Ship Tags and Ratings of

Our Flag means Death

Fanfiction on Archive of Our Own

What Are the Most Popular Ships in OFMD?

AO3 ship tags as indicators

- The popularity of different relationship tags on Archive of Our Own (AO3) is not a perfect method to gauge the overall popularity of a ship, because fanfiction is not the only way for fans to show which ships they like.

- Tagging can also be misleading, because tags can include relationships that aren't the actual focus of the story.

- It's important to be aware of these limitations when interpreting the tagging data.

- This being said, AO3 tags can give us some idea of the popularity of different ships.

Now, where **are the graphs?!**
Where's the fuckin' **pie!**

Click here to skip the data collection methods and see the pretty graphs immediately!

If you want to know where the numbers came from, keep going.

Collected Data

Using AO3's "Sort and Filter" tool

- The data was collected from **Archive of Our Own** on Nov 25th 2022. The data was saved as screenshots of filtered search results.

- Steps for collecting data of the most tagged ships:

  1. Go to **Our Flag Means Death (TV)** fandom tag: total number of fics for fandom

  2. Sort and Filter → Include → Open "Relationships" menu: 10 most used ship tags and the number of fics using them

  3. At the bottom of Sort and Filter is "Search within results" → Write **OTP: true** → Click *Sort and Filter*: the same sort of data as before, but now it only includes fics that use a single ship tag

- Steps for collecting ratings data:

  1. Sort and Filter → Include → Open "Ratings" menu: the number of fics with each rating

  2. Choose a relationship to include → Click *Sort and Filter*: the number of fics with each rating for chosen ship

- Steps for collecting ship tag overlap data:

  1. Make sure **OTP: true** search isn't active.

  2. Choose to include the relationship tags that overlap → Click *Sort and Filter*: the number of fics tagged with all included ship tags

Collected Data

Fandom tag with and without "OTP: true"

- There were 15,079 fanfics tagged with "Our Flag Means Death (TV)" fandom tag.

- After filtering the fandom tag with "OTP: True", there were 9,738 fanfics left.

- 9 of the 10 most used ship tags were the same ships in both search results.
    - "Blackbeard | Edward Teach & Israel Hands" made it to the top-10 in both results, but it was excluded from the data sets, because the focus was on romantic relationships.
        - NOTE: "&" between the names indicates a platonic relationship and "/" indicates a romantic or non-platonic one.
    - "Minor or Background Relationship(s)" was excluded from the fandom tag data set.
    - "Israel Hands/Roach (Our Flag Means Death)" was in top-10 only in "OTP: True" results. This ship was added to the fandom tag top ships, to make it possible to compare the numbers between different data sets and also to have equal number of ships (9) in both data sets.

Collected Data

The most used ship tags & the ship names this study uses

- Blackbeard | Edward Teach/Stede Bonnet **[GentleBeard]** *

- Blackbeard | Edward Teach/Israel Hands **[BlackHands]**

- Black Pete/Lucius Spriggs **[LuPete]** *

- Oluwande Boodhari/Jim Jimenez **[TealOranges]** *

- Blackbeard | Edward Teach/Stede Bonnet/Israel Hands **[SteddyHands]**

- Stede Bonnet/Israel Hands **[Stizzy]**

- Israel Hands/Lucius Spriggs **[Lusrael]**

- Israel Hands/"Calico" Jack Rackham **[CJizzy]**

- Israel Hands/Roach (Our Flag Means Death) **[Rizzy]**

Rizzy was included to the fandom tag data set despite not making it to the top-10, because with "OTP: True" filter Rizzy is one of the 10 most tagged ships.

*Canon ship = relationship featured in the show

Collected Data

Ratings for fandom tag and the most used ship tags

- There are five different ratings for fanfics on AO3:
  - General Audiences
  - Teen And Up Audiences
  - Mature
  - Explicit
  - Not Rated

- Ratings don't directly tell us anything about the popularity of a ship. They might still help us understand the possible differences between the fics that include popular ships.

- The ratings data for the whole fandom tag was collected with and without "OTP: True" filter.

- The ratings data for each of the most used ship tags was collected by filtering for one ship tag at a time. This was done with and without "OTP: True" filter.

Collected Data

Ship tag overlap: Case SteddyHands

- SteddyHands = Ed/Stede/Izzy

- Fanfics that tag SteddyHands often also tag one or more of the pairings it includes (GentleBeard, BlackHands, Stizzy).

- The fandom tag was filtered with the following settings to get the necessary data of overlapping tags.

    - SteddyHands overlapping with at least one of the three pairings it includes was calculated from two different search results.
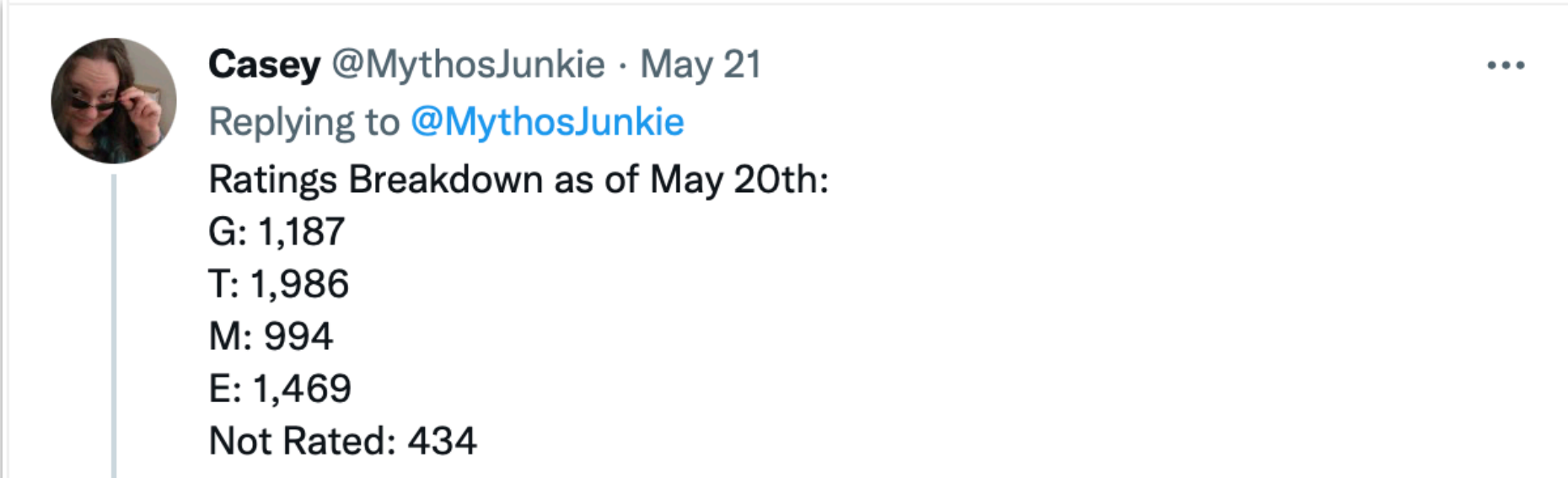
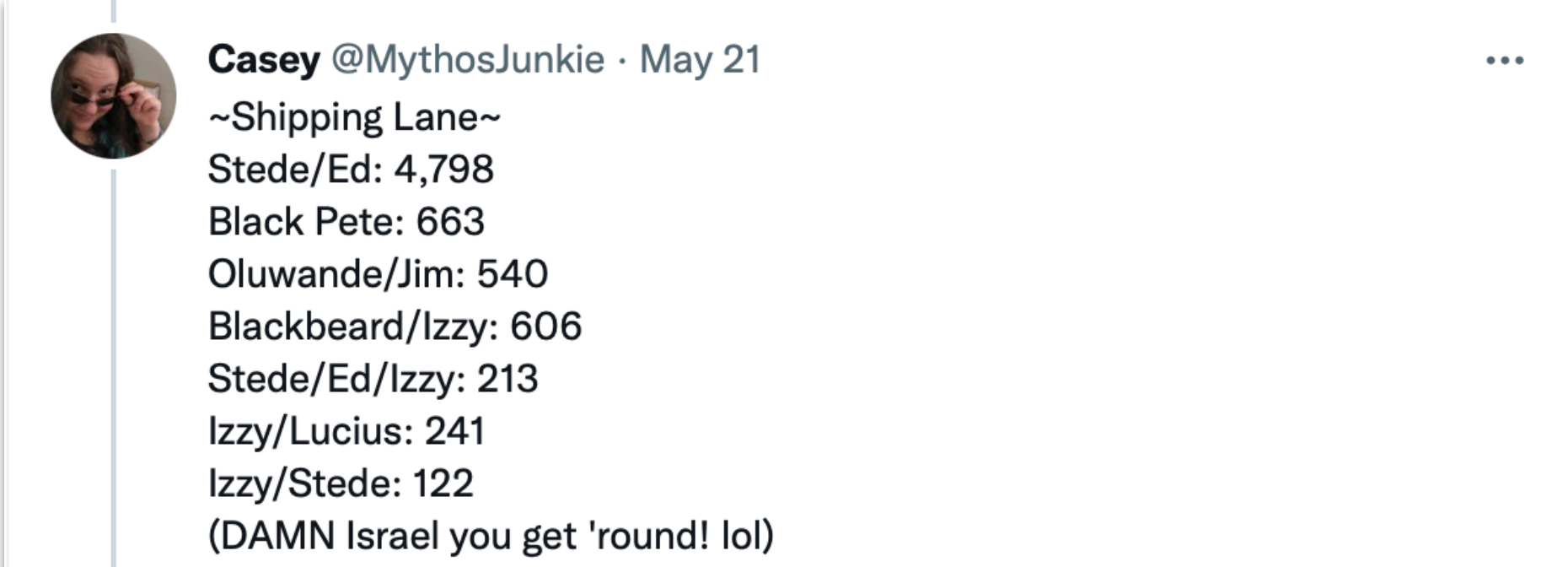| Included		Excluded	OTP: True	Result
GentleBeard + SteddyHands		-	no	GentleBeard overlapping with SteddyHands
BlackHands + SteddyHands		-	no	BlackHands overlapping with SteddyHands
Stizzy + SteddyHands		-	no	Stizzy overlapping with SteddyHands
A	SteddyHands	GentleBeard + BlackHands + Stizzy	no	All fics with SteddyHands that do **not** overlap with any of the three pairings it includes
B	SteddyHands	-	no	All fics with SteddyHands
			B - A =	SteddyHands overlapping with at least one of the three pairings it includes

Collected Data

Comparison data from May 20th 2022

- The first OFMD fanfics were posted on AO3 on March 9th 2022, 6 days after the show started airing on HBO.

- Twitter user **@MythosJunkie** had collected OFMD fanfic data from AO3 in the spring and summer of 2022.

- **A tweet thread from May 21st 2022** had data that was partially comparable with the current data. These fanfics were posted over a period of ~2.5 months.

  - Ratings

 - Total number of fics for 7 of the most used ship tags


Casey @MythosJunkie · May 21
Replying to @MythosJunkie
Ratings Breakdown as of May 20th:
G: 1,187
T: 1,986
M: 994
E: 1,469
Not Rated: 434

Casey @MythosJunkie · May 21
~Shipping Lane~
Stede/Ed: 4,798
Black Pete: 663
Oluwande/Jim: 540
Blackbeard/Izzy: 606
Stede/Ed/Izzy: 213
Izzy/Lucius: 241
Izzy/Stede: 122
(DAMN Israel you get 'round! lol)

