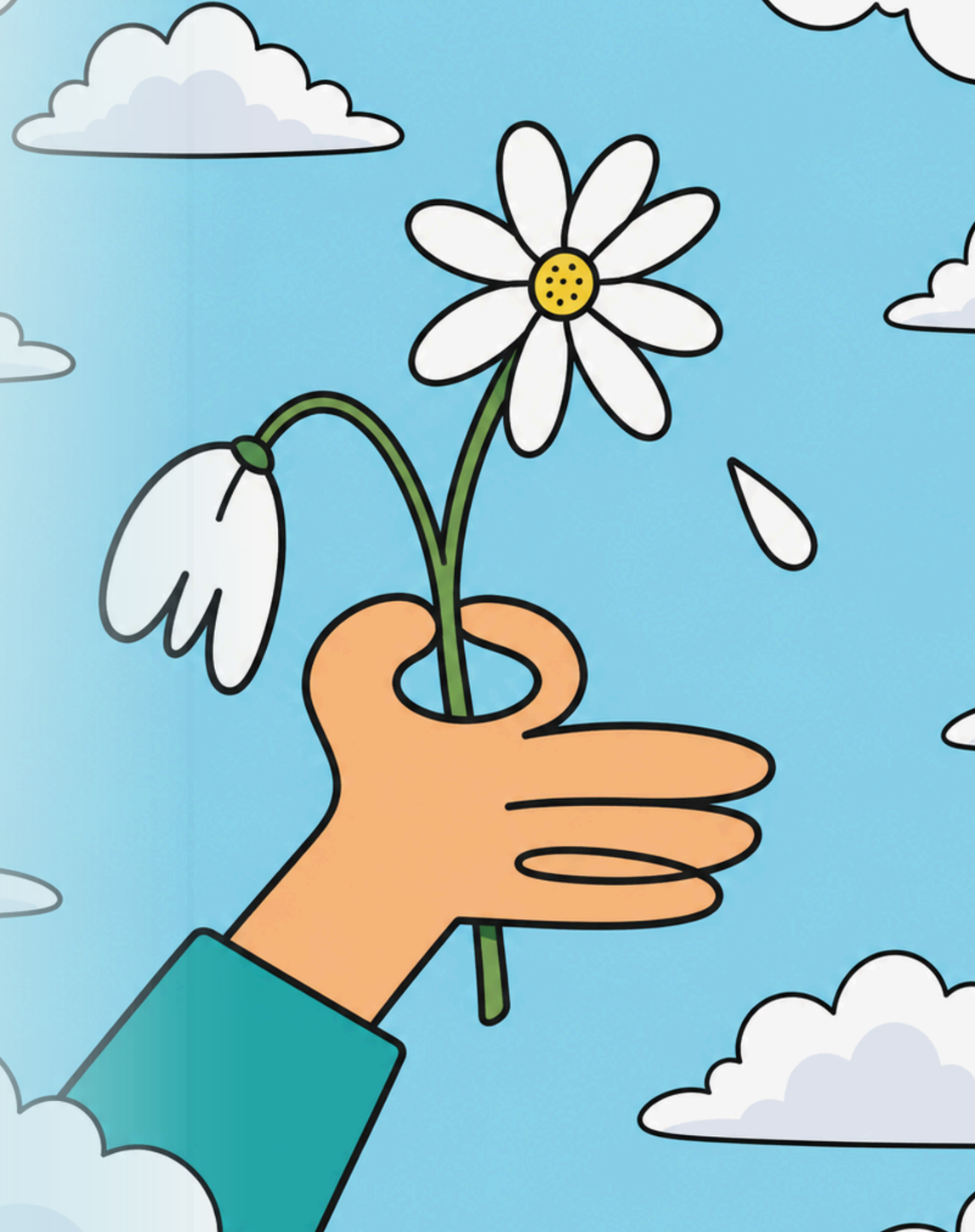
Bonded

Quality over quantity.

What 238 people told us about loneliness, being heard and the depth gap.

