State of the Fandom 2008

Furry Research Center
furcenter.org

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Introduction

The Furry Survey, with its descriptive (if unoriginal) name, is the single largest and most comprehensive survey ever taken of the furry fandom. All its respondents, added together, would crew the USS *Nimitz,* and it is safe to say that the collected encyclopaedic knowledge of Dungeons and Dragons, George Lucas, and the Thundercats contained therein would *put COMFLTFORCOM to shame.*

The document you are currently reading represents an attempt to sum up this group of people, with a little more rigour than in the sentence immediately preceding. It is also—more boldly—an attempt to provide a snapshot of the fandom *beyond* the five thousand individuals who took it. I have therefore called it the "State of the Fandom," although it is not a policy document and, for various reasons, I will not conclude with any exhortations to war against third world nations.

I am going here to attempt to bring demography to the masses. A knowledge of statistics and statistical methods, such as they are employed, will not be required. If you find this informality off-putting, I will put some numbers tables at the end to sum things up *sans* prose. For the rest of you, stick around and we'll see if we can't make sense of this whole crazy thing.

It bears admitting that this while this has trappings of academia, and that while we will be interpreting the data using academically-geared statistical methods, it isn't really "science," although there is science to be done with it. Thus I am also going to attempt to write it in "pop-sci" style, and make it as generally readable as possible. We'll see how that goes.

Before we begin I should offer thanks to a number of people without whom this document would not be possible. Among them are Dr. Kathleen Gerbasi, WikiFur's Laurence Parry, and fellow furry sociologist David Rust, all of whom volunteered time and brainpower that was invaluable to me. I hope they will not be *too* disappointed by a document that opens with the metaphor of an aircraft carrier full of 1980s cartoon fanatics.

I am also indebted to my associates at the Furry Research Center, who have laboured many sleepness nights, like Bothan spies, to temper my exuberance with useful facts. To you, slightly peeved that Google reveals your furry affiliations before it lists your Nobel nominations: this would be impossible without you. Thanks.

-Alex

BACKGROUND

Furry

Imagine that it is the early 1980s and that, yea, even as the strains of *Rio* fill the air, a group is beginning to come into existence in the conventions of the American science-fiction scene.[1] They don't have a name for themselves, or a leader, or a plan. All the nascent fandom is, for now, is a bunch of folks who think creatures like Larry Niven's "Kzinti" are pretty keen.[2]

Now skip ahead a bit (if you lived through the decade, you may envy the ease with which we perform that step). Anyway, it's now the opening days of the 1990s and this group has continued to develop. They've found the Internet, in the form of USENET, and they're starting to cohere into something recognisable. They still don't have a leadership, or a plan, but they have finally acquired a name, to be found in one of this group's earliest on-line hangouts, newsgroup *alt.fan.furry*.

By 1992, to provide a solid date, what we would today call the furry fandom had assumed its modern form. A loosely-tied group of artists, writers, and role-players, furry fandom had by that point started to generate its own lexicon, artwork and literature, some of which—lest we chalk such behaviour up to "kids these days"—was adult in nature, implying that, if nothing else, the kids these days were around (and older) then, as well.[3]

Through the 1990s, and riding on a wave of ever-widening public access to the Internet, it continued to attract new members but remained, on the whole, beyond the view of the general public. George Gurley's 1999 *Vanity Fair* article, which nearly ten years later can still draw angry growls from furries, was for many outside the fandom their first glimpse at the apparently-bizarre world that lurked within.

Today, furries—as a fandom—have appeared on MTV, HBO's "Entourage," and "CSI," in addition to (occasionally) less sensationalistic treatments in a number of newspapers. Called out by websites like Something Awful and Portal of Evil, and widely distributed across online galleries like Side7 and Deviant Art, the furry fandom has attained an established—if uneasy—niche on the Internet.

And yet, like Spider-Man (probably not a furry despite the name), nobody knows who they are.

1. Wikifur's Laurence Parry disagrees with me on this evolution of the fandom. Discarding as implausible the suggestion that this is because he doesn't like Duran Duran, I nonetheless note that it is only one of a few genesis theories. Others call more heavily on, for instance, the alternative comics scene of the 1960s. As the development of furry fandom is not a primary focus of the "State..." thing, I'm using this as a basic primer, especially as it happens to be the theory I believe myself.

2. I use these creatures as a stand-in for the genre of humanish animals, or animalish humans, common in science fiction and fantasy, but Niven's felinoid Kzinti in particular, developed in his *Ringworld* series among others, were formative for at least some people. The warrior Kzinti were later incorporated/ripped off by the Starfleet Battles universe, where they were joined by the equally felinoid Lyrans and had, as I recall, rather subpar battleships.

3. Lexicon is included within this statement deliberately. Once upon a midnight dreary I resolved myself to discover the etymology of the word "yiff," inextricably linked to the furry fandom. Suffice it to say, if it ever was widely accepted as representing the completely-innocent noises of foxes, a contention I tentatively accept but would not vigorously defend, it has not done so since the Clinton presidency. I imply nothing by this statement.

Folk devils of the Tubes, in some ways the fandom—defined by others—is as much a collection of stereotypes and vague notions as it is a real entity. Incredibly, not even CSI *and* Entourage *put together* managed to definitely settle the question of what a furry was, and outsiders tend to have somewhat screwy ideas.

Alas the situation is hardly better on the inside. Question words fail in describing the furry fandom for its members. Simple questions like *who* is a furry remain beyond our ability to judge: self-labelling creates one group, but there are those outside it, people who may even publically disavow membership, who would nonetheless be considered furry by persons external to the fandom (and many within).

Why people are furry is a question of fantastical interest that, needless to say, I have no good answer for, and furries themselves remain sharply divided: many claim spiritual affinity for animals (generally, a specific animal), but many others are in it simply for the artwork. Or the porn. Or both, a furry stock in trade.

Needless to say then *what* a furry is becomes a question of incredible ambiguity. I imagine furry children, were they to exist, would ask this existential question right around the time they also asked their parents about where they go when they die. I'm sorry, though, sweetie. We just don't know.

Even *when* people become furry in their lives is up for grabs. A number of individuals inexplicably claim to have considered themselves furries for far longer than then fandom itself has existed. More troublingly, a few list their entry into the furry fandom as preceding their birth (these I have chalked up to typographical error, although the notion that their conception somehow involved animal costumes remains an outside and haunting possibility).

It is tempting to pass this off the way we did pornography—that is, "I know it when I see it". And of course, the bulk of the time this works fine: if it has a muzzle and a fur coat, but walks on two legs *and* is capable of talking enough that you'd feel bad about turning it into a stole, it's a furry character. And if you run across someone with a greater-than-average fascination with them, then that person is probably a furry.

It is tempting, but we have a much more fun option available to us: numbers.

This thing you're reading

Of course, despite considerable hubris I do not harbour any grand ideas about the potential for what I'm writing now to set any records straight. It is, however, what I would consider to be a reasonable attempt, because if nothing else its thousands of respondents, across a wide age and geographic range, represent a non-trivial fraction of *all* furries.

We should lay down some groundwork before going forward, I suppose. This means the exposition is not done, so for those of you watching at home we're still in the slow opening camera pan, past the initial credits but not quite to the first bit of real action. Steady, lads, we'll get there soon enough.

The first question you may care about is who is responsible for this thing you're reading, and why you should pay attention to them. Or you may not, but here is a stab at an answer anyway: my name is Alex Osaki, I have a degree in anthropology from the University of Colorado and I work in demographic research for a marketing think tank. I am also the founder, writer, and lead researcher for the Furry Research Center.

"The what?" you say. Natch. The Furry Research Center, inaugurated in early 2008, supports the activities of the Furry Survey and will eventually carry out additional research, on the side. It, and its plucky band of merry pranksters, serves to provide research-grounded answers to the tough questions of life, or at least those questions concerned with the affairs of bipedal foxes.

The Survey itself is responsible for the delicious cream filling of the thing you're reading. It is a general-purpose survey with 33 questions in it, ranging from basic demographics (like age and sex) to indices of furry activities (how many people go to conventions, and things of that nature). For those of you with inclinations to curiosity, and keeping in mind what curiosity did to the cat, the survey as it stood when all the fine folks contained in this write-up took it is contained in the appendix, where it is labelled Part C.

Biases

After the question of "why are you doing this?", which is to say after people are resigned to the existence of the Survey, their second question tends to be about the biases. People are deeply—some would say inordinately—concerned with this, although the statistical bias we muse on here is different from the liberal bias that plagues, say, Stephen Colbert.

In brief, the survey consists entirely of (1) **self-selecting**, (2) **English-speaking**, (3) **self-identified** (4) **furries** with an (5) **online presence**. One by one, this goes as follows:

1. **Everyone who took the survey chose to do so**. Alas, breaking out the leather and whips and compelling people to do something is beyond my abilities. At least demographically.

2. **Everyone who took the survey speaks English**. It is not always a first language, and indeed in many cases is not. But for obvious reasons furries from the United States, Canada, the UK, and Australia are more common here. This isn't actually all that surprising; "furry" has been an English-language phenomenon for some time. Just throwing it out there.

3. (Almost) **Everyone who took this survey identifies as a furry**. Mostly. There are a few examples of people who do not claim to be furry but nonetheless provided an answer. Looking at their responses, I think they're close enough to the fandom that we would miss them if they were gone, so in they go.

4. (Almost) **Everyone who took this survey *is* a furry**. "Thanks," you say. "*Real helpful.*" Fine, fine. My point, though, is that I didn't give this survey to a control group. This fact alone seems to bother some people, although I was not about to poll random people on my commute. "Hello, sir. Do you ever dress up as an animal?" Public transportation is weird enough as it is.

5. **Everyone who took this survey is online**. The survey was only offered online. David Rust

conducted his survey of the fandom at conventions; Kathleen Gerbasi has similarly done the bulk of her surveying at furry conventions. For these reasons among others people occasionally suggest that I should conduct sampling at conventions as well. I have no great inclinations to do so, for the following reasons:

1. "Being online" is not a bias, or at least not an important one. Internet access is so widely diffused as to make it a poor way to sort people on the best of days. The idea that there are people who would *not* have an online presence but would somehow be present at the Internet-organized conventions of a fandom inextricably linked to the Internet, rooted in a strong online presence since MC Hammer was still relevant, is bizarre. I contend that the body of furries capable of receiving information about this survey (it was posted to numerous websites and journals as well as being passed around IM and Email channels) is for all intents and purposes equivalent to the entire furry fandom.

2. Being a convention-goer *is* a bias. Not all furries attend conventions by a long shot; specifically sampling those who do doesn't accomplish nearly as much as just sampling random furries. The only interesting conclusions one can draw from it is to compare convention-attending furries with those who don't attend conventions, and in a practical sense it's easier to just do that with the sample I already have, especially since

3. The sample surveys more than the attendance of any other furry convention. Polling *every person who attended Anthrocon* last year would've yielded a far smaller sample with a far more pronounced set of biases.

There are a couple of other biases that people are liable to bring up. For instance, did the survey primarily reach only a certain demographic online? This is speculative, and I am going to make an executive decision (alas, *sans* Kurt Russell) to dismiss it: at more than five thousand responses, and considering the referrer logs, the survey has achieved such diffusion that conspicuous under- or over-sampling strikes me as unlikely.

Lies and damned lies

Here is a brief section on some statisticky stuff:

I am assuming that the survey consists of a **random sample of furries**. This is self-evidently not true, since no furries just woke up with the survey in front of them (see **self-selecting**, above), at least so far as I am aware. This *Godfather* scenario notwithstanding, all of the writing and analysis here is based on statistical methods that assume a random sample, and who am I to buck that trend?

The methodology of the survey involved **peer-to-peer distribution** with no central point of origin. The five thousand results analysed here stem from a period of intense activity in May, 2008, that does not come from any one site in particular but rather a multitude of separate, smaller ones that then led to reposting elsewhere. This has made the legwork to consider biases more difficult, although having done this work I think this way of spreading around the survey was and is sound.

When I say something is "statistically significant," or that the result differs from another group in a

"significant" way, I mean that the results are **statistically significant at a 99% confidence level**. Stat jocks know what this means already; for the rest of us, this means that the difference between two groups, with 99% certainty, did not occur as the result of random chance. In other words, I'm asserting that God doesn't play dice with furries in my sample.

