



Relief and Rage: Transfic and Mental Health on the Archive of Our Own

by Sage Durkrahm

Back



Next





Content Warning

:

- Discussion of mental health issues, suicide, dysphoria, violence.



Back



Next



Fanfic, Transfans, Transfic, Darkfic

- fanworks: creative works based on an existing work, “produced by one or more fans, generally intended for other fans” (Fanlore, 2021).
- Fanfic/fanfiction: fiction written by fans based on an existing work
- Transfans: fans who are trans
- Transfic: fanfic by, for or about trans people
- Darkfic: “fan fiction that deals with intentionally disturbing material, such as physical and emotional violence.”





Archive of Our Own

- web archive of fanworks
- founded and run by the Organization for Transformative Works
- created by the community for the needs of the community.
- tagging



Back



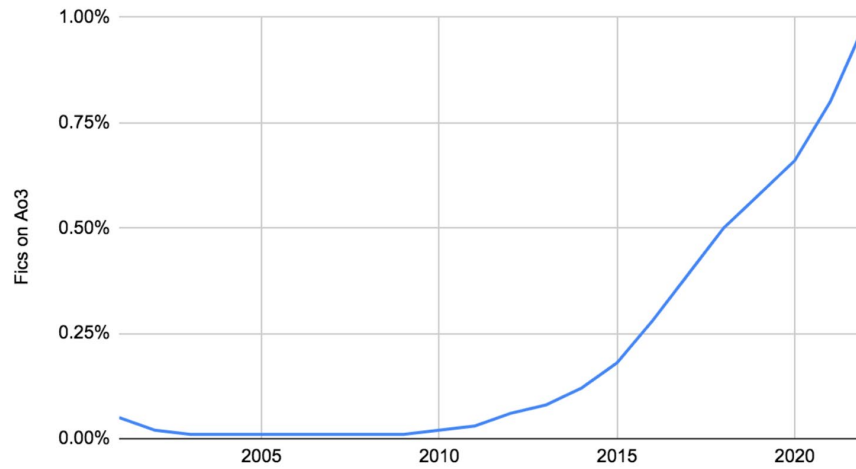
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Why Study Transfic?



Percentage of Fics on Ao3 Tagged "Trans Character"



Back



Next



Challenging Narratives about Representation

→ good/ bad representation





The Data

	Trans Character	Archive Total
Total	131,338	10,677,762
Mental Health Issues	8.12%	3.17%





Mental Health Issues

	Trans Character	Archive Total
Total	131,338	10,677,762
Mental Health Issues	8.12%	3.17%
Suicide	4.27%	2.23%
Eating Disorders	0.47%	0.26%
Substance Abuse	1.71%	0.76%
Depression	2.87%	1.46%
Anxiety	4.05%	1.43%
Panic Attacks	2.38%	0.88%
Self Hatred	0.96%	0.35%
Self Harm	3.97%	1.09%





Warnings

	Trans Character	Archive Total
Warning: Rape/Non Con	5.41%	2.76%
Warning: Underage	4.67%	2.42%
Warning: Death	4.35%	5.48%
Warning: Violence	9.58%	7.76%





Trans-Specific Experiences

	Trans Character	Archive Total
Transphobia	8.66%	0.05%
Gender Dysphoria	5.63%	0.03%





Darkfic

Trans Character

Archive- Trans Character

Abuse	10.02%	3.98%
Body Horror	0.76%	0.33%
Horror	1.71%	1.31%
Whump	0.67%	0.74%
Torture	1.59%	1.35%
Hurt/Comfort	12.95%	8.91%
Angst	19.88%	18.54%
Emotional Hurt/Comfort	3.47%	2.39%
Incest	2.87%	1.29%
Cannibalism	0.54%	0.30%





Gender Categories



Ratio of Trans Character Tags

Other, trans character

1.8%

Trans Female Chara...