Bonded Research Lab · October 2026



ABOUT THIS STUDY

Who we asked

238
people took part

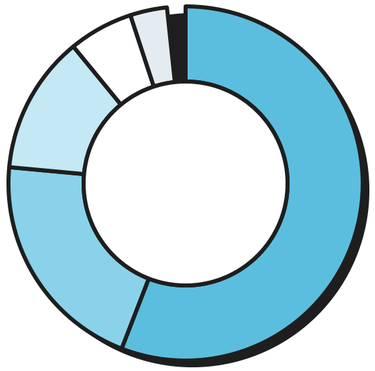
7 Aug – 4 Oct 2026
when they answered

4.8 min
typical time to finish

Anonymous
no names, no accounts

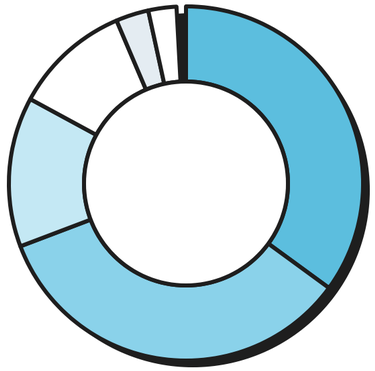
An online survey about loneliness, the people closest to you and the depth of your conversations. Every number in this deck describes the people who took part, not everyone.

Age



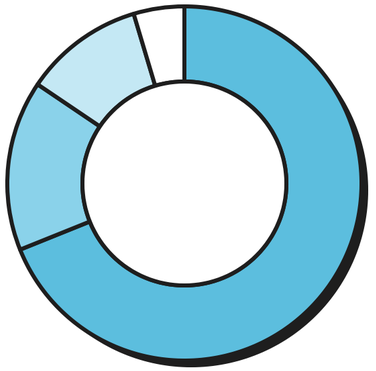
25–34	56%
18–24	21%
35–44	13%
55+	6%
45–54	3%
Prefer not to say	<5

Relationship



In a relationship	35%
Single	34%
Married / civil partnership	14%
Dating	11%
Describes it another way	3%
Prefer not to say	3%
Separated / widowed	<5

Phone time zone



Greece	69%
Other Europe	16%
Cyprus	11%
Elsewhere / unknown	5%

WHY THIS MATTERS

Loneliness is a public-health issue



1 in 6

people worldwide are affected by loneliness.

WHO, 2025

871,000

deaths a year are linked to loneliness: about 100 every hour.

WHO, 2025

13%

of people in the EU feel lonely most or all of the time. Greece is among the countries where it is most common.

EU Loneliness Survey, 2022

WHAT LONELINESS IS

“The painful feeling that arises from a gap between desired and actual social connections.”

World Health Organization, 2025

WHY WE’RE BUILDING BONDED

Loneliness isn’t about being alone

It’s about whether anyone really hears you.

The World Health Organization describes loneliness as the painful gap between the connection you want and the connection you have. In 2025 it estimated that one in six people worldwide are affected. In the EU’s first loneliness survey, 13% of people said they felt lonely most or all of the time.

The gap is rarely about a lack of people. Decades of research, and our own survey, point the same way: what matters most is whether the people already in your life really hear you.

Most of us want deeper conversations, yet we stay on safe ground. We aren’t sure how to start, the right moment never seems to come, and we worry about how the other person will react.

That is the gap Bonded is built for. Not more contacts, but better conversations with the people who already matter to you.