Finally, although 5000 discrete responses are encompassed in this thing you're reading, not everyone answered every question, and no question was answered by everyone. Response rates were generally high and if conspicuous I will try to call them out; the least frequently answered question, asking about income (natch) was still answered by 68% of respondents, true—but next least frequently answered question and the most frequently answered question, asking about sex, was answered by 99%.

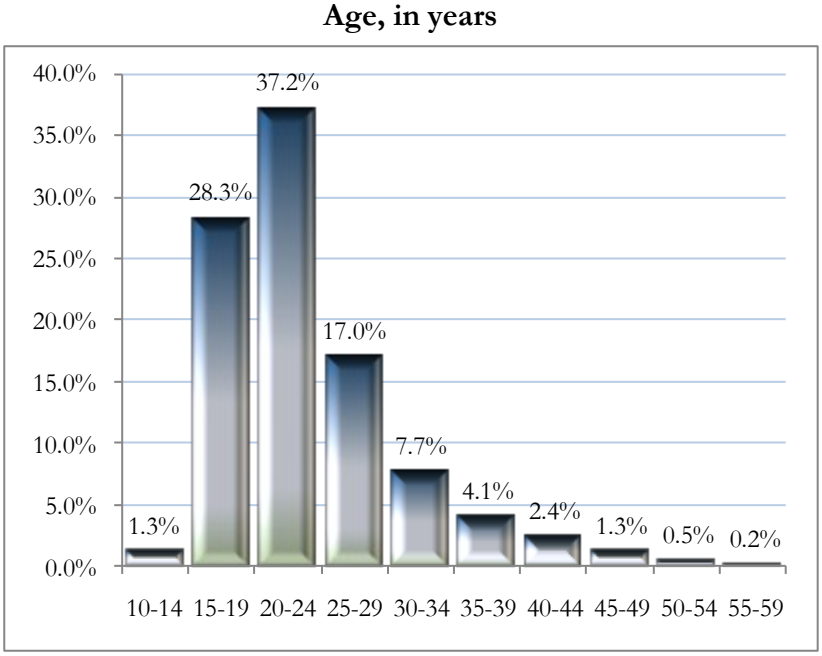
SURVEY RESULTS 1 of 4

- **Basic demographics**
- **Sex, gender and orientation**
- **Education and occupation**
- **Religion and politics**

Basic demographics

First, consider age. Everyone agrees that the fandom is, on the whole, quite youthful, but the results of this survey suggest that even the previous estimates were too old. Of people submitting a response to this survey, the median age was **22** and the average age was **23.7**, or nearly a full year younger than the **24.6** that the guys at UC-Davis reported.

David Rust's "Sociology of Furry Fandom" doesn't provide a median or average age for his sample, but his figures show around 31% of people as being between the ages of 16 and 22. By my reckoning, this figure is actually closer to half, at **47%**. "Sure," you rejoin quickly. "But Rust primarily sampled convention-goers". Fair enough, but **69.5%** of convention-goers in the Furry Survey were below the age of 29, about **12%** more than Rust finds.

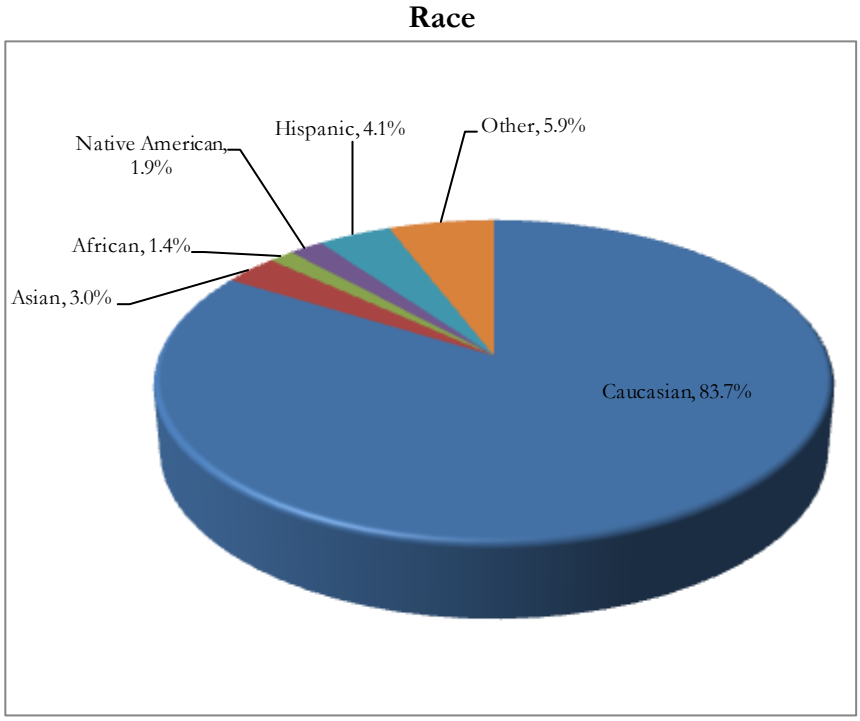


Furries are relatively young; most of them are between the ages of 16 and 25, and thus prime candidates to star in TV sitcoms. NBC, take note, but if you set it in New York with six budding twenty-something actors and call it "Fur-riends," I'll kill you myself.

The reasons for this difference are not obvious, alas. It's possible, although conjecture,

that we can chalk that explanation up to small sample size. Most probably, though, it comes from a combination of his convention oversampling and the fact that his data are now nearly a decade old. As many attest, the fandom was substantially different then.

It is "common knowledge" that furries are white—remember that in its early days it was driven by science-fiction and computers, and to this day it is deliciously geeky, easily beating out reporting "Jedi" as your religion and probably on a par with speaking Klingon. Hence, geeks being of a pasty sort, the common knowledge, which at first glance appears borne out by Rust, who finds 94% of furries to be Caucasian, non-Hispanic. UC-Davis did not see fit to provide data quite that nuanced, only saying that 89% of their respondents were "White".



So this is mostly a cream-filled pie, you see. 83% of furries are white. This is higher—though not too *conspicuously higher—than the equivalent number in the United States.*

I think both numbers are a skosh high; in this case around 4/5ths, **83.7%**, reported themselves as being non-Hispanic Caucasians, with **4%** Hispanic, **3%** Asian, **1.4%** Black, and **5.9%** "Other" (nearly all of them a mix of two or more races). For comparison's sake, the demographics of the United States[4] suggest that, to a statistically significant degree, furries are more likely to be Caucasian (73.9% in the US), less likely to be Black (12.2% in the US), and more likely to be mixed race (2% in the United States). The percentage of people reporting as Asian or American Indian are different by statistically-insignificant margins.

Conventional wisdom also pegs the furry fandom as American. Of course this is again in part because of its geekish heritage: while Douglas Adams and Doctor Who are both British, Internet adoption was faster in the United States[5], and the early science fiction conventions that nurtured the fandom were American. UC-Davis reports 83% of respondents as American.

The data appear, however, to suggest a number closer to David Rust's 70%; **68.9%** of people

4. From the Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey. In the furry fandom, the race statistics for the United States were virtually identical to the non-American pool, so I consider this a valid enough comparison.

5. For a remarkable view of this, I personally find the map available here quite fascinating: http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=335

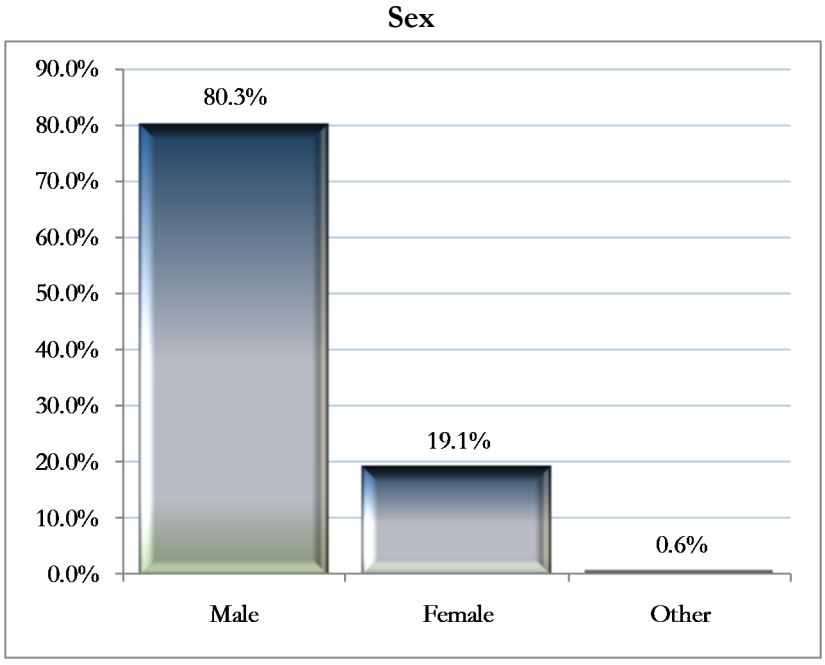
answering that question in the Furry Survey said they were from the United States. The five most popular furry locations, in order, are:

1. United States (68.9%)
2. United Kingdom (8.26%)
3. Canada (7.45%)
4. Australia (3.45%)
5. Germany (2.12%)

Of these, the highest "furry population density" is in the United States, with Canada a close second, Australia a distant third, and the United Kingdom languishing well behind. Germany's density is the lowest of the top five, though I suspect that the English-language nature of the survey has a tendency to disadvantage those for whom English is not a primary language. You may note this as the same tragic flaw that afflicts, for example, Eurovision.

Sex, gender and orientation

This is the boring type of sex you put on your driver's license, though. It is generally assumed that the furry fandom is exclusively or predominantly masculine, or at least that they're nearly all guys. Indeed, David Rust reports that 85% of his respondents were male; UC-Davis presents a more tempered 81%. Far be it from me to buck the trend: **80.3%** of persons responding to the Furry Survey were men. This number is lower than Davis's by a statistically-insignificant amount.



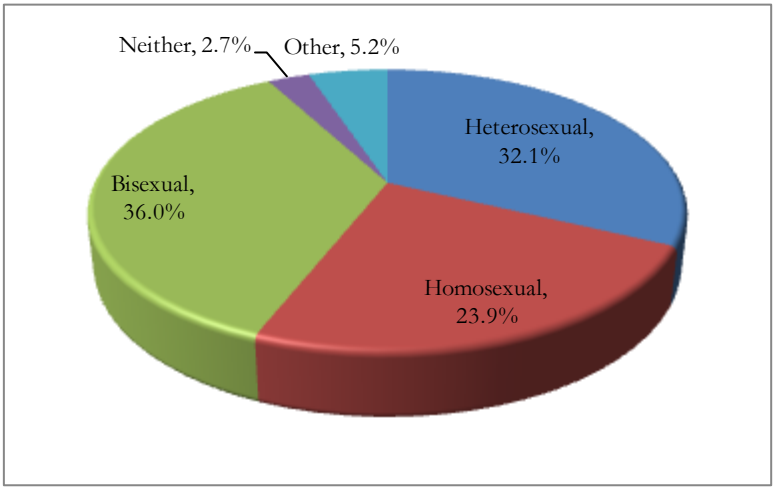
From the "Department of Telling You Things You Already Knew". Only a fifth of furries are female. There are isolated pockets of greater equality, but the fandom is on the whole fairly testosterrific.

So what gives? Not to keep telling you the same thing, but the basic, geeky nature of the fandom no doubt has much to do with it; furries saying they were sci-fi fans or big on technology were even less likely to be female. There are certainly aspects of it that are more egalitarian; more than 30% of artists are women, for instance. The gender breakdowns are slightly more even for younger folks and slightly less for older ones, so perhaps things in the fandom, as outside of it, are getting more equal.

Conventional wisdom holds the furry fandom to be a bastion of homosexuality. David Rust opines that "there have been many who have put forth the estimate that even more than 90% of Furries

are gay". Granted, Rust does not provide any citations for this, but his point is well-taken: as far as the outside world is concerned (and, actually, as far as much of the inside world is concerned too) the fandom is the Castro of the Internet.

