

Proposal for Transgender Flag Emoji

Submitted by:

Alda Vigdís Skarphéðinsdóttir (she, hers), Berlin, Germany (Independent software consultant) -

[@AldaVigdis](#)

Bianca Rey (she, hers), Washington, DC, USA (Chair, Capital TransPride) - [@BiancaRey](#)

Hannah Simpson (she, hers), Washington, DC USA (Writer, speaker, comedian, advocate) - [@Hannsimp](#)

Tea Uglow (she, hers), Sydney, Australia, (Google) - [@teaelleu](#)

Ted Eytan, MD (he, him), Washington, DC, USA (physician, Capital TransPride Producers) - [@tedeytan](#)

Chad Cipiti (he, him), Washington, DC, USA (Capital TransPride Producers) - [@chaddashwick](#)

Monica Helms (she, hers), Atlanta, GA, USA (creator of the Transgender Pride Flag) - [@MF_Helms](#)

Additional help from:

Seb Grubb (he, him), San Francisco, CA, USA (Google) - [@seb_uk](#)

Jennifer Daniel (she, hers), Berkeley, CA, USA (Google) - [@jenniferdaniel](#)

Olli Jones (he, him), London, UK (Microsoft) - olli@swiftkey.com

Updated: 03/13/2019

Submitted: 03/13/2019

1. Identification

CLDR short name - Transgender Flag

CLDR keywords - Transgender, flag, trans

2. Proposed emoji

Images



Notes

- **Color** The flag is based on five pastel bands. Pastel Blue (RGB #5BCEFA), Pastel Pink (RGB #F5A9B8) and white, repeating horizontally.
- **Black and White** As the flag is composed of coloured bands, without a symbol, a black and white reproduction as per the submission guidelines is impossible without an alternative design. We suggest a black-and-white image where the *Male With Stroke* and *Male and Female Sign* symbol is placed on top.

License - The flag is in the public domain.

Document



3. Sort Location



Category - Flags-flag [category](#).



Emoji preceding this one

Rainbow flag emoji 

Possible ZWJ

1	U+1F3F3	White Flag	
2	U+FE0F	Variation Selector-16	
3	U+200D	Zero Width Joiner (ZWJ)	
4	U+26A7	Male With Stroke and Male and Female Sign	

4. Reference Emoji

Emoji are used to represent significant aspects of people's identity.



We can see national flags, professions, skin tones and gender modifiers are all used to represent personal identity within the tweets highlighted above. The current emoji offering does not allow for the expression of transgender identity. We have selected the following reference emoji that strongly express aspects of personal identity:



Construction worker
(**builder** | construction | hat | worker)¹



Rainbow flag
(pride | lgbt | rainbow)²

We believe that given the transgender flag represents not only community affiliation (the role the rainbow flag emoji performs) but also an important role in personal identity (in the same way professions are an important aspect of identity) that both of these reference emoji are important data points.

We expect the transgender flag emoji to be general enough that users can use it to express both community affiliation and also personal gender identity.³

¹ recommended comparison from the emoji proposal page

² recommended comparison from the ESC

³ <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt>

Introduction

We are requesting the addition of the transgender flag to better represent individuals with non-cisgender identities. Research conducted across 27 countries highlights that on average one in three people are transgender or know someone who is.⁴ Google, Microsoft, and the individuals listed in this document believe that adding an emoji illustrative to our life experiences isn't just about creating technology that should be accessible to everyone — it's about fostering culture that is inclusive of users around world.⁵ Emoji are a powerful tool for communication and are frequently used for a range of self-expression, from showing support for a loved one, to expressing personal identity.

While the current selection of emoji provides a wide array of generalised representations, very few speak to the life experiences of those users who are transgender. We see the transgender flag as integral to diversifying the options available: filling a significant gap and providing a more inclusive experience for all.

The history of transgender people dates back to ancient civilizations around the globe.⁶ Prior to western contact, some American Native tribes had third-gender roles, but details were only recorded after the arrival of Europeans.⁷ In ancient India, *Hijra* are a caste of transgender people and have a recorded history from antiquity onwards as suggested by the Kama Sutra period.⁸ In Ancient Greece and Phrygia, and later in the Roman Republic, there are recordings of early transgender figures have also been referred by several authors as early gay role models. Several Pacific Island regions have an ongoing third-gender cultural heritage such as the Fa'afafaine in Samoa.⁹

Transgender rights are enshrined in law around the world. For example, South Africa passed the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act allowing transgender and intersex people to change their legally recognized sex. Similar laws exist in Botswana, Japan, United Kingdom, Spain, Uruguay, Argentina, Denmark, Malta, Colombia, Ireland, Vietnam, Ecuador, Bolivia, Norway, Canada, Belgium, Greece, Pakistan, Portugal, Luxembourg, Uruguay, and Chile ... to name a few, as well as protections afforded through numerous UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions.¹⁰

We see both the history and legal protections are complemented by the high frequency with which transgender is mentioned and searched for on the web. This frequency data shows that a transgender flag emoji would gain high usage by users around the world.