Fanfic Ratings Distribution
The Most Frequently Tagged Ships
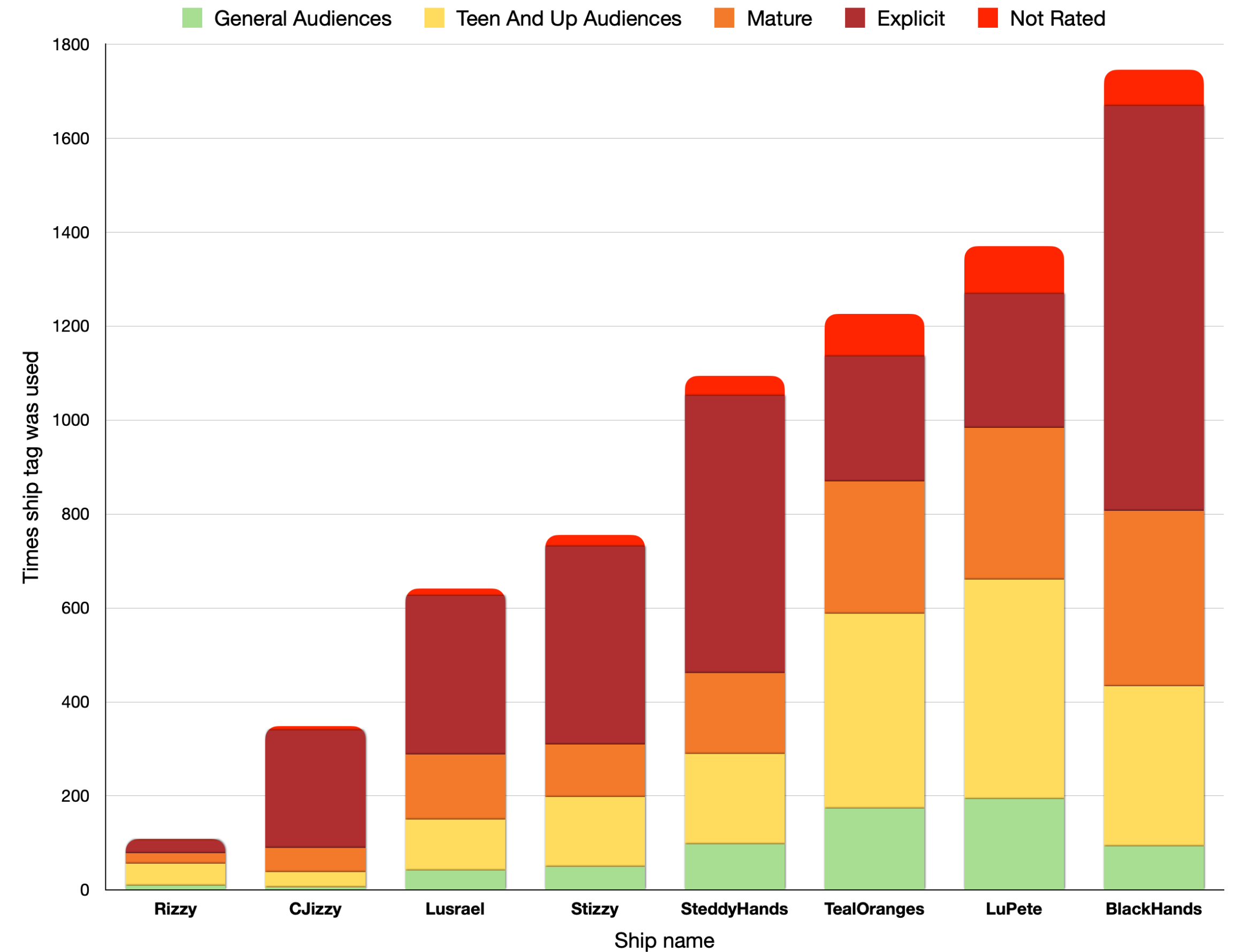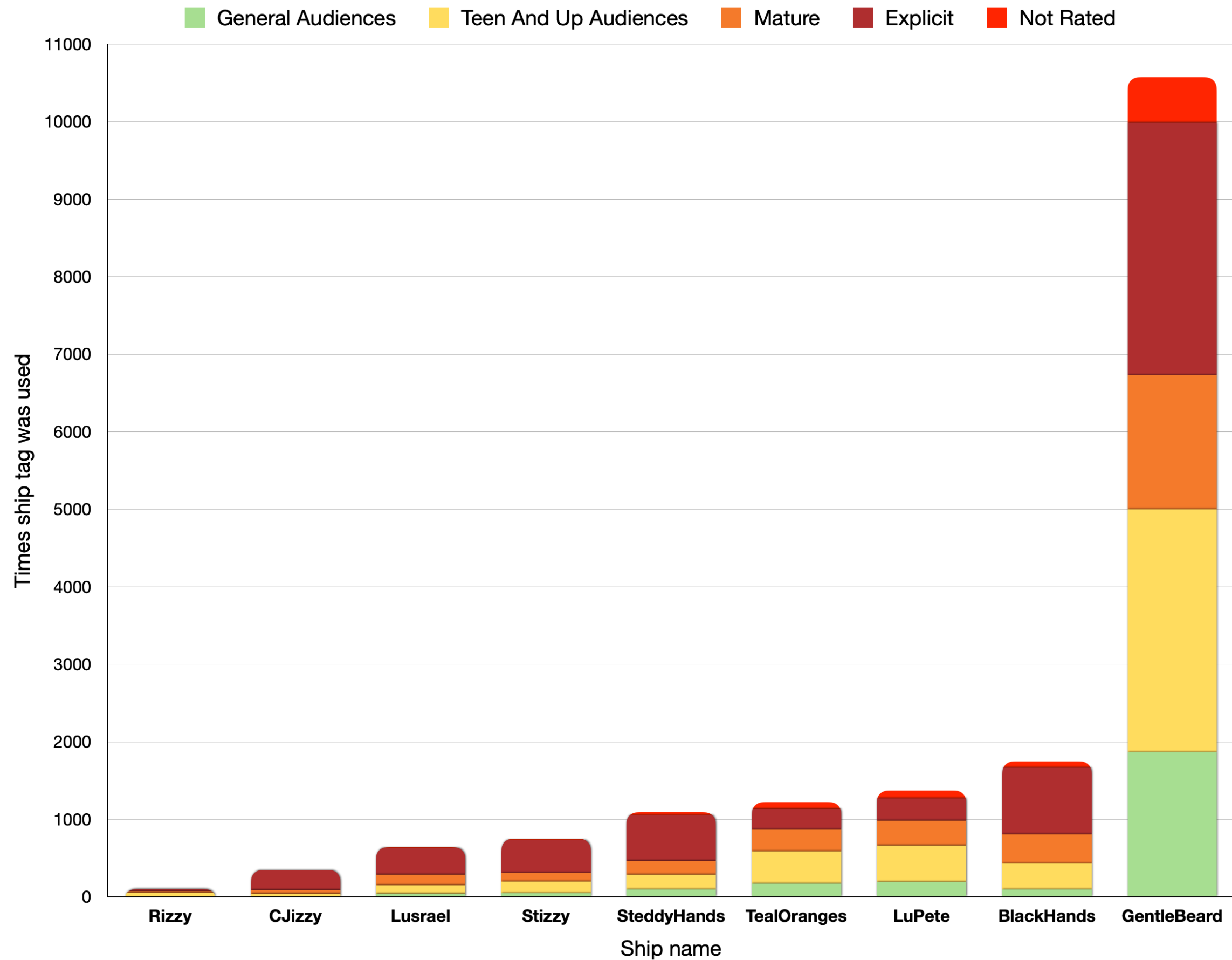
The most frequently tagged OFMD ships and their ratings distribution on AO3. To get a more detailed look of the other ships besides the main canon pair, the graph on the right shows the data without GentleBeard, changing the scale of the times ship tag was used.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is the focus of the fic or if it's a minor / background relationship.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

Fanfic Ratings Distribution
The Most Frequently Tagged Ships of Fanfics That Focus on Only One Ship
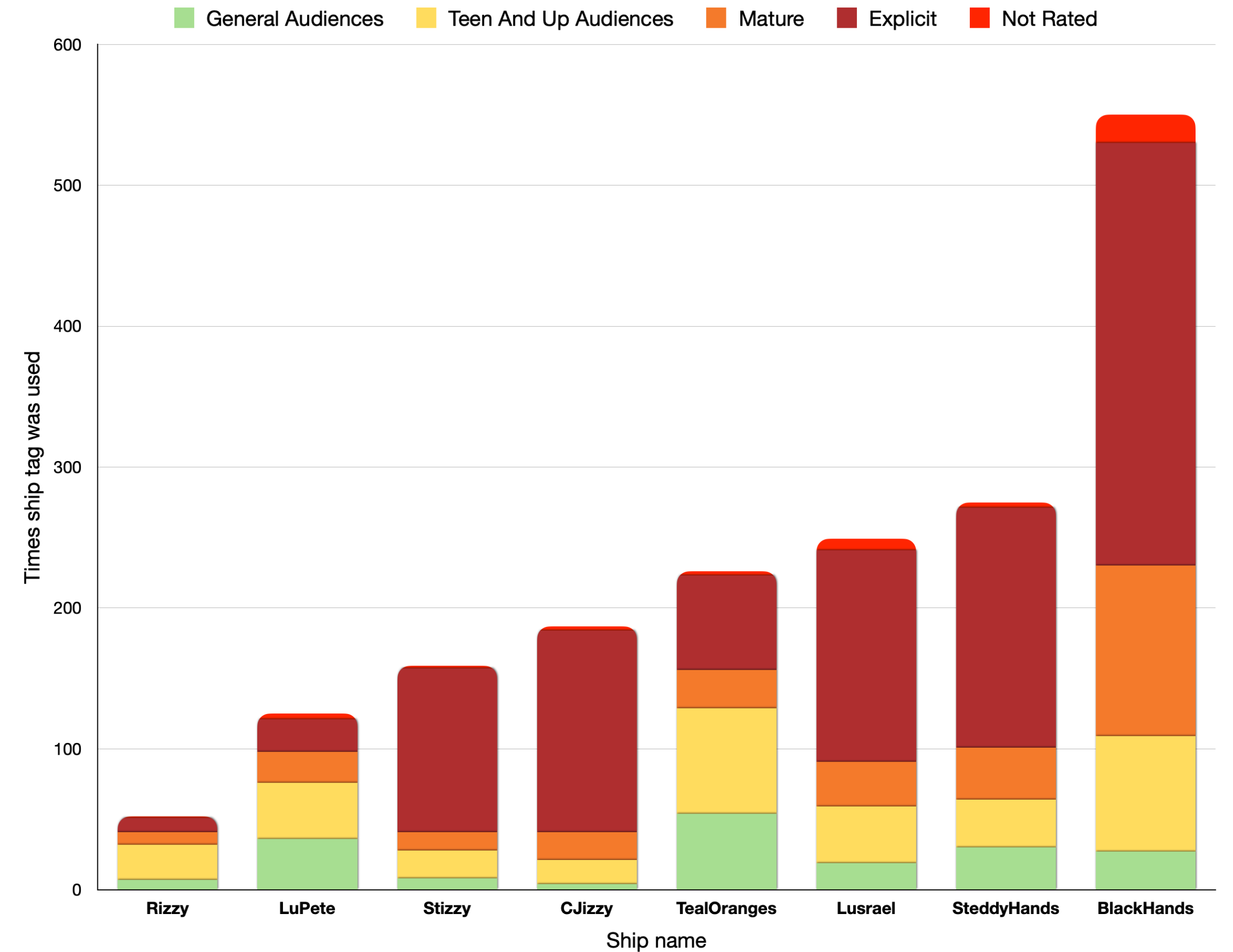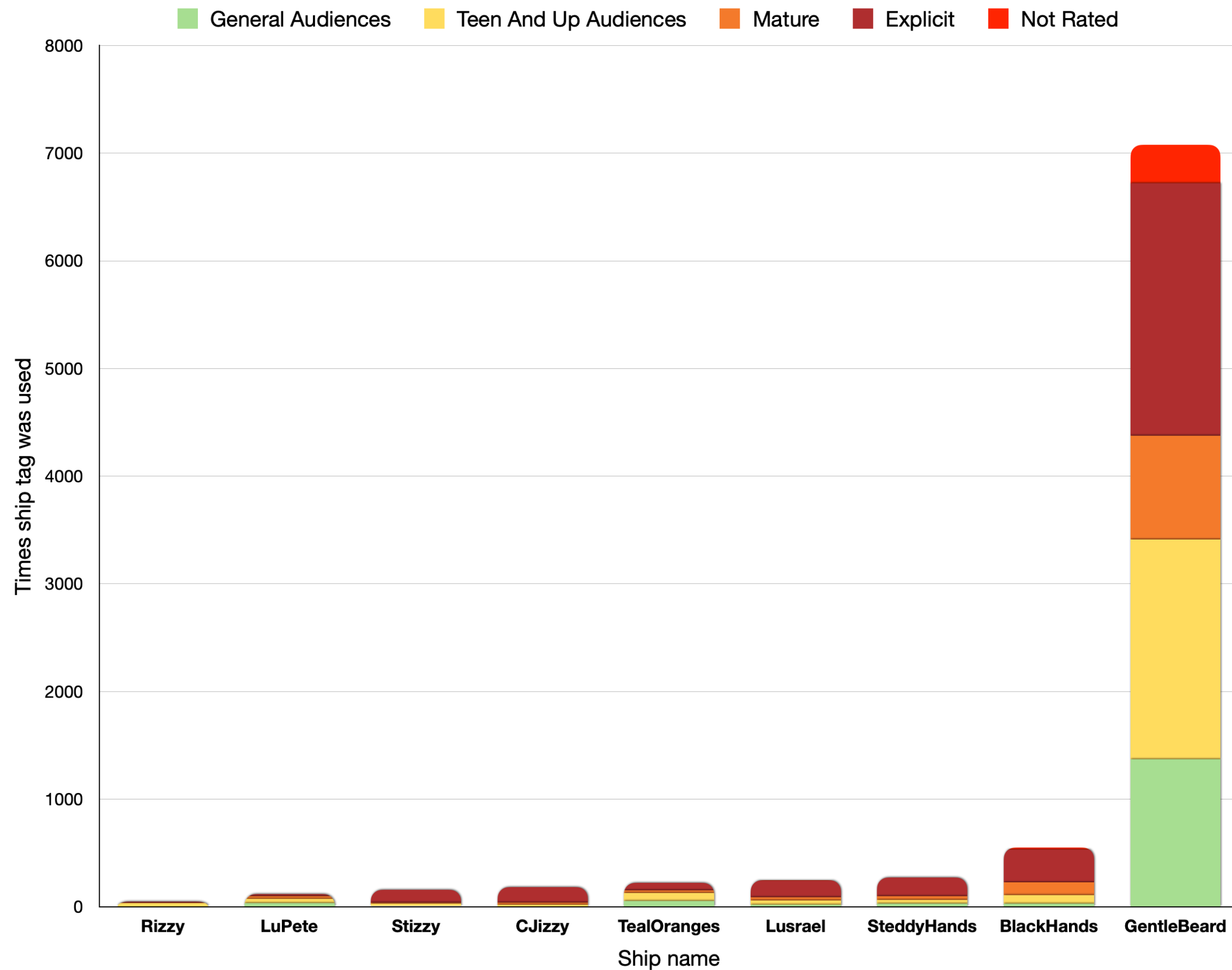
The most frequently tagged OFMD ships and their ratings distribution on AO3, based on the number of fanfics that focus only on one ship. To get a more detailed look of the other ships besides the main canon pair, the graph on the right shows the data without GentleBeard, changing the scale of the times ship tag was used.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is also the main ship of fics that tag several ships.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

The Relative Ratings Distribution
The Most Frequently Tagged Ships

Legend: General Audiences | Teen And Up Audiences | Mature | Explicit | Not Rated

