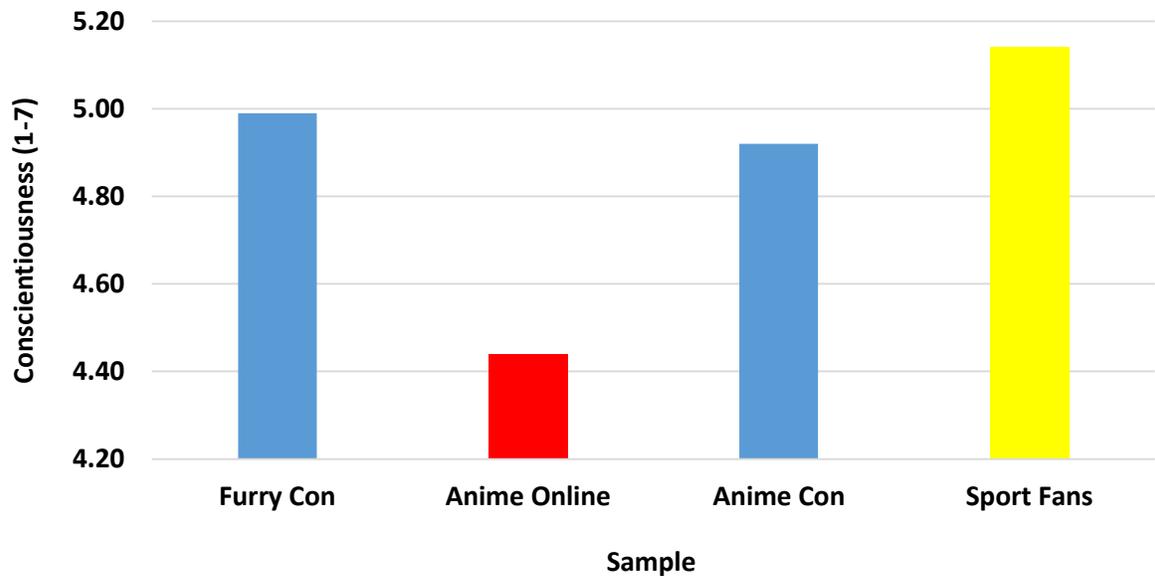
Extraversion: The more strongly a person identified as a furry, the higher their extraversion score was.

Personality by Group - Agreeableness

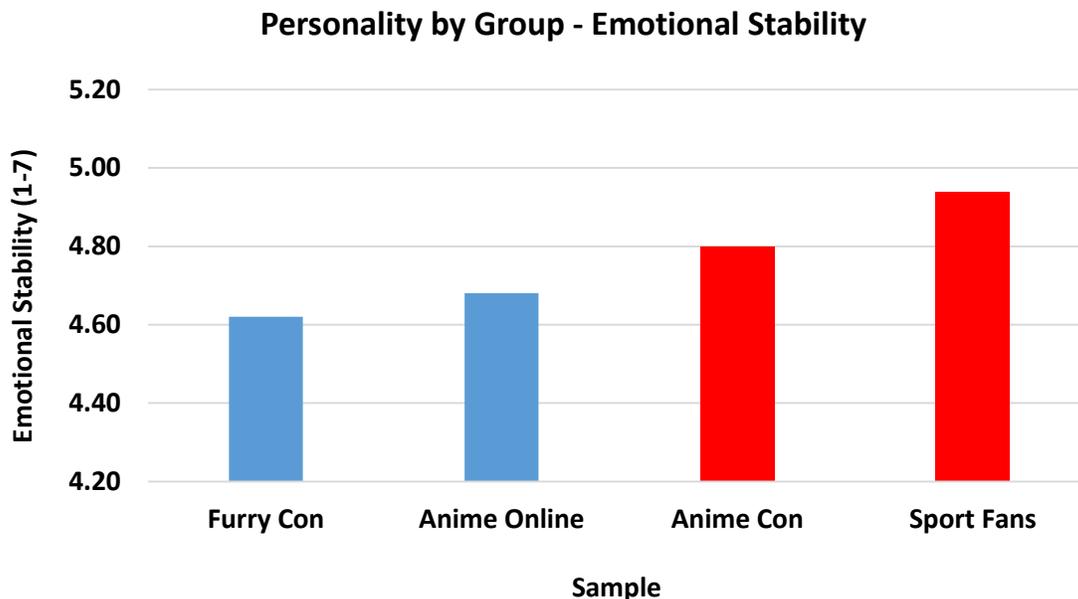


Agreeableness: The more strongly a person identified as a furry, the less agreeable they tended to be.

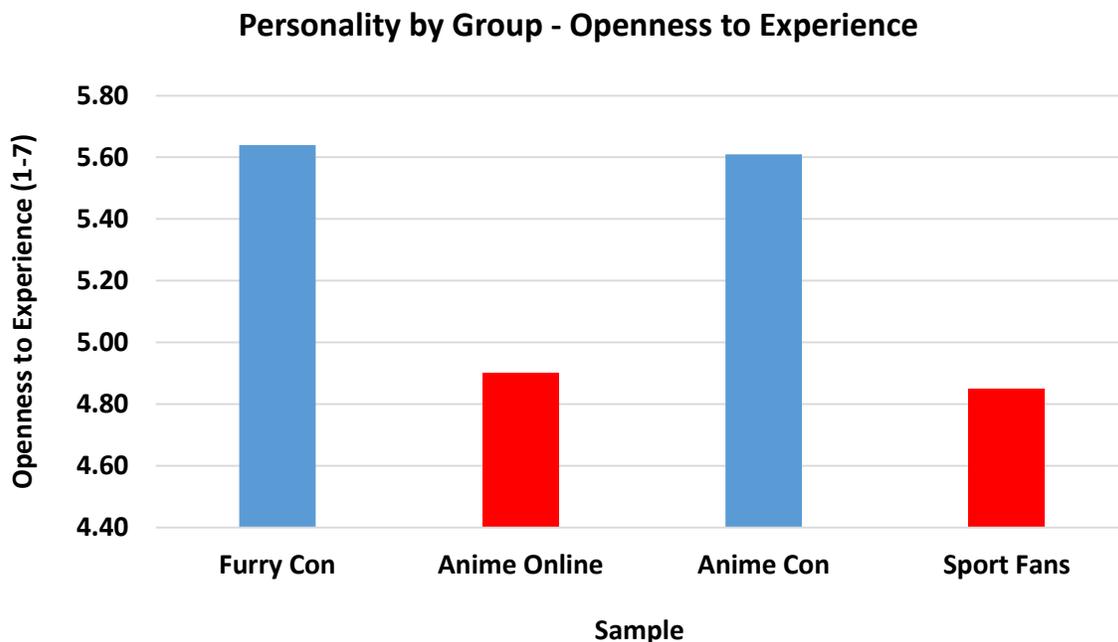
Personality by Group - Conscientiousness



Conscientiousness: How strongly a person identified with being a furry was unrelated to their levels of conscientiousness.



Stability: How strongly a person identified with being a furry was unrelated to their levels of emotional stability.



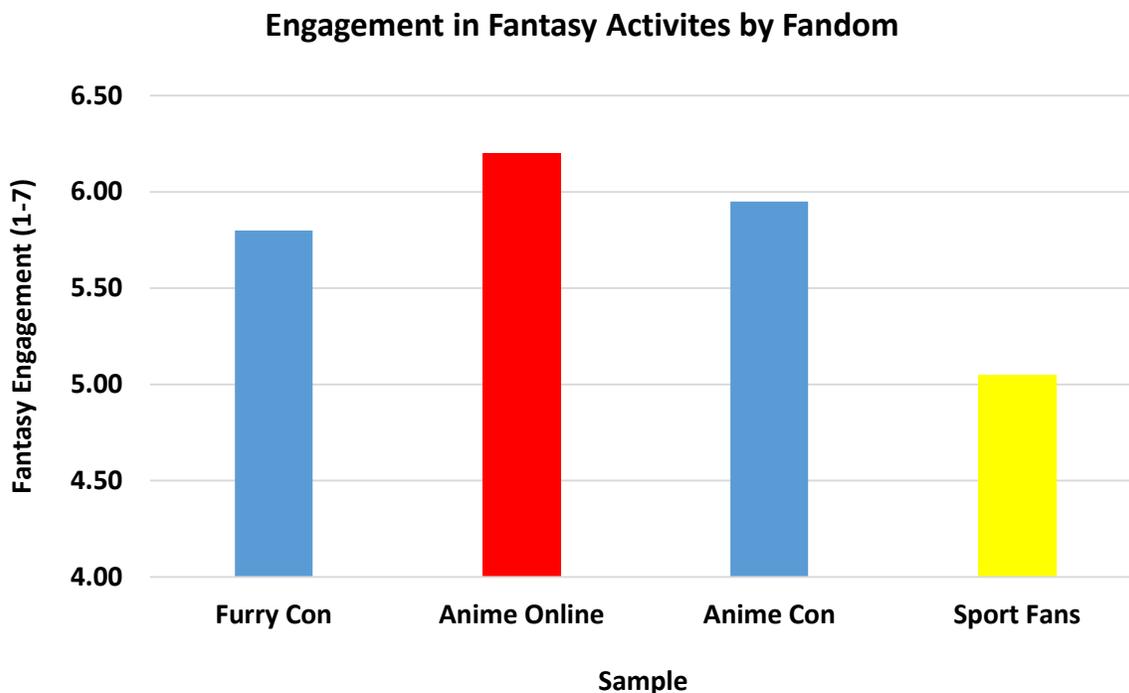
Openness to Experience: The more strongly a person identified as a furry, the more open to experiences they tended to be.

Of course, each of these five personality factors consists of many different sub-factors, and they do not capture the entirety of individual differences between people (e.g., 3.12). In future studies, we would like to look at sub-factors within these five facets of personality—as well as others—to see if we can more specifically describe the personality of members of the furry community and the ways in which they are similar to, and differ from, members of other fandoms.

9.2 Fantasy Engagement

One of the IARP researchers, Dr. Plante, has been studying fantasy and its potential function in the everyday lives of people. Given that furries seem to lead very active fantasy lives (judging by the content of the fandom – walking, talking animals), he has assessed fantasy engagement in furries as compared to non-furries across a number of studies. These measures assess different aspects of “fantasy” as a concept, ranging from belief in supernatural/magical thinking (e.g., belief in premonitions about future events), ability to perspective-take and empathize (e.g., feel the pain of a character in a story), childhood (and current) experiences of fantasy behaviour and thoughts (e.g., having an imaginary friend as a child, having vivid daydreams), and engagement of fantasy within the context of the furry fandom (e.g., spending time thinking about furries, treating furry as a hobby/recreational activity).

- In general, the more strongly a person identifies as furry, the more they engage in fantasy, including more magical thinking, more childhood (and current) fantasy experiences, and greater engagement in fantasy activities (W12, AC12).
- Although furries engage in more fantasy than non-furries in general, the difference is limited to healthy fantasy engagement (e.g., for recreation, creative, or social purposes, to a non-pathological extent). In contrast, furries do not differ from non-furries in the extent to which they engage in more pathological (e.g., escapist, obsessive, delusional) forms of fantasy.
- Furries were equally as good as non-furries at distinguishing fantasy from reality, suggesting that while furries engage in more fantasy than non-furries, it is not due to an inability to distinguish between the two (FF13).
- Furries have more vivid mental images and are more likely to experience hallucinations than non-furries (AC13).
- The figure below, which assesses the frequency with which participants engage in fantasy activities (1 = *almost never* to 7 = *several times a day*), reveals that furries engage in a level of fantasy that’s comparable to members of other fan groups (e.g., convention-going anime fans).