⁴ https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-01/ipsos_report-transgender_global_data-2018.pdf

⁵ A blog post written by the Google Emoji team in October, 2016#, said this about gender equality in Emoji:
People like to see themselves represented in emoji. That's why people emoji look human, have skin tones, and are gendered. However, the current emoji set only includes options that represent men and women. We recognize that gender identity is not fully defined by this binary and that we can do better to represent a more inclusive gender spectrum.

⁶ <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2016/02/trans-history-101-transgender-expression-in-ancient-times/3/>

⁷ Fenton, William N.; Moore, Elizabeth L. (1969). "J.-F. Lafitau (1681-1746), Precursor of Scientific Anthropology". *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*. 25 (2): 174–5. JSTOR 3629200.

⁸ "[Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association, Inc.](#)". Galva108.org. Archived from [the original](#) on 2013-10-23. Retrieved 2013-11-02.

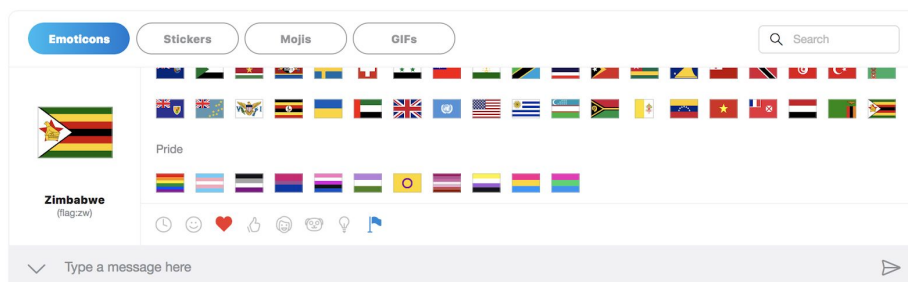
⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37227803>

¹⁰ A/RES/69/182 A/RES/67/168 A/RES/65/208 A/RES/63/182 A/RES/61/173 A/RES/59/197 A/RES/57/214 A/HRC/RES/32/2 A/HRC/RES/17/19 A/HRC/RES/27/32

5. Selection factors — Inclusion

A. Compatibility

Compatibility is somewhat applicable, insofar as the transgender flag is often included with the LGBT flag in some apps. For example, the transgender emoticon is employed in apps such as Skype (no data is collected on usage) and WhatsApp.



Skype sticker panel showing transgender flag emoticon next to LGBT flag



WA chat app showing transgender flag zwj of “🏳️🌈”

B. Expected usage

1. Frequency

The proposed emoji are expected to have high usage for people in the transgender community, including friends and family. As previously mentioned, this community on average spans around one in three people globally, and in some countries as high as 58% of the population.^{11 12} The frequency data highlighted below shows this community are engaged and active online so when quantifying and comparing against the existing reference emoji we see that the transgender flag emoji will have a high frequency of usage that justifies this proposal being accepted.

¹¹ The survey by Ipsos shows a range of 9% (Japan) to 58% (Mexico), 32% overall, of people surveyed who have an acquaintance, family or friends, or self-identify as transgender.

¹² The number of the United States population who know someone who is transgender is currently 30%. This number is expected to increase, with greater access to health care, often needed to successfully transition and live authentically, and general visibility in society.

General search data for various terms

All data are from February and March 2019; each data item was obtained using a new private browser window. As per the submission guidelines, we compare against both “person” and “flag” categories as we believe the transgender flag emoji is equally applicable in both scenarios. We quote multiterm “construction worker” as required.