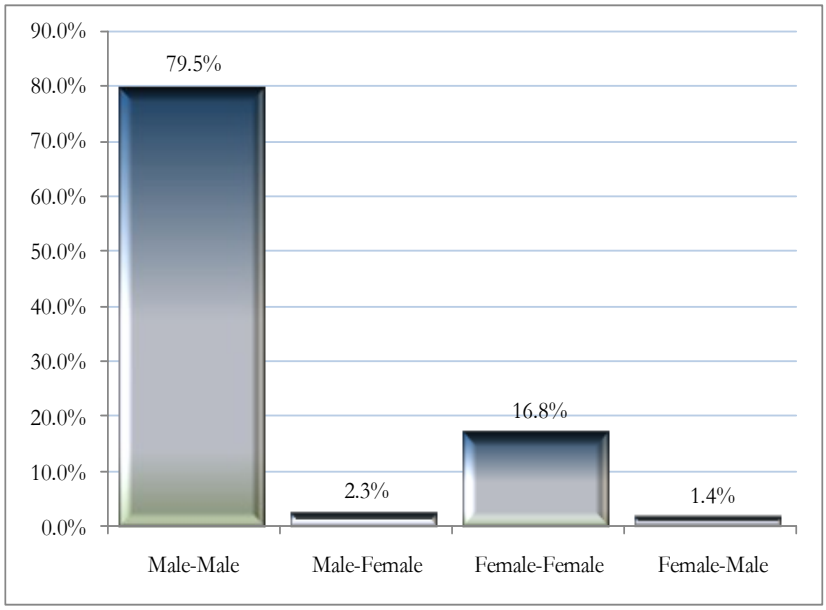
Sexual orientation



Proportionally, homosexuality is more likely inside the fandom than it is in the general public, but they still make up less than a quarter of respondents. Bisexuality, now, that enjoys true popularity.

Accurate? Well. No, and of course we have known this *since* Rust's landmark publication. The intervening years have played with the numbers a little, but the song remains the same. The Furry Survey finds **32.1%** of furries to be heterosexual (more than Rust's 25% to a statistically significant degree; less than Davis's 32.7% by an insignificant one) and **23.9%** of furries homosexual, statistically identical to Rust's 19% and Davis's 25.5%). **36%** of furries in our sample were bisexual, well less than Rust's 48% and virtually identical to Davis's 37.3%.

Self-reported gender



The prevalence of roleplaying games has made the thought of gender not according strictly with biological sex more common in the public eye; an article published this year in Cyberpsychology and Behavior *suggests two thirds of gamers switch gender in-game. Truly transgendered individuals are still uncommon, as you can see here.*

One perceptive fellow, writing in an email, suggested I should track how many people roleplay as a member of the opposite sex. This is itself an interesting question and one I intend to put into the next version of the survey. For the moment, however, we can offer up a bit of commentary on gender roles. Presume that we find the American Psychiatric Association and Lynn Conway to be credible[6]. In this case, the APA suggests 2-3% of men engage in at least occasional cross-dressing, and Conway estimates that the prevalence of transgendered persons at between 1:50 and 1:2500 for various degrees and bounds.

6. Admittedly not a trivial presumption. Data here is taken from http://www.apa.org/topics/transgender.html and http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/TSprevalence.html respectively

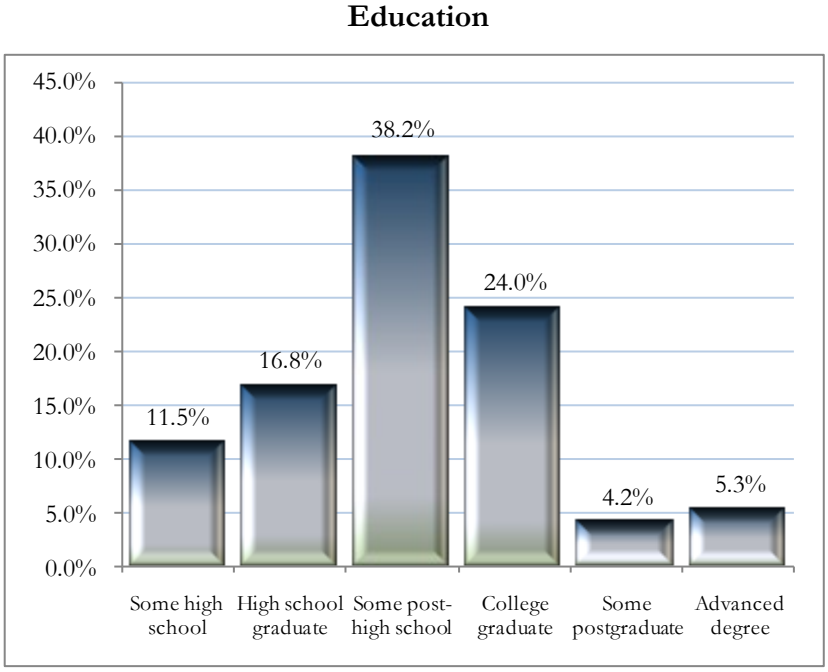
Failing to consult a crystal ball meant that I didn't realise how fascinating the question was until it was too late, and the Furry Survey doesn't nuance things beyond asking people what gender they identify with, in addition to asking what their biological sex is. From this, we discover that **3.7%** of respondents listed their gender identity as different from their biological sex, suggesting that furries are more likely to identify outside of their own sex than the population as a whole. Of these, **2.3%** were men and **1.4%** women.

"Yes," you are saying, "that pretty much matches with my experience in furry chat rooms." Ha, ha. I would however point out that while **2.8%** of furry male respondents identified as female, **7.8%** of furry women identified as male. Thus while the raw numbers favour men, the percentage of men reporting transgendered inclinations is substantially less than the number of women. This difference is statistically significant.

Education and Occupation

David Rust opines that "nowhere [do groups of Furry fans organize] as often as on college campuses." He does not tell us where he gets his information, but his data bear out the notion that furry is a college-oriented thing; 42% of his respondents had "some college" education, with an additional 20% having a bachelor's degree.

Our take on this: "pretty much." We asked respondents to tell us the highest level of education they had attained. Only **11.5%** had not completed high school (the bulk of these respondents were under the age of 18); **16.8%** had a high school diploma but no further education. **38.2%** had some post-high school education, with **33.5%** possessing a college degree, including **4.2%** with at least some postgraduate education and **5.3%** holding an advanced degree.

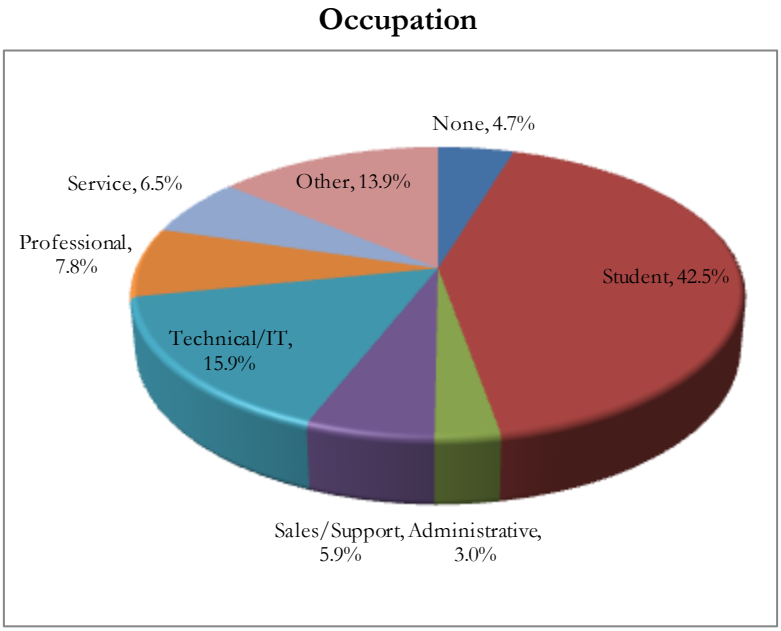


Real Genius or Revenge of the Nerds? Either way, furries are a highly educated bunch; most people out of high school either already have higher education, or are working on it.

The US Census department provides educational attainment data for those 18 and older. We can pull furries matching this description—that is, US residents at least 18 years old—to obtain the following points. Compared to the average American (American furries are identical in educational attainment to non-Americans, in case you were wondering) of equivalent age, furries are 1) much more likely to have at least some

college education (**79.2%** of furries compared to 52% of average Americans) and much *less* likely to have only obtained a high school diploma (**3.2%** of furries vs. 14.8% of average Americans).

The numbers are a little more skewed when you see that a strong plurality—**43.9%**—of furries have some college, but no degree—more than twice their average American counterparts. Why? A conjecture: the median age in America is better than a decade greater than the median furry age, and more than 40% of furries listed their occupation as "student". So the question sort of answers itself, with the notion that furries are—lo, as Rust had told us were we wise enough to listen the first time—college kids.



Most furries are still in school—see "Education," just to the left over there. Those that aren't have a fairly wide distribution, although the technical and IT fields find a singularly unsurprising degree of representation.

Many of them, anyway, although not all by far. The occupational breakdown is roughly what you'd expect given the nature of the fandom and its age. **42.5%** of furries listed their occupation as "student" (this is higher, in a statistically-significant way, than the **38%** claimed by Davis and the **31%** by Rust), making it by far the most common answer. Second place was claimed by persons working in technical or IT-related fields, garnering **15.9%** of respondents. Around eight percent were otherwise employed in other professional jobs, with an additional three percent working in some administrative capacity. Reflecting the young age of the fandom, service-sector and sales/support jobs combined made up **12.4%** of the answers.

As I said in the beginning, questions regarding income were answered by the fewest number of people, around seventy percent. Of these, **37.4%** said their income was less than $10,000 per annum; this again reflects the young age of the fandom. About a quarter, **27.4%**, made between $10 and $24,999, and **18.9%** of furries made between $25 and $45 thousand. Few made more than that, and only **2.8%** had an annual income greater than five figures.

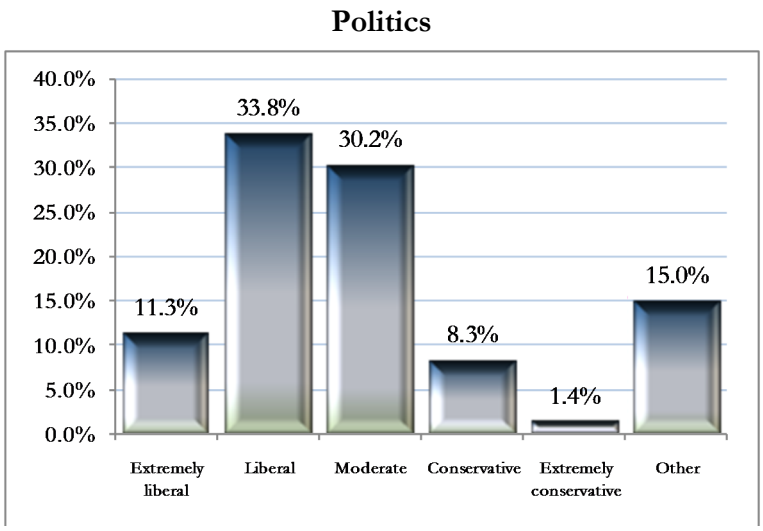
13.9% of respondents listed their occupation as "other". Of these, the bulk were either homemakers or employed in government or military positions, although a number of persons were employed in an artisanal or creative field. Imagine, some people get paid to write, the lucky b—oh, look. A new section.

Religion and politics

Yes, the two things you should refrain from discussing around the dinner table with extended family, just in case. We address them here under the hope that furries are a homogenous group and

we can avoid offending anybody.
Alas, it's not to be, so pass the potatoes and let's settle in. We'll deal with politics first, since in 2008 America this is something of a topical issue. Furries are stereotypically liberal and as you can see from the graph, this is largely for good reason. A plurality of respondents—around a third, **33.8%**—described their political inclinations as "liberal," with an additional **11.3%** saying they were "extremely liberal".

On the other hand, while only **9.7%** of furries said they were "conservative" or "extremely conservative," **30.2%** claimed to be politically moderate. This probably accords with your experience looking at furry message boards or chat rooms where politics is ever a topic and for what it's worth the centrist pull isn't exactly unfamiliar in politics as a whole. Thusly while it's safe to call furries left-leaning, one presume that if your furry convention keynote speech picks on the GOP, not everyone will be laughing.



