

Thoughts on Furies?

LGBTQ+ phobia can hide in some strange places...

Mary Rose Krouse • DATA-510: MSDS Capstone • Summer 2026



Abstract

The “furry” fan community is one centered around an interest in animal characters in art, from film to costume. These fans, individually called “furries,” are not only majority LGBTQ+, but also highly stigmatized, as a common punching bag for cyberbullying, misinformation, and even political alarmism [1, 3]. Through a survey on people's thoughts on both furries and issues involving the LGBTQ+ community, this project seeks to investigate the suggestion that attitudes toward furries and toward diverse sexual orientations and gender identities may be related.

Research Question

Are unfavorable attitudes toward furries significantly associated with stigma toward LGBTQ+ people and issues? How does the relationship with furry favorability differ between attitudes toward **gender identity** (including transgender/non-binary/2-spirit/etc. people and issues) versus toward **sexual orientation** (including gay/homosexual/bisexual/pansexual/etc. people and issues)?

Motivation

In the current climate of rising political and cultural threats to the rights and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people within the United States and beyond [2], being an effective ally is increasingly important. Strong allyship ends with concrete and ongoing action in support of pro-LGBTQ+ causes, but it also begins with a look inward at personal biases. This extends all the way down to examining small, unconscious, or seemingly innocuous gut feelings. For example, *why might some niche subculture with strong ties to the LGBTQ+ community make you feel a certain way?* This project is intended for allies to the LGBTQ+ community, presenting furries as a case study of where stigma and feelings of discomfort are common, yet possibly associated with homophobia and transphobia.

Data Analysis

Respondents rated their agreement to a list of statements. Each statement belongs to one of three categories, relating to attitudes on: **furries**, **non-heterosexual orientations**, and **diverse gender identities**. Each category contains 20-24 questions. Respondents selected from a scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Responses may demonstrate an individual's (un)favorability, ignorance, stigma, or ideological (dis)agreement with a given category.

Aggregating all question responses, I assigned each respondent three “favorability scores,” approximating their favorability toward 1) furries, 2) non-heterosexual orientations, and 3) diverse gender identities. Each score has three levels:

1. **Highly favorable**
2. **Moderately favorable**
3. **Ambivalent or Neutral**
4. **Unfavorable**

As you observe score distributions (fig. 1-3), please note that favorability can only be compared within the same score type. For example, if someone scores unfavorably on gender and neutrally on orientation, they are not necessarily less favorable on gender.