SEARCH TERM	GOOGLE	BING	YOUTUBE
Trans person	<u>550,000,000</u>	<u>28,400,000</u>	<u>358,000</u>
Transgender person	<u>119,000,000</u>	<u>717,000</u>	<u>163,000</u>
“Construction worker” person	<u>11,300,000</u>	<u>3,430,000</u>	<u>10,900</u>
Builder person	<u>280,000,000</u>	<u>624,000</u>	<u>278,000</u>
Trans flag	<u>134,000,000</u>	<u>331,000</u>	<u>44,600</u>
Transgender flag	<u>97,300,000</u>	<u>12,700,000</u>	<u>75,600</u>
Rainbow flag	<u>119,000,000</u>	<u>293,000</u>	<u>164,000</u>
Pride flag	<u>165,000,000</u>	<u>312,000</u>	<u>128,000</u>

On average (between synonyms) the search queries for the transgender flag across the *person* category is between 1.7x and 7.1x the volume of the reference emoji construction worker, which is compelling even with the high variance we can see in the volumes of results. We see the transgender flag synonyms are competitive in the *flag* category even when excluding the Bing outlier.

It could be argued that “construction worker” implies “person”, our searches for “[trans person emoji](#)” and “[construction worker emoji](#)” yield 2,760,000 Google search results and 1,840,000 results respectively, following the trend that “trans person” has higher numbers of results than “construction worker”.

This data supports our proposal that a transgender flag emoji will receive high usage.

Screenshots available in [Appendix](#).

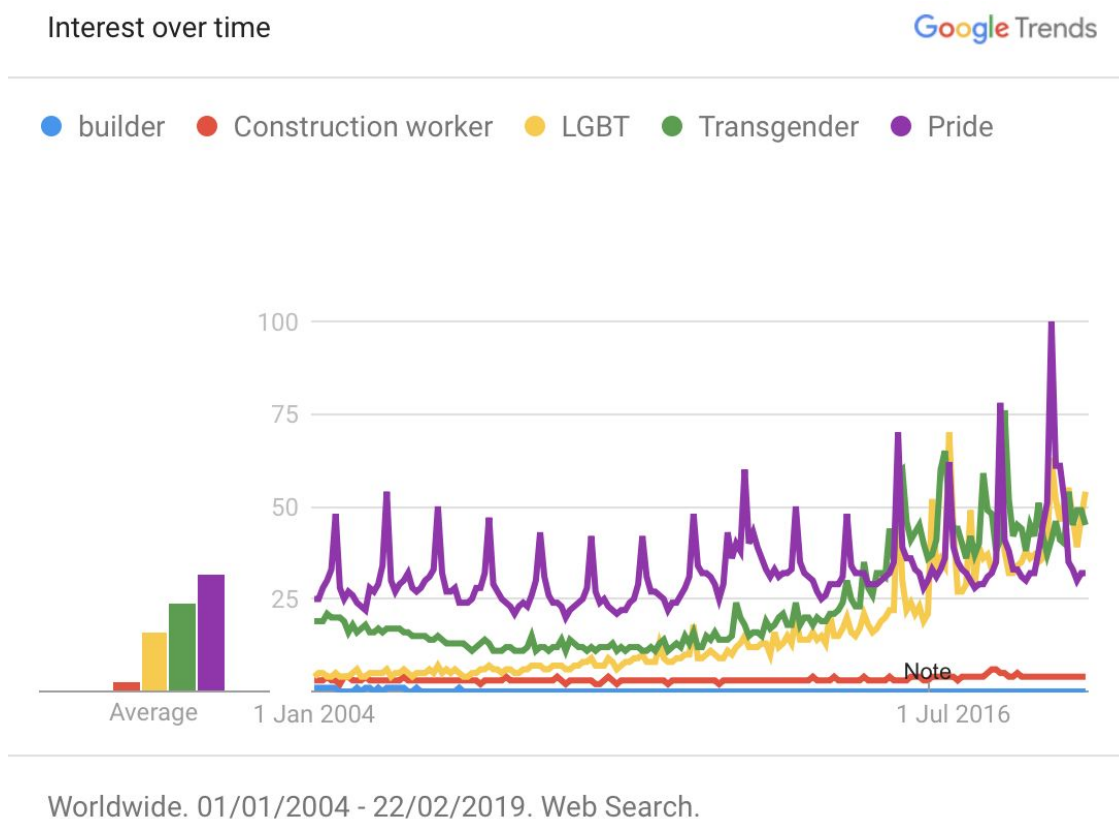
Social Media

Looking at social media, the hashtag #transgender has over 5 million posts on Instagram compared to 16 million for the baseline of #lgbt. This indicates that even if the transgender population is only a fraction of the total of LGBT, interest in the subject is proportionally very high.

Google Trends

Comparing the [Google trend](#) topic for “transgender” against the topics highlighted from the reference emoji we see that, on average over the last 15 years, “transgender” is similar to “LGBT” and “Pride”, we see for the [last 5 years](#) “transgender” is actually the

most searched for topic. This is unsurprising given the findings from the volume of search results highlighted in the section above.