Ship	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Rizzy	8.3	43.5	20.4	25.9	1.9
CJizzy	1.7	9.2	14.6	71.9	2.6
Lusrael	6.4	17.0	21.5	52.6	2.5
Stizzy	6.5	19.7	14.8	55.8	3.2
SteddyHands	8.9	17.6	15.8	53.9	3.8
TealOranges	14.1	33.8	23.0	21.7	7.3
LuPete	14.1	34.2	23.5	20.8	7.4
BlackHands	5.3	19.5	21.4	49.4	4.4
GentleBeard	17.6	29.6	16.4	30.8	5.6
OFMD fandom tag	17.1	28.2	16.2	33.6	4.9

x-axis: 20.0 — 40.0 — 60.0 — 80.0 — 100.0

% of fanfics

Number of fanfics

Rizzy: 108
CJizzy: 349
Lusrael: 642
Stizzy: 755
SteddyHands: 1,094
TealOranges: 1,226
LuPete: 1,370
BlackHands: 1,746
GentleBeard: 10,572
OFMD fandom tag: 15,079

The relative ratings distribution of the most frequently tagged OFMD ships on AO3. The ratings distribution of the whole fandom tag is shown for comparison.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is the focus of the fic or if it's a minor / background relationship.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

The Relative Ratings Distribution
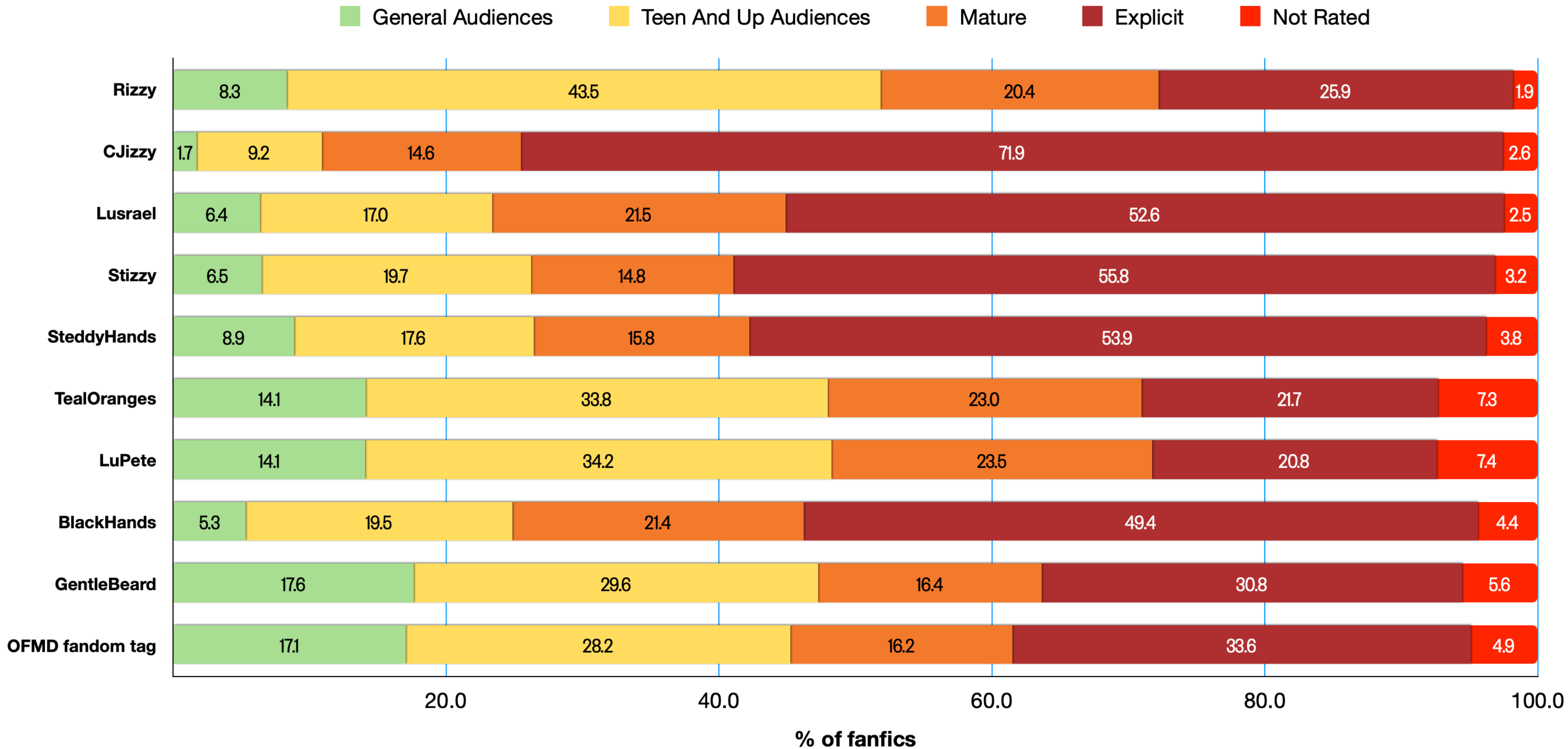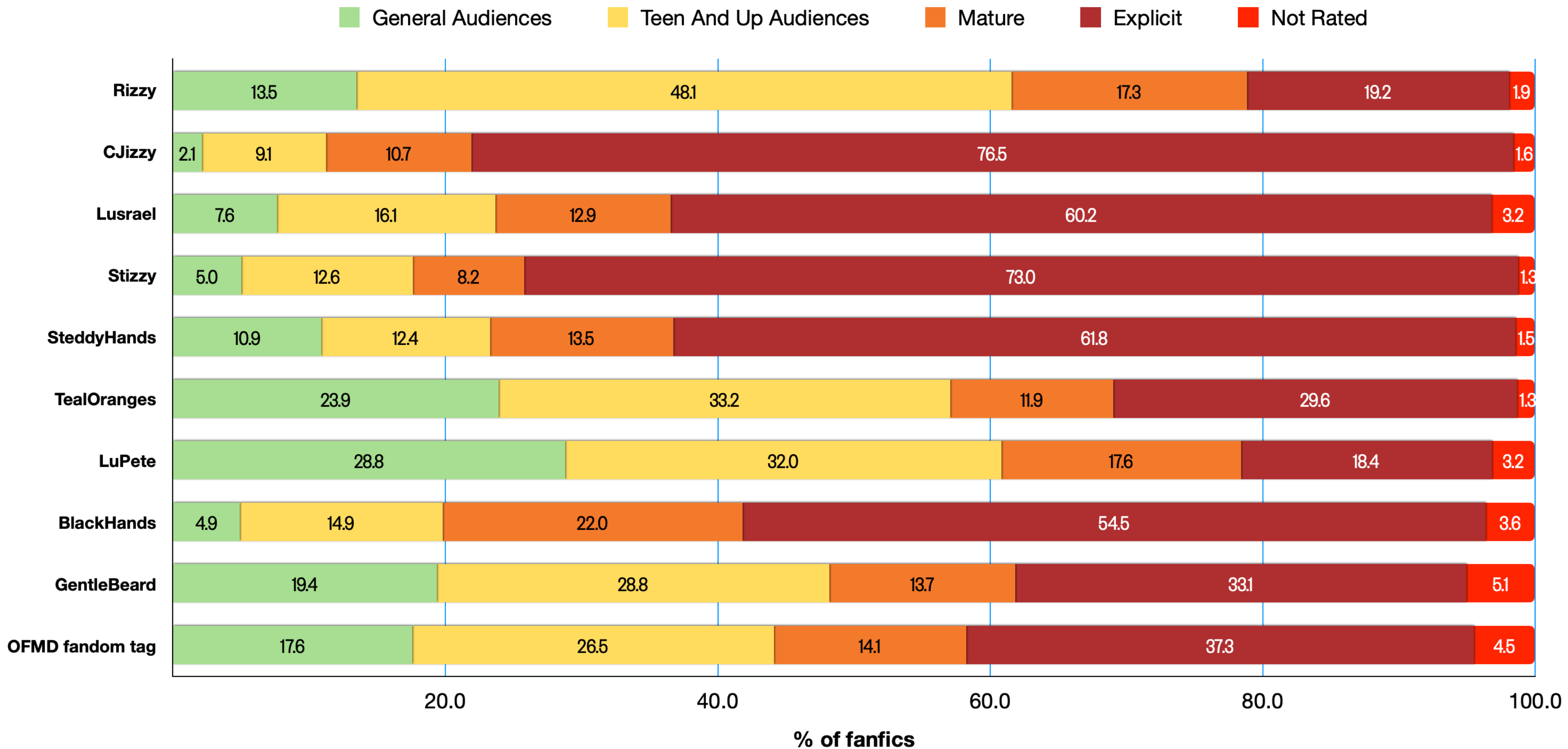## The Most Frequently Tagged Ships of Fanfics That Focus on Only One Ship

Legend: ■ General Audiences ■ Teen And Up Audiences ■ Mature ■ Explicit ■ Not Rated

Ship	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Rizzy	13.5	48.1	17.3	19.2	1.9
CJizzy	2.1	9.1	10.7	76.5	1.6
Lusrael	7.6	16.1	12.9	60.2	3.2
Stizzy	5.0	12.6	8.2	73.0	1.3
SteddyHands	10.9	12.4	13.5	61.8	1.5
TealOranges	23.9	33.2	11.9	29.6	1.3
LuPete	28.8	32.0	17.6	18.4	3.2
BlackHands	4.9	14.9	22.0	54.5	3.6
GentleBeard	19.4	28.8	13.7	33.1	5.1
OFMD fandom tag	17.6	26.5	14.1	37.3	4.5

% of fanfics (x-axis: 20.0, 40.0, 60.0, 80.0, 100.0)

Number of fanfics

Rizzy: 52
CJizzy: 187
Lusrael: 249
Stizzy: 159
SteddyHands: 275
TealOranges: 226
LuPete: 125
BlackHands: 550
GentleBeard: 7,079
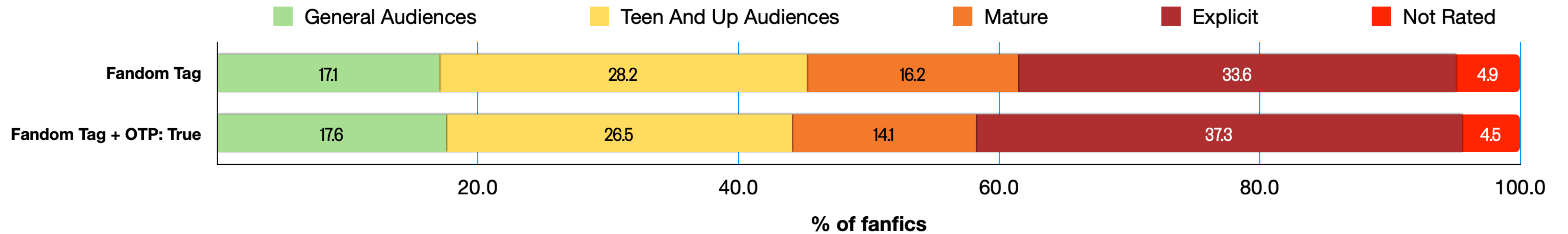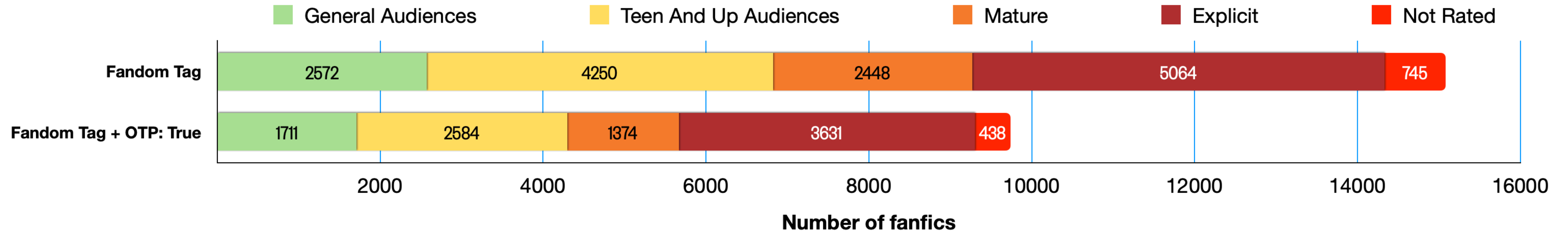OFMD fandom tag 9,738

The relative ratings distribution of the most often tagged OFMD ships on AO3, based on the number of fanfics that focus only on one ship. The ratings distribution of the whole fandom tag (filtered for fics that focus on only one ship) is shown for comparison.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is also the main ship of fics that tag several ships.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

