

Status of Emoji Gender & Skintone Support

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To: UTC

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Introduction

This document is an update to [L2/20-196](#).

Since the addition of gender and skin tone related Zero-Width Joiner (ZWJ) sequences, the encoding of gender and multi-person multi-skintone support has matured significantly.

However, these implementations can seem random to the average person. Within ZWJ sequences that are Recommended for General Interchange (RGI), some emoji list three gender options while others list one. Similarly, while some multi-person emoji have the full range of the Fitzpatrick scale, others have none.

Over the past four years, the Emoji Subcommittee has been investigating paths to resolve seemingly incomplete legacy decisions. The best path forward accomplishes two things: (1) Fix old issues, and (2) Don't create too many new issues. This follows priorities set out in [19-101](#) and [L2/20-196](#)

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

1. [L2/22-276](#) Guidelines for Family Emoji ZWJ Sequences that currently lack RGI tone support
2. [L2/19-392](#) Recommendations for Multi-skintoned Emoji Sequences for Unicode 14.0
3. [L2/19-078](#) Using Gender Inclusive Designs For existing code points which do not specify gender
4. [L2/19-231](#) Recommendations for Gendered Emoji ZWJ Sequences
5. [L2/17-232](#) Proposal for Fully Gender-Inclusive Emoji
6. [L2/17-195](#) Add Emoji Gender Properties
7. [L2/17-071](#) Gender-Neutral Human-form Emoji
8. [L2/17-287](#) ESC Recommendations

State of Emoji: Gender

As of Emoji 16.0, only four emoji remain explicitly gendered without an opt-out option. At this time, the ESC is not pursuing a completionist approach and therefore is not proposing additional characters.

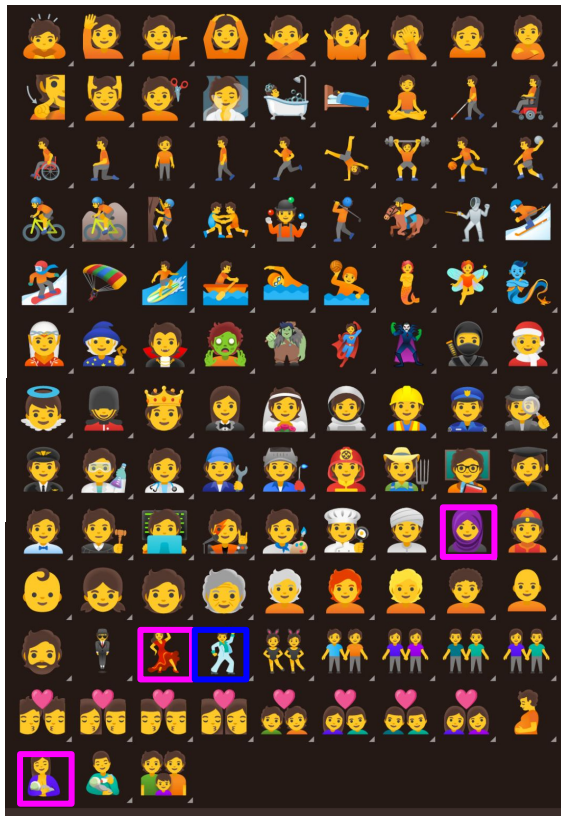
No Proposals Currently in Flight

- Women
 - Dancing woman
 - Woman in headscarf
 - Breastfeeding
- Men
 - Dancing man

KEY

Only male option

Only female option



State of Emoji: Skintone

In Emoji 13.1 there were [29 multi-person emoji that did not have skintone support](#).

Since then, only two person-emoji remain without tone support.

Background

After exploring a number of options, the ESC is narrowing down to two: either (1) adding multi-person emoji tone support (similar to [L2/19-377R](#)) or (2) change design details (similar to [L2/22-276](#)).

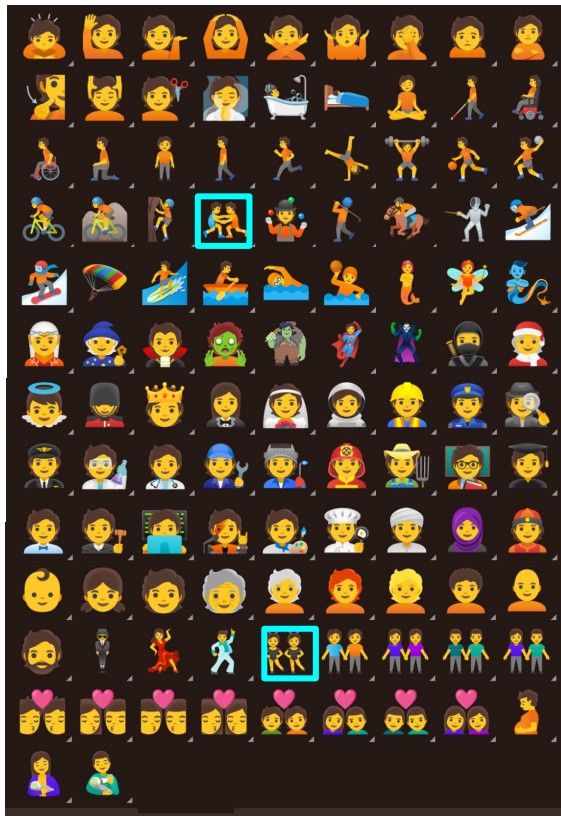
Recommendations in Flight

- Wrestlers
- People with Bunny Ears

KEY

No RGI skin tone support*

*Note: Not highlighting emoji where skintone is obscured.