Furries tend to be liberal, although not quite as liberal, I think, as you would expect. That said, there aren't many conservatives, although semiconservative philosophies like libertarianism get a lot of play in the fandom.

Some will do so regardless of who you rag on, of course. **15%** of furries described their politics as "other". Of these, many said they were simply non-political, although doctrines that are unpopular in the real world but find a niche on the Internet—here I am thinking libertarianism, though socialism came up often enough too—also represent themselves well.

Rust, perhaps not wanting to be hauled up before Congress, didn't ask about politics, but Davis did. Their furry fandom is even more liberally-skewed than the one the Furry Survey depicts, and even fewer people described themselves as conservative—but the leading answer, garnering nearly a quarter of the respondents, is apparently to be "not political".

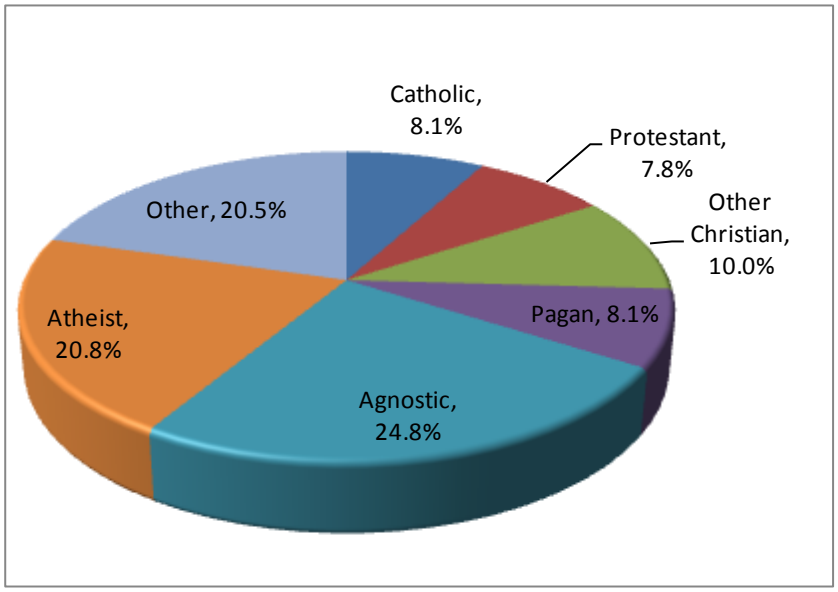
This figure seems incredibly high to me; even considering that I didn't explicitly provide a "who cares?" option, the number of people who said so anyway ("who gives a [expletive of some sort]?", technically) suggests to me that respondents were aware of their ability to express their apolitical leanings. The Davis crew doesn't feel compelled to identify where their responses come from, so I can't conjecture as to why these differences might exist.[7]

Religion is another touchy subject, all the better that we should pry it open. Just over a quarter (**25.9%**) of respondents identified as being a Christian of some stripe, the plurality of them

7. Perhaps they figured that if you'd seen one convention, you'd seen them all and, rather than going to AC or Further Confusion, picked an anarchist gathering somewhere instead? But seriously, a quarter of people so strongly apolitical that they pick that over even some vague political leaning? Weird and, as Lore would say, eerie. I want answers. *I want the truth*.

nondenominational; **8.1%** were Catholic. As far as any defined religion, Pagans tie Catholics (technically there is one more pagan, I suppose, but they both come out to **8.1%**, anyhow). Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists together add up to only **3.7%**.

Religion



Furries aren't sold, on the whole, about this whole "religion" thing. Atheism and agnosticism are strong in the fandom. On the other hand, more than a quarter are Christians of some stripe or another. This is needless to say well below baseline levels in their resident countries, including the Commonwealth.

Those with calculators at the ready will note that this leaves a substantial chunk out and, indeed, people listing a named religion make up only a third of all responses. Of the remaining, about a fifth (**20.8%**) were atheists, with a quarter (**24.8%**) describing themselves as agnostic. Another **20.5%** said "other," because apparently I did not provide them sufficient leeway. Fair enough.

By far the most popular answer among those saying "other" was that they identified with their own religion, typically described as a blend of other beliefs. Lesser-known religions, such as Satanism, also received a few votes, but a self-defined spirituality nonetheless predominated.

Davis, perhaps not wanting to be hauled up before the Vatican, didn't ask about religion, but David Rust, playing Jack Sprat's wife, *did*. His respondents were substantially less likely to be Christian (-7.9%) but also much less likely to be atheists (-10.8%). They were also, curiously, 8.2% more likely to be agnostic and, the greatest difference, 11.9% more likely to have some affiliation with paganism; a fifth of his respondents were "NeoPagan". Rust's numbers add up to roughly 100% so presumably most people provided an answer, which would seem to exclude all the folks who told me "other".

Rust elaborates that younger furries tended be agnostic while older ones tended to be either atheists or affiliated with some religion. I would not quite go so far; looking at the numbers, furries over the age of 25 were, within the bounds of statistical significance, equally likely to be Christian and, while 3.5% less likely to be agnostic, were also 4.6% less likely to be atheists. The bulk of the difference appears to be made up here, and with a 6.3% rise in paganism among older furries—though this number is itself seven points lower than Rust's and, *pace* that noble bloke, I don't really see any significant age gap.

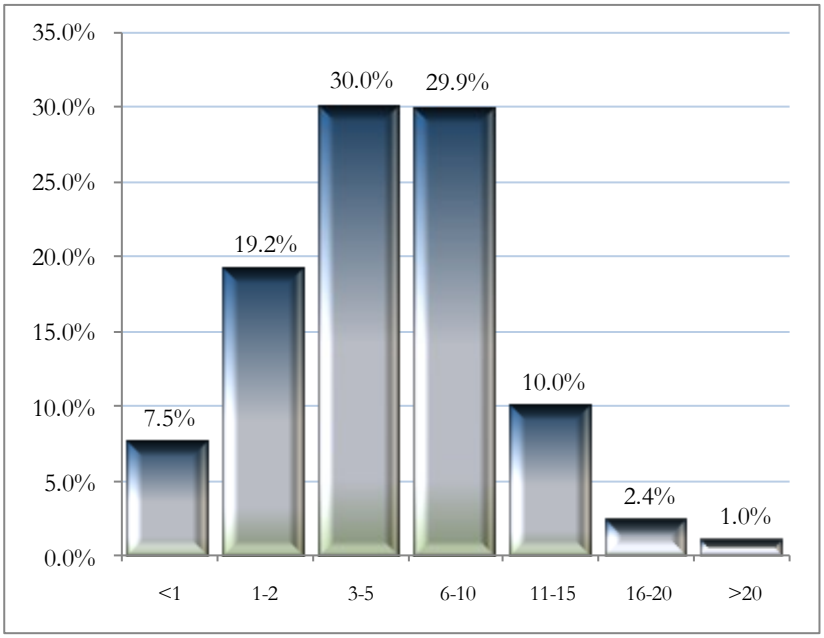
SURVEY RESULTS 2 of 4

- **Length of time in the fandom**
- **Number of other furries known**
- **Accuracy and disposition of public perception**

Length of time in the fandom

Next we turn to the bits that have a little more relevance to the fandom itself. I asked people to indicate how long they had considered themselves a part of the fandom. The question is not especially clear in this regards—it doesn't say, you know, "how long have you been in the furry fandom by that name". For this reason, more than a few people said they had been in the fandom their entire lives, and a few interesting souls said they had been so longer. How that works, well, beats me.

Length of time in fandom



Furries tend to enter the fandom when they're in their late teens; sixty percent have been furries between 3 and 10 years; more than eighty percent have been furries less than a decade.

You can see that the furry fandom consists largely of folks who haven't been around it all *that* long—**56.7%** said less than five years. On the other hand, **29.9%** said they'd considered themselves furries for between 6 and 10 years, and **13.4%** had been around longer than a decade. This figure itself seems impressive, although ten years ago is still fairly recent when you think about it—the notion of furry itself is at least close to twice that. Fewer than fifty respondents, however, said they'd been members of the fandom for more than twenty years, suggesting to me that the "old guard" is either dispersed or inaccessible, *hélas*.

The average length of time in the fandom is about six and a half years, with the median length at five. This means the average "time of entry" (that is, the average of "age minus length of time in fandom") is 17.2 years. Rust places a high—though, I have to admit, not unreasonable—emphasis on college, but furries appear to be reaching the fandom a good year or so before they would be of that age.

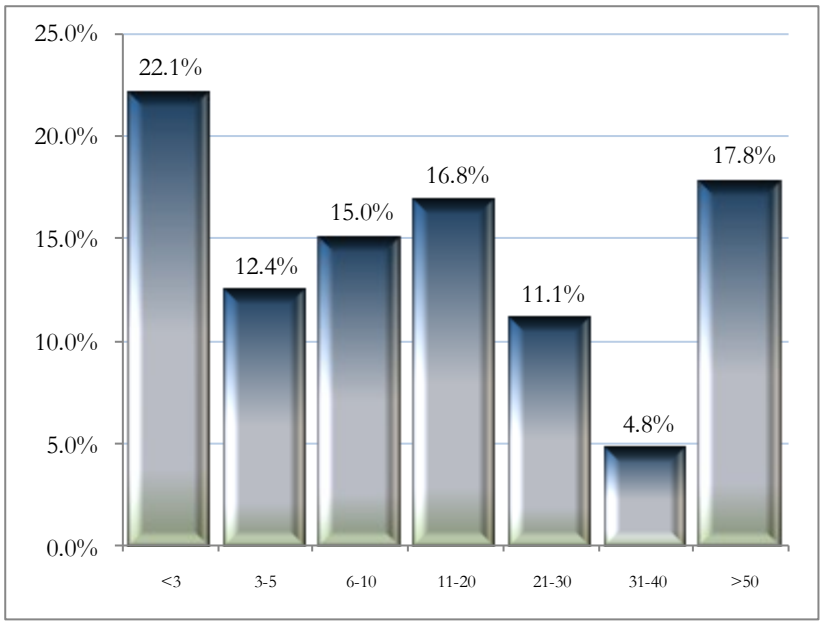
One supposes that this lays the blame at the foot of high school, which is I suppose where I *would* put the blame. Indeed, the median and modal answer is both that sweet 16, which I would imagine

likely accords roughly with your personal experience. In the event, thinking about it, that was pretty much when I started considering myself a part of it all.

Number of other furries known

There is the belief that furries are highly gregarious, travelling in packs like wolves (or locusts, depending on your view of the fandom, I suppose). This is certainly a perspective one could reasonably defend on the basis of, say, Anthrocon. How accurate is it, literally?

How many other furries are known?



There is not as clear a trend when asking how many other furries folks know. Although a fair number didn't know any, many people claimed to know 50, 100, or more furries. They must, I realise, have awesome rolodexes.

I asked "how many other furries do you know?" which in retrospect was not the clearest way of phrasing the question, since the only qualification I provided was that the number could not be a decimal. Granted, it isn't a terribly hard question to answer. Most people, based on comments to the question, took it in the same way as you would if I asked you "do you know [name]?" to your face. If you talk with [name] regularly, know their birthday, etc, then this probably counts as "knowing". I mean we're not talking Biblical, here.