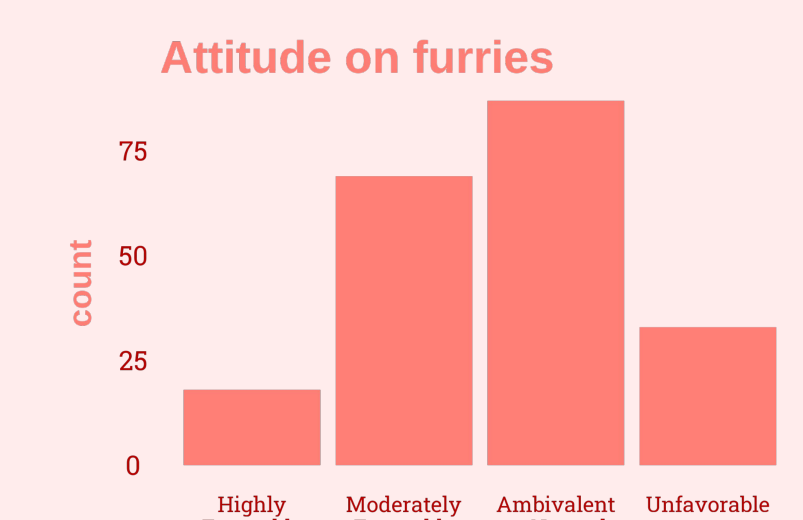


Figure 1: Furry favorability distribution

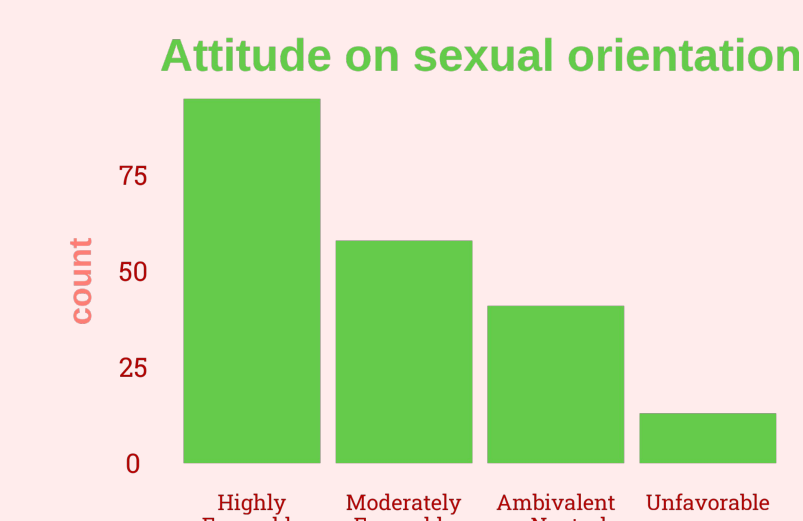


Figure 2: Sexual orientation favorability distribution

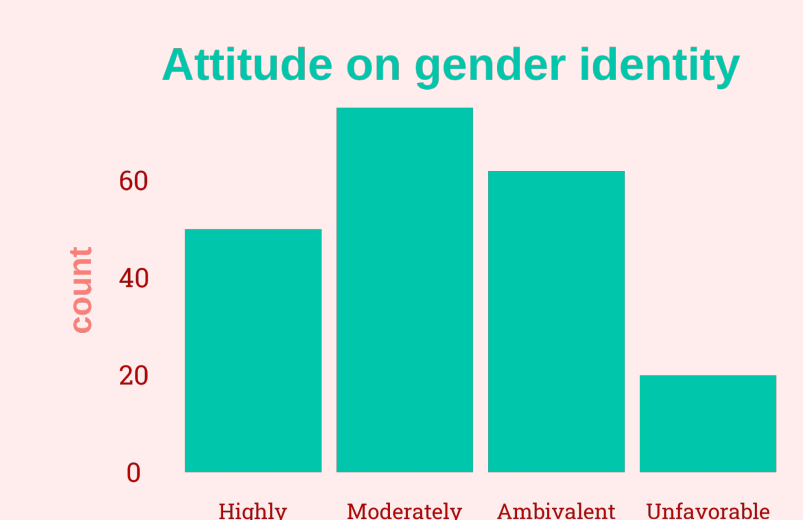


Figure 3: Gender identity favorability distribution

To investigate the main research question, I asked three sub-questions. 1: **As favorability toward diverse gender identities increases, does furry favorability increase?** 2: **As favorability toward non-heterosexual orientations increases, does furry favorability increase?** 3: **Is furry favorability predictable given responses to all specific questions on both gender and orientation?**

1 Yes - Furry favorability and gender identity favorability share a moderate correlation (Spearman Rho: 0.52), with an extremely low p-value (<2.2e-16). This means that as gender identity favorability increases, furry favorability tends to increase a moderate and extremely statistically significant amount. (See [fig. 4](#))

2 Yes - Furry favorability and orientation favorability share a weak to moderate correlation (Spearman Rho: 0.36), with an extremely low p-value (1.5e-07). This means that as orientation favorability increases, furry favorability tends to increase only a low to moderate amount, but enough to be extremely statistically significant. (See [fig. 5](#))

3 Yes, somewhat - Using random forest-based ordinal regression with a 3:1 train-test ratio, predicted furry favorability scores have a macro-averaged mean absolute error of 0.59. This means that averaged across all possible values, predicted values are on average 59% of one step on the favorability scale away from true values. (See [fig. 6](#))