Radical Redesigns or More Variant Options?

The **Emoji Subcommittee** is currently exploring the **resolution of two remaining multi-person emoji without tone support**. The only way to prevent the need to redesign these existing codepoints would be to expand gender/tone support that show multiple people. The ESC can then consider closing the door on “multiple people” emoji.

Option A

Add full multi-toned support (As consistent with existing multi-person emoji such as 🧑🏽🧑🏿🧑🏻🧑🏼🧑🏾🧑🏿)

Option B

Redesign wrestlers and people with bunny ears emoji (No additional sequences required).

These remaining emoji are a topical reminder of why emoji proposals need to provide evidence of how the proposal is neither “open-ended” nor “overly-specific”.

Option B

Frequency
of Use

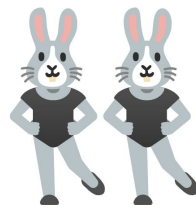
[source](#)

ranked
465/1550

Present Design
No Tone Support



Future Design
No Tone Support



ranked
963/1550



Ongoing Discussion: Inclusion vs Diversity

Currently, **gender** and **skin tone** modifiers can both be applied to humanoid emoji e.g. 🧑 (heads) 🧑 (professions) 🧑 (gestures) 🧑 (full body action).

Skin tone alone can be applied to people and body parts
(💡👉👉👉)

Gender alone can be applied to 🧑 (single) 🧑 (dual)

Some animals and objects present gendered with only one version (See: 🦁, 🌿, 🍷). Others have both present (🐄, 🐄, 🐄, 🐄, 🐄 & 🐄).

As a result, the ESC is currently exploring if some emoji may benefit from a more generalized appearance so they have broader representation.

Present Design



Toned
[L2/18-156](#)

Potential Future Design



No Tone



Gendered and Toned
[L2/18-113](#)



Not Gendered Nor Toned

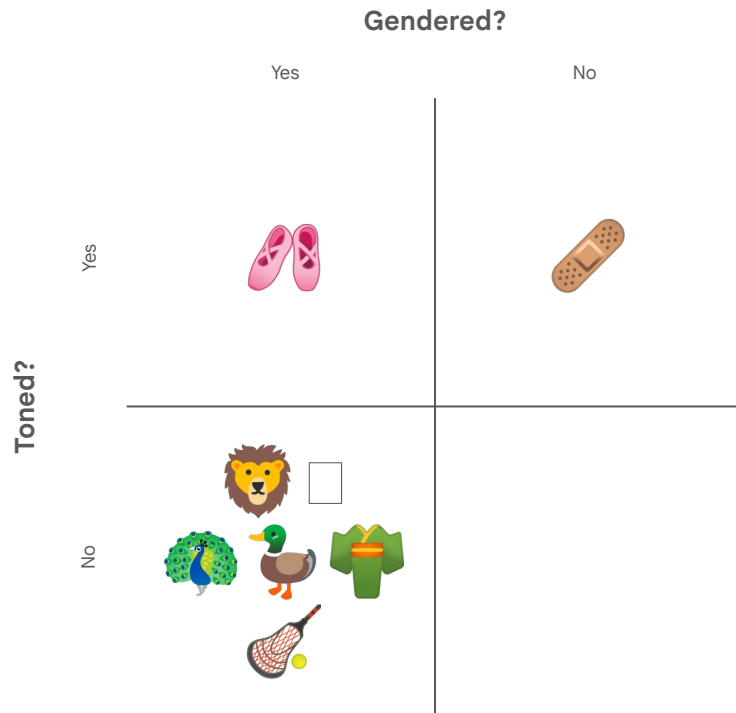
Ongoing Discussion: Definitions and Criteria

Should gender and tone be restricted to humanoids and never as a modifier on objects?

- If so, the Emoji Subcommittee may need a stricter working definition of representation. What variety requires encoding in order to efficiently represent human variety vs what is just completionism?

When emoji proposals include a concept that has additional permutations (such as gender or tone) then additional evidence may need to be provided to indicate the proposal is not open-ended.

If an object ONLY comes in human skin tones then this should raise the question if the proposal is overly specific.



Questions for Consideration

The ESC is exploring paths and policies on these topics.

When designing a spectrum of skin tone and gender, what level of detail is too much? Not enough?

- Skin tone is not a race, it is a color fill. How do we provide guidelines that don't set the wrong expectations?
- Is encoding explicitly gendered objects (👉👈) for representation resulting in less inclusion and more exclusion?

Are skintones the most effective way to communicate race and identity? What are other types of emoji that would be effective to emojiify to represent yourself?

- Culture is music, dance, art, stories.

Have we already set an expectation we can never meet as it relates to representing culture?