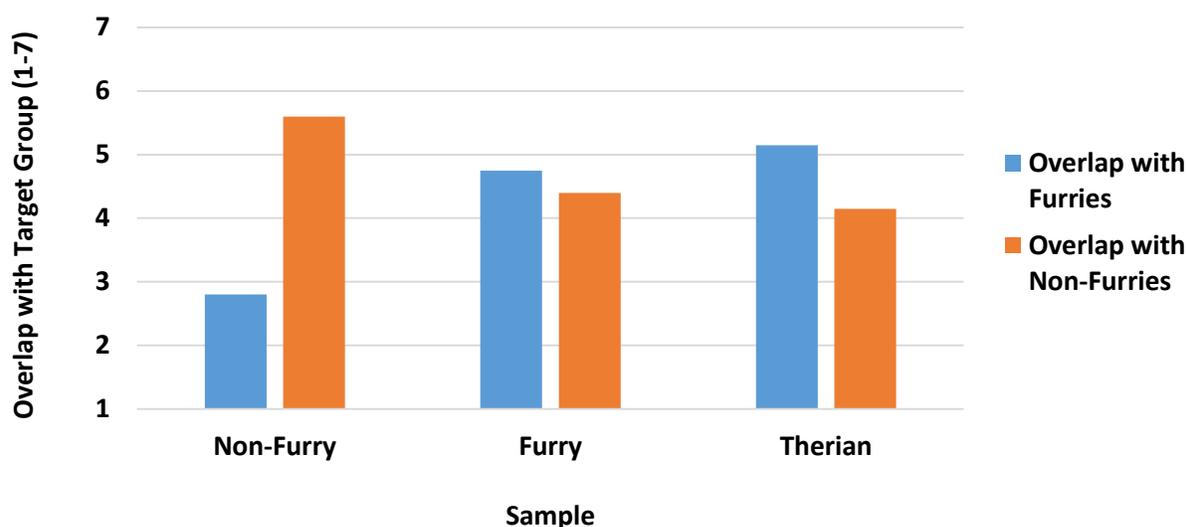
Taken together, these data suggest that furies may have particularly active, vivid, and magical mental worlds, and that such factors may contribute to (or be caused by) the extent to which a person identifies themselves as furry. Many of these items are often thought of with regard to psychological dysfunction (e.g., belief in magic or overly vivid mental imagery may be associated with delusion). That said, the lack of relationship between being a furry and psychological dysfunction (11.2) suggests otherwise, however: despite having particularly active, somewhat aberrant, vivid, and fantastical mental worlds, furies nonetheless seem as well-adjusted as others in the general population. To put it another way: while furies may be distinct for having vivid fantasy lives, they are not dysfunctional for it.

9.3 Inclusion of Other in Self

In several of our studies, we have been interested in assessing the extent to which furies and non-furies (e.g., others at a furry convention) felt a sense of connection or inclusion within the furry and non-furry community. We assess these feelings using a scale called the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (IOS). In this scale, participants indicated the amount of “overlap” that existed between themselves and another group (either the furry fandom or non-furies). Higher numbers indicate greater “overlap” between the self and the group.

The data below (S11) show that non-furries consider themselves to be more connected to non-furries than to furries. Furries, on the other hand, felt pretty much equally connected to both furries and non-furries. Unexpectedly, therians, most of all, felt the most overlap between themselves and the furry fandom, a finding consistent with other data showing that therians have been in the furry fandom for longer on average (7.4) and incorporate elements of the fandom's content (e.g., animals) into their sense of self (7.2, 7.3).

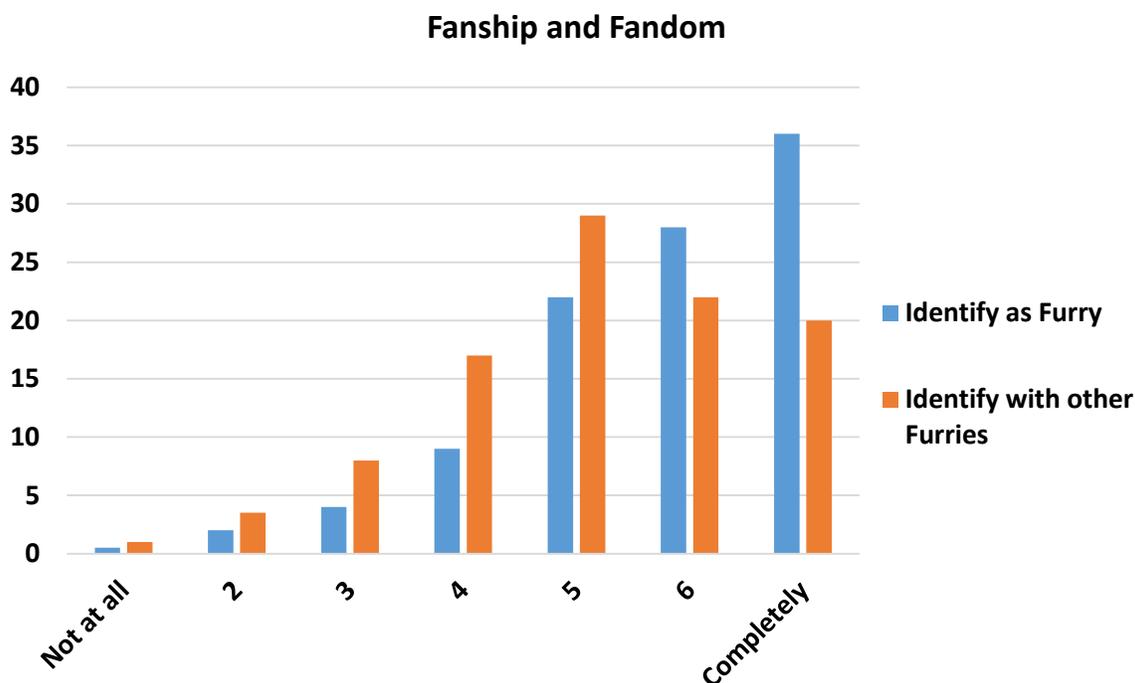
Self-Group Overlap with Furries and Non-Furries Across Samples



9.4 Fandom vs. Fanship

Social psychologists who study fan groups make a distinction between two related concepts: fandom and fanship. Fandom refers to a person's identification with others who share a similar interest to them. In contrast, fanship refers to the extent to which a person identifies with an interest in something. To illustrate, we can imagine people who are high or low on these two traits. A sport fan high on fanship but low on fandom may enjoy watching the games, but find little interest in doing so with others. In contrast, a sport fan low on fanship but high on fandom may watch the games with their friends, not for love of the game itself but for love of being a part of the fan community. Far from being a trivial distinction, psychologists have suggested that a person's fandom and fanship differently predict their attitudes, feelings, and behaviours in different contexts.

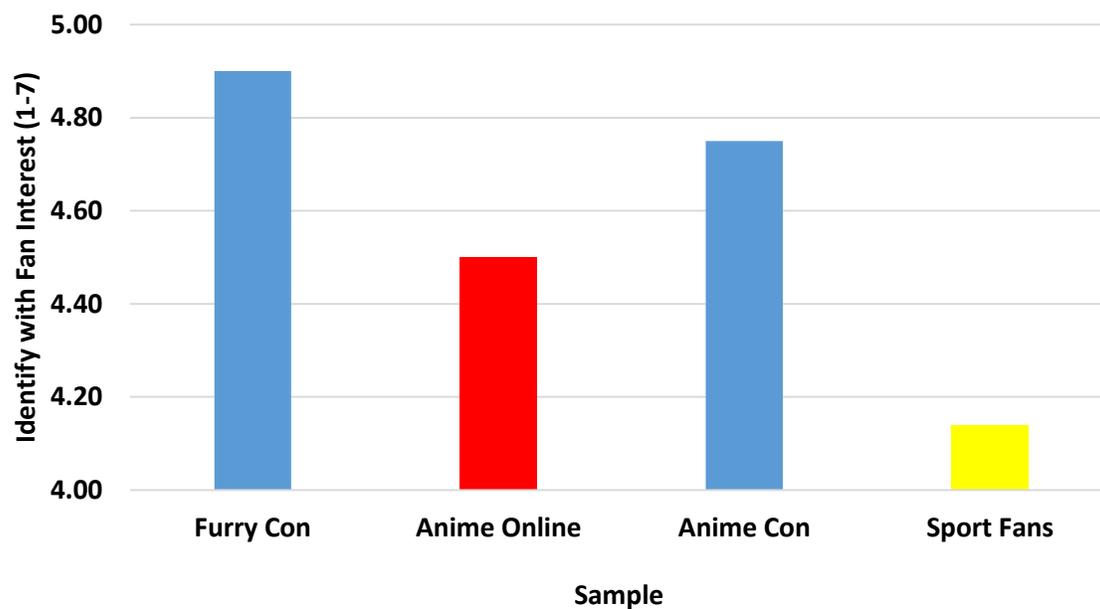
To illustrate this distinction, the figure below (AC12) shows how furries responded to three different questions, two of which are presently relevant: how strongly do you identify (on a 1-7 scale) as a furry (fanship), and with other furries (fandom)?



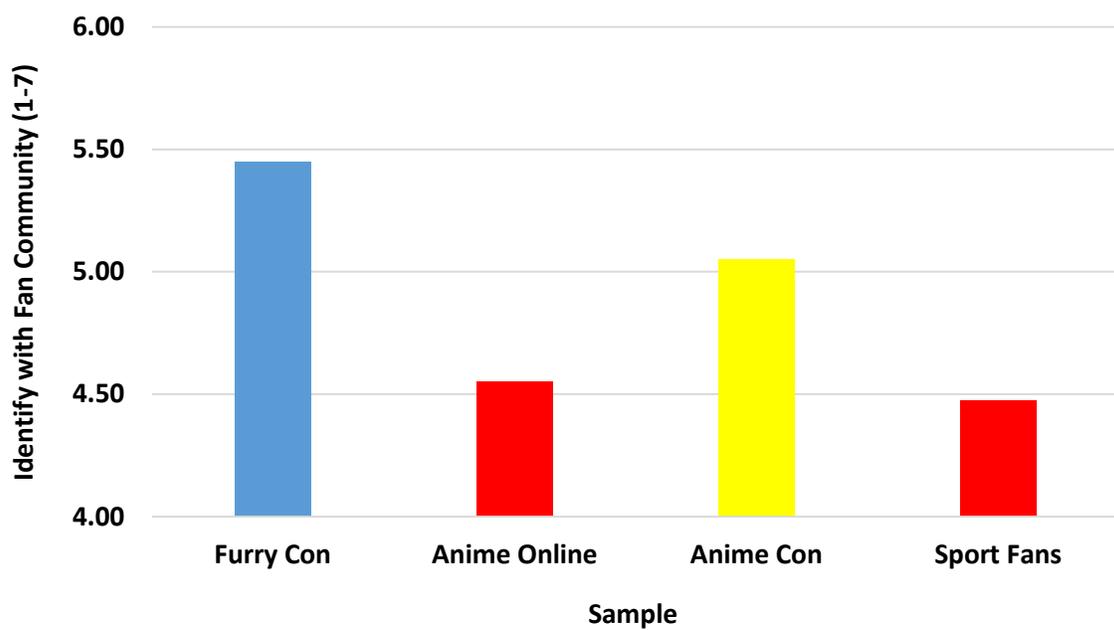
The blue bars, which represent fanship, show that most furries strongly identify with their fan interest (with an interest in furry content). In contrast, while many furries identified strongly with other furries in the fandom (fanship), there was not as significant a peak at the right side of the figure, suggesting that while many furries feel a strong sense of fandom, not all furries feel such strong identification with the fandom as a whole.

That said, studies comparing furries to members of other fandoms show that while furries may be just as big a fan of their fandom's content as other fans (e.g., convention-going anime fans, top figure), fandom was far more important for furries than for other fandoms (bottom figure), suggesting that the sense of community provided by the furry fandom is a bigger part of furries' identity than it is for other fans (a figure which is consistent with other data showing that belongingness is an important motivator of participation in the furry fandom, 2.10).

Identify with Fan Interest (Fanship)

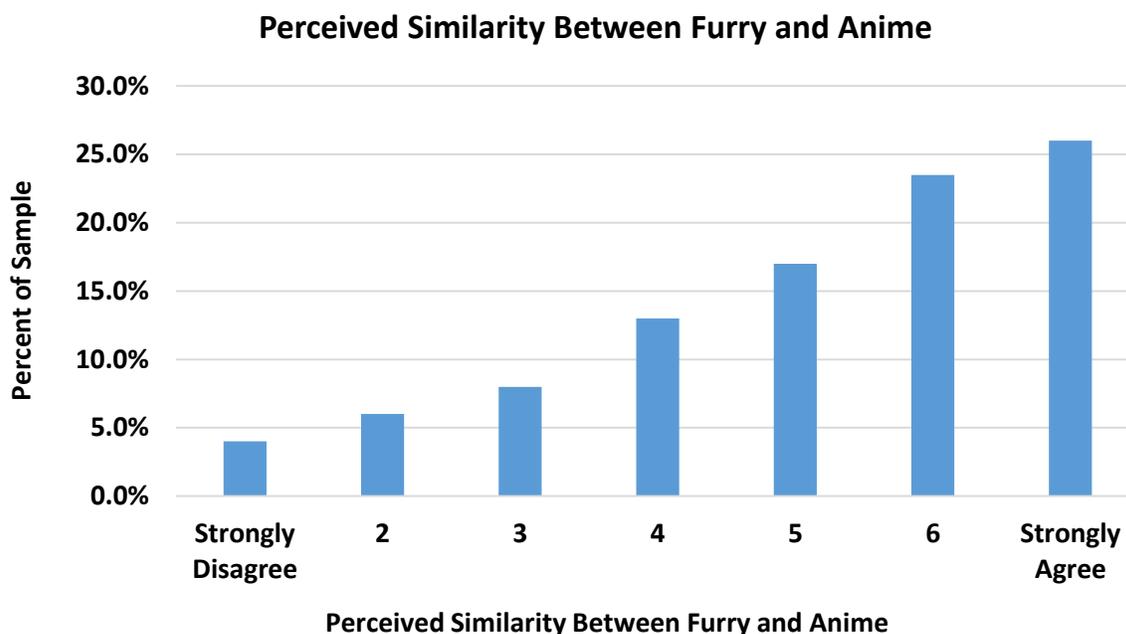


Identify with Fan Community (Fandom)



9.5 Outgroup Perception

An interesting aspect of the furry fandom is its independence as a fandom despite its overlap with similar or related fandoms or groups (e.g., Disney, anime, cartoons, bronies, science fiction, fantasy, therians, otherkin, gamers, ravers, just to name a few, see 2.3, 2.6). This led us to question the extent to which the furry fandom is perceived by furries as being unique and distinct from a similar fandom: anime.