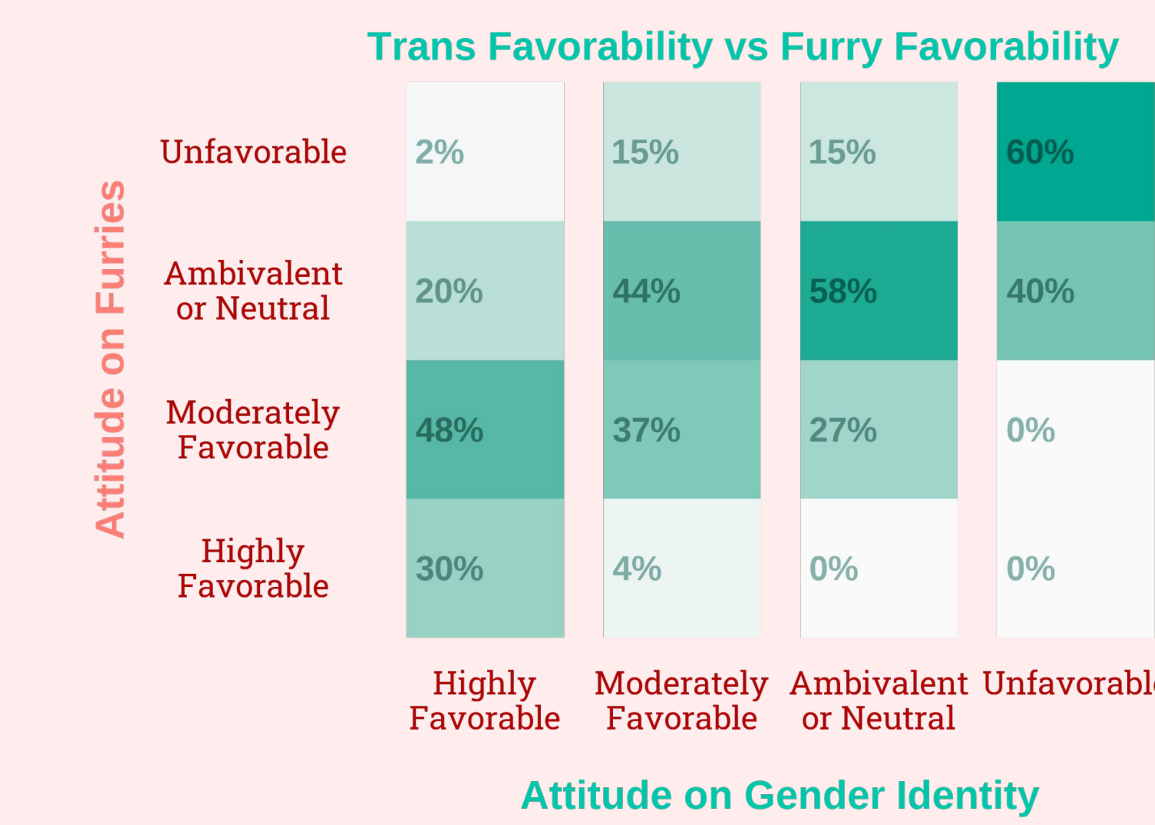


Figure 4: Gender identity favorability vs furry favorability

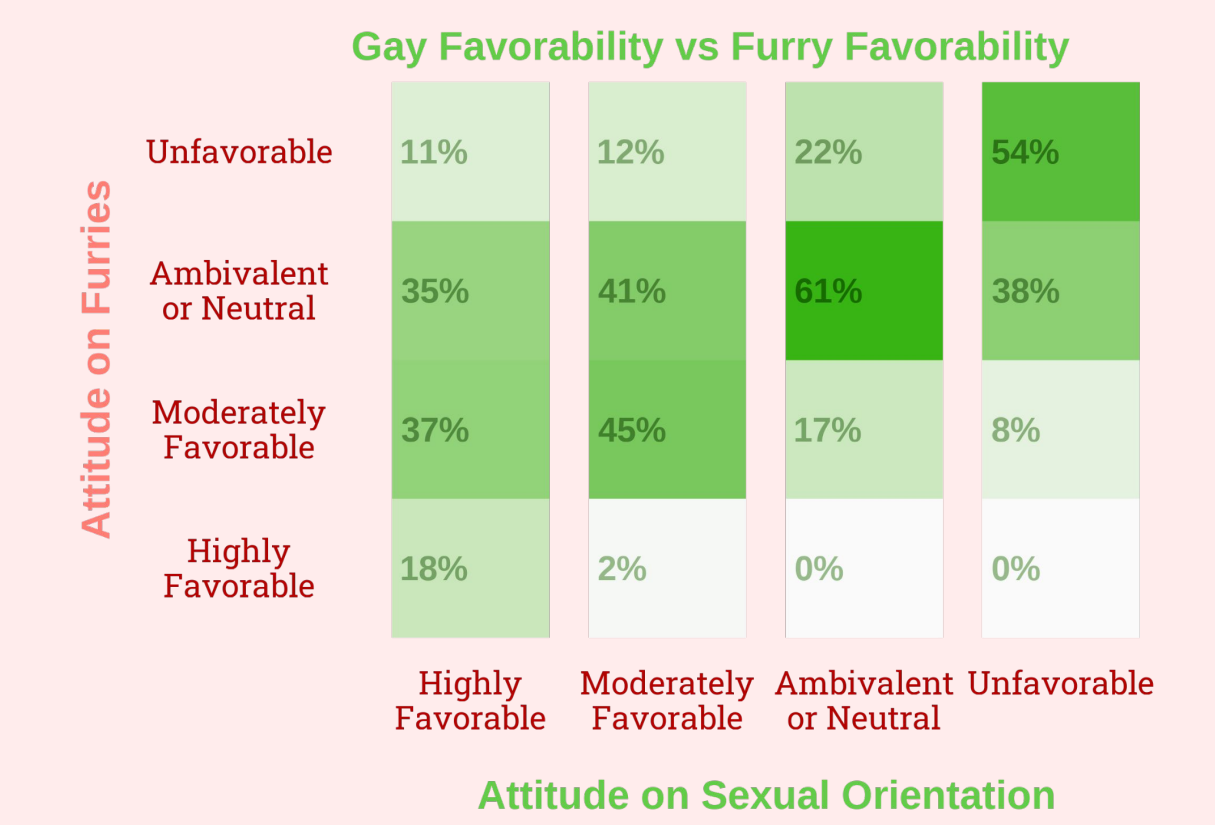


Figure 5: Sexual orientation favorability vs furry favorability

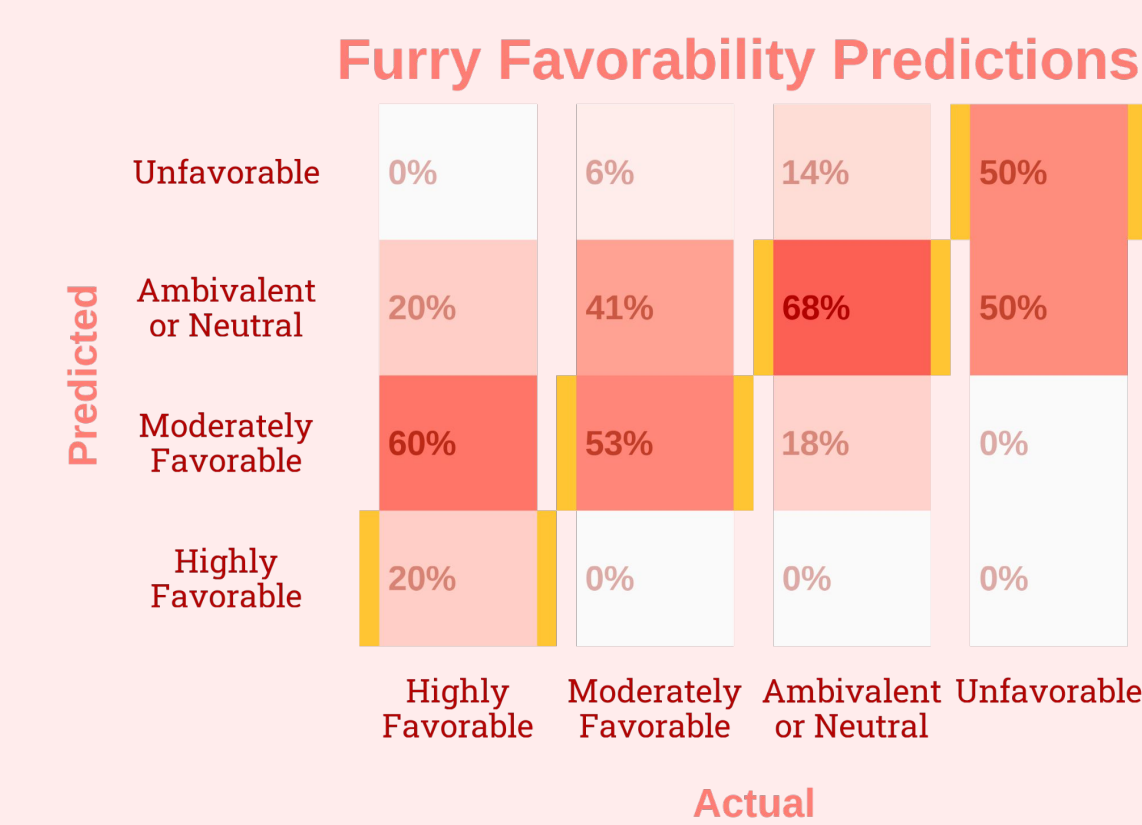


Figure 6: True vs predicted furry favorability scores

In conclusion, is it inherently homophobic or transphobic to dislike or have reservations about furries? **No!** It is impossible to make that kind of conclusion from these data. However, it is clear that **unfavorable feelings around furries are associated with stigma, disagreement, and bigotry toward LGBTQ+ people and issues**. While the furry community is not itself a marginalized group, it is important to be sensitive to the fact that it is made up of a vast majority of people who are.

Outside the scope of what the data can show, it is likely that the culture of the furry community is heavily built and influenced by Queer culture, including aspects of that culture that outsiders may find strange or uncomfortable. Personal reservations toward the furry community, though they may be more socially acceptable, may parallel stigma toward the LGBTQ+ community, and thus are worth examining.

Ethics & Limitations