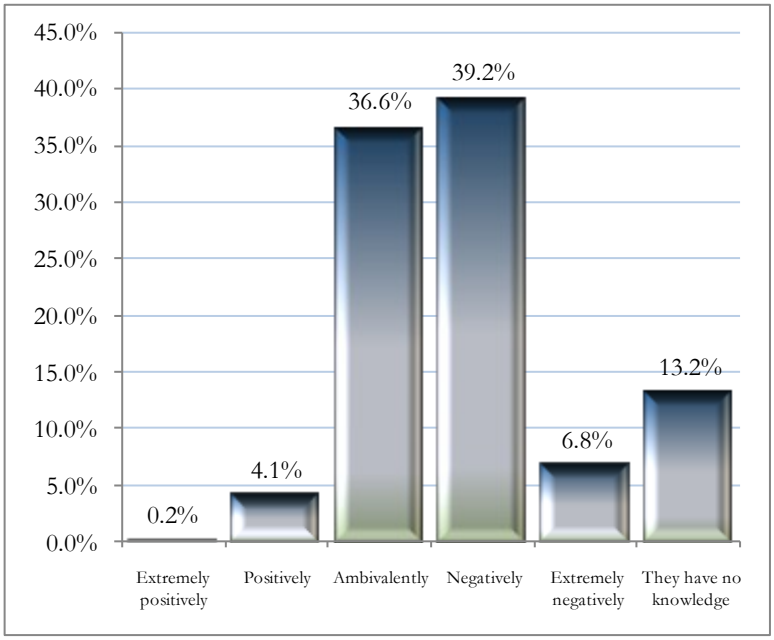
The median answer was 15 furries, although the most common answer was, uh, 0. Zero is not the default answer for the question; people would have had to enter it manually. I am not quite sure what that means, since presumably they know at least one furry to have found the Furry Survey in the first place—I imagine these individuals were only counting folks they knew in person. Fair enough. The average number of furries known is 41, buoyed by a contingent of people who took "know" to, I imagine, mean "have listed in your IM buddy list". A couple of individuals have furry social networks sizeable enough to put together a fairly good sized (though not record-setting) convention.

One thing I did not ask was how respondents related to other furries. David Rust makes much of the exchange of physical affection, something I did not inquire into but intend to the next go around. To my way of thinking he accords the furry phenomenon of "skritching" somewhat more weight than might be warranted—but then I am in the group of people who finds it somewhat odd and is apparently, in his words, statistically insignificant. C'est la vie.

Accuracy and disposition of public perception

Or: "they just don't understand me". Really, though, this shouldn't be said flippantly. The reality, unfortunately, is that public coverage of the fandom *has* been slanted towards the sensationalistic and the salacious. But then you think, and it's all, who are we talking about, here? *Vanity Fair*? "Entourage"? For real? I mean, I'm not asking for a *New York Times* Pulitzer-oriented exposé, but is MTV the best you can do, journalistic community? Come on, get with the program.

How does the public respond to the fandom?

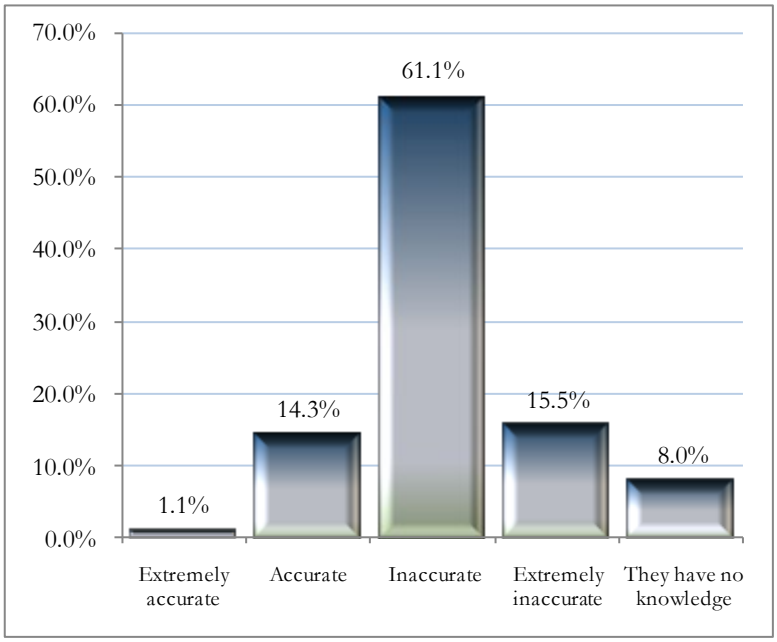


As you can see, furries think the public has a low opinion of them...

From a position of scepticism, then, do furries face the world at large. **46%** of respondents said that non-furries responded "extremely negatively" or "negatively" to the fandom. A further **36.6%** said the response was "ambivalent". Of five thousand respondents, only nine said non-furries responded in an "extremely positive" way.

13.2% said that non-furries "had no knowledge" of furriness which I have to admit I find probably low-balls the real figures. Even on the Internet one continues to find those unexposed to the fandom (if I was in a neologistic mood I might call them "fur-gins," ho ho). In any case, **39.3%** said that others had no knowledge of their personal furriness, suggesting that if nothing else people are cagey about revealing to others the less-than-sordid truth.

How accurate is public perception?



… but they believe this opinion undeserved.

People who said that the public reaction was positive were more likely to say that there was "no" difference between responses to the abstract fandom and to them, personally (that is, that they were *also* responded to positively). **30.9%** said that they were responded to even *more* positively.

Conversely, people who said that public reaction was negative were sharply more likely to say that people "had no knowledge" of their own personal furriness, and **31.7%** of them said the reaction was more negative to them, personally than it was to the fandom as a whole. I didn't ask how this expressed itself, though given that they already think the public takes a dim view of our fair fandom, I am thinking stoning.

A whopping **61.1%** of respondents thought that public perception of the fandom was "inaccurate" with a further **15.5%** saying it was *extremely* inaccurate. A total of **15.4%** thought that it was accurate to some degree, which says a lot about the fandom's inexplicable lack of willingness to accept "CSI" as a truth-telling medium. Or for that matter, *Vanity Fair*. "Go figure," I am inclined to say; thus far public perception hasn't had a very good track record in meshing with reality.

People who thought that public reaction was negative and people who thought it was positive scored pretty much the same as far as how accurate they thought it was; people saying it was negative were 5-10% more likely to say it was inaccurate. About what you'd expect, although about 60% of the people saying the public had an "extremely accurate" view of the fandom also thought the public view was negative.[8]

8. "Trolls!" you say, or rather you can see others saying. Having looked over the responses I am more inclined to chalk it up to good, old-fashioned cynicism. To each their own, though as I have been accused of cynicism, from time to time, I suppose I can at least sympathise.

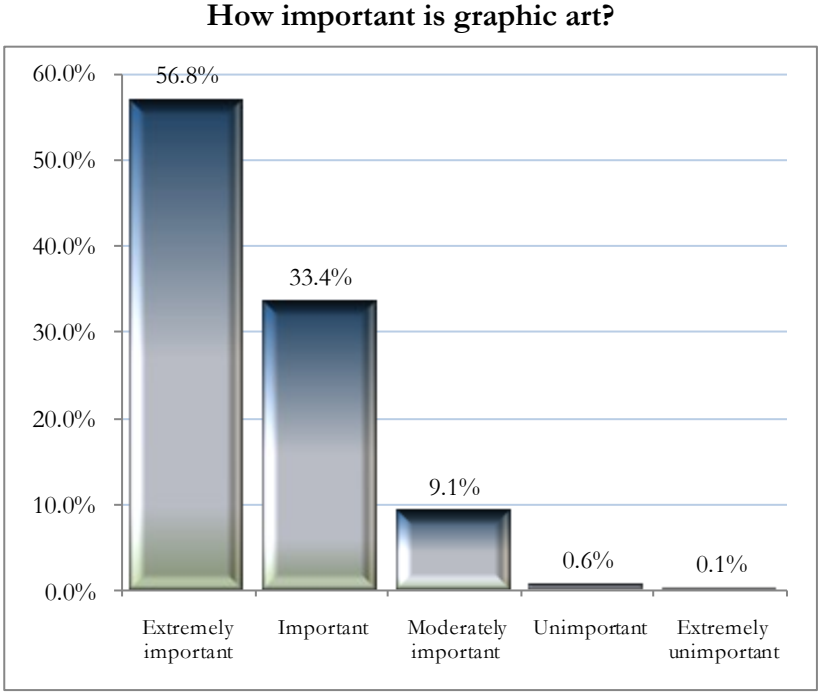
SURVEY RESULTS 3 of 4

- **Visual art**
- **Online activity**
- **Conventions**
- **Fursuiting**
- **Other stuff**

Visual art

You shall know they are furries by their art. It just goes without saying; the big furry hangouts, and the big names in furry websites, are art-related (VCL, FurAffinity, DeviantArt, the now-defunct Yerf [9], etc) and many of the furry celebrities are artists, cartoonists, and so on.

48% of furries, within spitting distance of half, said that they were graphic artists. I did not ask any further questions to nuance this, such as for instance whether or not they sold art, took commissions, etc. All we know is that if you meet a furry, and absent tell-tales like sketchpads or easels, a coin-flip is apparently a viable good way of separating the sheep from the goats. So to speak.



You don't mess with the graphic art. Visual artistry is intensely popular in the furry fandom, to no one's surprise.

Furries are, needless to say, keenly aware of the importance of art to the fandom. Over half—**56.8%**—said it was "extremely important," with another *third* saying it was 'just' "important." A grand total of 7 people said that graphic art was "extremely unimportant" to the fandom. Of these, two were devotees of online communities instead, apparently; the balance were people who said that *everything* was unimportant, representing a minority view of what I suppose amounts to a perplexing kind of furry nihilism.

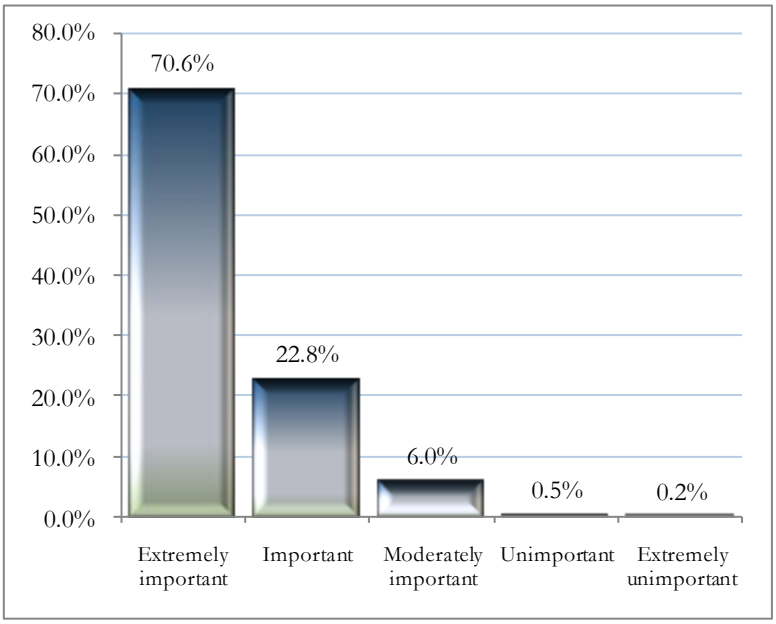
Recognition of the primacy of graphic art is, needless to say, completely diffused. Artists were about five percent more likely than the average to say art was "extremely important", and non-artists about five percent less—but in any case, public opinion remains overwhelmingly supportive of the importance of art. Would that the NEA found such adamant backers.

9. Yerf.com, for those uninitiated, was one of the most famous furry websites. Intended as a clean archive of high-quality artwork, a server failure in late 2004 removed it from the realm of the living, to whose warm bosom it has yet to return. The smart money, at the moment, is on its permanent decease.

Online activity

59.3% of furries said they were active online, a number which seems high, although for all that somewhat less than one might expect for a survey distributed entirely digitally. This harkens back to what I said way back in the beginning, which is that the furry fandom is such an online-centric place that polling online doesn't really introduce a strong bias.

How important are online communities?



Online communities are also important; notably, a statistically significant fewer amount of people saying online communities were important didn't actually belong to any.

People were even less ambivalent about online communities than they were about art; **70.6%** of respondents considered online communities "extremely important" to the furry fandom, with another **22.8%** saying "important". Less than one percent—a total of 30 people—said online communities were "unimportant" in some fashion.