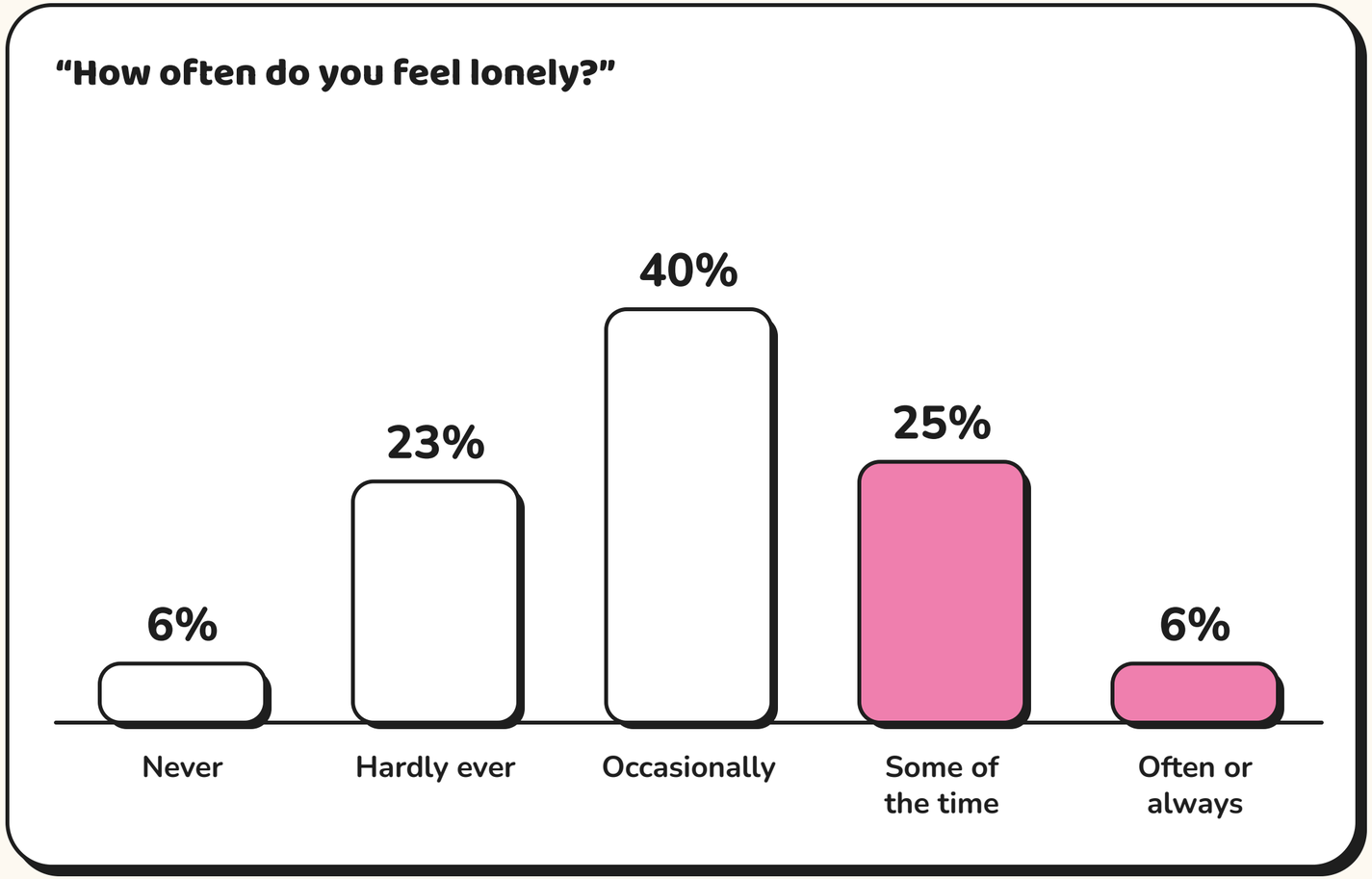
Loneliness was common

31%

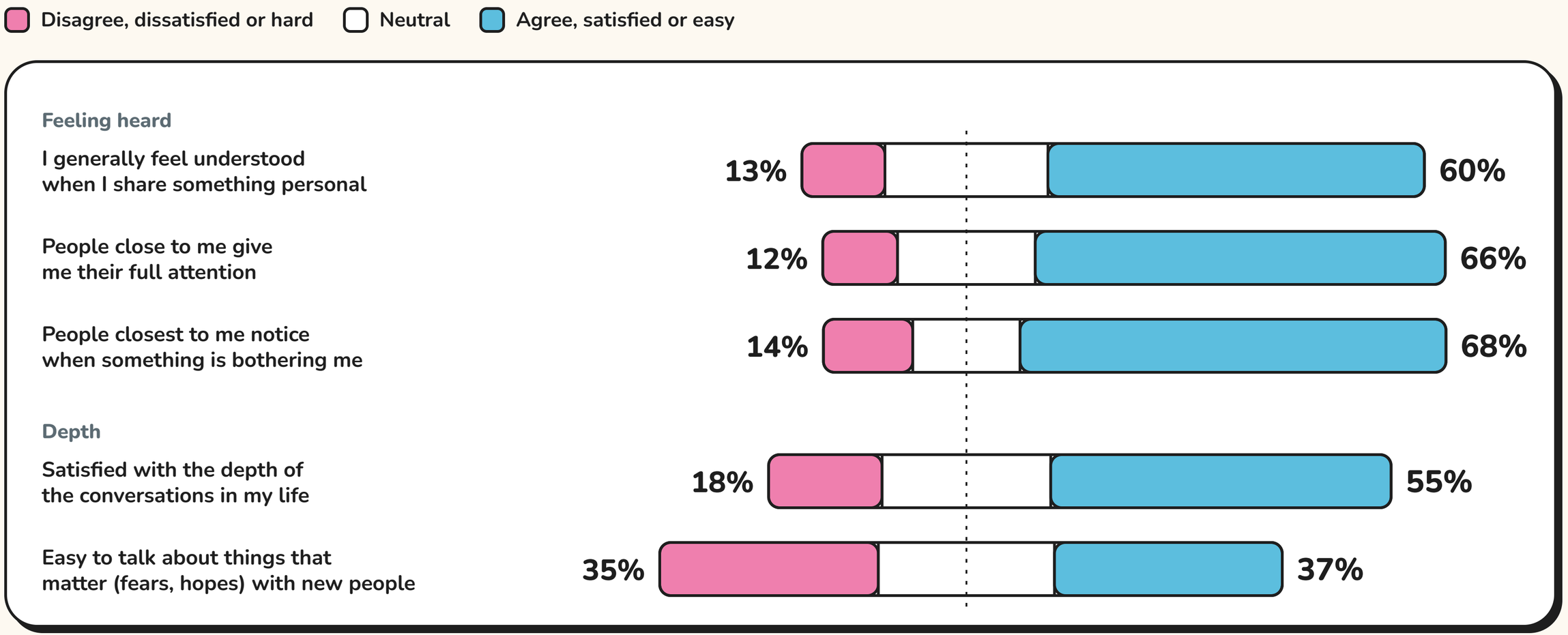
feel lonely at least “some of the time”