I required informed consent from all participants, confirming that they are each at least 18 years old and understand that: all responses are anonymous, participation is voluntary, responses cannot be withdrawn after submission, the questionnaire may contain sensitive topics, and response data may be released publicly.

When considering releasing results publicly, such as in a Grafana dashboard or on Kaggle, it was important to ensure that responses remain as anonymous as possible. The Google Forms questionnaire did not collect names or email addresses. By default, Google Forms exports a timestamp to Google Sheets with each response. In the process of data wrangling, I dropped the timestamp column, out of concern that some respondents could be traceable by time of response, such as by locating a comment declaring completion on one of my r/SurveyExchange posts, from the same minute. In the sections on how a respondent found my survey, some methods of collection, such as scanning a QR code on a tee shirt I wore, and in-person locations, including Salem, Oregon and Vashon, Washington, had very few responses. Thus, I set all such responses to blank (NA). Lastly, out of similar concern to timestamping, I shuffled the order of all rows.

One challenge in conducting a survey was finding a representative sample. My target population was the entire world in theory, but not realistically. I recruited online respondents through survey exchange websites and Reddit communities, who, though international, are generally students and younger people conducting their own surveys. My few in-person responses are from liberal-leaning areas in Washington and Oregon of various age groups. All participants are English language readers. Neither sample should be assumed to truly represent everyone in the world.

Related Work

Existing research into the furry fandom has largely been conducted by the International Anthropomorphic Research Project (**IARP**) and presented through its public face, **Furscience.com**. IARP presents the furry fandom as a case study of a stigmatized community, with the goal of de-stigmatizing [1]. Most of its research involves conducting surveys within the furry fandom and other fan communities. Though my goal is similar, my personal data collection differs in that I instead attempt to survey a sample of outside attitudes beyond the furry community, as broadly as possible. Additionally, my motivations extend beyond the interests of furries themselves, to the broader LGBTQ+ community.

Data Sources

Primary Data

on attitudes toward furries, etc.

