

Are Trans Headcanons Becoming More Popular Than Canonical Trans Characters?

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We've all seen tweets criticizing that trans headcanons (HCs) are overtaking Jim in terms of popularity—but are they really, or is it just perception?

To figure this out, I decided to take a look at how often the 3 most popular trans headcanons (Ed, Stede and Izzy) are tagged on AO3 compared to how many Jim-centric fics there are.

Jim is often tagged even when they are only a side character in the fic.

To estimate how many of the 2400+ fics under "Jim Jimenez" tag have Jim as a main character, I used the 200 most recently posted fics (~8% of all the fics under the tag) as a sample to determine the percentage of fics that focus on Jim.

I read through the summaries of the sample fics and tallied how many of them had Jim as a main character. I did not count anthologies (such as kinktober collection fics) in Jim's favour, even when there were some chapters that were Jim-centric.

Jim was a major character in 39 of the 200 sample fics. Based on this, I estimated there to be 474 fics where Jim is the main character. (You can send me a message if you want to know more about the math I did.)

There are 445 fics that tag one or more of the top-3 trans HC characters. The total of trans HC tags used for these characters is 508 (Figure 1).

While that does make it seem like trans HCs are taking over, when you look at the appearances of individual trans HC characters you can see that this isn't the case. If we round Trans!Izzy HCs up to 300 and round Jim's fics down to 500, Jim is still 66.7% more popular as a character on AO3 than Trans!Izzy.

The full break down is shown in Figure 2.

Let me know if you have any questions.

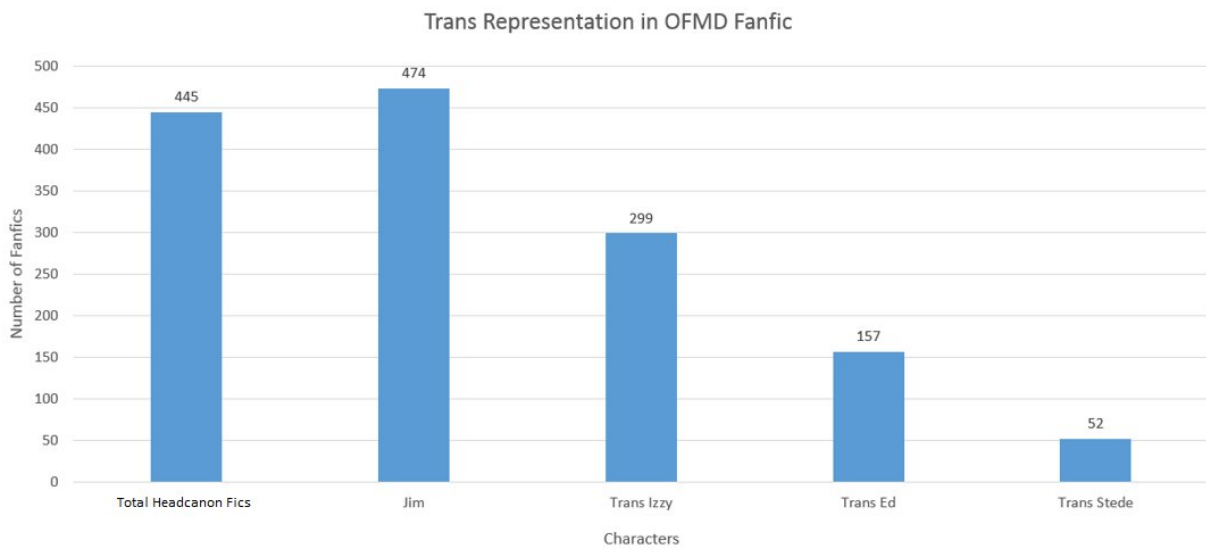


Figure 1. Trans Representation in OFMD Fanfic based on the number of fanfics for each character individually and also the combined number of fanfics for the three main trans headcanons.

Trans Representation in OFMD Fanfics

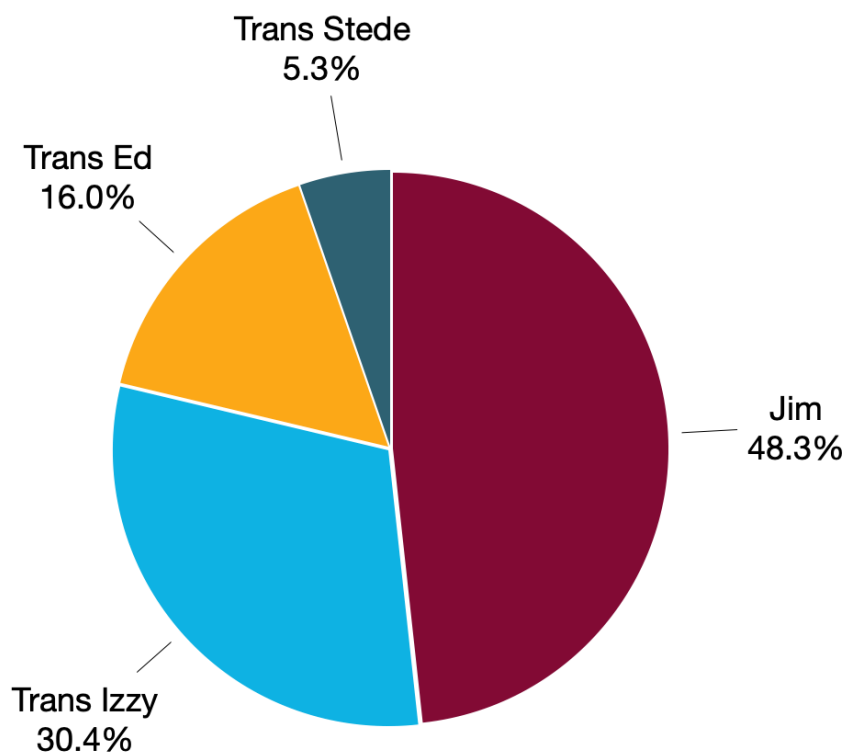


Figure 2. Trans Representation in OFMD Fanfics based on how often each character appears. The data consists of fanfics that have Jim as a main character and fics that feature a trans headcanon version of Izzy, Ed and Stede. There were 982 fanfics in total and the data was collected from AO3 on October 10th 2022.