We asked furries to indicate, on a 7-point scale, whether or not they agreed that furries were distinct and unique compared to anime fans (W12). The figure above shows that furries strongly felt that the furry fandom was distinct from the anime fandom. In further analyses, furries and non-furries were asked to judge the perceived distinctiveness of the furry fandom from the anime fandom. Furries, who have a vested interest in protecting their unique and distinct identity, were significantly more likely ($M = 5.19$) than non-furries ($M = 4.75$) to say that the furry fandom was distinct from anime. In fact, the more strongly a participant identified as furry, the more strongly they felt that the furry fandom was distinct from the anime fandom (W12). These are not surprising findings considering most “in-groups” will distinguish themselves more emphatically from an “out-group.”

Another potential way to study distinctiveness of the furry fandom is to look at something called “essentialism”—the belief that a group is based on some naturally-occurring, physical, tangible feature (examples of groups commonly perceived to be “essential” include gender and ethnicity, while examples of “non-essential” groups may be things like “a band class” or “the group of people standing in line at the bank”—groups with nothing inherently “groupy” about them except for superficial or transitory features). Included in the survey was an “essentialism” scale, measuring furries’ beliefs that furries, as a group, were based on essentialist traits (e.g., hard-wired, biologically based, or physically “real”). Consistent with the above findings, the

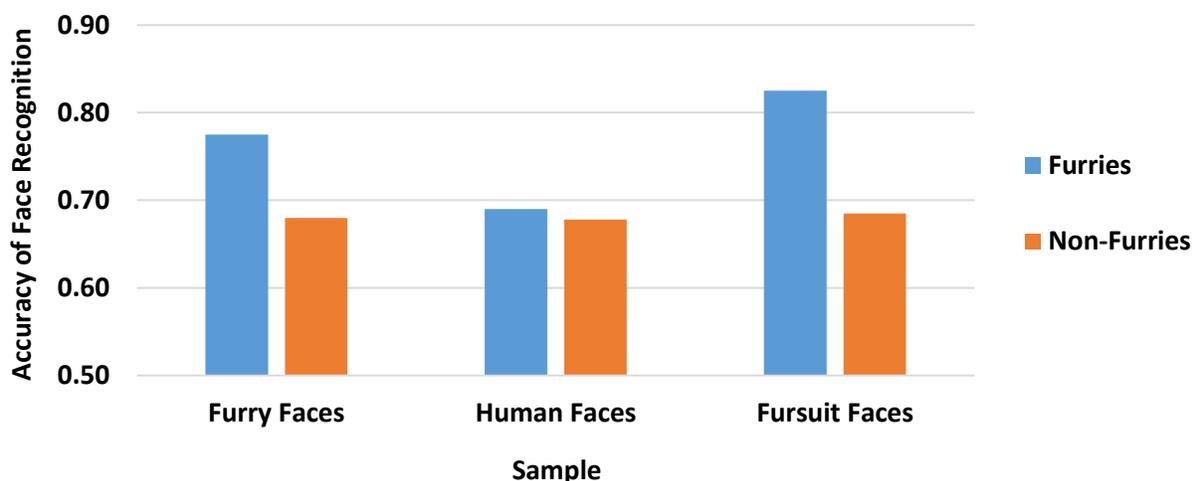
more strongly a person identified as a furry, the more they considered furry to be a more highly essential group which, in turn, was associated with how distinct it was seen as being from anime (W12).

In sum, it seems to be that the more closely attached one is to the furry fandom, the more distinct one views it from other fandoms. This makes sense, from a psychological point of view: the groups we belong to serve a number of functions for us, one of which is to provide a source of identity for us. We like to have a distinct and positive sense of identity. The more our group is seen to blur with other groups (especially if those groups disagree with our perception of ourselves or our attitudes), and the less clear our groups' boundaries seem, the more threatening this is to our sense of identity—who we are as defined by what groups we belong to.

9.6 Face Recognition

Because furries spend a lot of time looking at fursuits and images of anthropomorphic characters in the fandom, we decided to test whether this experience provided them with the ability to better recognize and distinguish between these faces. Furries and non-furries (undergraduate psychology students) completed a computerized study where they saw pictures of 100 different faces: some human, some featuring drawn furry characters, and some featuring fursuits. Then, later in the study, 50 of the faces were shown again, along with 50 new faces. For each face, participants were asked to indicate whether they had seen the face earlier in the study or not (FF15).

Face Recognition Accuracy by Stimulus Type Across Samples



The results revealed that furries and non-furries did not significantly differ with regard to recognizing previously-viewed human faces. When it came to furry faces and fursuit faces, however, furries outperformed non-furries. Interestingly, it appears that non-furries did about as well on furry/fursuit faces as they did on human faces. This suggests that the difference between

furries and non-furries wasn't driven by the fact that non-furries were bad at recognizing furry faces and fursuit faces (they still did well above chance, which would be 50%). Instead, the data suggest that furries are particularly good (and possibly motivated) to recognize furry faces and fursuits.

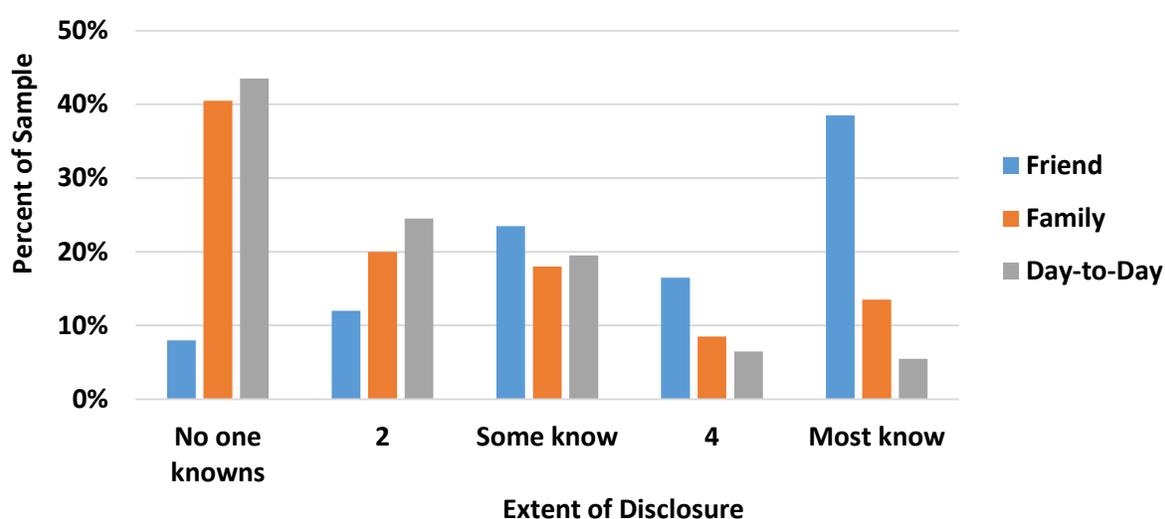
Thus, we tested whether this difference in performance was due to the fact that furries simply see more furry content and fursuits. Analysis showed that furries' tendency to see more fursuits and more furry art accounted for at least some of the difference in performance between furries and non-furries on furry face and fursuit face recognition. Future research will attempt to replicate these findings and further test some of the other possible mechanisms underlying these findings and the implications of these findings in other domains (e.g., regarding attitudes toward animals, recognition of animals, and humanization of non-human animals).

Section 10: Disclosure, Stigma, & Bullying

10.1 Disclosure

Furries perceive a significant amount of stigma from the world around them (10.2). This, coupled with the fact that many furries work professional jobs or belong to families and communities where the fandom’s openness (e.g., toward homosexuality and transgender people) may lead to disapproval or conflict, may motivate furries to at least occasionally hide their furry identity from others. To test this, we asked furries to indicate how many people in their day-to-day life (job/school, friends, family, etc.) know about their furry identity on a 1-5 scale (1 = *no one in this group knows* to 5 = *most people in this group know*; W11).

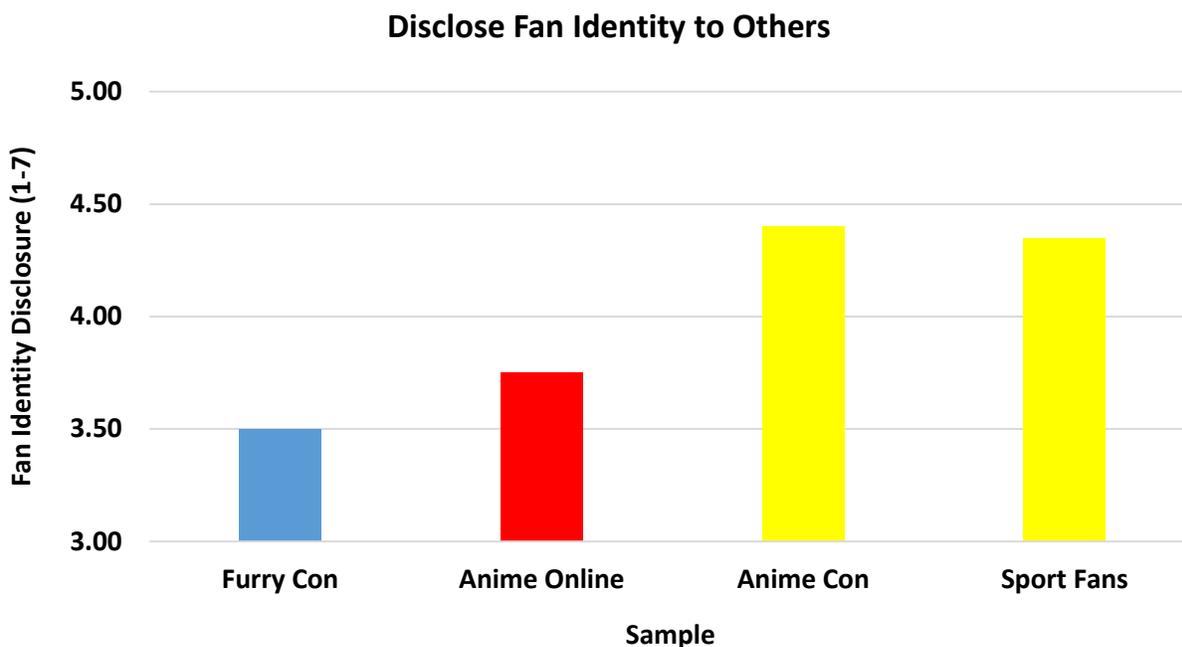
Extent of Disclosing Fan Identity



Looking at the blue bars, it’s apparent that many furries tend to tell their friends about their furry identity—more so than they tell anyone else. This may be because many of a furry’s friends may, themselves, be members of the furry fandom. That said, only about 55% of furries said that many or most of their friends knew about their furry identity, with 45% reporting that some or only a few of their friends knew. Self-disclosure was even lower for family or day-to-day interactions: 40-45% of furries said that no one in their family, work, school or day-to-day life knew that they were a furry. Only about 35% of furries report being out to “some” or “most” of their family about their furry identity, and even fewer made it known at work or in day-to-day life. In another question, only 35.1% of furries reported any sort of outward display of their furry identity in day-to-day life (e.g., “wearing a collar,” “wearing a furry t-shirt,” “drawing furry art in public,” “wearing a tail,” “having furry badges on my backpack,” etc.). These data collectively suggest that, for many furries, their furry identity and affiliation with the furry community is something they hide from others.