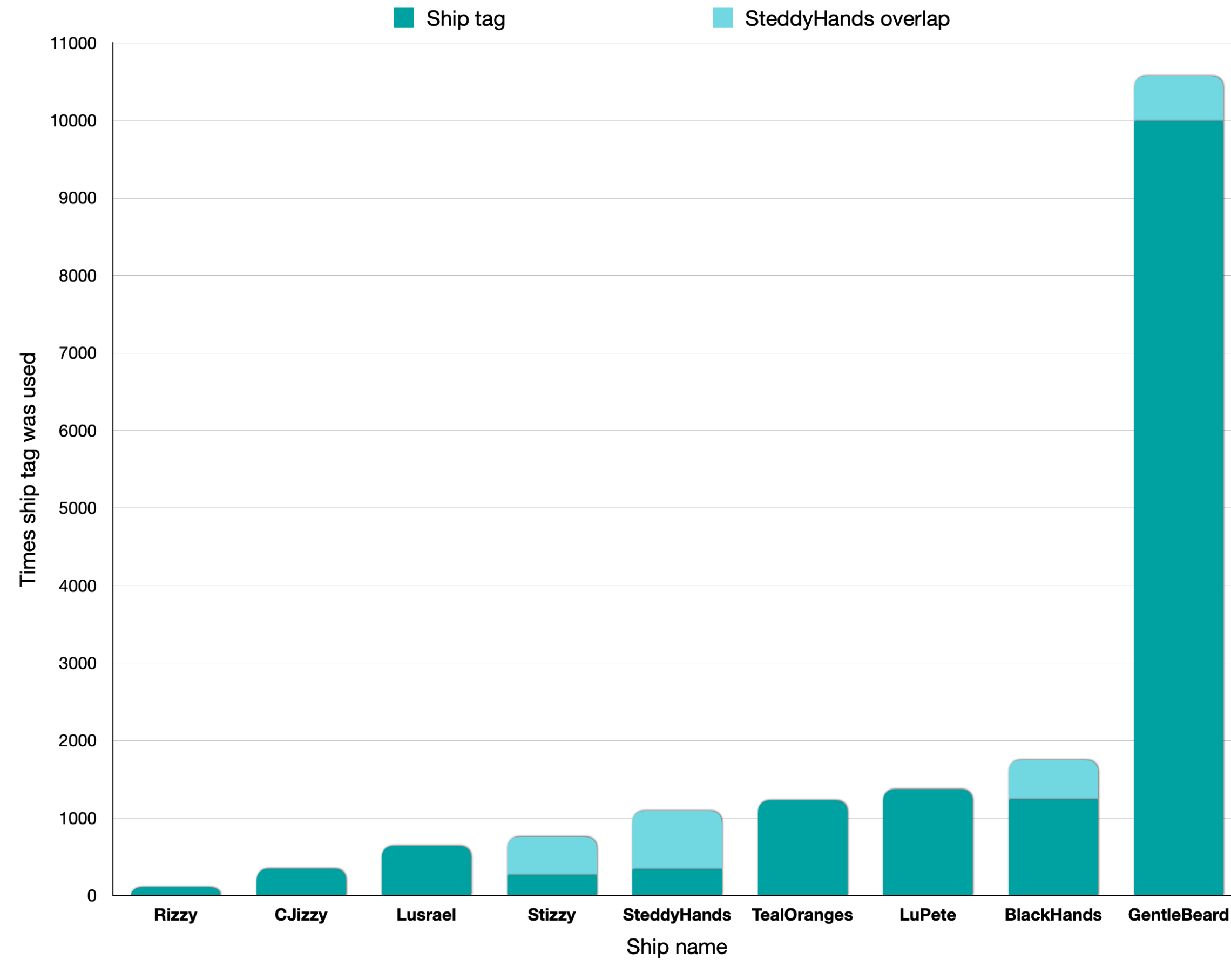# Comparing the Number of Fanfics and Their Ratings Distribution
Whole Fandom Tag vs. Fanfics That Focus on Only One Ship

Legend: General Audiences | Teen And Up Audiences | Mature | Explicit | Not Rated

Number of fanfics

	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Fandom Tag	2572	4250	2448	5064	745
Fandom Tag + OTP: True	1711	2584	1374	3631	438

% of fanfics

	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Fandom Tag	17.1	28.2	16.2	33.6	4.9
Fandom Tag + OTP: True	17.6	26.5	14.1	37.3	4.5

All fanfics under the OFMD fandom tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution, compared to the fanfics that focus on only one ship (fics filtered with OTP: True).

The SteddyHands Overlap
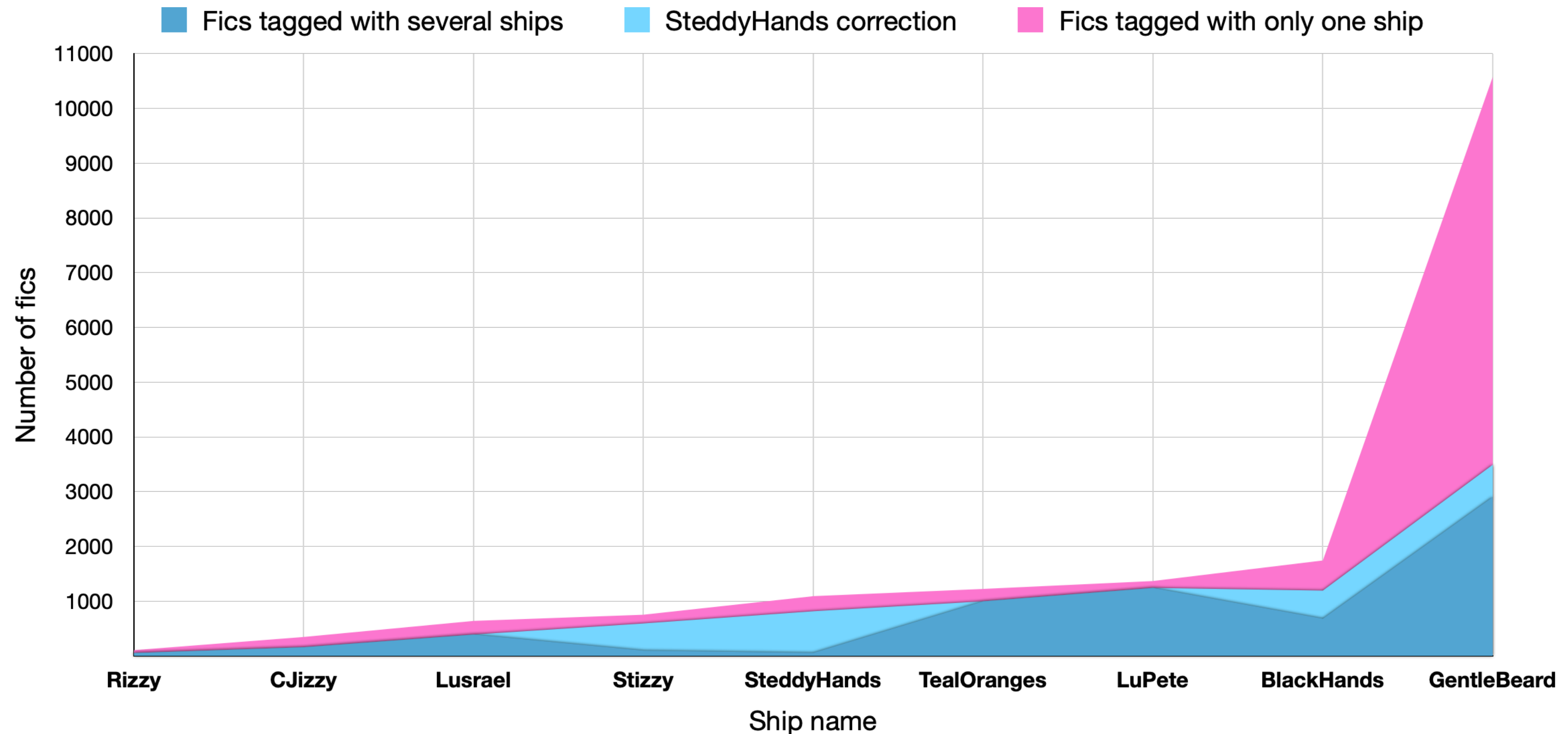## Correcting the Numbers for SteddyHands, GentleBeard, BlackHands and Stizzy

■ Ship tag ■ SteddyHands overlap

Times ship tag was used

11000
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0

Rizzy   CJizzy   Lusrael   Stizzy   SteddyHands   TealOranges   LuPete   BlackHands   GentleBeard

Ship name

The most frequently tagged OFMD ships on AO3. The total number of times Stizzy, BlackHands and GentleBeard tags are used includes the fics that are also tagged with SteddyHands. Respectively, the total number of fics tagged with SteddyHands includes the fics that are also tagged with at least one of the aforementioned ship tags.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is the focus of the fic or if it's a minor / background relationship.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

The Fanfics With the Most Frequently Tagged Ships

Legend: Fics tagged with several ships — SteddyHands correction — Fics tagged with only one ship

Y-axis: Number of fics (1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000, 9000, 10000, 11000)

X-axis (Ship name): Rizzy, CJizzy, Lusrael, Stizzy, SteddyHands, TealOranges, LuPete, BlackHands, GentleBeard

The number of fanfics featuring the most frequently tagged OFMD ships on AO3. Fics with only one ship tag are separated from the fics with several ship tags. For Stizzy, SteddyHands, BlackHands and GentleBeard, the number of overlapping fics is also shown.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