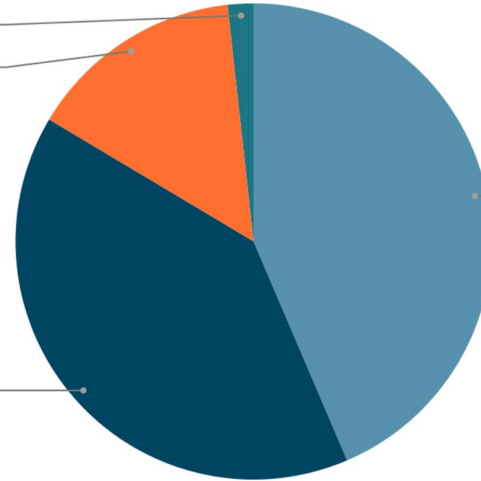
14.7%

Trans Male Character

43.6%

Non-Binary Character

40.0%



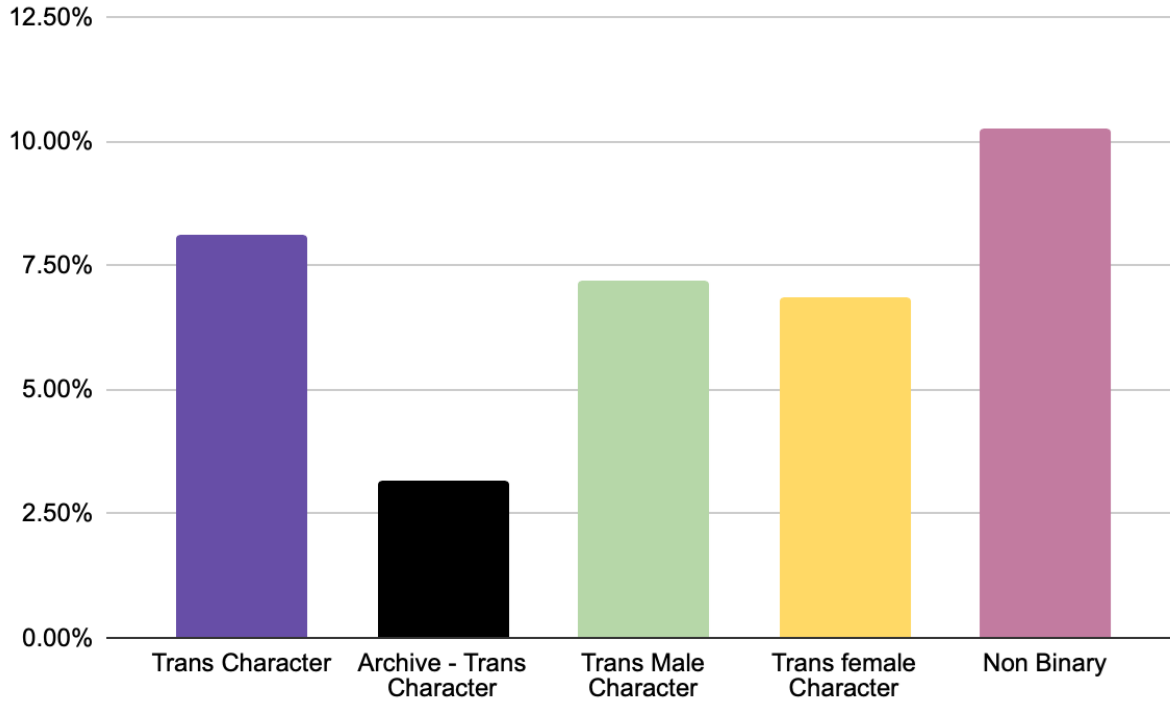
Back

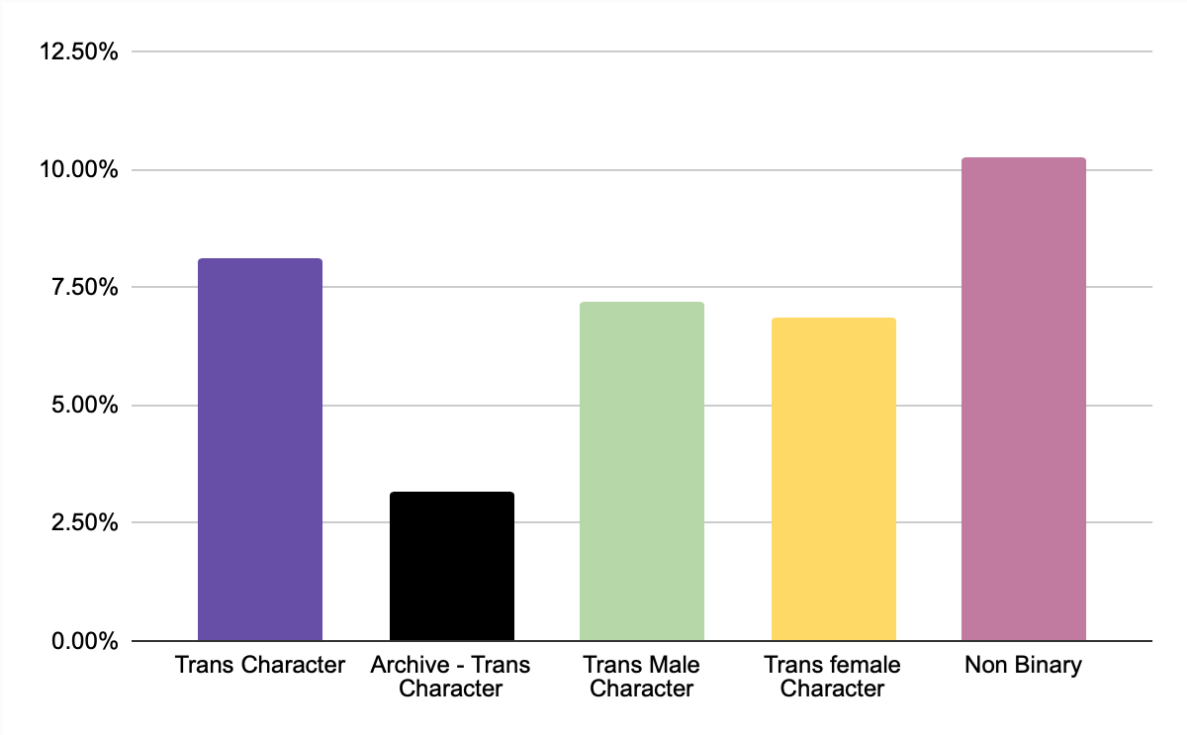


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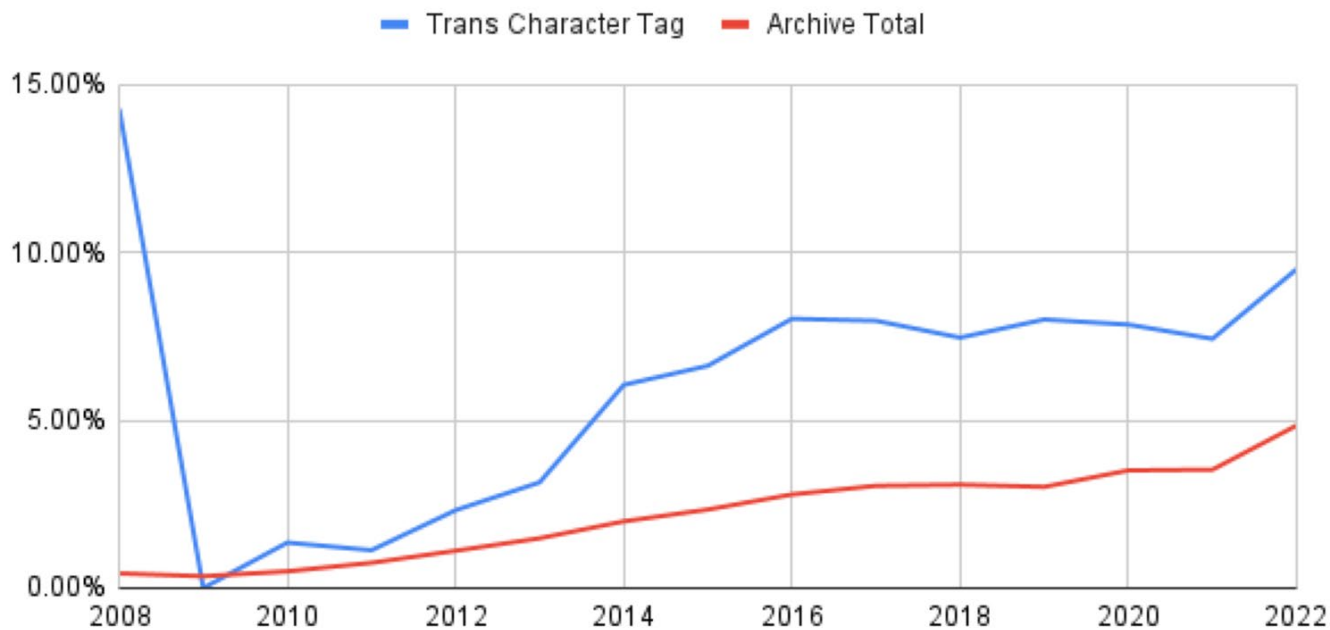
Differences in Gender Categories







Rise of "Mental Health" Tag in Archive Total and within "Trans Character" tag





Why Darkfic?

“Darkfic gets me. The experience of naming my trauma and having it acknowledged in fiction gives me a sense of consistency and therefore relief” (Ledbetter, 2020, 6.2).

“(1) relief: naming dysphoric feelings, (2) rage: rebelling against conditions that produce dysphoric feelings, and (3) euphoria: imagining structures that inspire consonant feelings” (Ledbetter, 2020, 5.1).





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"your fave ship is problematic" yeah, I want to make it worse

"that character is irredeemable" that's why I love them

"how can you even write that" watch me

"i can fix him"
trope



"i can make him
worse" trope



12:18 · 22 May 21 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)


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Culture > TV & Radio > News

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