

INTRODUCING AROMANTICISM – INSIGHT INTO ROMANTIC DIVERSITY FROM A LARGE, INTERNATIONAL, OPEN-ENDED SURVEY

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Background:

Aromanticism, as an umbrella term and individual label, refers to people who have a non-normative relationship with romantic attraction. This may be actualized across a wide spectrum of experiences – from lack of interest, repulsion, confusion, or highly conditional romantic attraction. Research into the Aromantic community is sparse – with much of the known knowledge stemming from online community forums and unpublished works. This research, in collaboration with AUREA (a global online Aromantic community initiative) aimed to conduct some of the first empirical research exploring what Aromanticism means to Aromantic folk.

Methods:

An online survey was developed in collaboration with AUREA partners. Open-ended questions were used to facilitate free-form exploration of key areas of community interest, including how they define their identity, the impact of connecting with their identity, and personal barriers they experience. The survey was distributed through AUREA's global social media network with a target sample of 500. Data collection ceased after 48-hours with 2052 responses recorded. A combination of thematic and descriptive analyses were used.

Results:

To be aromantic is a diverse, personal experience allowing individuals to reject socially instigated norms around romance. Connecting with an Aromantic identity can be transformative for Aromantic people, particularly through connecting with online communities and having their identities affirmed. Many aromantic folk however report societal misconceptions around their identity, such as aromantic people are 'always asexual'. Our findings however show aromantic people hold multiple sexual identities with varying levels of sexual attraction and may engage in relationships and sexual activities with multiple partners.

Conclusion:

The Aromantic community are diverse, tied together by shared experiences of non-normative relationships with romance. Experiences of romantic attractions can be distinct from sexual attraction and behaviours. Building awareness around the nuanced needs of this community is important to inform development and provision of affirming models of care.

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