Other data suggest that while furries often selectively disclose their identity to others, they do begin to disclose their identity more as they spend more time in the fandom (FF14). However, this increased self-disclosure is limited predominantly to being more open about their

furry identity with their non-furry friends, not with their families, co-workers, new acquaintances, or strangers.

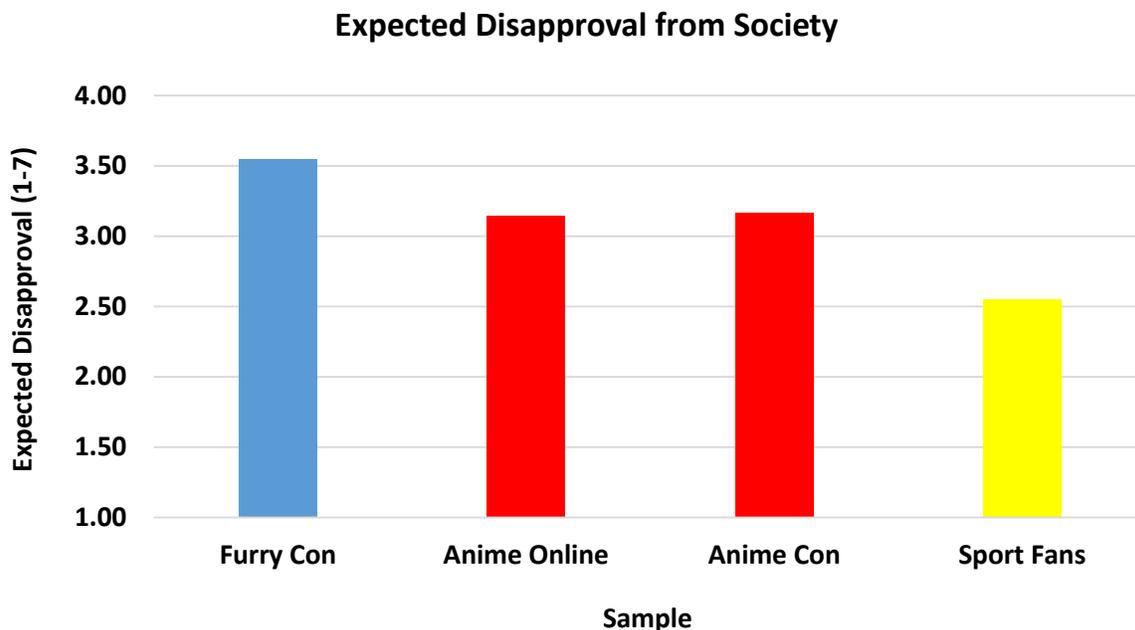


In a final study, we looked at the extent to which furies disclosed their furry identity to others, relative to members of other fandoms. As the figure above shows, furies were the least likely to do so, suggesting that among fan groups, furies are some of the most concealed, feeling the need to keep their identities from others (F3). This is likely due, in no small part, to the stigma they perceive from the world around them (10.2).

10.2 Experienced Stigma

Numerous negative stereotypes exist about furies, often perpetuated by negative or inaccurate media portrayals of furies as sexual deviants, socially awkward, or people with an unusual (e.g., fursuits) or, in some places illegal fetish (e.g., bestiality). As a result of the prevalence of these negative portrayals, we hypothesized that furies would perceive the outside world as particularly unaccepting and hostile toward furies.

In one study, furies indicated that they felt non-furies were prejudiced against furies and that they expected to be treated worse when people learned that they were a furry; these beliefs were even stronger in people who more strongly identified with the furry fandom (W12). Furies felt that more of this stigma was coming from society in general than from members of similar fandoms (e.g., anime fans), who they may have felt would be more sympathetic due to their sharing comparable interests.



In another study (F3), furies were found to expect greater backlash and disapproval from others if it were discovered that they were a furry. These results, when combined with other findings that furies are also the least likely to self-disclose their identity to others (10.1), suggest that furies' decision to not self-disclose is likely influenced by the fact that they expect negative repercussions if they did. In fact, there may be some truth to this: other studies have suggested that among the different fan groups studied, furies and bronies were consistently the most negatively rated, suggesting that others, even those in comparable fan groups (e.g., anime fans) hold a generally unfavorable impression of furies. Further research in to the nature of this stigmatization, its effects, and its origins, are planned as topics for future studies.

10.3 Bullying

Given that furies are often the subject of ridicule and harmful stereotypes (10.2), we investigated whether furies, compared to a sample of the general American population, were more likely to have experienced bullying. In focus groups and interviews, many furies suggested that their interest in furry and strong connection to the furry community manifested as a result of feeling like an outsider and being picked on, which led to a sense of affiliation with a community of other self-identified outsiders. We wanted to test whether there was truth to these claims, some of which have found support in other areas (e.g., interests pre-dating finding the fandom and feelings of isolation, 2.1; belongingness, 2.10; the fandom as social support, 11.1).

Participants were asked about the extent to which they experienced different types of bullying at different points in their lives (AC12). Even after statistically controlling for the fact that furies are more likely to be non-heterosexual or transgender (1.3, 5.1), both of which, themselves, are associated with a history of bullying, furies still experienced significantly more

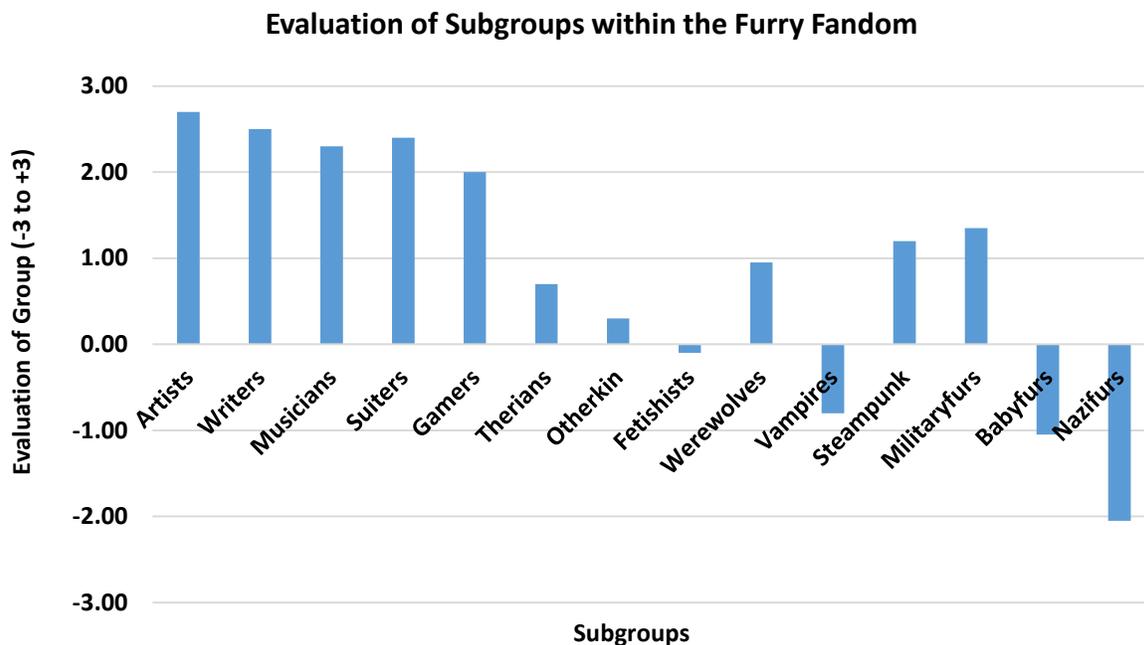
bullying than the average person, whether measured as being physically beaten up, teased, or ostracized. Many furies (48.3%) reported being bullied from the age of 4-10 (as compared to 37.1% of non-furies), 61.7% of furies reported being bullied from the ages 11-18 (as compared to 39.2% of non-furies), and 15.1% of furies report being bullied from the age of 19-24 (as compared to 10.2% of non-furies). This suggests not only that furies are more likely than the average person to be bullied (almost twice as likely in some age groups), but that the majority of furies are bullied at some point in their lives. The differences in bullying were also most prominent during the ages of 11-18, an age critical to the formation of a person's identity. This suggests that there may be some truth to the lay hypothesis of many furies that they were, indeed, picked on more as children and that this may have had an impact on their identity and on the groups (in particular, furies) that they chose to associate with later in life.

Future research will further investigate the role of bullying in the development of identity in furies, and to determine what effect engaging in the furry fandom has on counteracting the negative effects of bullying.

10.4 Intra-Fandom Stigma

Other research has shown that the furry fandom consists of a number of different subgroups (2.3, 2.6). Furthermore, some of these groups (e.g., bronies) have been shown to experience stigma from both the general population and from within the furry fandom itself (8.2–8.3).

To better understand which groups within the furry fandom experience stigma, we asked furies to indicate, on a scale from -3 (*very negatively*) to +3 (*very positively*), how they felt about each of a number of different groups (S11). It should be noted that the researchers do not, in any way, consider these results to be value judgments about the groups themselves, nor do the researchers wish to state that any group should or should not belong in the furry community. Instead, these data are taken as a reflection of the attitudes of the furry community toward subgroups within the community.



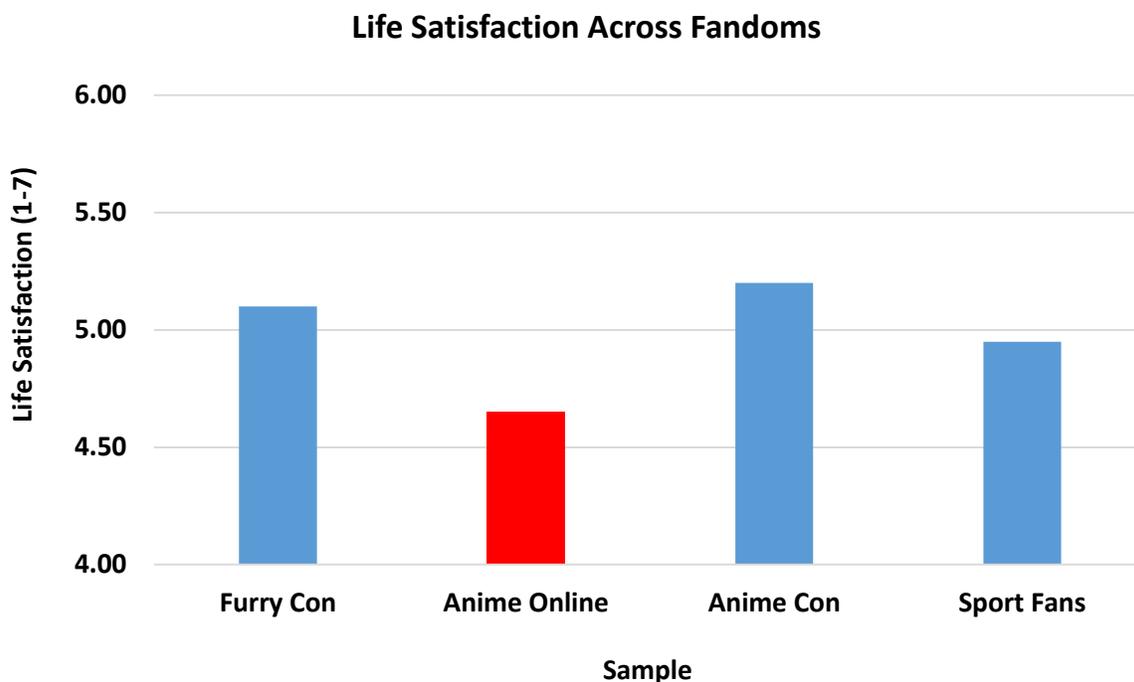
The data suggest that while some groups are almost universally revered in the fandom (e.g., content creators such as artists and writers), feelings toward others are more neutral (e.g., therians and otherkin, fetishists) or are negative (e.g., babyfurs). In the future, we plan to study the differences between these groups to determine the mechanisms underlying these evaluations.