Both as a community and as personal identity the transgender flag is competitive (in the case of the LGBT flag emoji) and surpassing (in the case of the construction worker emoji) our reference emoji.

A more thorough analysis of Google Trends data is available on Ted Eytan, MD's blog.¹³

It is of note that a different word other than "transgender" may be used per country/language. As an example, In the Icelandic language, the word *kynsegin* has become a common term for genderqueer people and this trend data may not index such words as synonyms of transgender. We use trends from topics, rather than terms, to try to encompass different languages. At the same time, survey methodologists currently avoid using the term "transgender" because it is unclear for many.¹⁴

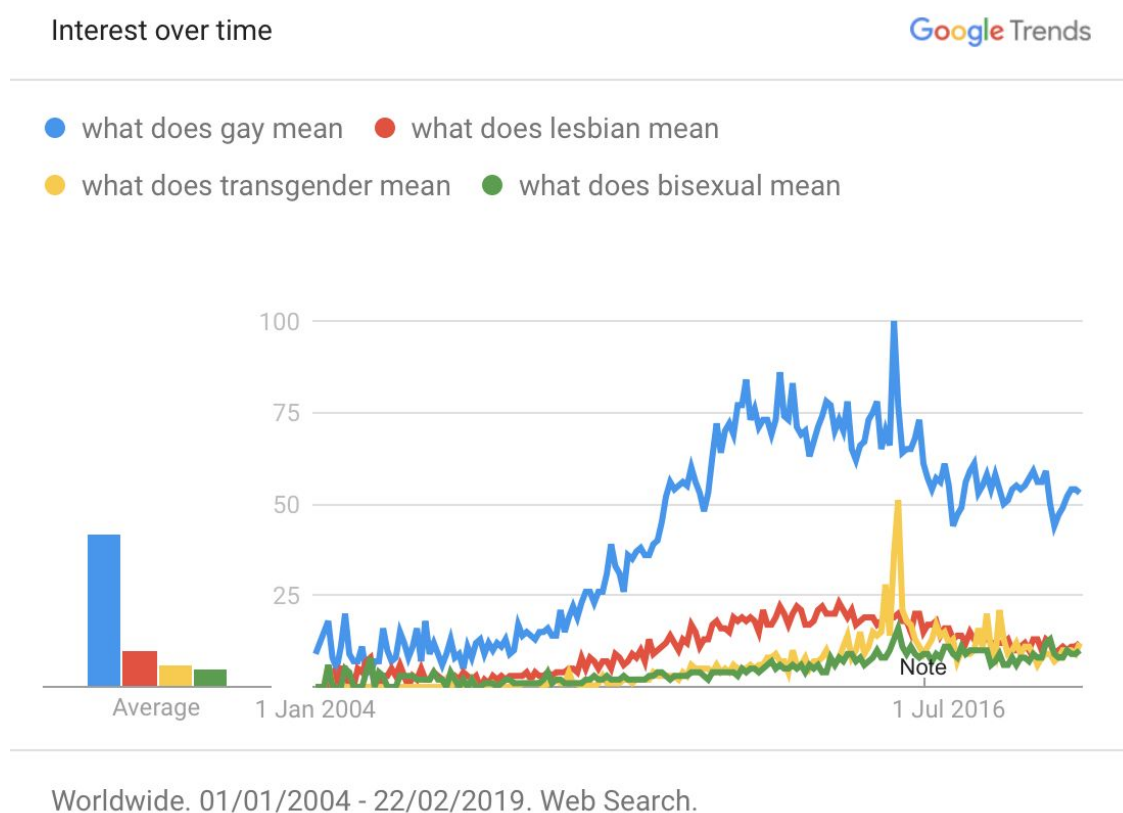
Note: In an earlier submission, ESC asked for evidence of frequency comparisons between the LGBT groups represented by the rainbow flag emoji. While comparisons and usage of flags for transgender or identity groups may be perceived as helpful here, they are not good proxies for the transgender flag, this is highlighted by the types of search *terms* that are made involving "lesbian", "gay" and "bisexual" in comparison to "transgender":

¹³ What Does Google Trends Tell Us About A Proposal for a Future Valid Emoji Sequence for Transgender Visibility? <https://www.tedeytan.com/2018/02/04/25071>, accessed 2/5/18.