When asked if they belonged to any furry websites, **78.9%** of respondents answered in the affirmative. Of these, FurAffinity was the clear winner, with almost three quarters of all persons listing websites saying they belonged to FA. The top ten furry websites listed by respondents:

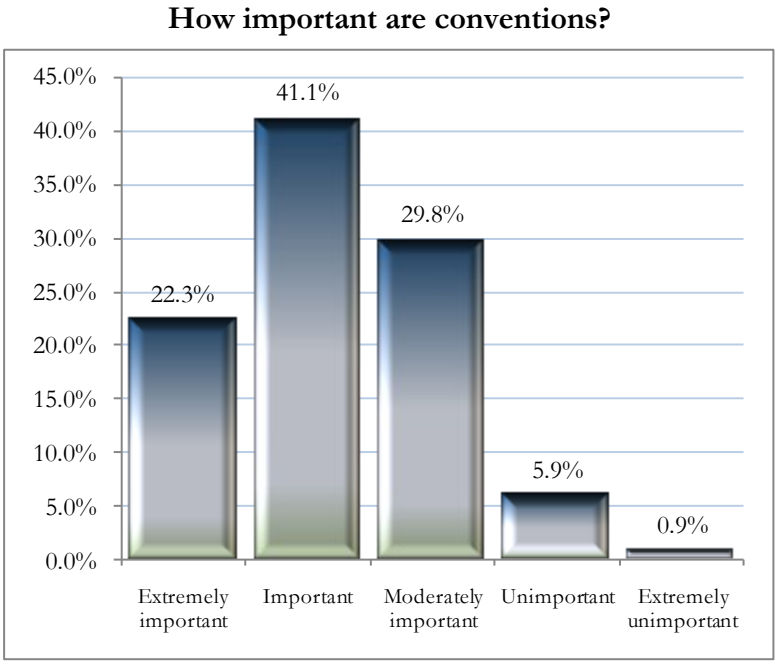
FurAffinity	73.1%
Yiffstar	13.5%
VCL	4.9%
Pounced	3.8%
Furtopia	3.5%
DeviantArt	2.7%
Furnation	2.6%
Artspots	1.9%
Wikifur	1.6%
Furcadia	1.4%

Websites spotlighting local groups were also popular, particularly those tied to the United Kingdom and Australia. A handful of people listed Yerf, some of them as the sole website to which they belong, which is either optimistic or depressing depending on your take on it.

Conventions

From dust to dust, the furry fandom was spawned of conventions, and to conventions it returns. I have had convention attendance explained to me as a sort of furry *hajj*—this was not the exact phrasing, but it conveys both the magnitude of the experience and its quasi-religious aspect, with regards to the fandom.

38.5% of our respondents said that they would describe themselves as a convention-goer. Within the boundaries of statistical rigour this meshes with the 41.6% that Davis reports. I did not ask people how often they went to conventions, nor did I ask how many they had been to.



Less than 40% of furries attend conventions, but 63.4% say they're important. Many of the major conventions are setting new attendance records each year.

Given the considerable expenditure in both time and money required to attend a convention, both of these numbers seemed a little high to me. For enlightenment, I queried the fine folks at Anthrocon asking them if they might have some insight. Alas they do not have figures on how many AC attendees also go to other conventions, or how many AC attendees are repeat customers. They thought it was possible that the numbers might be too high, but couldn't say anything definitive and having mused on it more I think they are probably more or less accurate.

In any case, whether they attended or no, people leaned towards describing conventions as important; **63.4%** of all respondents said this. Obviously, people who were themselves convention attendees were more likely to say cons were important to the fandom, but even non-congoers were reluctant to rate conventions below "moderate" importance; only **10.3%** of non-attendees said conventions were unimportant.

The same sort of picture emerges when you ask furries how they feel about conventions. Here, more than **70%** said they had a "positive" or "extremely positive" response; less than **5%** had a negative response.

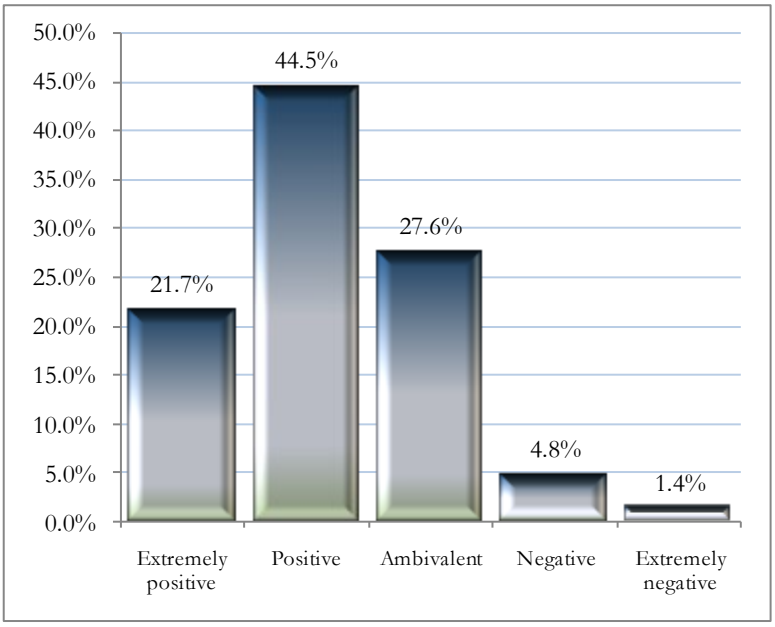
Fursuiting

Fursuiting is to furry fandom, I believe, as drugs were to Hunter S Thompson. Like drugs, fursuiting has the ability to provoke a polarised response between advocates and critics, and like

drugs fursuiting is a highly visible part of the furry oeuvre without being the *only* part of it (people make this mistake with Thompson too, you see).

In the Furry Survey, **21.1%** of respondents said they were fursuiters. UC Davis pegs this number at around 16%, meaning the Furry Survey indicates a higher percentage to a statistically-significant degree. On the other hand, Davis uses the label "furry dress," which has the disadvantages both of being highly ambiguous and of sounding like a Victorian cotillion.

Fursuiting and convention attendance are closely linked; 75% of fursuiters said they also attended conventions, and congoers were twice as likely to be fursuiters. Together these two provide something that could maybe be described as the public face of the fandom; furry has been cast as little more than animal dress-up before, and many people assume fursuiting to be intrinsic.



Most furries aren't fursuiters (despite what some depictions of the fandom would have you believe) but furries nonetheless look rather fondly on fursuiting.

Whether or not furries are comfortable accepting this depiction (I'd contend, personally, that the overwhelming response to the public accuracy question suggests they aren't) furries are fairly warm on the idea of fursuiting. Two thirds, **66.2%**, had a positive response to fursuiting, with about a quarter ambivalent and **6%** negative. Obviously fursuiters themselves looked more warmly on the pastime, but even among non-suiters, less than **8%** had a negative response.

Other stuff

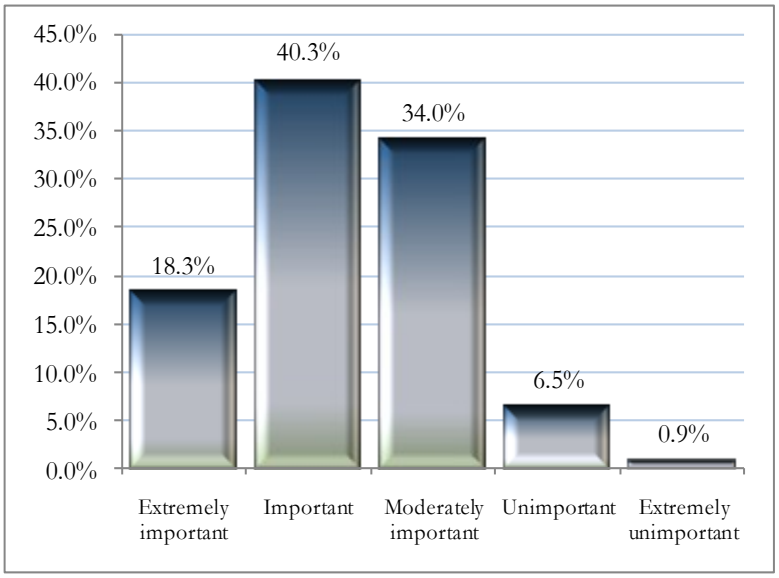
Furry fiction archive Yiffstar was the second most popular website in the Furry Survey, and while it was second by, er, a rather large amount its penultimate status reflects a little on the role writing plays in the fandom. **38.5%** of furries described themselves as authors, though as with artists I didn't ask if they made any money off the process (on the other hand cold experience with the iron hand of fate has demonstrated that it is harder to sell writing commissions than artwork, so perhaps they all gave up and resigned themselves to desk jobs. ... not that I would know).

Furries just weren't sold on the idea that writing was as important as, say, graphic art; although a majority, **58.6%**, said it was important in some fashion, more than a third said it was only of moderate importance. They were even less kind towards music; **36.3%** of respondents thought music was unimportant, with much of the balance according it moderate importance. Furry music is, of course, rather less common an activity, although **19.1%**, nearly a full fifth of the folks

answering, said they were musicians. I did not ask whether or not this music was furry in nature.[10]

So what else do furries do? For a full list you may consult your appendix, or at least the appendix of this document. But it's about as you'd expect, if you were told that we were looking at a fandom composed largely of geeks. Better than half, **53.4%**, said they were fans of anime; **58.6%** played role-playing games.

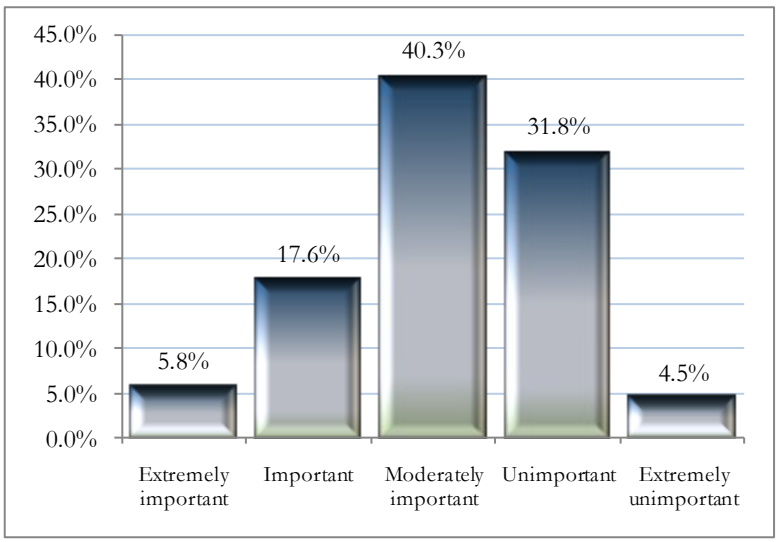
How important is writing?



Although furries consider writing important, they don't elevate it to the same level as, say, graphic art, or online thingies.

72.2% said they were fans of science and technology, and **68.9%** said they liked science fiction. These two items were the most popular, with a ten point lead over the nearest competitors, which pretty much matches up with the view of a fandom spawned and dominated by science fiction. Tolja.

How important is music?



Furries appear to be distinctly unimpressed with the relevance of music to the fandom. Though there are music videos with people dressed up as animals in them. "The Lovecats," for instance. Man, that's a weird 'un, though.

10. Doubtless you think I'm being cheeky. Not so long ago you would not have been so quick to judge. The Furry Music Foundation, so called despite lacking, say, an endowment, was in its heyday a reasonably popular site. It is still around and somewhat presumptuously declares its return, but has not really been updated since 2005, and much of the music comes from the Clinton administration. Notably, although more than a dozen people claimed they belonged to Yerf, a website that does not, *technically* speaking, exist, nobody identified with the FMF.

SURVEY RESULTS 4 of 4

- **Uncommon practises**
- **Sex**
- **Non-human self-identity**

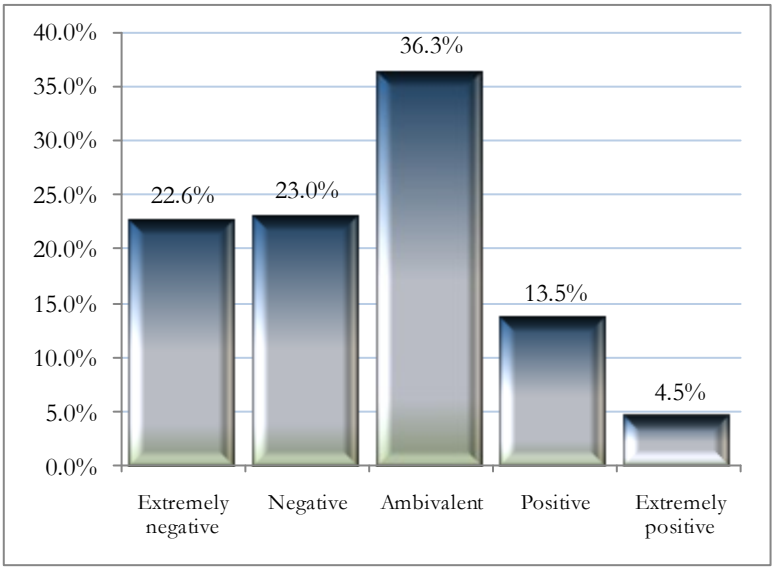
Uncommon practises

Mind you "uncommon practises" sounds like something you'd expect Oscar Wilde to be charged with. By "uncommon practises" I mean "things that people erroneously tie closely to the furry fandom when a more fair view would have them decently separated". Take zoophilia, for instance.