Section 11: Wellness & Dysfunction

11.1 Wellness

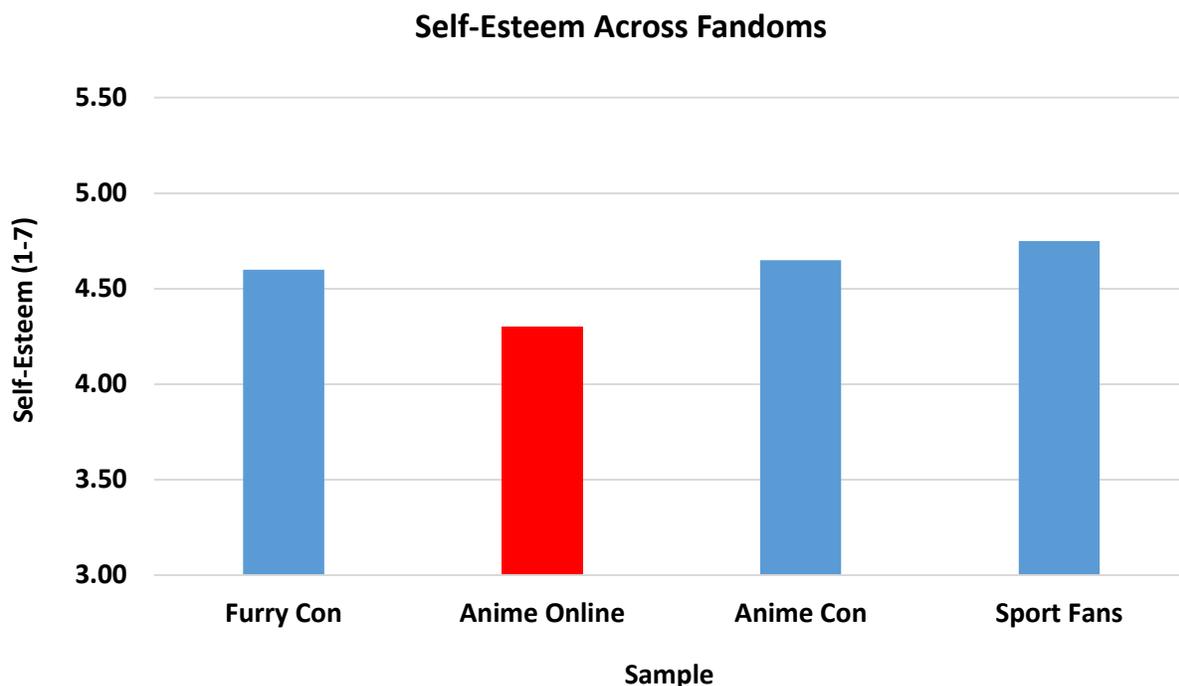
There is a tendency for people to moralize statistical deviance, to assume that those who are different are morally wrong or dysfunctional. It serves a number of protective functions for people, including preserving self-esteem and maintaining a positive self-image in the face of others whose views may be challenging or contrary to one's own. Because of this, however, there is a tendency for people (furries and non-furries alike) to assume that there is "something wrong" with furries, something reflected in media portrayals and negative stereotypes about furries (10.2), which insist that furries, as a group, need to be explained. Some seek psychological explanations, suggesting that furries may be people with developmental problems or psychological conditions. Others assume situational explanations such as a broken childhood or a tumultuous, friendless, or a socially awkward childhood. After all, most furries have experienced significant bullying (10.3), and abundant psychological evidence shows that bullying, stigma, and concealed stigmatized identities can be particularly damaging to a person's well-being. One could, therefore, expect furries to show evidence of significantly compromised well-being.

Data collected on the well-being of furries suggests otherwise, however. Across several samples, furries and non-furries did not significantly differ from one another on measures of life satisfaction and self-esteem (W11, S11, AC12). Furries did not differ with regard to their self reports of physical health, psychological health, or the quality of their relationships, and were actually more likely to have a stable and coherent sense of identity than non-furries (AC12).



The well-being of furries was also compared across fandoms (see figures above and below, F3). Furries did not differ significantly from convention-going anime fans or fantasy

sport fans, and were actually higher in life satisfaction and self-esteem than online anime fans—all are groups that experience less stigma than furies (10.2).



Taken together, these data, in conjunction with the rest of the data in Section 11, demonstrate that furies, contrary to popular misconceptions, are surprisingly well-adjusted. It's worth noting that this lack of difference in well-being occurs despite the fact that most furies have a history of significant bullying. One possible explanation for this is the ameliorating role of the fandom: given that belongingness and acceptance are both important values in the furry fandom (2.10), as is compassion, helping, and global citizenship (1.9), for many furies, the fandom is a source of social support. Social psychologists have long recognized the important role that social support plays in building resilience and fostering well-being, and future studies are planned to test whether this mechanism explains furies' tendency to thrive despite stigmatization and pressure to conceal one's identity.

11.2 Psychological Conditions

In conjunction with 11.1, we sought to test whether presumptions about the furry fandom as maladjusted or dysfunctional were supported or refuted by the data.

Across several studies, furies were shown to be no more likely than non-furies to experience anxiety in their day-to-day lives (e.g., W11), and were diagnosed with anxiety disorders at a rate no higher than the general population (6.1%; AC13). Similarly, furies were no more likely to experience depression than non-furies or members of other fandoms (W11, F3), and were diagnosed with depression and other mood disorders at a rate no higher than in the general population (16.1%; AC13). Furies were also no more likely to have been diagnosed with

attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (9.2%; AC13), to have been prescribed psychotropic medication (37.3%; AC13), or to have been diagnosed with a medical condition (FF15). These findings coincide with other data showing that furries are no more likely to experience dysfunctional fantasy or delusion than non-furries (9.2).

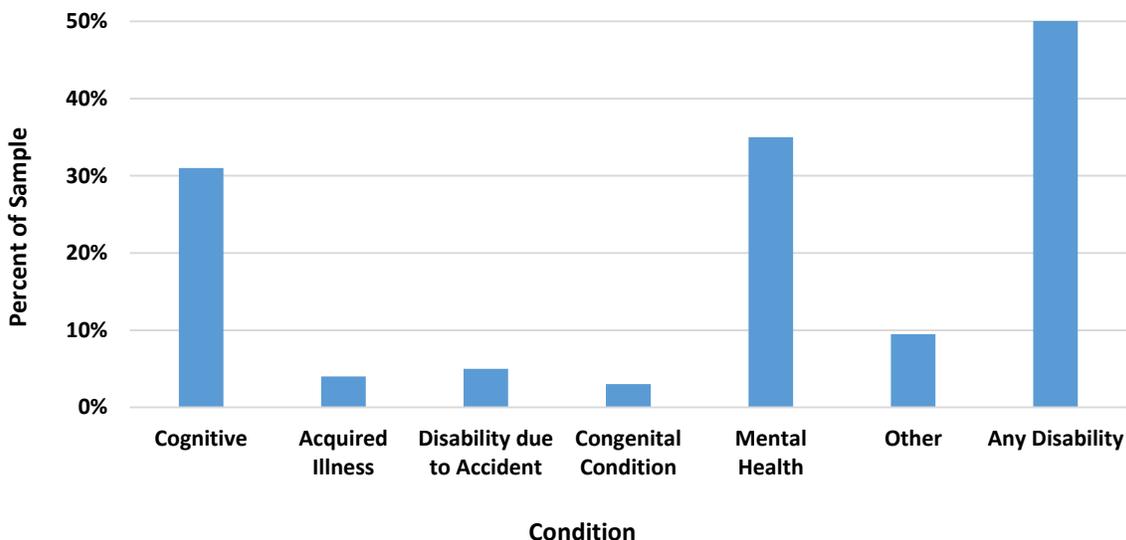
In fact, of all the conditions studied, there was only one where the prevalence rate is possibly higher than in the general population: Asperger's Syndrome, or high-functioning autism. Approximately 4% of participants indicated that they had been diagnosed of Asperger's Syndrome. Given that estimates of the prevalence rate of Asperger's Syndrome in the general population differ immensely, it is difficult to know exactly how much more prevalent this condition is in the furry fandom than the general population. However, the most conservative estimates suggest that, based on the obtained data, furries are at least 2.25 times more likely to have Asperger's Syndrome than the general population after controlling for different sex ratios in the furry fandom. Additionally, there was a small, but significant positive relationship between the extent to which participants identified as being furry and having Asperger's Syndrome. It should be noted, however, that one trait commonly associated with Asperger's Syndrome is a powerful focus on a narrow or specific activity or interest. As such, future research is needed to test whether the increased prevalence in Asperger's Syndrome in the furry fandom is unique, or whether it is observed in other fandoms as well.

In sum, generally speaking, there is little relationship between furries and clinical diagnoses of psychological dysfunction. Across several studies, furries did not differ significantly from the general population with regard to the prevalence psychological conditions. As such, it is incorrect to define or "try to explain furries" by the presence of any particular psychological condition or through any type of psychological dysfunction, as the data do not support such claims.

11.3 Disability in the Fandom

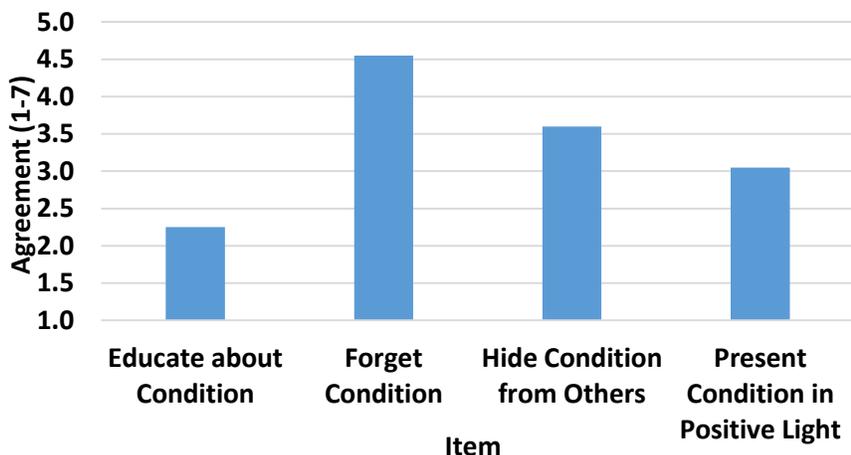
While the data suggest that furries are no more likely to experience significant dysfunction (11.2) or reduced well-being (11.1) compared to non-furry populations, we were nevertheless interested in the issue of disability within the furry fandom—how those with disabilities interacted with the furry fandom. This study involved the use of convention-based focus groups with those who considered themselves to have a disability of any type (FF15). Among those surveyed, the most common disabilities, displayed in the table below, were learning, communication, cognitive, and other mental disabilities. Physical disabilities (e.g., acquired illness, brain injuries, and congenital conditions) were far less common, though they were present.

Prevalence of Disabilities in Fandom



As the above figure below indicates (FF15), furries with disabilities used their fursonas for different functions, with some functions being more frequently adopted than others. In particular, the most popular fursona function for furries with disabilities was as a means of forgetting one's condition, while hiding one's condition when interacting with others was the second most popular function. Follow-up analyses revealed that furries were more likely to use their fursona to hide their disability during interactions if they had low self-esteem or if they experienced significant depression or anxiety. This suggests that the use of one's fursona to interact with others might seem more feasible when one is experiencing significant distress or dissatisfaction with themselves. In contrast, the use of one's fursona to temporarily forget about their condition was unrelated to their psychological well-being.

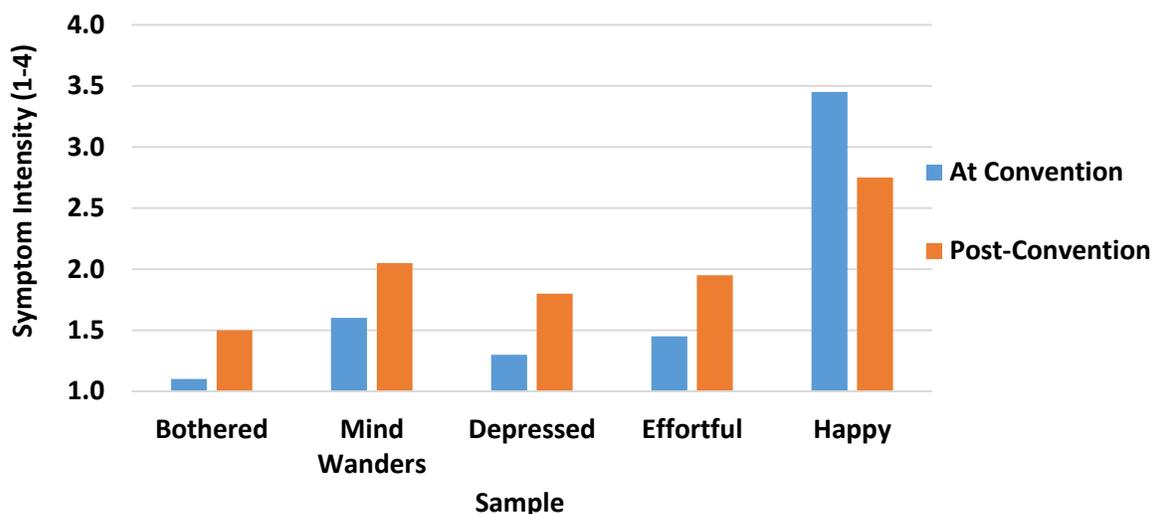
Fursona Function for Furries with Disabilities



11.4 Post-Convention Depression

Many furries anecdotally refer to a condition referred to as “post-con depression” (PCD)—a feeling of malaise and lowered mood in the days following a furry convention. While PCD was assumed to be a fact among furries, we aimed to test whether the data supported this condition using a number of existing psychological measures of well-being. These measures were given to furries both at Anthrocon (AC15) and again, 3 or 7 days post-Anthrocon. We assessed differences between these scores and tested whether there was a statistically significant change in scores between the two time points. Without exception, furries reported less psychological well-being following the convention as compared to at the convention, which may be indicative of post-con depression.