¹⁴ "Global Attitudes Toward Transgender People," Ipsos, <https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-attitudes-toward-transgender-people>, accessed 2/5/18



We try to remove this bias, by presenting [trend data](#) for “what does [X] mean” showing transgender is comparable to “lesbian” and “bisexual”:



The large increase in interest in July, 2017 stands out, and was likely caused by the proposed ban on transgender individuals from the U.S. Military.

This data is compelling because there are currently many ways of representing LGB relationships within emoji (using the couples and families) but no emoji exists that adequately represents a transgender identity despite this search frequency data showing that transgender is comparable to other letters in LGBT.

2. Multiple Usages

A transgender emoji would not just represent a group of people, but would span into representing:

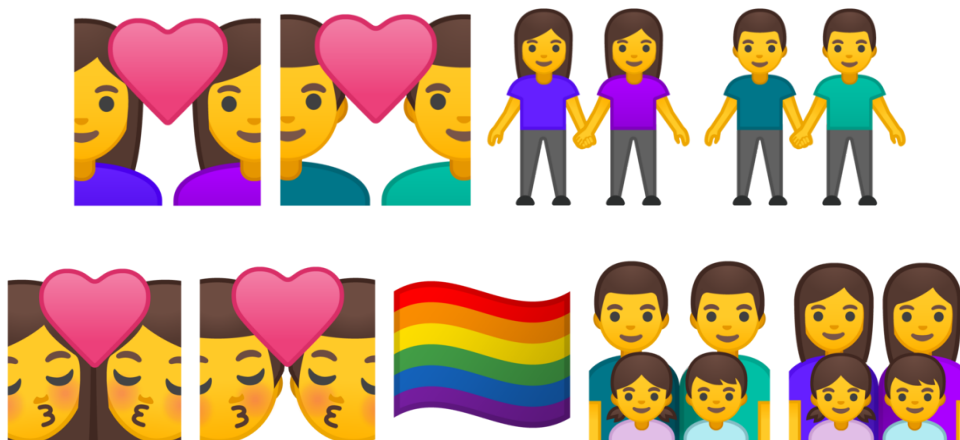
- medical treatment
- health care
- gender identity
- community association
- cultural events and venues welcoming or specifically accommodating to transgender people

While social media is one proxy to indicate use, many people use emojis to represent their identity in their bios. An inline image of the flag and its variants have been adapted to indicate a user belonging to the transgender community on various online platforms.

3. Use in Sequences

This proposal does not suggest a further use in a sequence. Nothing in particular prevents or discourages future use. Possible future variants are explored in section G: Open Ended.

4. Breaking new ground



(Above) Ways of expressing LGB identity with current emoji.

There are ways of expressing LGB within the emoji specification already, but there are no ways to express “I am trans”, or to depict transgender life. The rainbow flag is simply insufficient to represent this community. Given that this will be the first way of expressing trans identity we expect usage to be high.

While the acronym LGBT includes transgender people, gender identity is very distinct from sexual identity. Transgender people may be straight, gay, bisexual or lesbian.

*“Simply put: sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to and fall in love with; gender identity is about who you are.”*¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://www.glaad.org/transgender/transfaq>

Transgender individuals face many of the same challenges LGB individuals do, but also go on their own unique journey. Transgender individuals experience the emotional (and often, physical) process of gender transition, which can include therapy, and/or medical intervention.

This distinction is also being adopted by the general public. David Perruza, Managing partner of Pitchers and A League of Her Own, in Washington, DC explains why he has hung up both a transgender and rainbow flag outside his bar:

"I chose to put the transgender flag up because I have found that the transgender community usually doesn't feel welcomed in Queer spaces just because they see the rainbow flag. I wanted people to know that my bar accepts everyone. The rest of the community is okay with just the rainbow flag as it includes everyone but the minute I added the transgender flag we got a lot more clientele."

C. Image distinctiveness

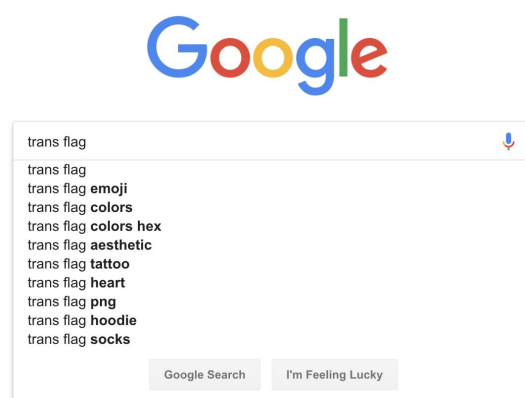
The transgender flag is an easily identifiable and unique symbol. As the transgender flag is a banner of three colours, arranged in five horizontal bands, it can be represented at very small sizes; down to 5 pixels high.