Zoophilia is the "love of animals", which generally makes itself known as a sexual attraction to non-human animals. It's a fairly rare—though not overwhelmingly so—fetish indulged in to one degree or another by somewhere around ten percent of the population.[11] Note that it may not (indeed frequently does not) manifest itself in actual activity.

Its practitioners draw a distinction between *zoophilia* (love of/attraction to animals) and *bestiality* (sexual gratification derived from animals), which I mention here mostly because I will get angry mail if I do not. This distinction does not appear to be one commonly recognised in the scientific community, the general public or, for that matter, the furry fandom. When I said "would you describe yourself as a zoophile," then, almost no one asked questions.

Response to zoophilia



With nearly half taking a negative position and the balance of the remainder saying they were ambivalent, zoophilia was responded to the least favourably by furries.

Overall **17.1%** of furries identified as zoophiles, which is higher in a statistically-significant sense from the general population although, per the footnote, how much isn't clear. It's hard to say. In any case, UC-Davis did not record or has not published any data on zoophilia, perhaps because they didn't want to touch it with a ten foot pole or perhaps because they didn't want to have to explain their browsing histories.

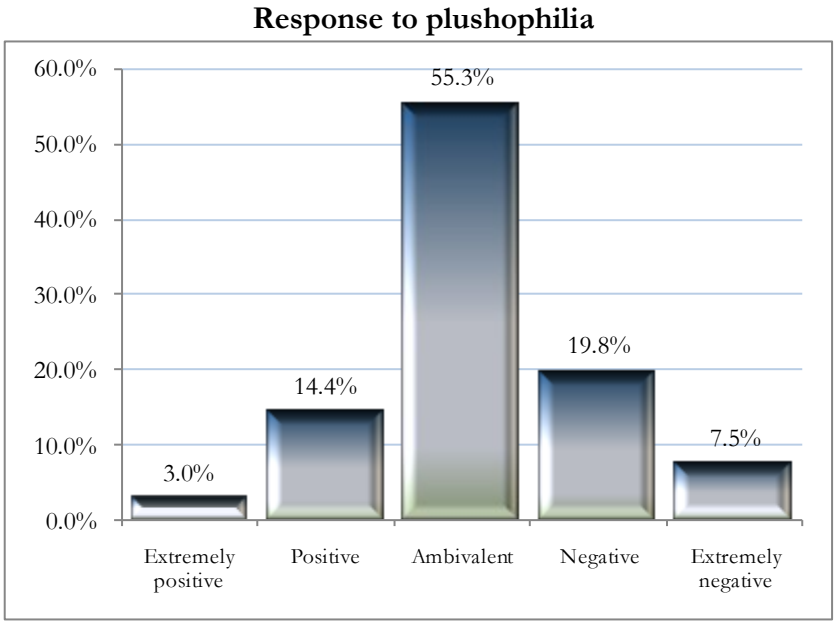
11. The data on this are rather sparse for a number of reasons, chiefly that "your dog: Hot or Not?" is not a question people seem to feel comfortable answering, and nor is the subject something most research groups feel comfortable investigating. Kinsey's landmark study reported a very high prevalence in some areas, generally rural. On the other hand, WA Alvarez and JP Freinhar *always* get mentioned (1991: "A Prevalence Study of Bestiality (zoophilia) In Psychiatric In-Patients, Medical In-Patients, and Psychiatrict Staff. *International Journal of Psychosomatics 38*: 45-47) and who am I to be an iconoclast? They say between 10% and 15%; these and other more anecdotal studies appear to suggest something around 10%, which is also a nice round number. Finding out how many zoophiles there are is a task well beyond yours truly and his team of researchers, crack though they be.

Rust *does* ask, because he and I are all about asking the hard-hitting questions. His prevalence rate is, uh, 2%. If accurate, this would put the furry prevalence rate at well below the national average, a likelihood I admit to finding somewhat remote. Although his survey is anonymous, I suspect some hesitation in providing responses. Conversely I've had people Email me to ask if I think that someone is trolling the Furry Survey to inflate the numbers of unseemly things. I just don't think so: seventeen percent it is.

Regardless of participation, most furries took at best a moderated view towards zoophilia. **45.6%** described their response as "negative" or "extremely negative," with another third ambivalent. Zoophiles tended to think rather more positively, but the non-zoophile majority, for which only **7.2%** indicated favourable opinions of the practise, largely negates this.

Plushophilia, for those unfamiliar with the term, is a word commonly used to describe a sexual fetishisation of stuffed animals, or their use in sexual gratification. As with zoophilia, it is occasionally ascribed non-sexual meaning, but this interpretation is by far in the minority (a handful of people wrote additional comments clarifying that they were fans of stuffed animals, but not "plushophiles" and had not checked that box).

Perhaps because it is, to be fair, a little weird, it is another one of those things that outsiders tend to fixate and focus on. Nonetheless, only **8.5%** of furries answering the Furry Survey were plushophiles. This number is higher, to a statistically-significant degree, than the "<1%" reported by David Rust. Again, I would say that either the world is much different now or people elected to underplay their wild sides.



Plushophilia is not as unpopular as zoophilia, but it doesn't have a particularly large number of advocates, either. Most people were ambivalent.

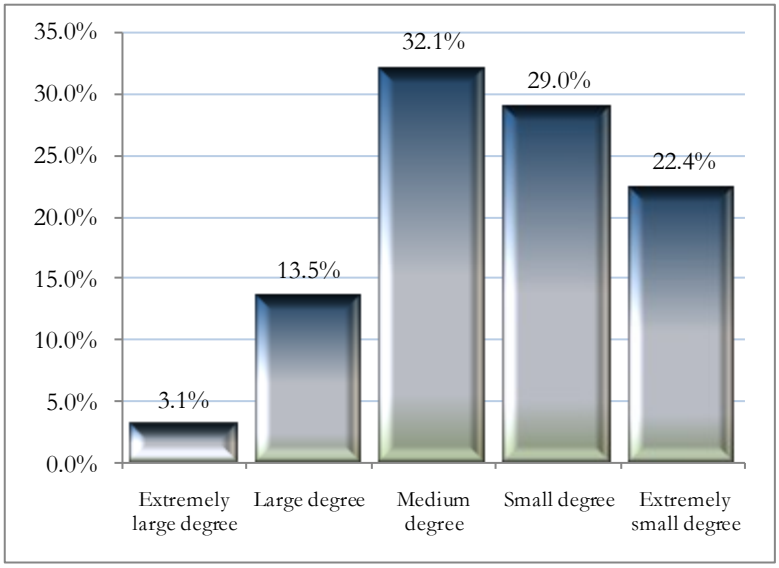
In fairness, the fandom is a little kinder to plushophiles than they are zoophiles, who faced no small amount of vitriol in comments expressed to me. Furries are, however, aware of the disproportionate focus on plushophilia that outsiders tend to have, and did not on the whole respond positively, either.

55.3% of respondents were ambivalent to plushophiles, with **17.4%** positive and **27.3%** negative. Plushophiles themselves were more optimistic, with **65.4%** having a positive opinion. About one and a half percent of them had an "extremely negative" response, with another 2.7% reporting their reaction as "negative," at which point you find yourself asking: "then why do it?" But, you know, to each their own. I did not ask this.

Sex

I'll spare you the indignities of the "now that I have your attention!" gag, because there's no way around it now: we have to address the elephant in the room. The fandom has a long and storied relationship with sex, which is implied in a lot of discussion surrounding it—it's not uncommon for furriness to be described as a sexual fetish.

What degree of importance does sex have to you?



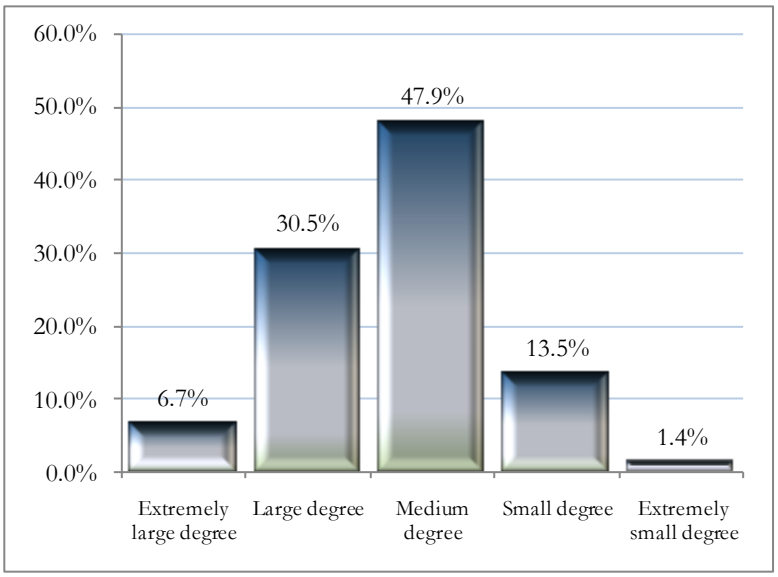
Sex fiends, furries are not. Only around 16% of respondents said sex was important in their furry lives…

Of course furries are keenly aware of the degree of this infamy. Is the common view accurate? Not to belabour the point: of course not. Like many things involving sex, it gets played up for kicks by people who don't know, or don't care, what they're talking about. **13.5%** of furries said that sex had a "large degree" of importance in their furry lives; **3.1%** said it was "extremely large". Fine. But **32.1%** said it had a medium degree of importance and over half, **51.4%**, said its role was "small" or "extremely small". Compared to some settings—here I am thinking college dormitories, though bars also work—the fandom is downright prudish.

So myth: busted. But curiously enough, furries themselves seem to buy into it, at least to a degree. Remember that half of furries said sex wasn't as important to them? Of course you do; I just said it. But only **14.9%** of furries said they thought sex wasn't important to *others*, and over a third said they thought it played a "large" or "extremely large" part in the lives of their furry brethren.

This may be therefore a myth in part of the fandom's own unintentional design. Or it may simply be the public image trickling down: virtually nobody believed the public thought sex to

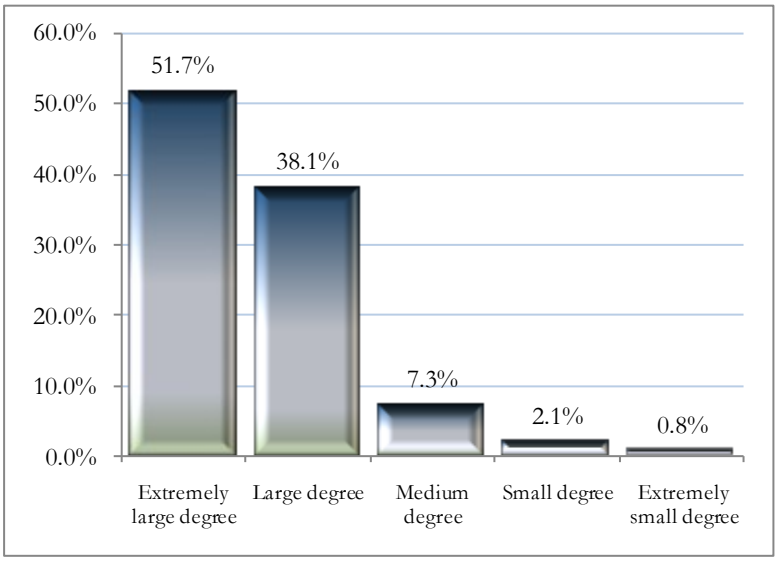
What degree of importance do you think it has to others?



