Status of Emoji Gender & Skintone Support

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To: UTC
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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.
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
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

*Note: Not highlighting emoji where skintone is obscured.*
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 💁🏼‍♂️.EventQueue>

**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”.

**Frequency of Use**
- Present Design: No Tone Support
  - ranked 465/1550
- Future Design: No Tone Support
  - ranked 963/1550
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 (.HandleFunc, 🐰, 🦛, 🦚 & 🩳).

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