D. Completeness

The LG and B in LGBT can be represented through the use of gendered emoji, from the couple holding hands to the same-sex parent families, as well as the rainbow flag. There is currently no way to express "I am trans" in emoji therefore the T is underrepresented in the current standard.

The proposed transgender flag provides an advance in coverage to depict various forms of gender, sexual orientation, and identity and fills a significant gap in representation and inclusiveness among existing emoji.

E. Frequently requested



Most popular search term associated with "trans flag" is "emoji"

The transgender flag emoji has been frequently requested of Google, Microsoft, Emojipedia, and Apple. Multiple transgender proposals have been submitted in the past.¹⁶ A myriad of tweets indicate strong support and demand for a transgender flag emoji.¹⁷

The transgender flag emoji regularly appears on “Emojis we wish existed” lists and in the media including [Time Magazine](#), [Reuters](#), [The Independent](#), [Metro UK](#), [Dazed Digital](#), [Cosmo](#) and many others documenting the public outcry everytime new emojis are announced and the transgender flag is not included.

6. Selection Factors — Exclusion

F. Overly specific

The proposed emoji is no more specific than it needs to be in order to represent the intended range of gender represented by this community which can be split into even further subgroups as described in this document.

G. Open-Ended

As noted, the proposed set provides a significant advancement in the depiction of various forms of identity. While we would hope this set stimulates discussion about possible additional ways for emojis to represent individuals we don’t expect such discussion to lead to proposals for a large number of additions beyond the current proposal.

H. Already Representable

The concepts depicted in the proposed set are not representable with existing emoji. As previously noted, the rainbow flag emoji represents sexual orientation but not so much gender identity.

That being said, it’s worth noting that the rainbow flag emoji is one of the most successful flag emoji, despite users having multiple mechanisms to express sexuality within the existing emoji — for example, through the same-sex family emoji and same-sex couples emoji. We believe that usage will be high because the transgender flag emoji will be the only emoji capable of communicating a transgender identity.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

Not applicable. This emoji or any graphical representation of the transgender flag does not represent any logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people or deities. The original work falls into the public domain.¹⁸

J: Transient

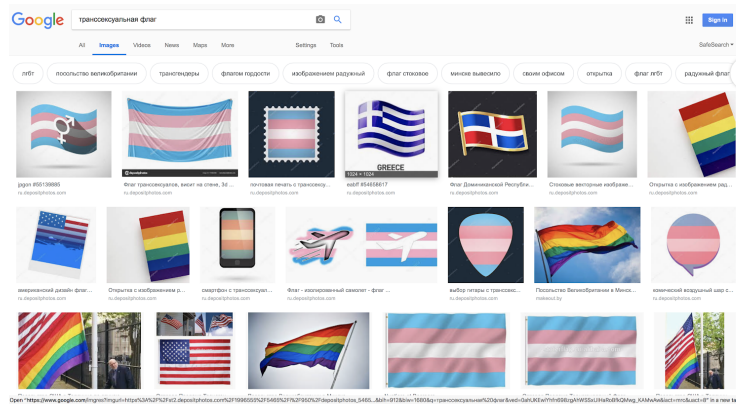
In the early 2000’s there were [a few efforts](#) to create a trans pride symbol. Since then, the five-stripe transgender flag has become the widely acknowledged standard. An

¹⁶ Other transgender submissions include: 1. Hamblin submission, March 2017 2. Eytan et al submission, June 2017. 3. Renamed “Proposal for New Valid Emoji Sequence” Second draft: November 2017 4. Third draft: March 2018

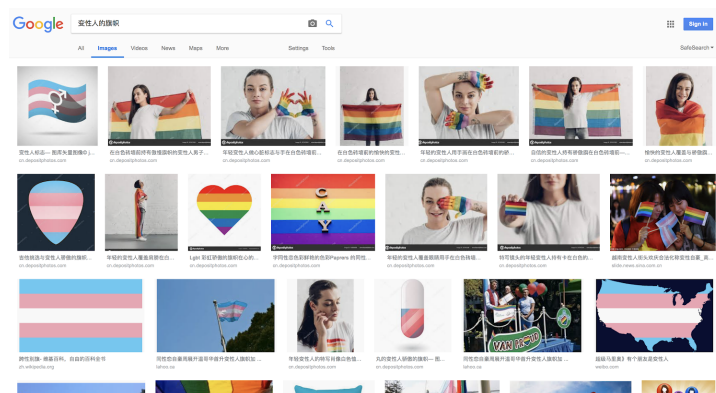
¹⁷ A collection of tweets can be found here <https://twitter.com/i/moments/894216583937015808> and here (twitter moments cap at 98 tweets each)

¹⁸ The flag was designed by Monica Helms (a co-author of this proposal) in 1999, with its first public appearance in 2000.