Post-Con Depression Symptoms



These data show not only that furries feel sad in the days following a furry convention, but that they also experience symptoms of fatigue, inability to focus, and irritability, all of which suggest a depressive mood. Moreover, there was little to no difference between those furries completing the survey 3 days after the con to those completing it 7 days after the con. This may suggest that post-con depression may last longer than we had initially thought—perhaps spanning weeks instead of days, and may even suggest that, rather than being construed as an aberrant “low point,” the phenomenon may be thought of as an aberrant “high point”—at-con mania. These data are, to our knowledge, the first empirical evidence demonstrating the phenomenon commonly referred to as post-con depression. Future studies will aim to not only better understand what this phenomenon entails and how long it lasts, but will also be focused on trying to reduce its effects.

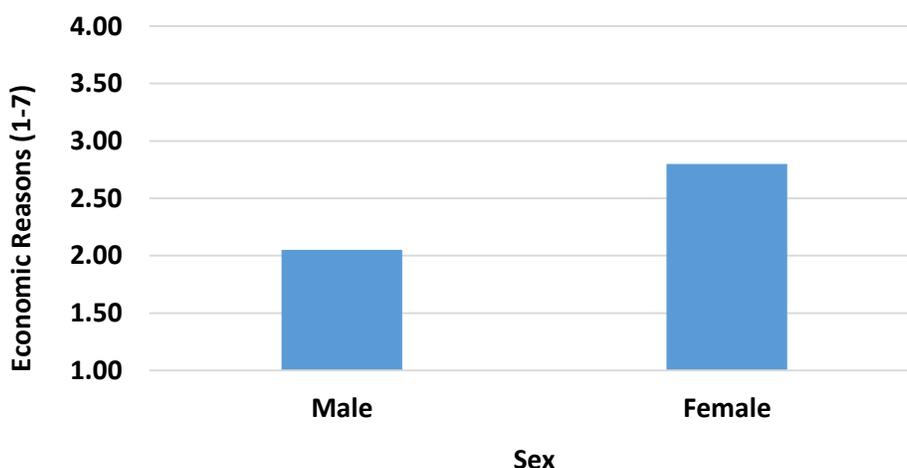
Section 12: Gender and Sex Issues

12.1 Gender Disparity

Given that the furry fandom is predominantly male (1.3), the fandom itself may be seen by female furies as a male space. In fact, one study found that 81% of women in the fandom considered perceived it to be a “boys club” (FF14). Whether explicitly stated or not, a male-dominated space may be perceived as unwelcoming for women, despite the fandom’s values of openness and inclusivity. Based on prior research on norms, which has found that women often feel unwelcome or repelled from predominantly male areas (e.g., mathematics, computing science, or engineering), it may be possible that one of the reasons the fandom remains so male-dominated is the perpetuation (through the presence of implied norms rather than explicit, organized, or intentional behaviour) that the fandom is a male space. With this in mind, we are interested in testing whether female furies feel that the fandom is a male space and whether this reduces the extent to which they feel they belong in the fandom.

One hypothesis arising from this theorizing is that female furies may need a way to “get their foot in the door” as a way of “validating” their presence in the male-dominated fandom. There is evidence to support this idea: while 90.5% of female furies indicated that their own interests in furry played a major role in their decision to become involved in the fandom, 45.0% also indicated that a relationship partner played a major role in introducing them to the fandom, while 57.1% indicated that a friend introduced them into the fandom (FF14). Other data (FF11) suggest that women are significantly more likely than men to say that they are in the fandom for financial or economic reasons, implying that they are artists or vendors—which coincides with data showing that artists in the fandom are far more likely to be female (6.2).

Economic Reasons for Being in the Fandom by Sex



When asked about their identification with the furry fandom, women did not differ significantly from men with regard to length of time in the fandom, how strongly they identified with their fursona, or with how strongly they identified as a furry. Taken together, these data suggest that, for all intents and purposes, women seem to be about “as furry” as men in the

fandom. In the language of fan psychologists, they are comparable to men with regard to “fanship”—being an enthusiastic supporter of the content of a fandom (9.4).

The evidence also shows that, despite being comparably “furry” however, women are less likely than men to feel a sense of “fandom”—feeling a sense of kinship with others sharing the same fan interests (9.4). The data suggest that female furies are more likely to identify with other female furies than with other male furies. Given that there are fewer female furies than male furies in the fandom, this may lead women to feel less of a sense of belongingness to the fandom. In fact, women reported feeling less like a member of the furry community, and were more likely to desire friends outside of the furry community and to retain aspects other, non-furry cultures, than men, who were more likely to want to immerse themselves completely in the furry fandom (FF15). In sum, men seem to be more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging in the furry fandom, to the point where they feel little need to look outside the fandom for friends or other needs. In contrast, females experience less of this, perhaps in part because the fandom may seem less welcoming to them, or less like a place that fulfills their social needs entirely (FF15).

12.2 Different Treatment due to Gender

In focus groups, furry women and genderqueer/non-binary furies were asked to discuss sex and gender in the fandom from a minority perspective. From these focus groups, several issues emerged:

- 52.4% of participants said that when hanging out with other furies, they were often reminded of their sex; 48% stated that the words or actions of other furies remind them of their sex.
- 19% expressed concerns that they did not belong in the furry fandom because of their sex.
- 85% indicated that they wished there were more furry women in the fandom.
- 42.1% of women disagreed with the statement that “women in the fandom are treated as equal to men.”
- 22.0% felt that women in the fandom were looked down upon, but 66.7% of women felt that women in the fandom were put on a pedestal or revered. Interestingly, these two variables were highly correlated, and coincide with psychological research showing that the two often go hand-in-hand.
- 68.4% of women agreed that the fandom was an intimidating place for women.

More general comments included:

- Several women suggested that fursonas represented a way for them to discover and explore gender, although there was often pressure online for women to make characters whose gender matched their own.
- Many women feel that males in the fandom tend to view female furies as outsiders.
- Transgender individuals in the fandom may experience discomfort or objectification at the fetishization of hermaphroditic or dual-gender characters in artwork.
- Given that the furry fandom is a predominantly online one, in many instances online sexism is often worse than in-person sexism.
- Several participants indicated that “inappropriate touching” was a problem at conventions, with furies feeling entitled to hug or to touch them because they were in suit, cosplaying, or simply for being a female.
- Many women expressed frustration over having male friends who would try to make a relationship sexual, or who were friends with the goal of one day becoming more than “just friends.” In a similar vein, relationship statuses seemed to be a barrier for many women, who found it difficult to make male friends when they were in a heterosexual relationship.
- Several participants expressed concerns that furry artwork portrayed women in an objectifying, derogatory, disrespectful, or unrealistic fashion.

Given the qualitative nature of these findings, we next conducted a large-scale survey of these issues, testing both their prevalence and whether they were limited to women and genderqueer/non-binary furries. These questions were answered by a large and diverse sample of convention-going furries, and the results are presented in the table below.

Attitudes toward Sex and Gender Issues in the Furry Fandom (AC15)

Item	Men	Women	Genderqueer/Non-Binary
I can be myself	5.97a	5.83a	5.71a
Gender never comes up with furries	5.22a	5.07a	4.81a
Receive unwanted attention	2.55a	2.62ab	2.93b
Feel I don't belong	2.43a	2.47a	2.68a
Okay with males in artwork	5.58a	4.94b	5.25b
Okay with females in artwork	5.37a	4.62b	4.68b
Furry porn makes me uncomfortable	1.88a	3.16b	2.34c
Non-furry porn makes me uncomfortable	2.44a	3.25b	3.18b
I feel I belong	5.84a	5.47b	5.58ab
I feel safe with furries	5.56a	5.38a	5.46a
I need to hide aspects of my identity	3.08a	2.70b	3.51c
Pressured into romantic relationships	1.98a	1.66b	2.33c
Uncomfortable around furries	3.00a	2.56b	3.38c
Shy around furries	3.35a	3.13a	3.71b

The table above presents the average response for each group on a 7-point scale (1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*). The letters following the averages portray the results of a series of *t*-tests: if two groups share the same letter for any given row (e.g., Men = a, Women = a), it means that the groups did not differ statistically significantly. If the two groups have different letters (Men = a, Women = b), it means that these groups differed statistically significantly from one another.

The data indicate that there are some issues in which women seem to experience greater distress or discomfort than men. For example: women are significantly more likely than men to say that they were uncomfortable with the way men and women were portrayed in furry artwork, and were less comfortable with pornography than men altogether. Women were also less likely to say that they felt they belonged in the fandom (though they did not necessarily feel that they didn't belong either). That said, there were also a number of issues in which men felt greater distress than women—men reported feeling a greater need to hide aspects of their identity around furries, felt more pressured into romantic relationships from other furries, and felt more uncomfortable around other furries than women. Finally, men and women did not significantly

differ from one another on several variables of interest, including feeling that they can be themselves in the fandom, feeling that their gender never comes up, receiving unwanted attention from other furies, and feeling safe/shy around other furies. Taken together, these data suggest that while there are some sources of distress in the fandom that are significantly higher for women than for men, there are also sources of distress for men that are significantly higher; moreover, several of the issues thought to be unique to the experience of women were also just as prevalent in the experience of men in the fandom.

Analysis of genderqueer/non-binary participants revealed that there are also some significant issues experienced by genderqueer/non-binary members of the fandom: these participants were, like women, uncomfortable with the portrayal of males and females in artwork, and were uncomfortable with pornography (though less uncomfortable with furry-themed pornography than women); genderqueer/non-binary participants were also significantly more likely to feel the need to hide their identity from other furies, felt more pressured into romantic relationships by other furies, and felt more shy/uncomfortable around furies than men and women.

It is worth noting, as a final point, that these data are not meant to be prescriptive or to dictate what “ought” to be the case in the fandom. In no way are the data intending to suggest that proportions of men, women, and genderqueer are “wrong,” nor are they intended to suggest that any one group of furies are maliciously attempting to trivialize, stigmatize, or prevent another group from entering the fandom. Nevertheless, the data do suggest that these are the perceptions of different gender groups within the fandom.

Section 13: Fandom Issues

13.1 Status of the Fandom

In a series of focus groups (FF14), participants were first asked whether they believed that the fandom was getting better or worse. About 71% of the sample believed that the fandom was getting better, while a small minority (4.2%) said that they felt the fandom was generally getting worse. Similarly, 56% of the sample said that they were getting increasingly more involved in the fandom, while 4% of furies indicated the opposite, that they were attempting to distance themselves from the fandom. These numbers largely coincide with other data on fan trajectory in the furry fandom (2.2).

13.2 Most Contentious Issues

At the end of many of our surveys, and in several topic-specific focus groups, we have asked furies to discuss important ideas or issues that were present in the fandom. Oftentimes, we ask whether there were aspects of the fandom they disliked, considered to be a problem, or which they would change if they could. Over the years, these data have been compiled and used to form a list of some the most controversial or contentious issues in the furry fandom (S13, FF14).

