

The content of this article is mature and discusses topics of sexual matters.

Lack of Sex and Love

What is “aroace”?

By Alyx Beaudoin

“If I had a big box of stuff, and I would put stuff in the box to dictate who I am as a person, the thing that dictates my aroace-ness is the lack of stuff assigned to sexual identity in the Box... I think a big thing that aroace people struggle with in their path to acceptance is just being okay with being proud of not having anything in the Box.”

- Somni Sanchez (they/them)

Layman terms: What is ‘aroace’?

The term aroace is a combined abbreviation meaning ‘aromantic asexual’ and it is a romantic and sexual identity—or more specifically, the lack of one.

Aromantic:

Abbreviated to ‘aro’, describes someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction. Aromantic can describe multiple non-standard experiences of romance, including a lack of romantic longing, romantic repulsion, non-desire for a romantic partner and many more.

Asexual:

Abbreviated to ‘ace’, describes someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction. Asexual can describe multiple non-standard experiences of sexuality, including a lack of sex drive, sex repulsion, non-desire for a sexual partner and many more.

Both aromantic, asexual, and the combination, live within a spectrum; like many 2SLGBTQIA+ identities. The terms frequently used for this are ‘aspec’, ‘arospec’ or ‘aro-aspec’, and this overall describes identities that fall under the umbrella of each term, but may be experienced uniquely between different people.

How common is the aroace identity?

According to a [study done in 2004](#), Asexual people make up approximately 1% of the population. A more recent [study from 2017 by GLAAD](#) noted an average of 4% of people between the ages of 18-34 identifying as asexual. The average of asexual-identifying people is comparable to the number of ginger-haired people on the planet. Although the research for aromantic-identifying people is limited, there is a [study from 2020](#) that provides a statistic that 41.5% of people who identify as asexual also identify as aromantic. Thus, it is possible with just a bit of open-minded conversation, aroace people can be found in any community around you.

When did aroace-ness become a thing?

It was in the early 2000s that we saw the rise of the term “aroace” as a dual identity label, especially on online blogging spaces like Tumblr. With the development of community sites like the [AUREA](#) (Aromantic-spectrum Union for Recognition, Education, and Advocacy) and [AVEN](#) (Asexual Visibility & Education Network) informational resources began to properly circulate.

The study by GLAAD shows us that younger generations seem to be recognizing aroace identities within themselves more than the generations before them. This doesn't mean only young people are aroace, though. It means that people have an easier time reflecting on these ideas as young adults in this era, and perhaps there will be a larger percentage of aroace people of all ages in the future.

How do people know they are aroace?

Sanchez, an aroace identifying young adult, explained their experiences with a sense of discontinuity with how they heard friends and family describe the sensations and feelings of love and sex.

As with many queer and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, these identities come from a person's feeling of being underrepresented by their surroundings. The topic of the modern love life is at the height of social norms, and when someone is unable to find commonplace among one's peers, questions from within bubble up.

Aroace can be described as being the *lack* of something most people seem to have. Aroace people do not live at a deficit for their identities, as the differences they feel are natural and normal.

Where do we see aroace people?

As there is an ever-evolving acceptance of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, with more and more people finding their identities and the confidence to come out, there is an overall increase of aroace visibility that follows. Aroace people can be anywhere, within any job or any culture.

Many statistics found online are biased toward Western and white-centric studies and fail to recognize that 'global' percentages may lack accuracy for differing cultures worldwide. In these cases, we must resort to [community-created resources](#) by and for people of colour to fill the holes and discrepancies the community experiences. The experiences of BIPOC aroace people may be more common than we realize, but we're missing the media to show for it.

How do aroace relationships work?

The concept of aromanticism might be strange to someone who experiences romantic feelings, but is something many people experience in different ways. Sanchez has a partner

who also identifies as aroace, and together they can share a closely committed relationship that doesn't hinge on romantic or sexual feelings.

People who identify with any aspect of being aroace tend to struggle in interpersonal relationships where the lack of awareness or language limits their ability to communicate social needs. Sanchez explained that in their relationship, communication is most important so that their and their partner's boundaries are always met.

There are plenty of sites, [like this one](#), that provides more thorough definitions of terms to aid in conversations about aroace identities.

Misunderstandings

Asexuality doesn't prohibit someone from enjoying and engaging in sexual encounters, rather it describes a person's *internal* relationship with sex. Sanchez, for example, shared that they do partake in such activities, but what they appreciate is the emotional experience shared with another person, rather than physical gratification.

Aspec, as mentioned before is a way to describe someone who experiences sex in any way that the standard definition doesn't capture. [Greysexual](#) and [demisexual](#), for example, describe people who experience sexual emotions but with certain limitations.

Aromanticism is similar and has many terms to associate feelings with a label. A demiromantic may feel romantic affection for someone only after making a deep connection, and a grayromantic may feel romantic attraction at different points in their life, either weakly or in response to a very specific context. A quoiromantic person may not be able to differentiate between platonic, sexual, or romantic feelings at all.

Why is it important?

Understanding the aro, ace, and aroace identities is essential to helping those in our communities feel comfortable being themselves. Maybe You can be the next person to help an aroace feel comfortable during the lunchroom talk about weekend dates and flirtations.

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