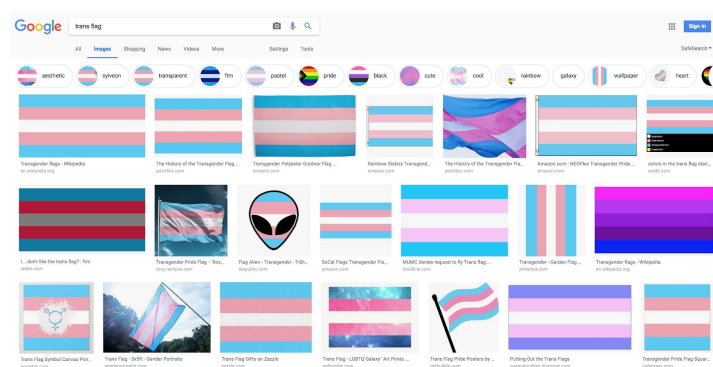
incognito search for “trans flag” in google images illustrate it’s ubiquity and we can see this reflected in Google Image searches from around the world.



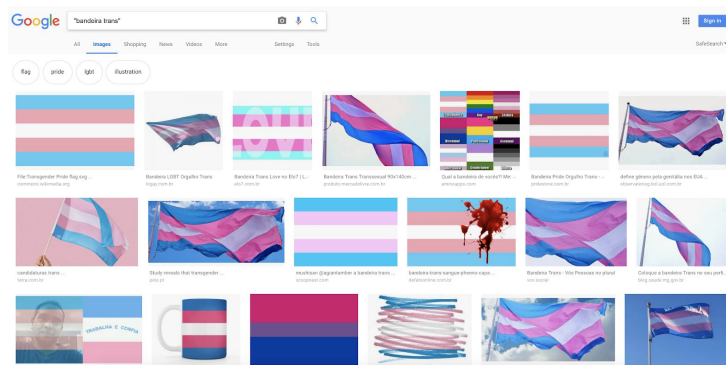
Google image results for “транссексуальная флаг” (Russian)



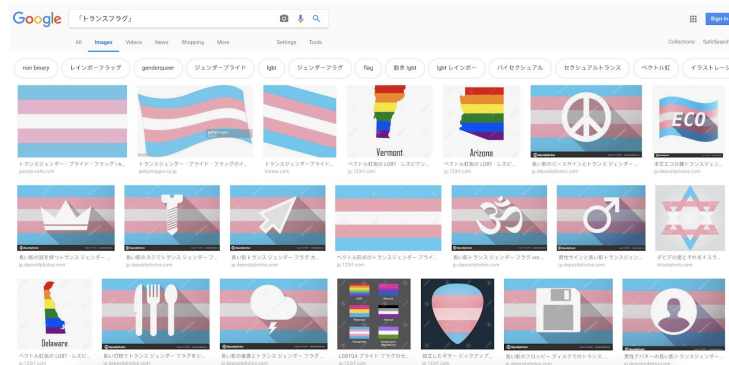
Google image results for “变性人的旗帜” (Chinese)



Google image results for “trans flag” (English)



Google image results for “bandeira trans” (Portuguese)



Google image results for “「トランスフラグ」” (Japanese)

This design has been portrayed as a banner, and on buildings around the world including in the Smithsonian, in front of government buildings, and on clothing.



The transgender flag displayed in the office of Jennifer Wexton, Congresswoman for Virginia.



The First Transgender Flag at the US Smithsonian Institution (Photo: Monica Helms)



Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto Canada, November 20th, 2015

<http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-transgender-day-of-remembrance-or-tgor-marked-in-the-city-hall-toronto-90325502.html>



Duke Energy Center Tower, Charlotte, North Carolina March 31st, 2016. [Link](#)



One World Trade Center Spire, New York, NY March 31st, 2017
(These colors were ALSO displayed on 6/23/2017 and 11/20/2017.)