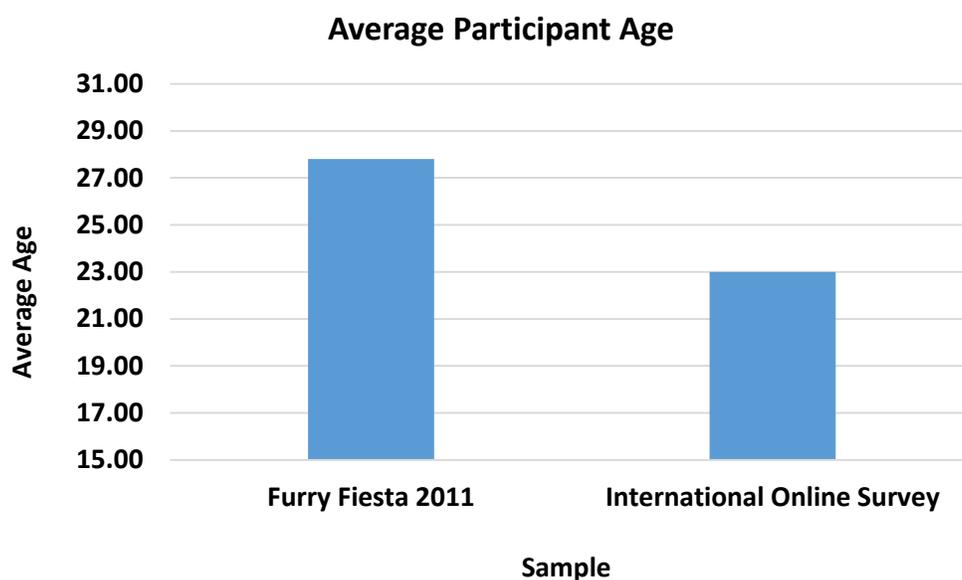
- The fandom is too sexual, and too openly so (e.g., behaviour/porn in public settings).
- The fandom has a negative public image (e.g., people associate furies with sex or deviant behaviour).
- The fandom includes/is too tolerant of deviant fetishes.
- There is too much drama/conflict within the fandom (e.g., between subgroups, or within local furry groups).
- There are problematic furs (e.g., furies who cause problems within local groups) and subgroups in the fandom (e.g., bronies, therians, babyfurs, nazifurs)
- The fandom is too restrictive (e.g., it tries to suppress sexuality or exclude others).
- Members of the fandom are immature/childish, and can be socially awkward and make others feel uncomfortable.
- There is a problem defining what furry is and is not.
- The furry fandom is too open, and allows in too many people that it should not be associating itself with.

- There is a problem with stereotyping within the furry fandom (e.g., groups stereotyping other groups within the fandom).
- There is a sense of entitlement within the fandom (e.g., people demanding unreasonable things of artists).
- The fandom is becoming too mainstream, and this is diluting the content of the fandom.
- There are significant gender issues within the fandom (e.g., the number of, and treatment of, women within the fandom).
- Bigotry, discrimination, intolerance, and bullying in the fandom, and a recognition that bullying does occur in the fandom. Despite the fact that it may not be physical bullying, significant social bullying occurs (e.g., rumors, ostracism, etc.).
- Despite the fandom's purported openness and acceptance, physical disabilities still receive significant negative attention.
- Issues such as spirituality and religion are looked down upon or discouraged by the fandom.

Section 14: Con-Going vs. Online Samples

14.1 Age

To test whether convention-going samples of furries differed significantly from online samples of furries, we compared the results of our largest online furry survey (W11) to the results of a convention-based survey conducted at around the same time (FF11).

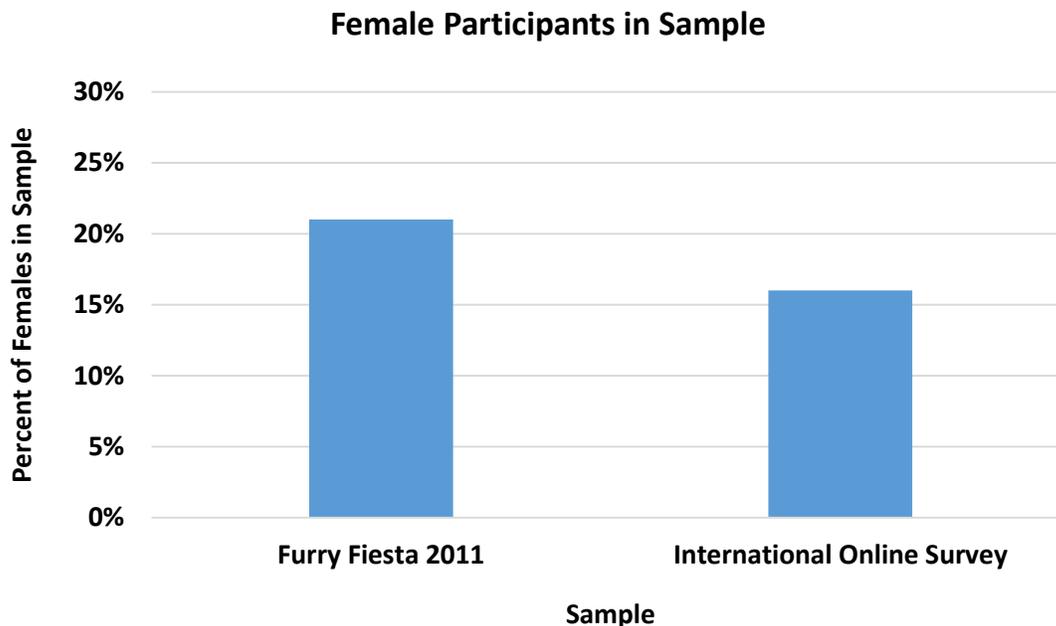


Convention-going furries were older, on average, than those in our online survey (28.7 years old vs. 23.0 years old). There are a number of possible explanations for this observation. One possibility is that older furries were more likely than younger furries to complete/return the surveys, suggesting that our obtained results may have been due to sampling bias. It may be the case that older furries have been to more conventions than younger furries, and may have been more willing to stop and complete our survey than younger furries who may have been in a rush to experience a convention for the first time. Older furries may also have been more interested in the idea of furry research than younger furries, and may have been more motivated to turn in surveys. All of these explanations suggest that the average age is younger, but due to sampling bias our sample was a bit older than the actual average age of furries present. It is also entirely possible, however, that the furries attending Furry Fiesta were older—a convention can be quite expensive, and it's plausible that people in their late 20s (who are more likely to have stable, better-paying jobs) were more able to afford going to a convention than furries in their late teens/early 20s.

Another possibility is that there are simply more age 30+ furries in attendance at conventions than online, which would push the average age upward. It may be the case that age 40+ furries may simply be less active in online furry communities like FurAffinity, but nonetheless actively attend conventions and other in-person gatherings. While we can only speculate on the reason for the data collected, however, we can say that, despite these between-sample differences, the furry fandom is nevertheless a relatively young one, with an average age likely somewhere in the late teens or early 20s.

14.2 Sex and Gender

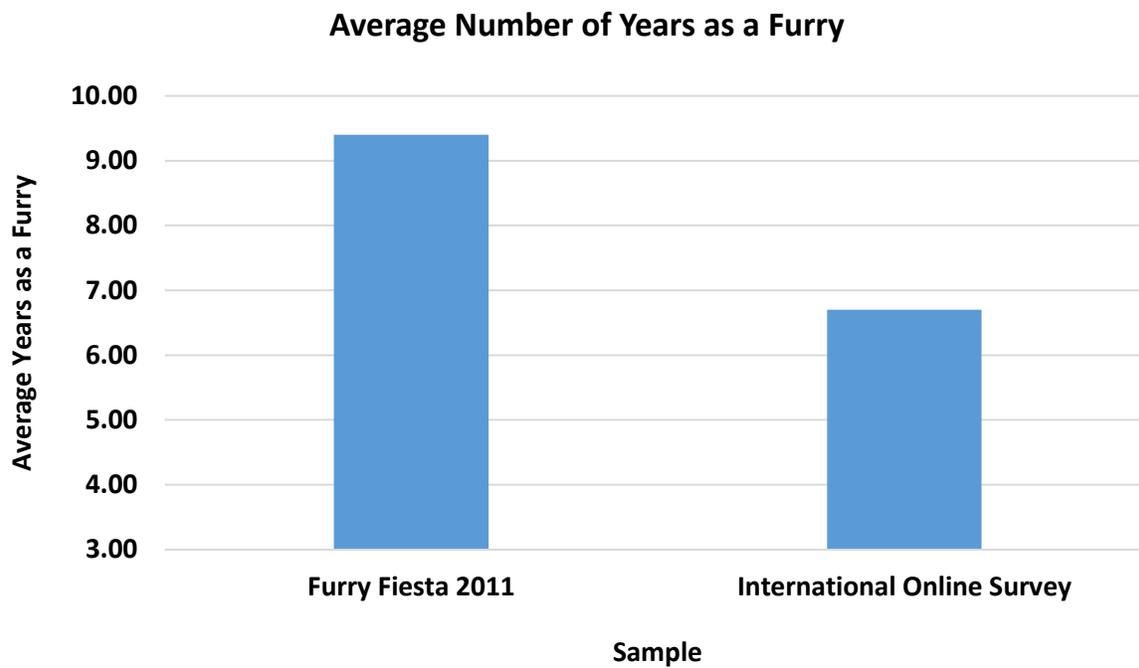
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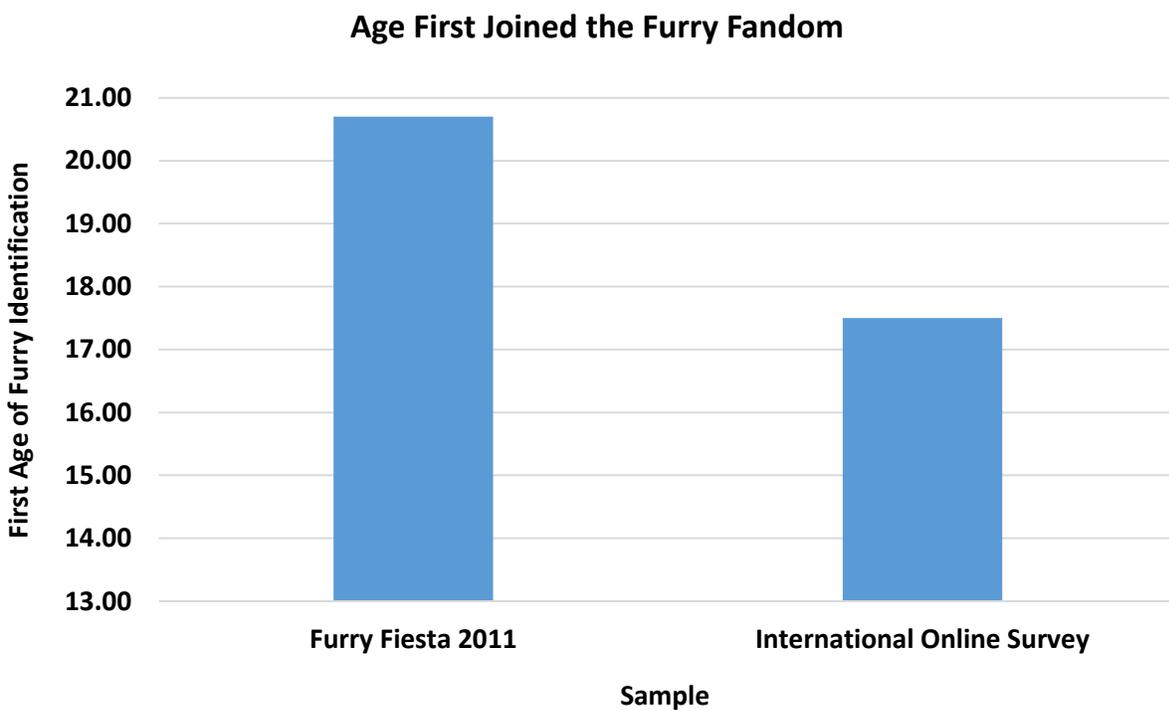
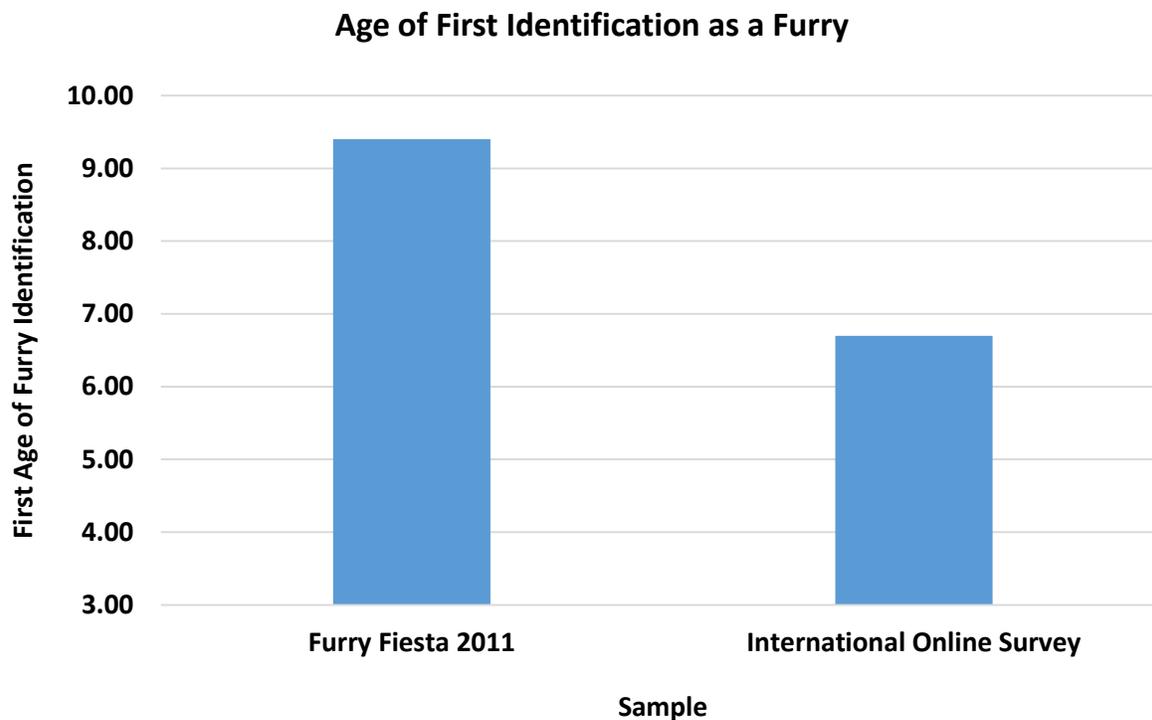
There were, by percent of furry population, more women among convention-going furries than in our online sample. These results may have interesting implications. First, it's worth noting that a similar trend has been observed in our samples of convention-going and online anime fans (1.3). This suggests that an explanation for this phenomenon should apply to both samples. One possibility is based on the fact that artists in the fandom are far more likely to be women, who, as a group (artists), may be more represented at a furry convention than online (6.2). Coupled with the fact that women are more likely than men to report economic reasons for being a part of the fandom (12.1), this is evidence that there may be more commercial female furry artists than male furry artists, which would make it more likely that such artists would be in attendance at a furry convention to sell their art, which could possibly explain the gender disparity between the samples.