70%

lack companionship at least some of the time



Most feel heard. Fewer find depth.



Most people feel a depth gap

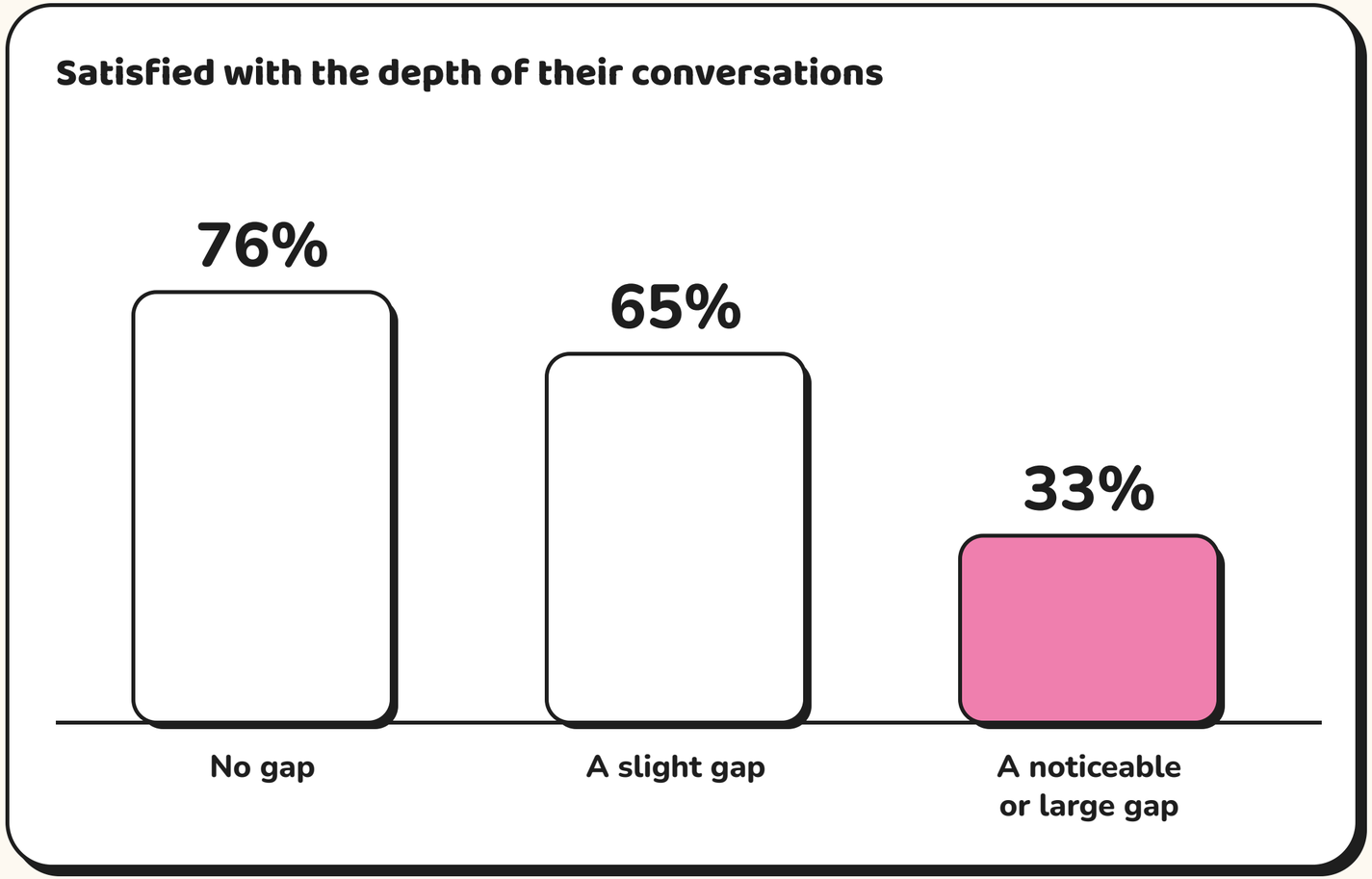
“How big is the gap between what you can easily talk about and what you wish you could talk about?”