… but they were nowhere near as charitable towards other furries, assuming that sex was much more important to them.

be unimportant to the furry fandom (possibly because they, ah, don't). **51.7%** said the public thought it played an "extremely large" part and another **38.1%** said the public thought it played a "large" one. A charitable **7.3%** said they reckoned the public thought sex was only moderately important to furries.

How important does the public think sex is?

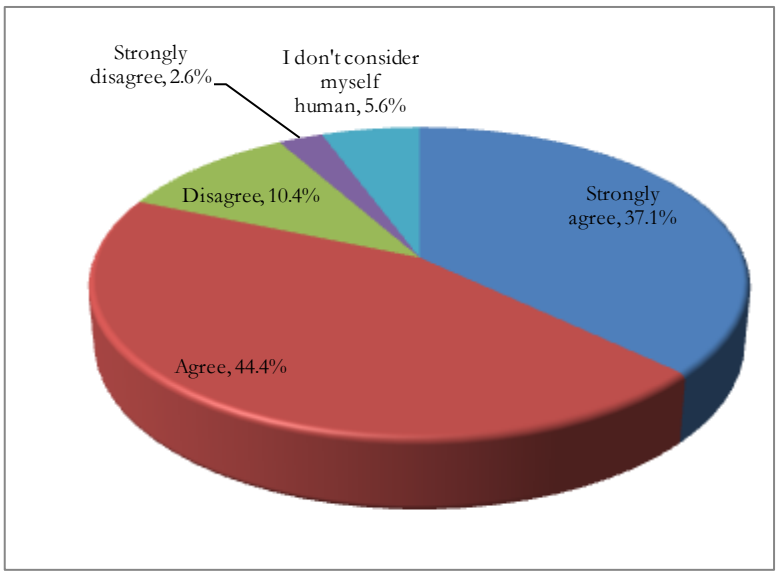


Everyone agrees, however, that the public thinks the furry fandom is one big orgy.

Non-human self-identity

One final item we can take a look at, and then you can all leave. Do furries think they're animals? Do they believe themselves human? Do they secretly consider themselves tigers and lions? *Do they know it's Christmas*? An enterprising soul looking in from the outside might think not, since many outsiders tend to think of furries as depraved.

Response to the statement, "I consider myself predominantly human"



Fascination with animals notwithstanding, furries don't conspicuously reject their humanity. Overall, only five and a half percent of respondents said they didn't consider themselves human, and only 13% beyond that felt sceptical to a significant degree. These people, I suspect, are like me and spend a lot of time on public transportation. That'll make you question your humanity real *quick.*

But this isn't the case and, as Tom Cruise says in *A Few Good Men*, any attempt to prove otherwise is futile 'cause it just ain't so. Asked to respond to the statement "I consider myself predominantly human," **81.5%** agreed. **5.6%** said they did not consider themselves human, which in any case is a small number of people we're talking about, here.

Of course on the other hand, it's apparently not something that anyone publishes reliable figures on for the control group of everybody else in the world. Offhand I'd have to guess 5.6% is a smidgen high, but to a significant degree? Who knows. I wouldn't commit to that, that's for sure.

CONCLUSIONS

What have we learned from all this? If there is a take-home lesson, it is that furry stereotypes—like all stereotypes—are probably rooted in truth, but nonetheless wrong. Of course we should be honest with ourselves. The stereotypical furry from something like Something Awful, say—"white sex-driven gay male who enjoys dressing up like a fox and lusts after the family dog"—*does* exist. Translating the negative tone into demographic reality, in this survey there were, ah, three such people. That makes them less common than, say, "Asian vegetarians who don't think sex is all that important" and strongly underrepresented compared to "Polish furry authors who like anime". We're talking fractions of a percent here, chilluns. Miniscule fractions, even. So why all the fuss?

Because it makes good copy, and a good running joke. The link between humour, especially (even newspapers aren't really writing the fandom up especially seriously. You think NPR is going to send Juan Williams to Further Confusion?), and the truth can be somewhat muddled. So be it. Let's take the opportunity to set the record straight.

"Who *is* the prototypical furry, then?" you might ask. Let's take a stab:

In all likelihood it's a guy. He's young, either college educated or headed that way, a moderate liberal without being terrifically politically active, who enjoys computers and probably does something creative—music, or writing, or drawing—in his spare time. He likes animals, but he doesn't think he is one and he doesn't feel any sexual attraction to them. He thinks sex is ok, but it doesn't rule his life. Does this sound familiar?

Sure it does. In fact it's quite possible that this sounds like most of the people you know (er, even setting aside the fact that most people reading this are furries). Is there room for the fringes? Of course. Ice cream made room for Ben & Jerry's, Woodstock made room for the hippies, and the DNC has made room for Dennis Kucinich. But at the same time, it also bears noting that they *are* the fringes, and even if they tend to overpopulate the headlines, they don't overpopulate the numbers.

Of course it's probable that nobody cares, because it's easier to mock furries than it is to deal with them on the level. But even with this ever-narrowing list of specifications, the prototypical furry I outlined above is fifty times more common than the one you'd see if you tuned in to MTV. And that, dear readers, is the rub. It's hard to pin furries down, because they are, basically, like everyone else. And maybe that's a shame, and maybe that's a good thing, but does it really *surprise* us?

Nah.

Alex Osaki
Furry Research Center
27 June, 2008

Appendix A
Furry Fandom at a Glance

The data here are gathered from the Furry Survey. This publication is based on the initial 5000 respondents, with a nominal margin of error +/- 1.4%

- Average age: 23.7
- 80.3% male; 19.1% female
- 83.7% Caucasian
- 69% American
- 20.8% atheist; 24.8% agnostic
- 78.9% have at least some college experience
- View as important:
  - online communities (**93.4%**)
  - artwork (**90.2%**)
  - conventions (**63.4%**)
  - writing (**58.6%**)
- 78.9% active at at least one furry-themed website
- 38.5% convention goers
- 21.1% fursuiters
- 5.6% don't consider themselves human
- 17.1% identified as zoophiles
- 8.5% identified as plushophiles
- View sex as unimportant or moderately important to their activities in the fandom; believe that other furries think it's more important for their own furry lives.

Appendix B
Activities Table

The following information is drawn from Question 26 of the survey and presents, of **5000 respondents**, the number (and percent) describing themselves in various ways:

Activity	#	%
Graphic artist	2406	48.1%
Musician	955	19.1%
Performance artist	620	12.4%
Author	1926	38.5%
Zoophile	856	17.1%
Plushophile	424	8.5%
Fursuiter	1056	21.1%
Convention goer	1924	38.5%
Active in online communities	2963	59.3%
Fan of RPGs	2931	58.6%
Fan of science-fiction	3445	68.9%
Fan of anime	2669	53.4%
Fan of science and technology/computers	3609	72.2%
Fluent in languages beyond their native one	1251	25.0%
Advocate of animal rights	2049	41.0%
Vegetarian	235	4.7%

Appendix C
Survey questions

The survey in its current form is online at
http://www.klisoura.com/furrypoll.php
Below is the survey as it appeared at publication time (new questions are occasionally added, and clarification added to existing ones; where significant this will be noted in the document)

Q1. Please enter your age, rounded to the nearest year:

[Text box]

Q2. Please select the option which most closely describes your biological sex:

Not disclosed
Male
Female
Other

Q3. Please select the option which most closely describes your self-identified gender:

Not disclosed
Male
Female
Other

Q4. Where do you live?

[Drop-down menu of countries]

Q5. Please select the option which most closely describes your spirituality:

Not disclosed
Christian, Catholic
Christian, Protestant
Christian, other denomination
Muslim
Hindu
Jewish
Pagan
Buddhist
Agnostic
Atheist
Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Q6. Please select the option which most closely describes your ethnicity:

Not disclosed
Caucasian, non-Hispanic
Asian
African
Native-American/Pacific Islander
Hispanic
Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Appendix C
Survey questions (continued)

Q7. Please select the option which most closely describes your political views (if it's easier, just write in the space provided):

- Not disclosed
- Highly liberal
- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
- Highly conservative
- Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Q8. Please select the option which most closely describes your occupation (if it's easier, just write in the space provided):

- Not disclosed
- None
- Student
- Administrative
- Sales/Support
- Technical/IT
- Professional
- Service
- Retired
- Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Q9. Please select the option which most closely describes your yearly individual income level (if it's easier, just write in the space provided):

- Not disclosed
- <$9,999
- $10,000-$14,999
- $15,000-$24,999
- $25,000-$44,999
- $45,000-$69,999
- $70,000-$99,999
- >$100,000
- Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Q10. Please select the option which most closely describes your sexual orientation:

- Not disclosed
- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Neither
- Other (optionally, provide more information below)

Appendix C
Survey questions (continued)

Q11. Please select the option which most closely describes your highest level of education:

Not disclosed
Some high school
High school graduate
Some college/post high-school
College/post high-school graduate
Some postcollege
I hold an advanced degree
Other
(optionally, if you have specialised education—college or post-high school vocational—provide more information below)

Q12. How long have you considered yourself a furry? (in years, decimal values ok)

[Text box]

Q13. How many other furries do you know? (decimal values not ok, sorry)

[Text box]

Q14. On the whole, how do you think non-furries respond to furriness?

Not disclosed
Extremely Positively
Positively
Ambivalently
Negatively
Extremely Negatively
They have no knowledge

Q15. Do they respond to you, personally, in a significantly different fashion?

Not disclosed
No
Yes, they respond more positively
Yes, they respond more negatively
They have no knowledge

Q16. On the whole, would you characterise popular perception of furriness as:

Not disclosed
Extremely Accurate
Accurate
Inaccurate
Extremely Inaccurate
They have no knowledge

Q17. Self-identity. Please respond to the following statement: "I am human."

Not disclosed
Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
I do not consider myself human

Appendix C
Survey questions (continued)

Q18. To what degree does sex play a part in your furry life?

- An extremely large degree
- A large degree
- A medium degree
- A small degree
- An extremely small degree
- No position

Q19. To what degree do you think sex plays a part in the lives of other furries?

- An extremely large degree
- A large degree
- A medium degree
- A small degree
- An extremely small degree
- No position

Q20. To what degree do you think the public assumes sex is important to furries?

- An extremely large degree
- A large degree
- A medium degree
- A small degree
- An extremely small degree
- No position

Q21. How important do you think conventions are to the furry fandom?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Unimportant
- Extremely unimportant
- No position

Q22. How important do you think visual art is to the furry fandom?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Unimportant
- Extremely unimportant
- No position

Q23. How important do you think music is to the furry fandom?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Unimportant
- Extremely unimportant
- No position

Appendix C
Survey questions (continued)

Q24. How important do you think literature is to the furry fandom?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Unimportant
- Extremely unimportant
- No position

Q25. How important do you think online communities are to the furry fandom?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Unimportant
- Extremely unimportant
- No position

Q26. Would you describe yourself as? (check all that apply)

- An artist (visual)?
- An artist (musical)?
- An artist (performance)?
- An author?
- A "zoophile"?
- A "plushophile"?
- A "fursuiter"?
- A convention goer?
- Active in online communities?
- A fan of RPGs?
- A fan of science-fiction?
- A fan of anime?
- A fan of science and technology/computers?
- Fluent in one or more languages besides your primary one?
- An advocate of animal rights?
- A vegetarian?

Q27. Do you belong to any furry websites?

- Not disclosed
- Yes (if so, please specify which ones below)
- No

Q28. Regardless of your answer to Question 26, please rate your general response to conventions

- Extremely Positive
- Positive
- Ambivalent
- Negative
- Extremely Negative
- No position

Appendix C
Survey questions (continued)

Q29. Regardless of your answer to Question 26, please rate your general response to plushophiles

- Extremely Positive
- Positive
- Ambivalent
- Negative
- Extremely Negative
- No position

Q30. Regardless of your answer to Question 26, please rate your general response to fursuiters

- Extremely Positive
- Positive
- Ambivalent
- Negative
- Extremely Negative
- No position

Q31. Regardless of your answer to Question 26, please rate your general response to zoophiles

- Extremely Positive
- Positive
- Ambivalent
- Negative
- Extremely Negative
- No position

Q32. Optionally, if you identify with a particular animal, which one is it?

- [Text box]

Q33. Optionally, if you answered the above question, why do you identify with said animal?

- [Text box]

[A final section is provided for any additional comments]

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