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/governor-cuomo-lights-the-night-for-trans-visibility_us_58e2705de4b0d804fbbb752e



Fans unfurl 'trans people deserve to live' banner during World Series Game 5
<https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2018/10/28/trans-people-deserve-to-live-flag-dodger-stadium-world-series-game-5-transgender/>



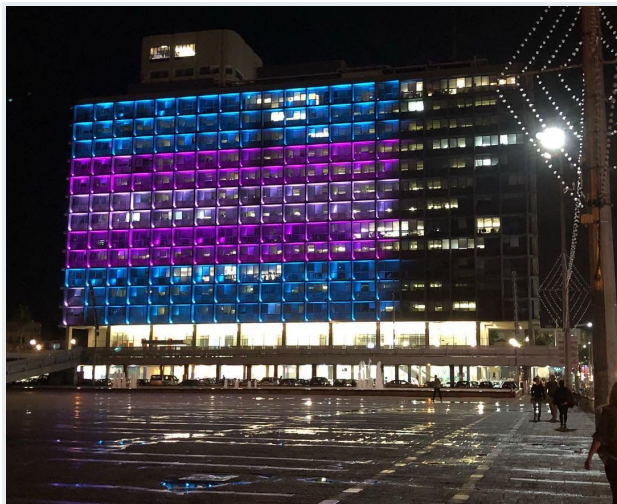
Transgender flag and Rainbow flag side by side — inclusive of LGBTQ communities, Washington, DC USA. (Photo: Ted Eytan MD)



The Transgender Flag flown at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2016. (Photo: Flickr/foreignoffice, CC-BY)



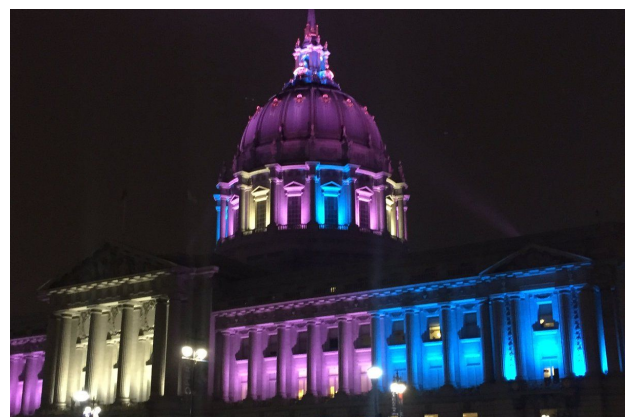
JR's Bar and Grill, Dupont Circle, Washington DC, showing both flags, which the venue deemed necessary to represent everyone in the LGBT community. (Photo: Ted Eytan MD)



<https://www.instagram.com/p/BbvA85Nj3if/>

Tel Aviv City Hall, Tel Aviv Israel

November 20th, 2017



San Francisco (California) City Hall, San Francisco California,

June 23rd 2017 [link](#)

Appendix

Google Searches

trans person

All Images News

About 550,000,000 results (

transgender person

All Images News Videos

About 119,000,000 results (0.51 seconds)

"construction worker" person

All Images News Shopping

About 11,300,000 results (0.56 seconds)

builder person

All Images Shopping News

About 280,000,000 results (0.47 seconds)

trans flag

All Images Shop

About 134,000,000 results (

transgender flag

All Images Shopping News

About 97,300,000 results (0.40 seconds)

rainbow flag

All Images Shop

About 119,000,000 results (

pride flag

All Images Shop

About 165,000,000 results (

Bing Searches

trans person

All Images

28,400,000 Results

transgender person

All Images Videos

717,000 Results Date ▾

"construction worker" person

All Images Videos

3,430,000 Results Date ▾

builder person

All Images

624,000 Results

trans flag	transgender flag	pride flag	rainbow flag
All Images	All Images	All Images	All Images
331,000 Results	12,700,000 Results	312,000 Results	293,000 Results

Youtube Searches

site:youtube.com trans person	site:youtube.com transgender person
All Images News Shopp	All Images News Videos Shopping
About 358,000 results (0.94 seconds)	About 163,000 results (0.26 seconds)

site:youtube.com "construction worker" person	site:youtube.com builder person
All Images News Shopping Videos	All Images Shopping News
About 10,900 results (0.24 seconds)	About 278,000 results (0.66 seconds)

site:youtube.com trans flag	site:youtube.com transgender flag	site:youtube.com rainbow flag
All Images Shopping	All Images Shopping News	All Images Shopping Ne
About 44,600 results (0.66 seconds)	About 75,600 results (0.24 seconds)	About 164,000 results (0.80 seconds)

site:youtube.com pride flag
All Images Shopping News
About 128,000 results (0.73 seconds)