Fanfic Ratings Distribution
Several Ships vs. Only One Ship
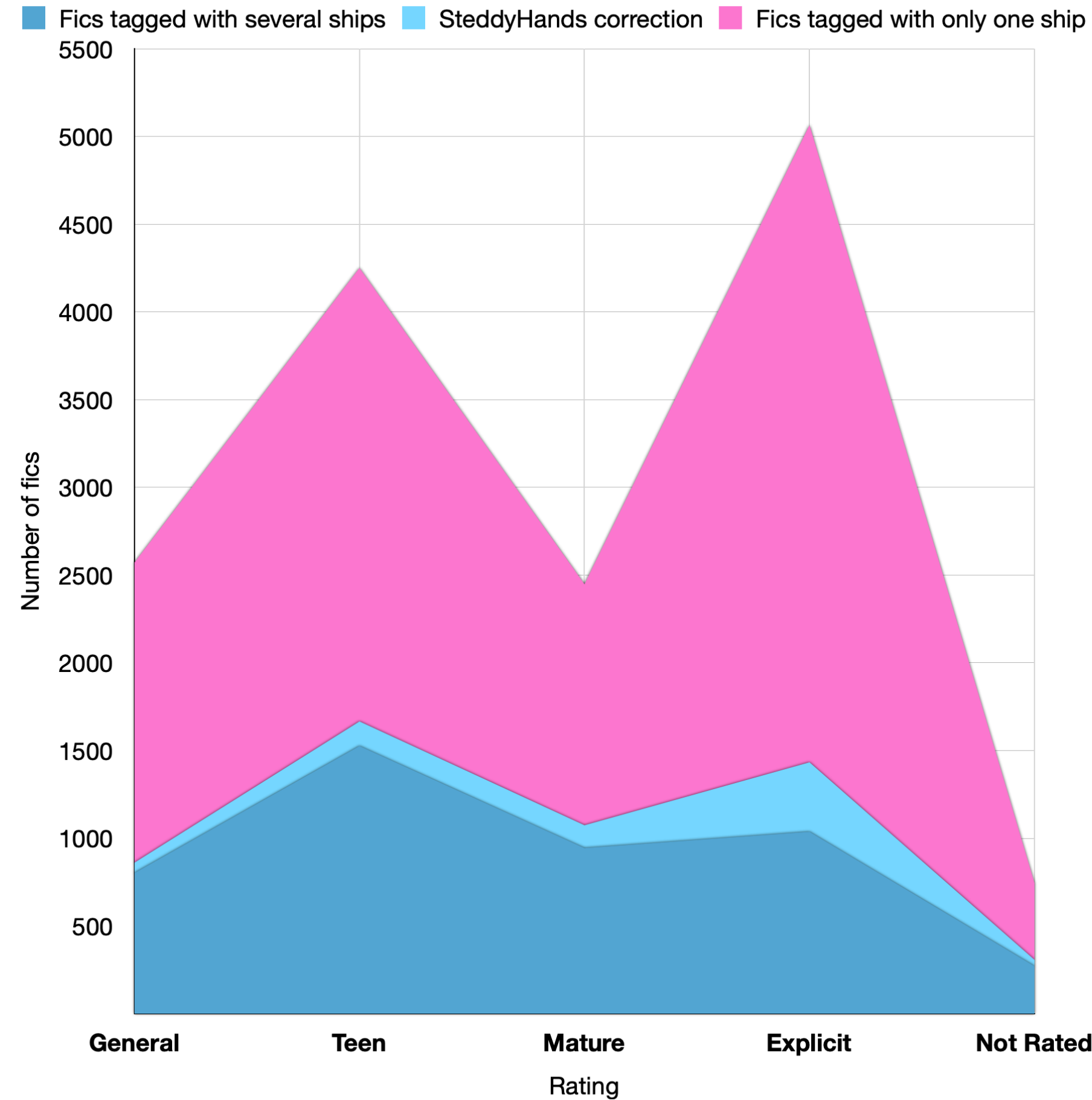
Legend: Fics tagged with several ships ■ SteddyHands correction ■ Fics tagged with only one ship ■
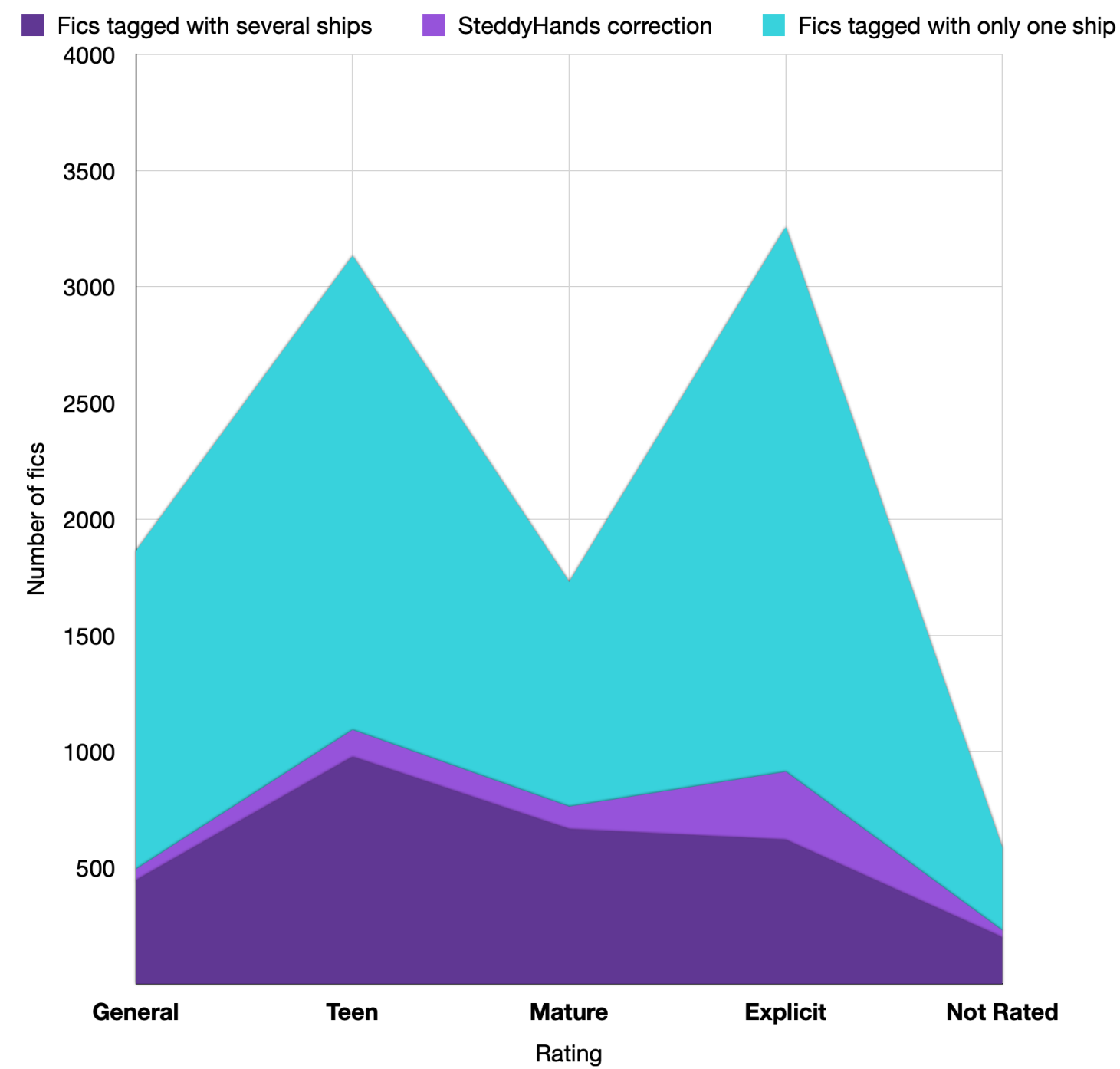
All fanfics under the OFMD fandom tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution. Fics with only one ship tag are separated from the fics with several ship tags. Fics that are tagged with SteddyHands and at least one of the pairing ships it includes are also shown separately.
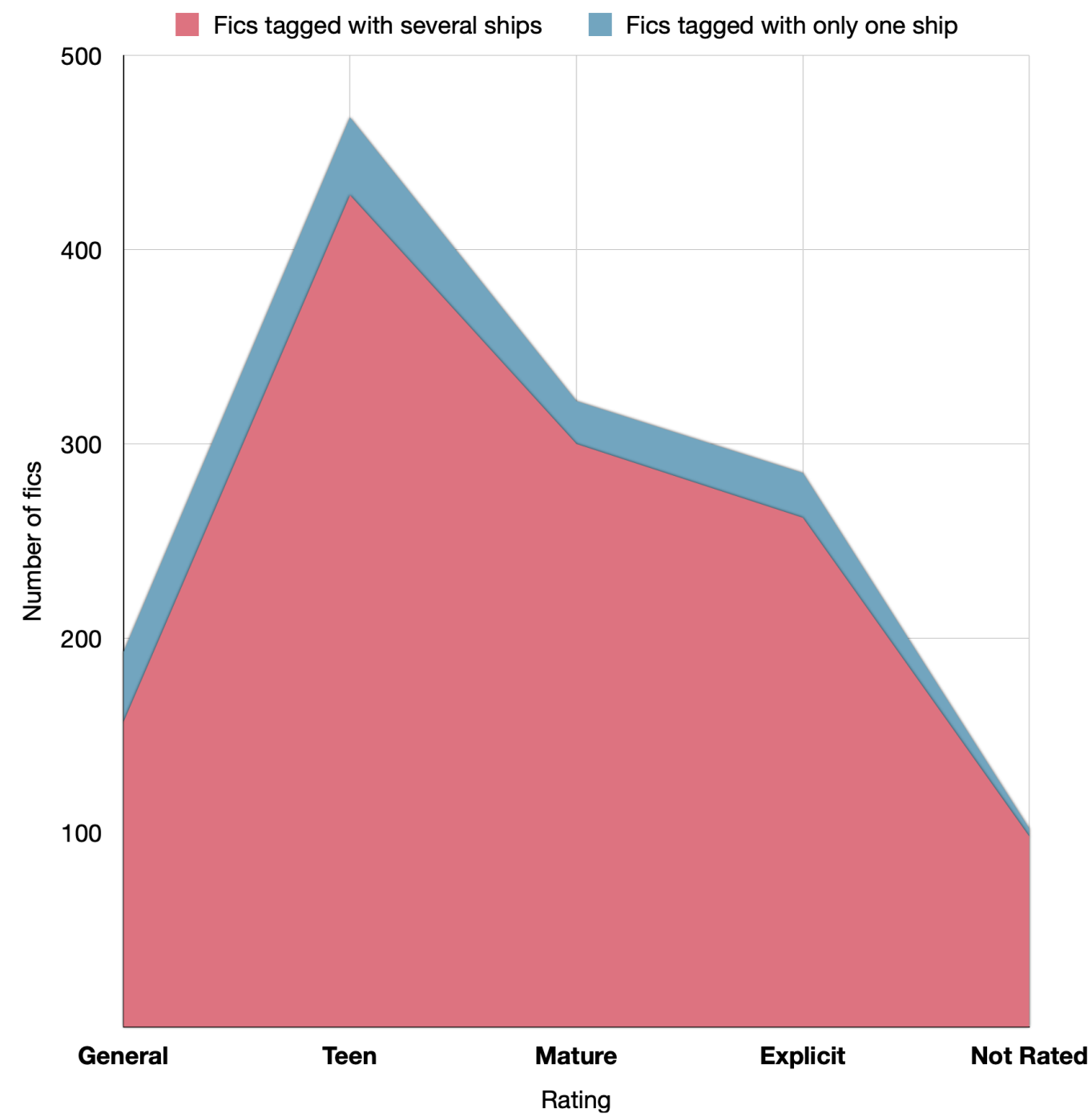
Fanfic Ratings Distribution: Canon Ships
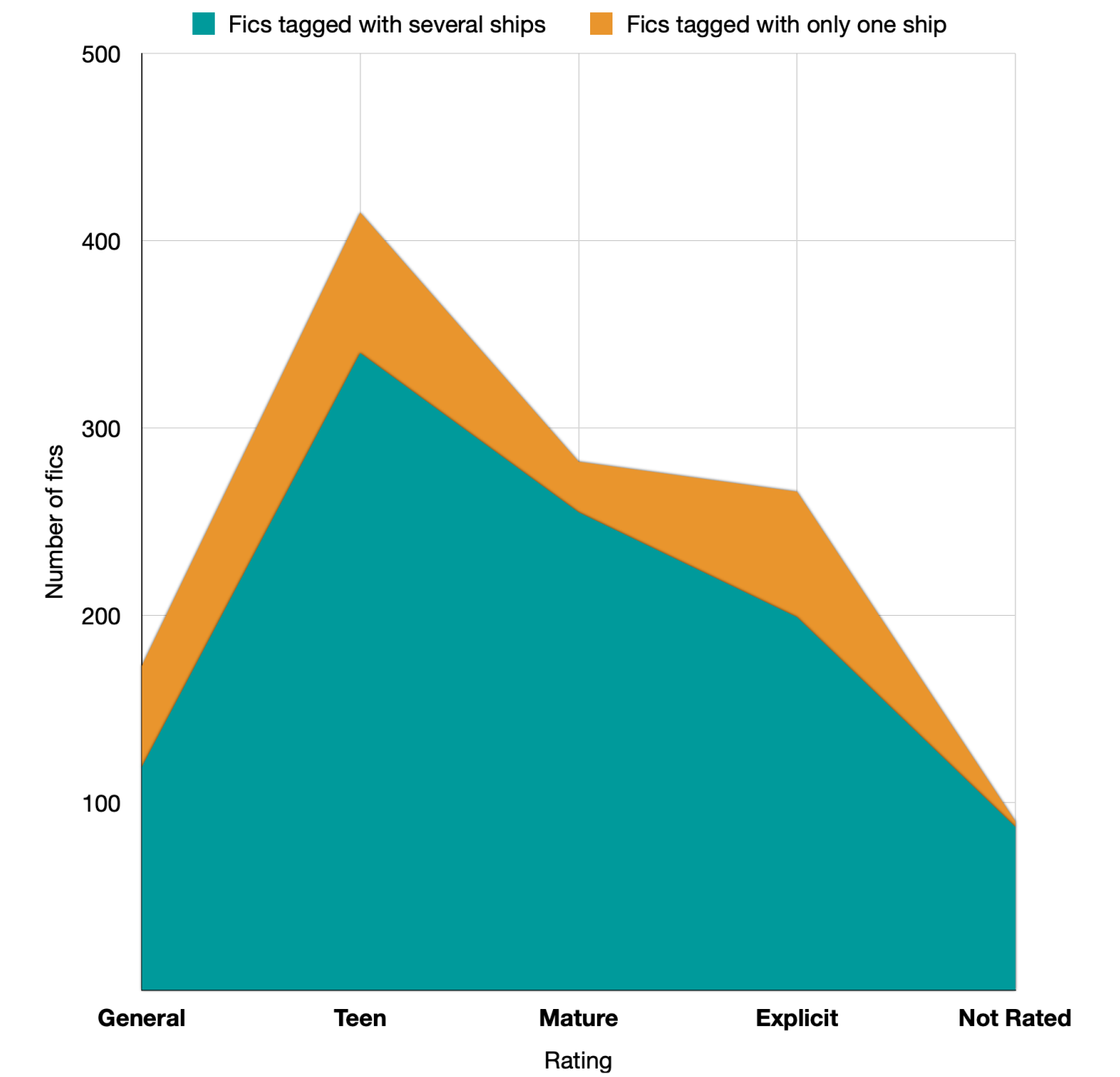## Several Ships vs. Only One Ship

GentleBeard

- Fics tagged with several ships
- SteddyHands correction
- Fics tagged with only one ship