84%

feel at least a slight gap

38%

call it noticeable or large



What gets in the way of deeper conversations

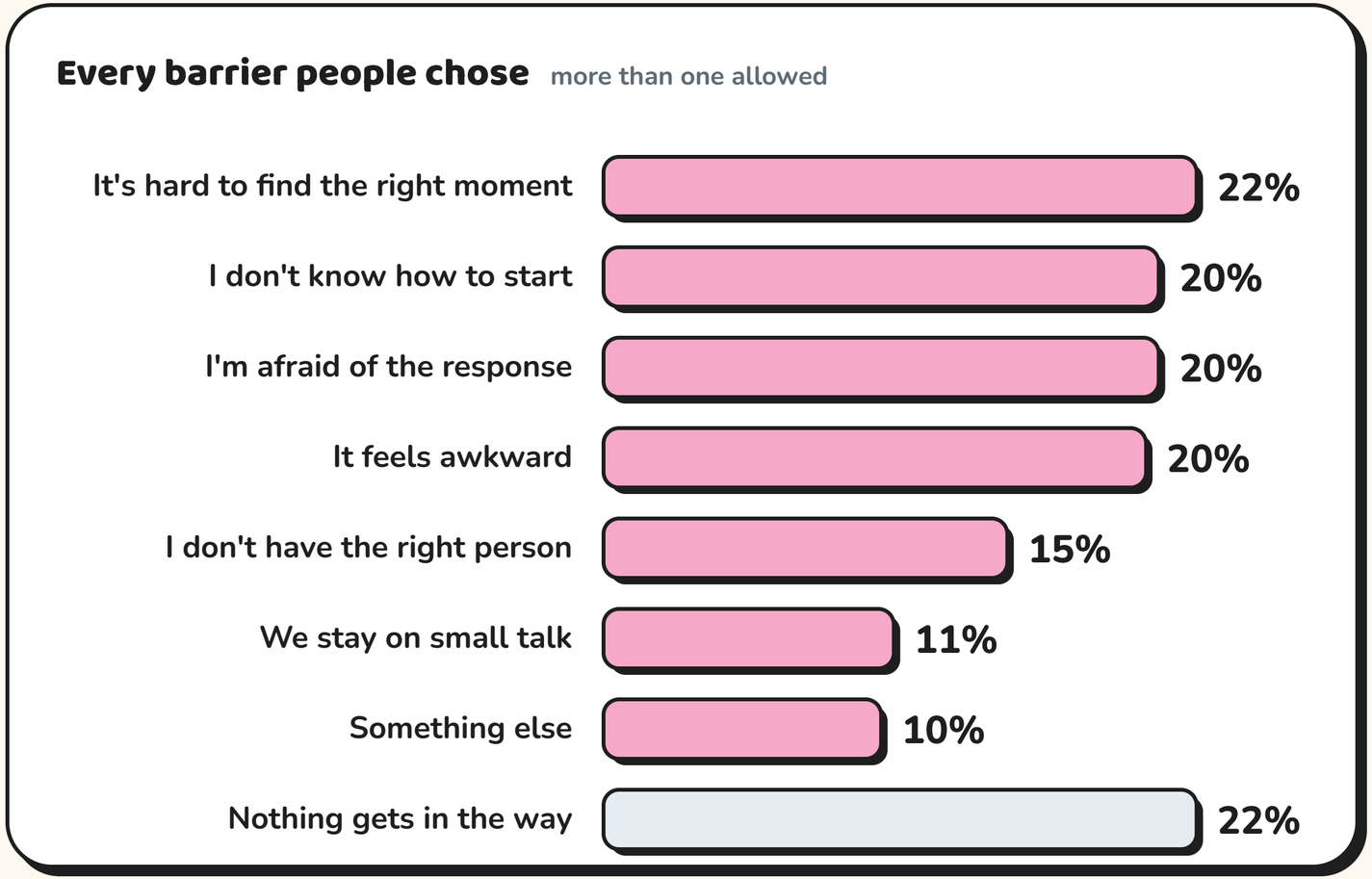
78%

name at least one barrier

THE MOST COMMON MAIN BARRIER

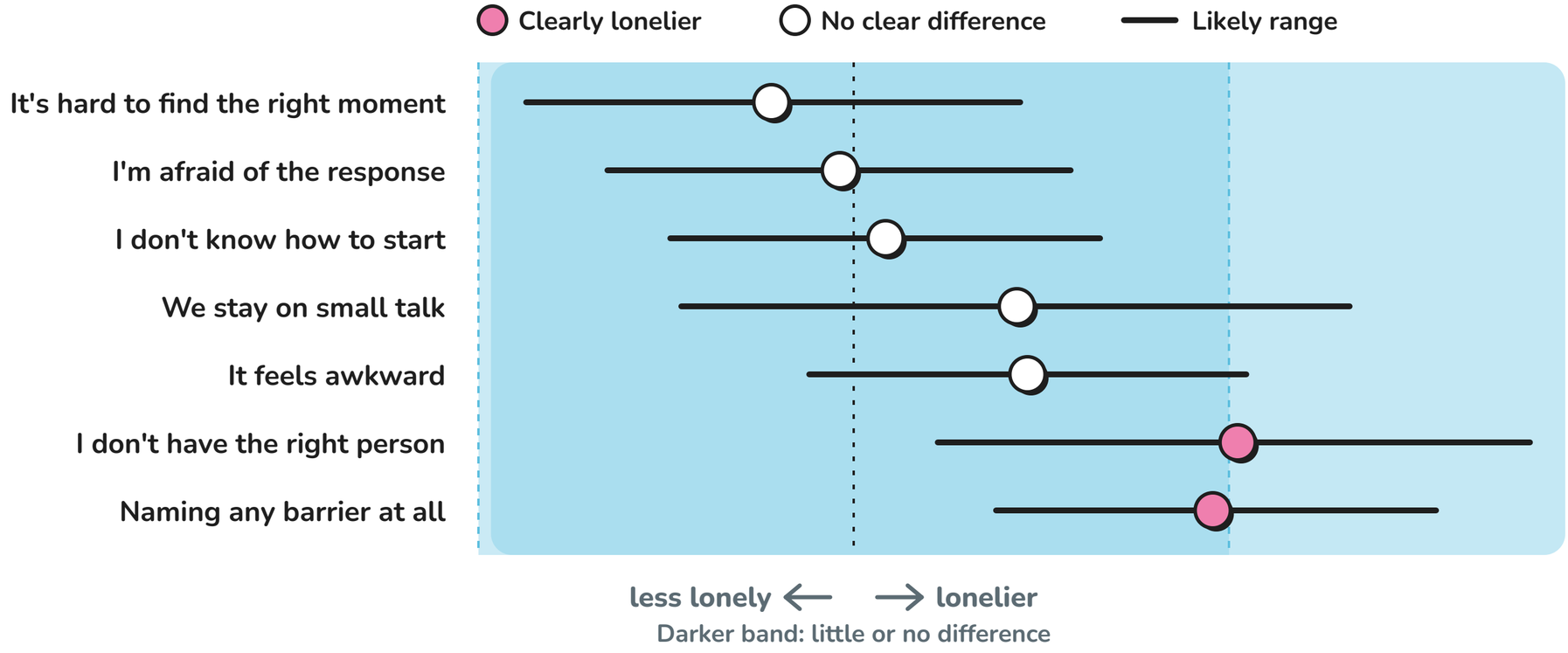
“I don't know how to start”

26% of people who chose two or more barriers



The common barriers are everyone’s barriers

Were people who chose each barrier any lonelier? Mostly not. Only lacking the right person stood out.



