

Request for Clarification of Gendered Emoji Situation

Author: Charlotte Buff

Mail: irgendeinbenutzername@gmail.com

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On 30th March 2017 I submitted my proposal ‘*Revised Proposal to Fill the Gaps in the Emoji 5.0 Repertoire*’ that aimed to add the remaining missing gender options for emoji to Unicode. This document was a revision of several earlier versions, some of which, to my knowledge, never reached their intended recipient before being superseded. The Emoji Subcommittee replied to my proposal via mail and I in turn replied to their feedback in the document ‘*Response to Feedback on My Latest Proposal*’ on 21st April 2017. As of the time of writing it has now been over seven weeks without any response from the ESC, and ESC member Jeremy Burge of Emojipedia could not verify whether my document had even been received.

The ESC independently and unbeknownst to my attempts published its own document entitled ‘*Gender-Neutral Human-form Emoji*’ (L2/17-071) which advocated for the addition of some – but very distinctly not all – of the missing emoji. The Unicode Technical Committee reviewed said document at the beginning of May. However, the minutes for UTC #151 imply that the UTC currently does not entertain the thought of adding any new gender-related emoji but rather just wants to improve documentation for handling already existing ones (see action item 151-A103).

You will be familiar with the fact that I have been trying to improve gender representation in Unicode for the past twelve months, so the current lack of any available information and communication pretty much prevents me from doing my work in this regard. Therefore I request the Emoji Subcommittee to answer the following questions:

- Does the UTC intent to add the following emoji characters and sequences to a future version of Unicode Emoji, or does the ESC intent to recommend said additions to the UTC in the near future?
 - a gender-neutral counterpart to DANCER and MAN DANCING
 - a gender-neutral counterpart to FATHER CHRISTMAS and MOTHER CHRISTMAS
 - a gender-neutral counterpart to PRINCESS and PRINCE
 - female and neutral variants of MAN WITH GUA PI MAO
 - male and neutral variants of BRIDE WITH VEIL
 - female and neutral variants of MAN IN TUXEDO
 - female and neutral variants of MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT LEVITATING
 - male and neutral variants of PREGNANT WOMAN
 - male and neutral variants of PERSON WITH HEADSCARF
 - male and female variants of BEARDED PERSON
 - male and neutral variants of BREAST-FEEDING
 - neutral versions of Farmer, Health Worker, Judge, Pilot, Cook, Student, Singer, Artist, Teacher, Factory Worker, Technologist, Office Worker, Mechanic, Scientist, Astronaut, and Firefighter

- Kiss, Couple with Heart, and Family sequences involving ADULT and CHILD
- If yes, what time frame does the ESC envision for said additions?
- If no, how does the ESC justify these omissions? Answers I will no longer accept as valid because I have already debunked them in my previous comment include:
 - There are other forms of presentation besides gender that some also consider important.
 - ➔ Irrelevant. The Unicode Consortium has already decided through its actions that gender is very important, second only to skin colour.
 - The ESC only adds a limited amount of emoji each year.
 - ➔ The core set of missing gender options (without the families etc.) does not require many new emoji. Besides, Emoji 4.0 was a pretty big update and was released in the same year as Emoji 3.0, making 2016 a very emoji-heavy year.
 - Some emoji are pure compatibility characters that don't strictly need options.
 - ➔ Many compatibility characters already arbitrarily received gendered variants with no questions asked. Most of the missing gender options are for non-compatibility characters.
 - The ESC does not want to make big changes all at once.
 - ➔ Emoji 4.0 brought significant changes that happened all at once. My proposals are merely trying to fill the few gaps that 4.0 and 5.0 did not cover.
 - The currently available gender options are more important than those missing.
 - ➔ No gender options are more or less important than any others. The ESC implied through their actions and statements that fictional, mostly unknown characters like MOTHER CHRISTMAS or "joke" emoji like 'Man with Bunny Ears Partying' are more important than accurate portrayals of transgender and non-binary identities, i.e. people that actually exist in the real world.
 - It is difficult for vendors to come up with androgynous designs.
 - ➔ Vendors will need to design androgynous emoji regardless of what happens next. In fact, Google and Twitter already did.
 - Character identifiers and CLDR short names are not indicative of gender.
 - ➔ They are; that is literally what they are supposed to do. Character names are immutable, I am aware, but some short names were chosen by the UTC to deliberately contradict their gender neutrality intentions, for example 'woman with headscarf' for PERSON WITH HEADSCARF.
 - There needs to be significant public demand for the addition of the missing options.
 - ➔ There was little to no visible demand for the vast majority of gender additions in Unicode 9 and Emoji 4.0 and they were approved without much hesitation regardless.
- Has the UTC proper been made aware of the controversy surrounding Unicode's gender policies, in particular that the current set of recommended emoji is inherently prejudiced, discriminatory, and bigoted due to the omissions, and that the implementation of L2/17-071 alone is not sufficient to fix this? It is my understanding that emoji-related document submissions are not forwarded to the UTC unless vetted and approved by the ESC, and I do not know whether my comments played any part in the discussion of 17-071 at UTC #151.

- If yes, what is the UTC's stance on gender equality and fair representation?
- If no, why did the ESC withhold this information?

Ideally those answers should be disclosed publicly and not just in a private conversation with me. I am by far not the only person who is strongly displeased with the current Unicode gender situation and people deserve to know what is being done by the ESC to remove blatantly sexist and transphobic contents from the emoji specifications.