LuPete

- Fics tagged with several ships
- Fics tagged with only one ship

TealOranges

- Fics tagged with several ships
- Fics tagged with only one ship

All fanfics under the ship tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution. Fics with only one ship tag are separated from the fics with several ship tags. With GentleBeard, fics that are also tagged with SteddyHands are shown separately.
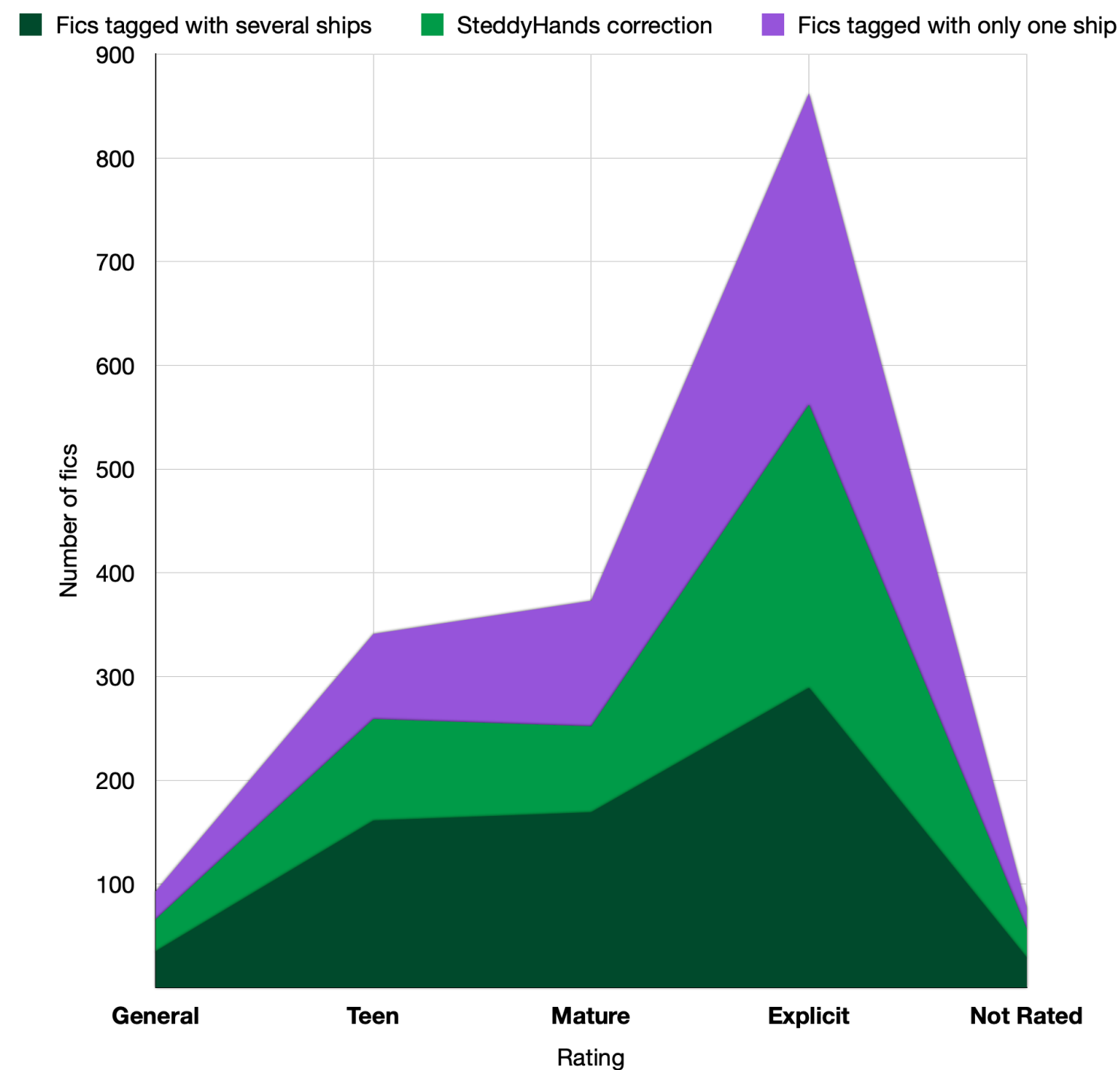
Please note that the scale on GentleBeard is different from LuPete and TealOranges.
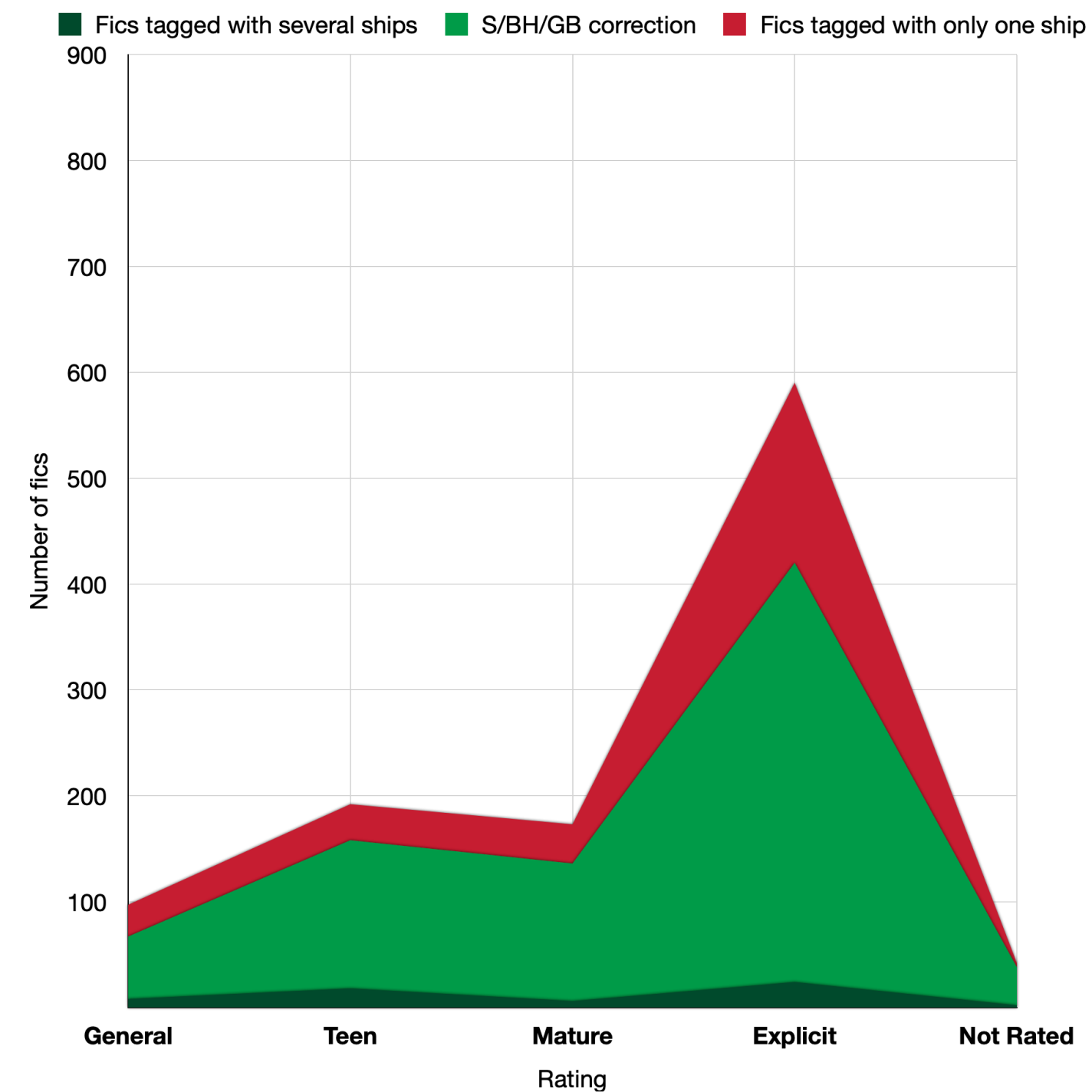
Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

Fanfic Ratings Distribution: SteddyHands & Associated Ships
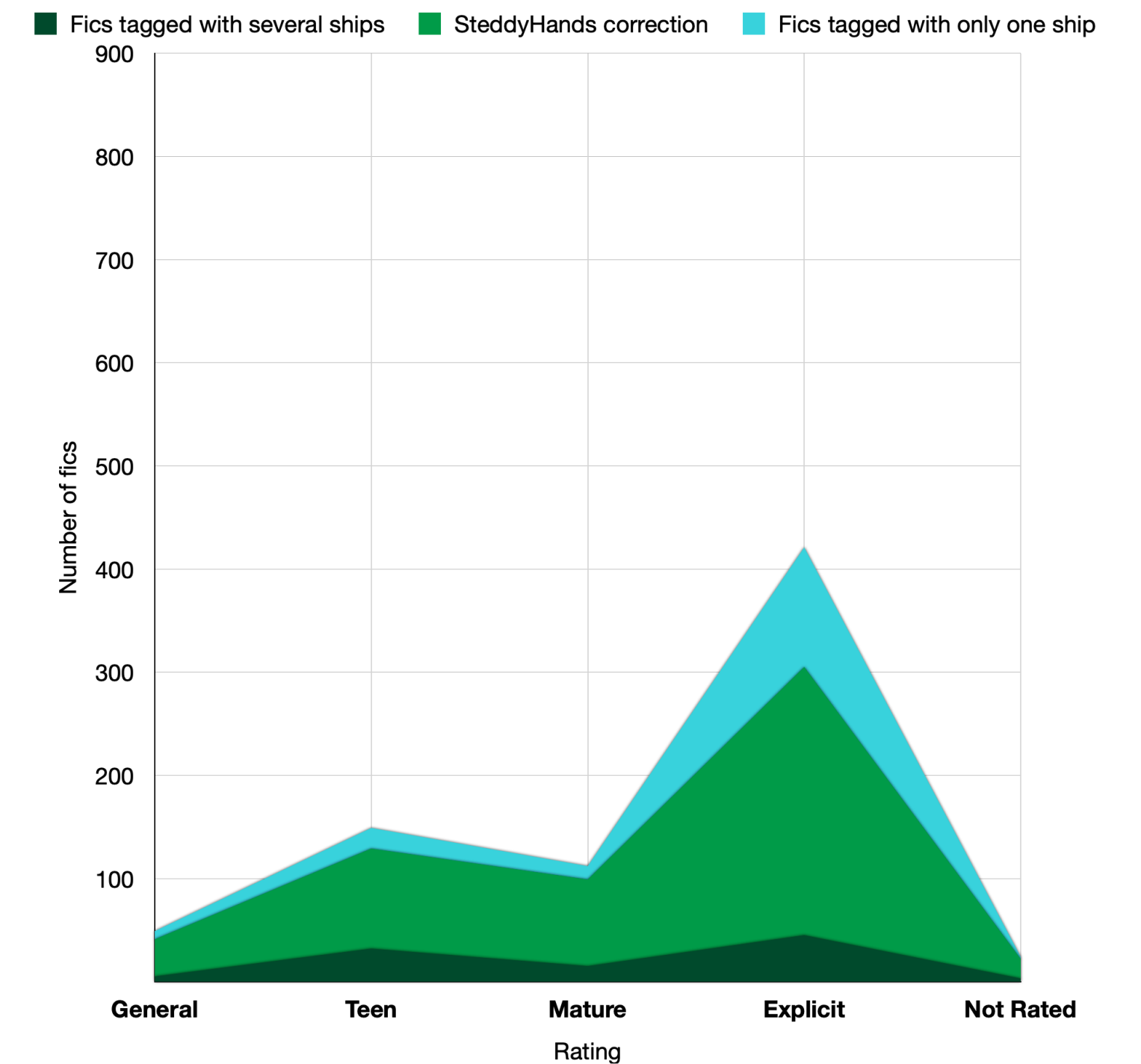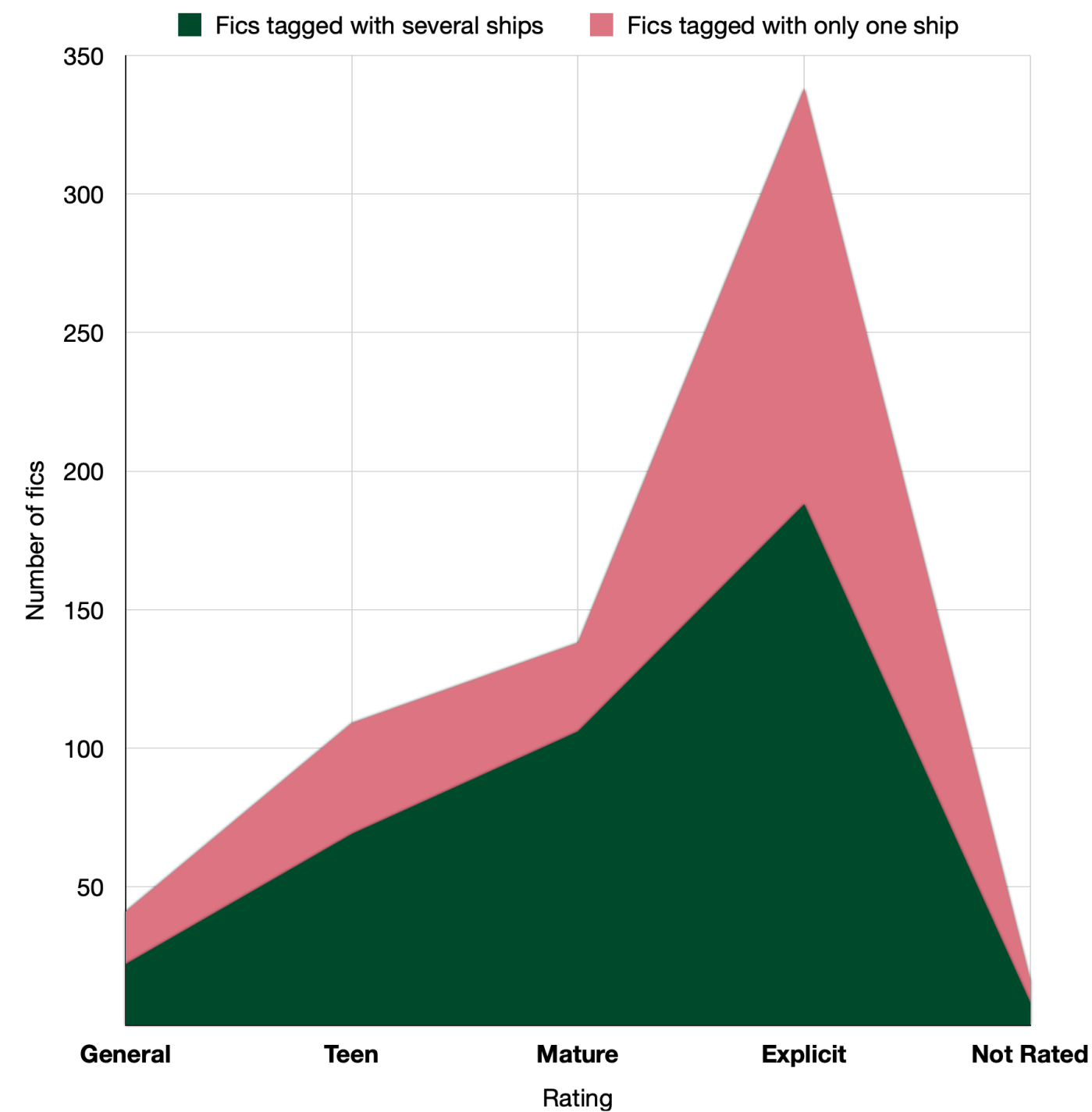## Several Ships vs. Only One Ship