14.3 Time in Fandom

To test whether convention-going samples of furries differed significantly from online samples of furries, we compared the results of our largest online furry survey (W11) to the results of a convention-based survey conducted at around the same time (FF11).



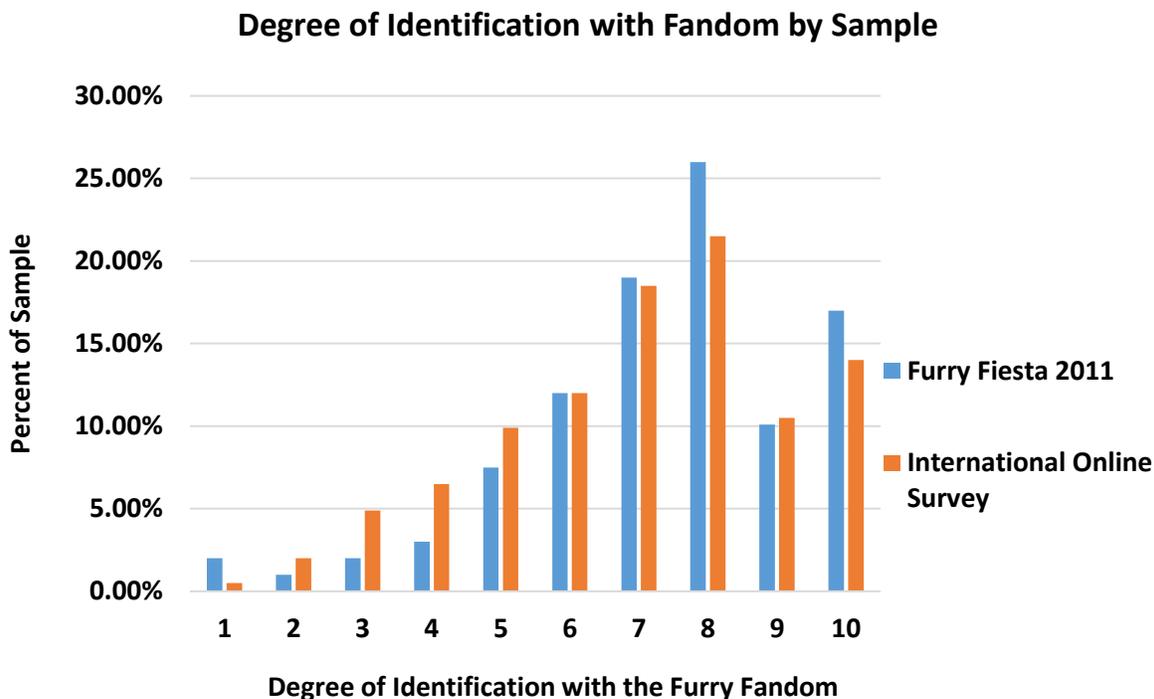
On average, convention-going furries report having been in the fandom for longer than furries in our online sample. These numbers have been consistently found across multiple surveys (W11, F11, S11).



Convention-going furies were also older when they first considered themselves to be a furry and when they first encountered/became a part of the furry community. This may be a by-product of convention-going furies being older than online furies (14.1), but it may also be the case that people who are older (and presumably more mature) when they get into the fandom may be more likely to attend furry conventions.

14.4 Furry Identification

To test whether convention-going samples of furries differed significantly from online samples of furries, we compared the results of our largest online furry survey (W11) to the results of a convention-based survey conducted at around the same time (FF11).



Convention-going furries did not significantly differ from online furries with regard to the extent to which they identified themselves as part of the furry fandom. The figure suggests that while there may be very slight differences—they were not statistically significant—the overall shape of the curves are approximately the same, suggesting that the two samples are similar enough to be considered functionally equivalent or comparable in their affiliation with the furry fandom.

Conclusions

Throughout this book we have outlined the results of five years of research and the conclusions the IARP has drawn from these data. This work should not be seen as “definitive” or “finished”, however. Science is not a goal, but rather a process. As such, there will always be a need to replicate our findings, to seek out possible mechanisms, and to test new and exciting hypotheses. What’s more, as the furry fandom continues to grow and change, it will be necessary to update our findings and to understand how and why such changes occur. As Carl Sagan famously said, “we’ve waded a little way out, maybe ankle-deep, and the water seems inviting.” It is in this spirit that we at the IARP will continue to study the weird and wonderful world of the furry fandom and all of its nuances and idiosyncrasies.

Even now, we are hard at work planning studies for the next few years. These studies include future waves of our ongoing longitudinal study, where we track the same furies over several years to see how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the fandom change over time. This includes asking new questions about the long-term effects of the furry fandom and capturing the reasons why many furies eventually decide to leave the fandom. In another planned line of research, we hope to conduct a large-scale analysis of patterns of interaction in furry social networks, to determine how just how interconnected and tight-knit the fandom is from a network structure perspective. In yet another set of studies, we hope to conduct content-specific surveys of subgroups within the furry fandom to better understand the dynamics of subgroups within a fandom. Finally, we aim to broaden our perspective of the fandom by studying furies in samples outside of North American conventions – in regions such as Japan, South Africa, and Europe, to see both what they have in common and what regional and cultural differences exist.

Science is a process. And while the IARP has been conducting scientific studies of the furry fandom for more than five years now, we’ve really only just begun to get our feet wet.

Glossary

Anime: Japanese-style animation (e.g., comics, television, and film).

Anthropomorphism: Giving human traits to animals (e.g., cats walking on two legs, talking dogs).

Babyfur: A subgroup within the furry fandom interested in age play, often manifesting as an interest in stories and artwork featuring young or child-like anthropomorphic characters or the creation of a child-like fursona.

Bronies: Fans (often adult male) of the animated television series *My Little Pony*.

Cis-Gender: A person whose identity corresponds with the gender identity that their culture associates with their biological sex; not transgender.

Control Group: A group against which to compare the results of an experimental manipulation or a group of interest, often representing the general population.

Economic Orientation: A person's beliefs about what constitutes an ideal economic system, often represented along a dimension anchored at "Socialism" and "Capitalism".

Fandom: Identification with a community or subculture that shares a common interest in an activity or media content (e.g., music, books, sports).

Fanship: Identifying with one's interest in an activity or with media content.

Fantasy Sport Fans: People with a shared interest in forming hypothetical teams drawn from real professional sport rosters and pitting those teams against one another based on real-world outcomes and statistics.

Fetish: Deriving unusually significant sexual gratification from something, often only indirectly or tangentially associated with sex (e.g., a foot fetish).

FurAffinity: Currently the largest online community and repository for furry-themed content (especially art and stories).

Furry Artist: A person who creates art (e.g., drawings, music, stories) which features animal characters or themes with varying degrees of anthropomorphism.

Fursona: An animal-themed avatar or self-representation, usually with some degree of anthropomorphism. Often used as one's "face" or public identity in the fandom, and can include a name, species, description, personality, history, and relationships.

Fursuiter: A person who wears a fursuit, a mascot-style (full or partial) costume representing an animal character or fursona with varying degrees of anthropomorphic traits.

Gamer: A person who identifies with their interest in playing games (e.g., tabletop, computer, video).

Gender: A culture's beliefs and expectations regarding the attitudes and behaviors associated with a person's biological sex.

Genderqueer: A person who does not conform to or identify with conventional gender roles

Greymuzzle: A term used to denote an older member of the furry fandom; is somewhat controversial, being alternatively considered an insult or a sign of respect.

Handler: A person who supervises a fursuiter with the goal of facilitating positive interactions with others (e.g., speaking for suiters who do not speak in character) and ensuring the fursuiter's safety.

IMVU: A three-dimensional graphics-based online chat system, which has found a significant furry following due to the ability for users to create anthropomorphic animal avatars.

LARPing: Live-action roleplaying, often involving playing a game with others as a character portrayed through costuming, props, and acting, often in a medieval fantasy setting.

Furry Convention: A gathering of furries, often annual, at a hotel, convention center, or other facility. Conventions often span multiple days and range in size from a few dozen to thousands of attendees.

Furry meet-ups: Gatherings of furries which are typically more local in scope, less formal in organization, and shorter in duration than a convention. May include activities such as a trip to a park, meeting at a restaurant, or a house party.

MilitaryFur / MilFur: A furry who is a current or past member of the armed services.

MUCKS: A multiplayer online, text-based role-playing game, typically with a significant social/community element, popularized in the early 90s.

Nazifurs: A subgroup within the furry fandom with an interest in World War II Germany, including an interest in the associated history, fashion, or military strategy of the era.

Non-Binary/Gender Non-Confirming: A person whose gender expression defies or falls outside of a binary gender conceptualization.

Otherkin: A person who identifies (predominantly spiritually or psychologically) as non-human, often (in contrast with therians) identifying with mythical beings (e.g., dragons).

Phantom Limbs: The experience of a physical sensation (e.g., pain) from a non-existent or amputated body part.

Political Orientation: A person's political beliefs, often conceptualized within a space bound by at least two dimensions (e.g., social, economic orientation).

Second Life: An online virtual world populated by avatars and objects largely created by the user base.

Sex: A physiology-based classification of organisms on the basis of their reproductive organs.

Sexual Orientation: An identity based on whom a person is attracted to; traditionally conceptualized along a single dimension anchored at “homosexual” and “heterosexual”, recent conceptualizations include recognition of asexuality and a separate dimension for romantic attraction.

Social Orientation: A person’s beliefs about what beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are socially acceptable in a society, presently conceptualized as a dimension ranging from “conservative” to “progressive”.

Steampunk: A genre of science fiction associated with stories that feature alternate or other worlds where technology is predominantly steam-powered and which feature a somewhat Victorian aesthetic.

Role Playing: Games or activities wherein players or actors take on the role of a fictional character, typically while interacting with others.

Tabletop Gaming: In contrast to video or computer gaming, gaming that involves the use of boards, cards, dice, or pencils and paper, and which usually involve multiple players.

Therianthropy: Like otherkin, a person who identifies (predominantly spiritually or psychologically) as non-human; in contrast to otherkin, therians identify with real-world non-human species (e.g., wolves).

Transgender: A person whose identity does not correspond with the gender identity that their culture associates with their biological sex; not cis-gender.

Zoomorphism: Giving non-human animal traits to humans (e.g., a human with cat ears and a tail).

WHAT IS FUR SCIENCE?

IT'S AN ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION YOU EVER HAD ABOUT FURRIES! JUST WHAT IS A FURRY? DO THEY REALLY THINK THEY'RE ANIMALS? IS IT TRUE THAT THEY ALL WEAR FURSUITS? DO THE CAT FURRIES AND THE DOG FURRIES GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER, OR DO THEY FIGHT LIKE... WELL, CATS AND DOGS?

GET THE FACTS ABOUT FURRIES STRAIGHT FROM THE RESEARCHERS WHO'VE STUDIED THEM FOR NEARLY A DECADE. WHETHER YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF FURRIES BEFORE OR YOU'VE BEEN A FURRY FOR DECADES, YOU'RE SURE TO LEARN SOMETHING FROM THIS BOOK!