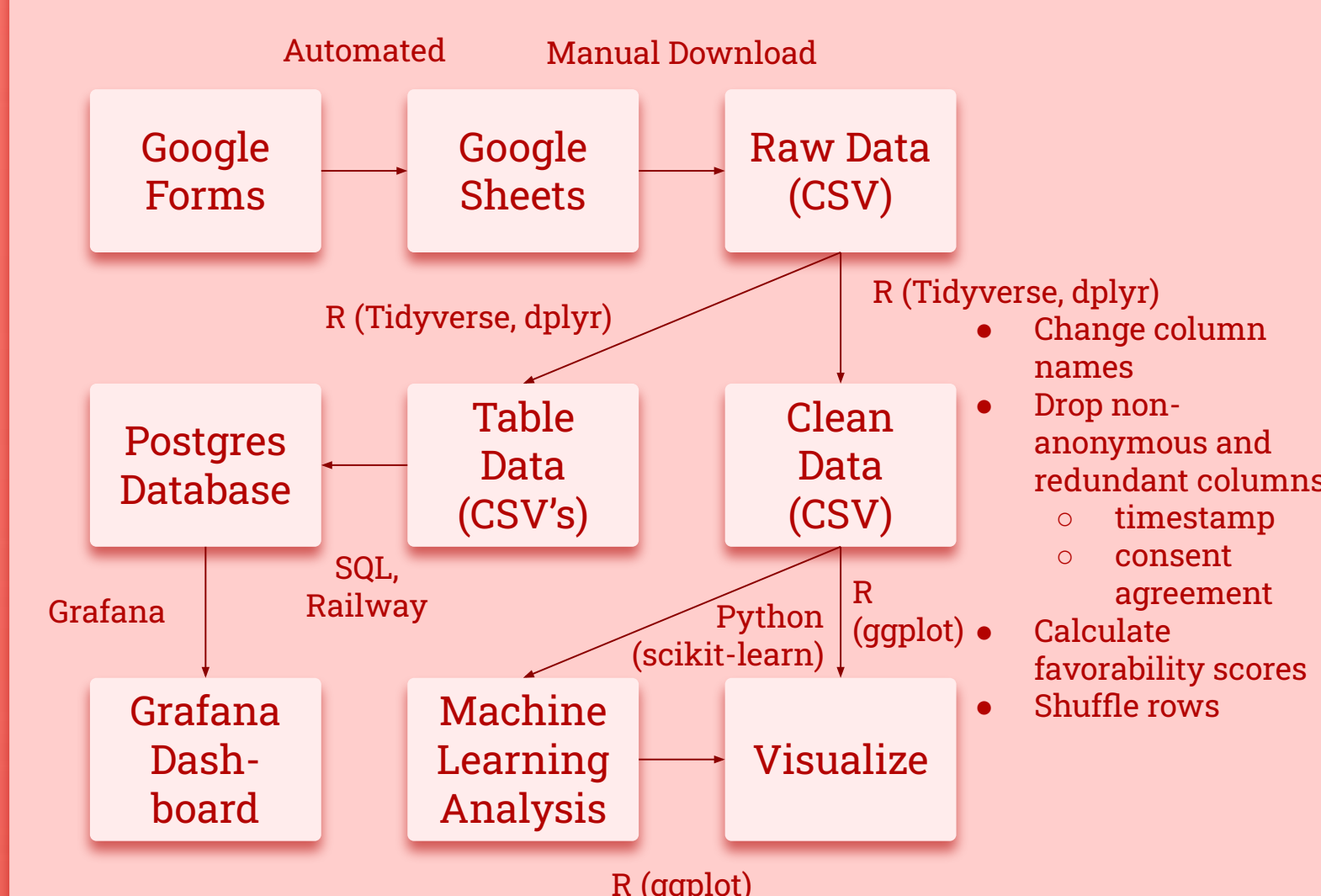
- Survey conducted by author
- Online & in-person, 2026
- 208 respondents

Outside Data

on furry gender & sexual identities

- Survey conducted by the International Anthropomorphic Research Project
 - Unpublished dataset; acquired with permission from Dr. Courtney Plante
- Online & in-person, 2023
- 995 respondents

Data Engineering



Repository: <https://github.com/MaryR0se/Mary-Krouse-Capstone-Repo> References:

1. Roberts, S. E., Davies-Kneis, C., Gerbasi, K., Fein, E., Plante, C., Reysen, S., & Côté, J. (2023). Seeding the Grassroots of Research on Furries: Lessons Learned from 15 Years of Creative Knowledge Mobilization, Valuing Community Partnerships, and Correcting the Record on Stigmatized Communities with Evidence-Based Scholarship. *Deviant Behavior*, 45(1), 50–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2023.2237634>
2. Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2026. (2026, July 9). American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved July 13, 2026, from <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2026>
3. Marks, M. (2025, March 17). Texas bill targets “furries,” banning non-human behavior in schools. FOX 4 News Dallas-Fort Worth. <https://www.fox4news.com/news/texas-bill-ban-furries>

What are furries?
from Furscience



See the response data!



Try the survey!