All fanfics under the ship tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution. Fics with only one ship tag are separated from the fics with several ship tags. With BlackHands and Stizzy, fics that are also tagged with SteddyHands are shown separately. With SteddyHands, fics that are also tagged with at least one of the pairing ships it includes are shown separately.
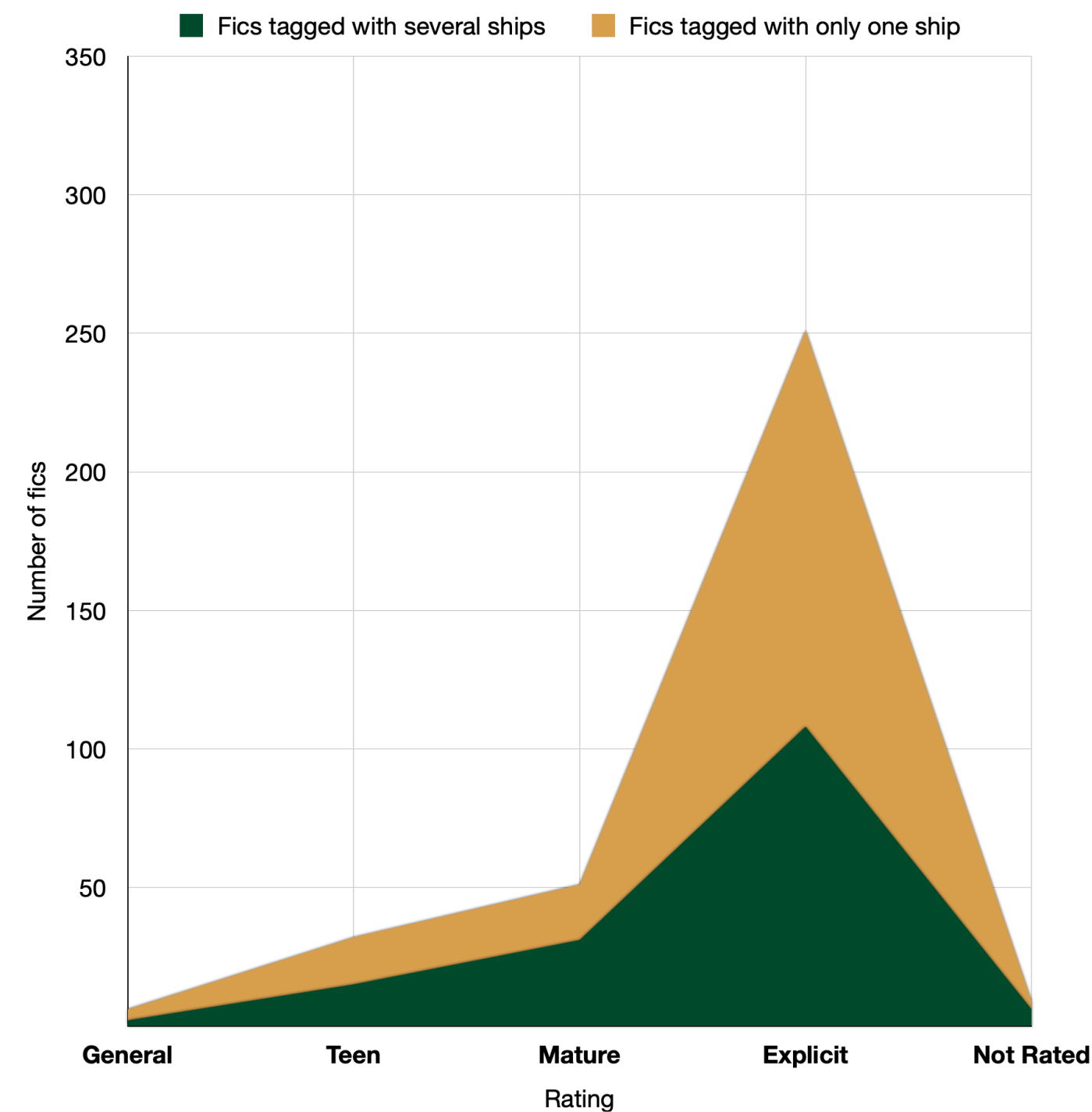
Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

Fanfic Ratings Distribution: Other Frequently Tagged Ships
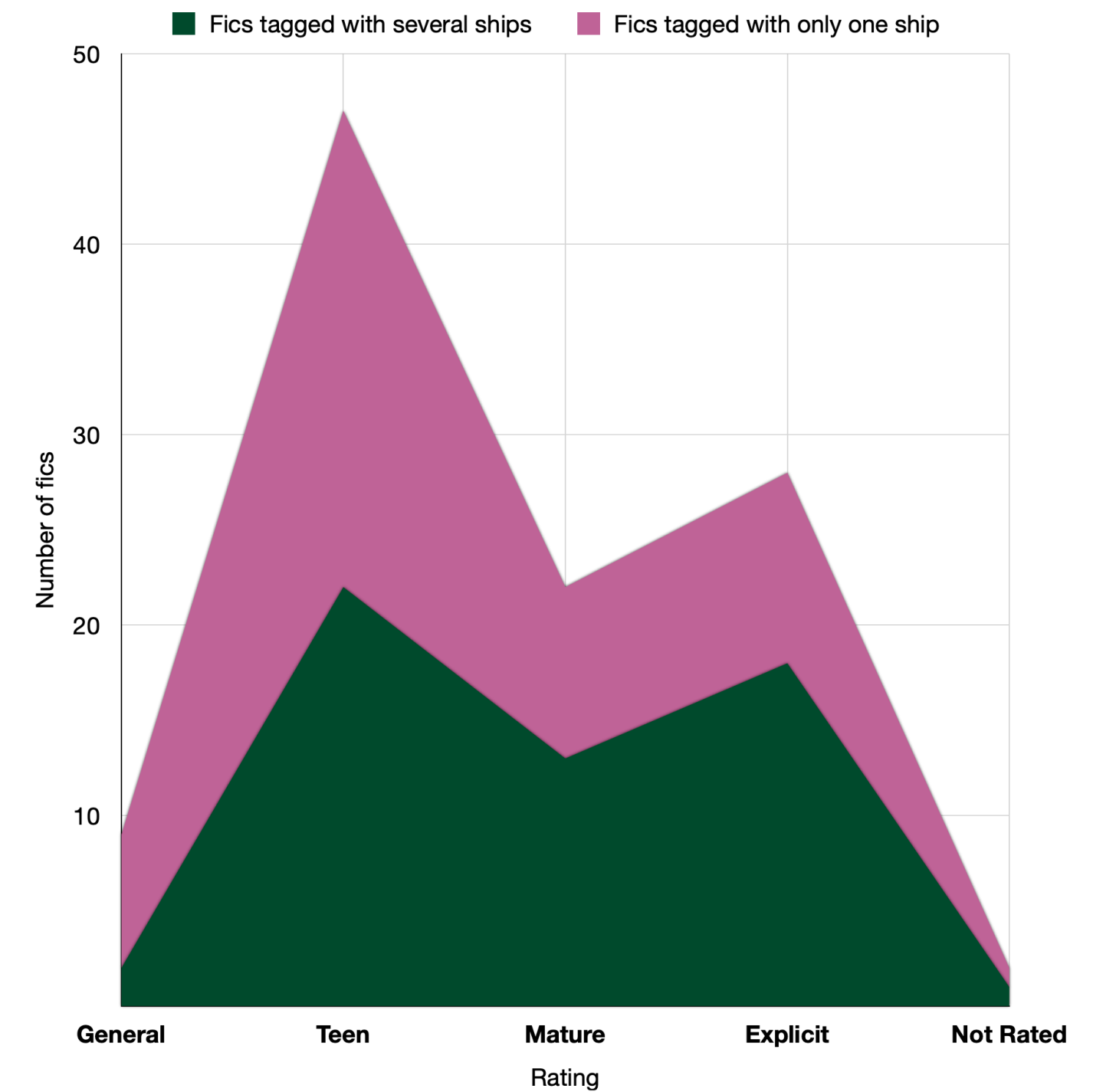## Several Ships vs. Only One Ship

Lusrael

Legend: ■ Fics tagged with several ships ■ Fics tagged with only one ship

Y-axis: Number of fics (50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350)
X-axis: Rating (General, Teen, Mature, Explicit, Not Rated)

CJizzy

Legend: ■ Fics tagged with several ships ■ Fics tagged with only one ship

Y-axis: Number of fics (50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350)
X-axis: Rating (General, Teen, Mature, Explicit, Not Rated)

Rizzy

Legend: ■ Fics tagged with several ships ■ Fics tagged with only one ship

Y-axis: Number of fics (10, 20, 30, 40, 50)
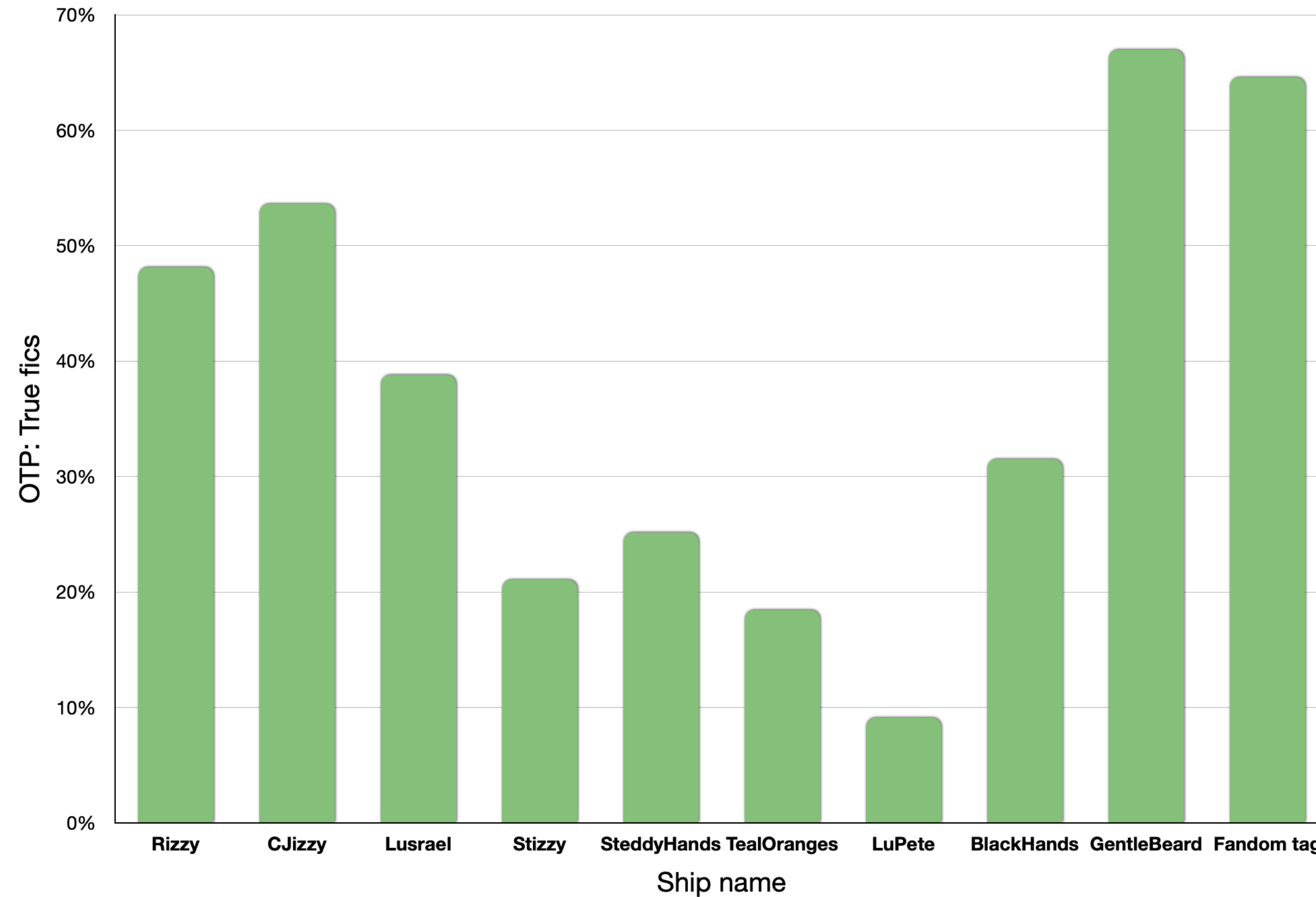X-axis: Rating (General, Teen, Mature, Explicit, Not Rated)

All fanfics under the ship tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution. Fics with only one ship tag are separated from the fics with several ship tags.

Please note that the scale on Rizzy is different from Lusrael and CJizzy.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.
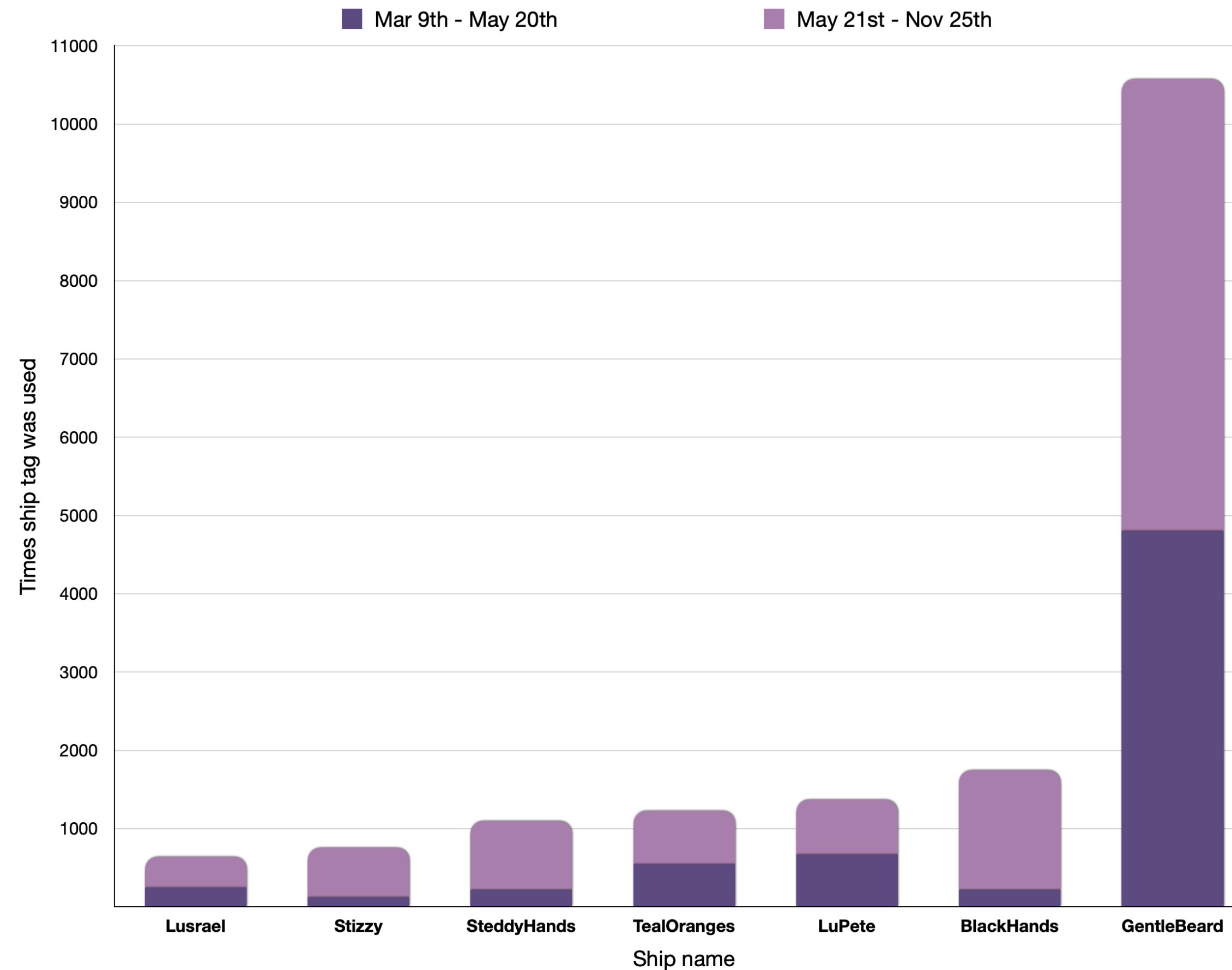
Fics That Focus on Only One Ship

The most frequently tagged OFMD ships on AO3 and the percentage of the fics that tag them without tagging any other ships.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is also the main ship of fics that tag several ships.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

The Most Frequently Tagged Ships
May 20th and Nov 25th

The most frequently tagged OFMD ships, divided between fics that were posted on AO3 between Mar 9th and May 20th, and fics that were posted between May 21st and Nov 25th. Rizzy and CJizzy are excluded, because there isn't comparison data from May 20th.

This data does not reveal if the ship in question is the focus of the fic or if it's a minor / background relationship.

Click here to see the definitions of each ship name.

Fanfic Ratings Distribution
May 20th and Nov 25th

Legend: ■ Mar 9th - May 20th ■ May 21st - Nov 25th

Y-axis: Number of fics (500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5500)

X-axis (Rating): General, Teen, Mature, Explicit, Not Rated

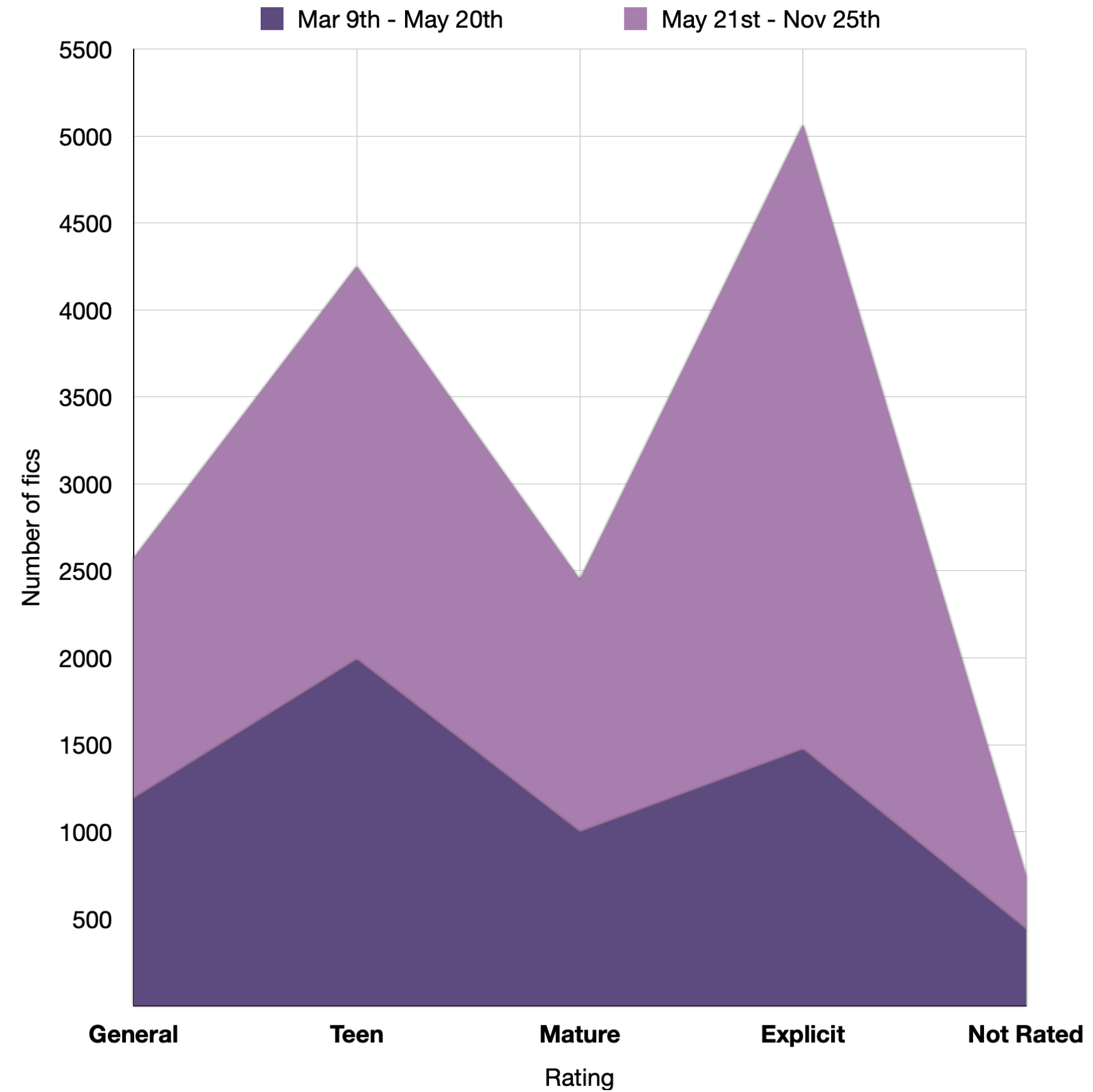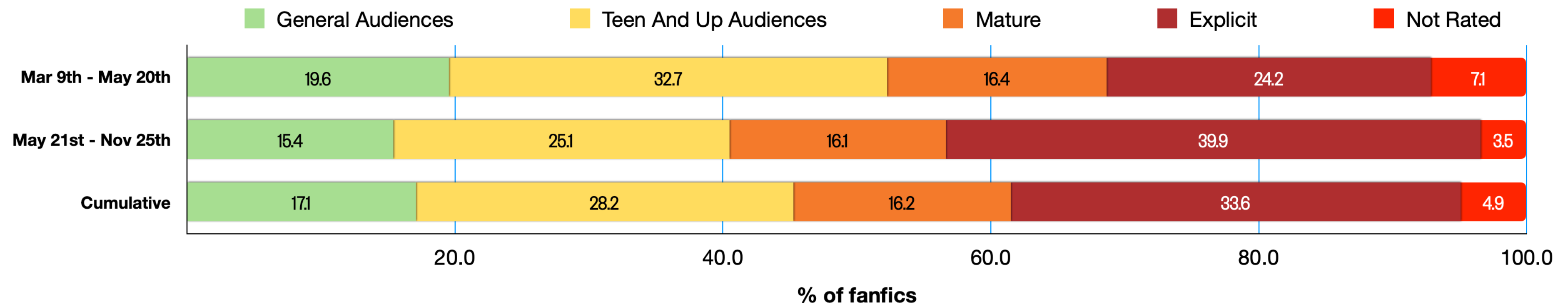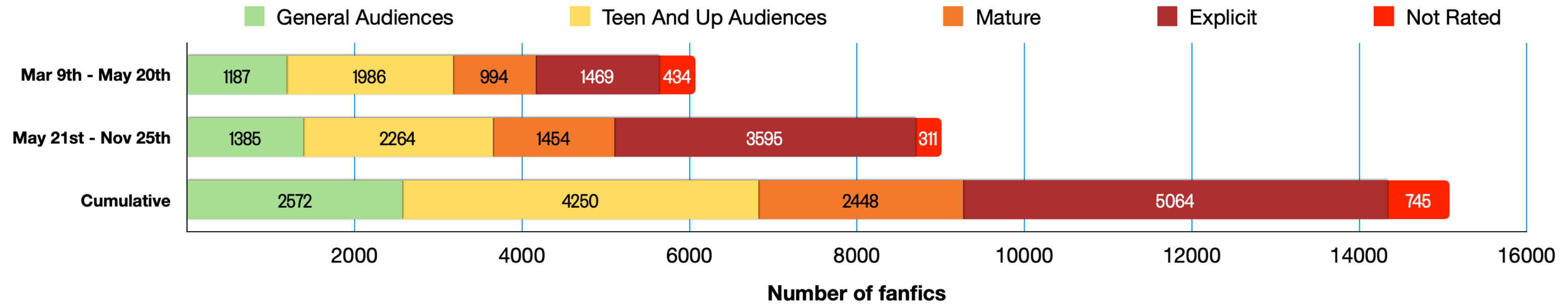All fanfics under the OFMD fandom tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution, divided between fics that were posted on AO3 between Mar 9th and May 20th, and fics that were posted between May 21st and Nov 25th.

Number of Fanfics and Their Ratings Distribution
May 20th and Nov 25th

Legend: General Audiences | Teen And Up Audiences | Mature | Explicit | Not Rated

Number of fanfics

Period	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Mar 9th - May 20th	1187	1986	994	1469	434
May 21st - Nov 25th	1385	2264	1454	3595	311
Cumulative	2572	4250	2448	5064	745

(x-axis: Number of fanfics — 2000, 4000, 6000, 8000, 10000, 12000, 14000, 16000)

% of fanfics

Period	General Audiences	Teen And Up Audiences	Mature	Explicit	Not Rated
Mar 9th - May 20th	19.6	32.7	16.4	24.2	7.1
May 21st - Nov 25th	15.4	25.1	16.1	39.9	3.5
Cumulative	17.1	28.2	16.2	33.6	4.9

(x-axis: % of fanfics — 20.0, 40.0, 60.0, 80.0, 100.0)

All fanfics under the OFMD fandom tag on AO3 and their ratings distribution, compared between the fics that were posted on AO3 between Mar 9th and May 20th, and fics that were posted between May 21st and Nov 25th. The current ratings distribution of the fandom tag is shown for comparison.

Findings
Canon ships

- GentleBeard is overwhelmingly popular. It also has more "OTP: True" fics than fics with several ship tags.

- LuPete and TealOranges are the 3rd and 4th most frequently tagged ships, but in "OTP: True" fics their ranking drops to 8th and 5th respectively. They have the smallest share of fics that tag only them (less than 10% and 20%, respectively).

- The ratings distribution of all canon ships leans away from Explicit, when compared to the ratings distribution of the whole fandom tag. Each ship has a bigger share of General Audiences, Teen And Up Audiences and Mature fics than the whole fandom tag.

  - Compared to the whole ship tag, "OTP: True" fics have a bigger share of G and T rated fics and a smaller share of M rated fics.

  - For GentleBeard and TealOranges, the share of E rated fics is bigger in "OTP: True" fics, but for LuPete it's smaller.

Findings

SteddyHands & associated ships

- Fics that tag SteddyHands frequently also tag at least one of the pairing ships (GentleBeard, BlackHands, Stizzy). When this overlap is taken into account, the ranking of BlackHands drops from 2nd to 3rd and Stizzy from 6th to 8th.

- In "OTP: True" fics BlackHands and SteddyHands are the 2nd and 3rd most frequently tagged ships. Stizzy is the 7th, which implies that Stede and Izzy are more often shipped as a part of the throuple than as a pair.

- The ratings distribution of SteddyHands, BlackHands and Stizzy leans towards Explicit, especially in "OTP: True" fics.

  - Over half of the fics are E rated except for the BlackHands ship tag, where only 49.4% of the fics are E rated.

Findings
Other frequently tagged ships

- The rest of the frequently tagged ships feature Izzy—just like the other non-canonical ships.

- For Lusrael and CJizzy, the ratings distribution looks similar to SteddyHands, BlackHands and Stizzy: it leans towards Explicit, especially in "OTP: True" fics.

- For Rizzy, the ratings distribution leans towards Teen And Up Audiences. Out of all the ships in this study, Rizzy has the biggest share of T rated fics.

    - Since the total fic count of Rizzy is quite small, and the fics are written by a handful of people, the focus on T rated fics might be a personal preference of the authors and not something that is specific to Roach/Izzy as a ship.

- For CJizzy, the ratings distribution leans heavily towards Explicit. When compared to the ratings distribution of the whole fandom tag, CJizzy has more than twice the share of E rated fics, which is also the biggest share among the frequently tagged ships.

Findings

All fanfics in the OFMD fandom tag

- The most popular rating is Explicit, but Teen And Up Audiences is not far behind.

  - With the fics that tag several ships, T is the most popular rating and E comes second.

- 65% of the fics are tagged with only one ship.

  - 37.3% of "OTP: True" fics are E rated.

- The popularity of General Audiences and Mature rated fics is almost equal.

Findings

The change in OFMD fanfics between May 20th and Nov 25th

- BlackHands, Stizzy and SteddyHands had the biggest relative growth, with 88%, 84% and 81% of their fics posted during last six months.

- The canon ships had 44-48% of their fics posted during the first ~2.5 months after episodes 1-3 had aired. They were also the most frequently tagged ships on May 20th.

- 60% of all OFMD fanfics have been posted during the last six months.

  - Explicit rating has the biggest relative growth, with 71% of the fics posted during the last six months.

  - On May 20th, there were 35% more fics rated T than fics rated E. Currently, there are 19% more E rated fics than T rated fics.

Main Conclusions

What did we learn?

- GentleBeard is crushing it and leaving all other ships in its wake.

- Other canon ships get tagged frequently, but they have a relatively small share of fics that tag only them. This might indicate that similar to the show, they also feature as background relationships in fanfiction.

- Izzy Hands is the fandom bicycle.

- The fandom has gotten hornier since spring.

About This Study

Who, why, when?

- This study was conducted by **Tikli**. After seeing some tweets making claims about certain OFMD ships, they got curious and wanted to find out which ships are the most popular ones.

- Tikli collected the data on November 25th 2022, processed it and made the graphs during the next week and then wrote this study report, publishing it on December 4th 2022.

- This is an officially unofficial fandom study. It's done for fun, because numbers are interesting and graphs are pretty.