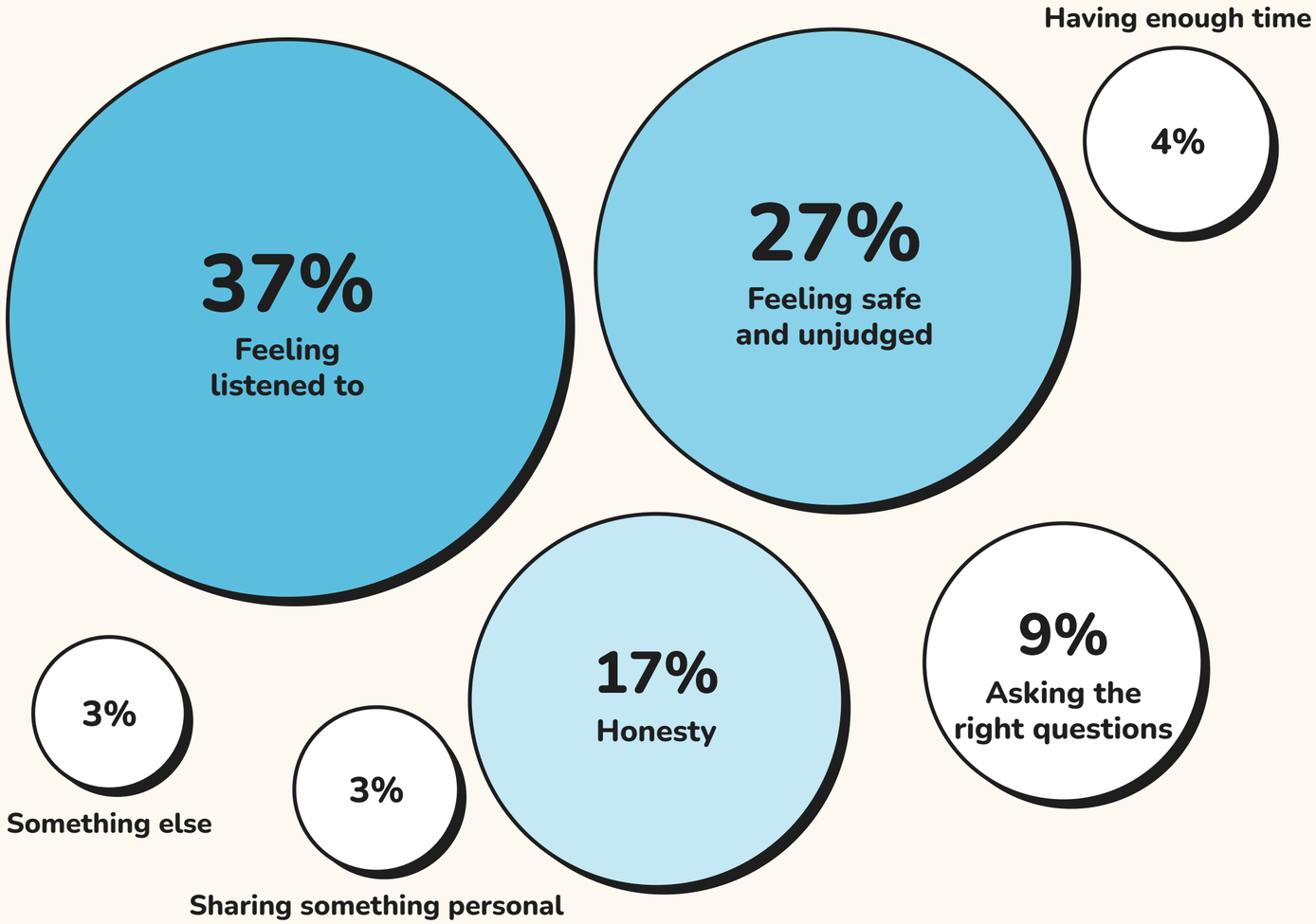
What makes a conversation meaningful

We asked for the **one** thing that helps most. Feeling listened to came first, then feeling safe and unjudged.

Bubble size shows how many people chose each answer.

WORTH NOTICING

People who chose “feeling listened to” were, on average, the loneliest of the four biggest groups.



THE HEADLINE FINDING

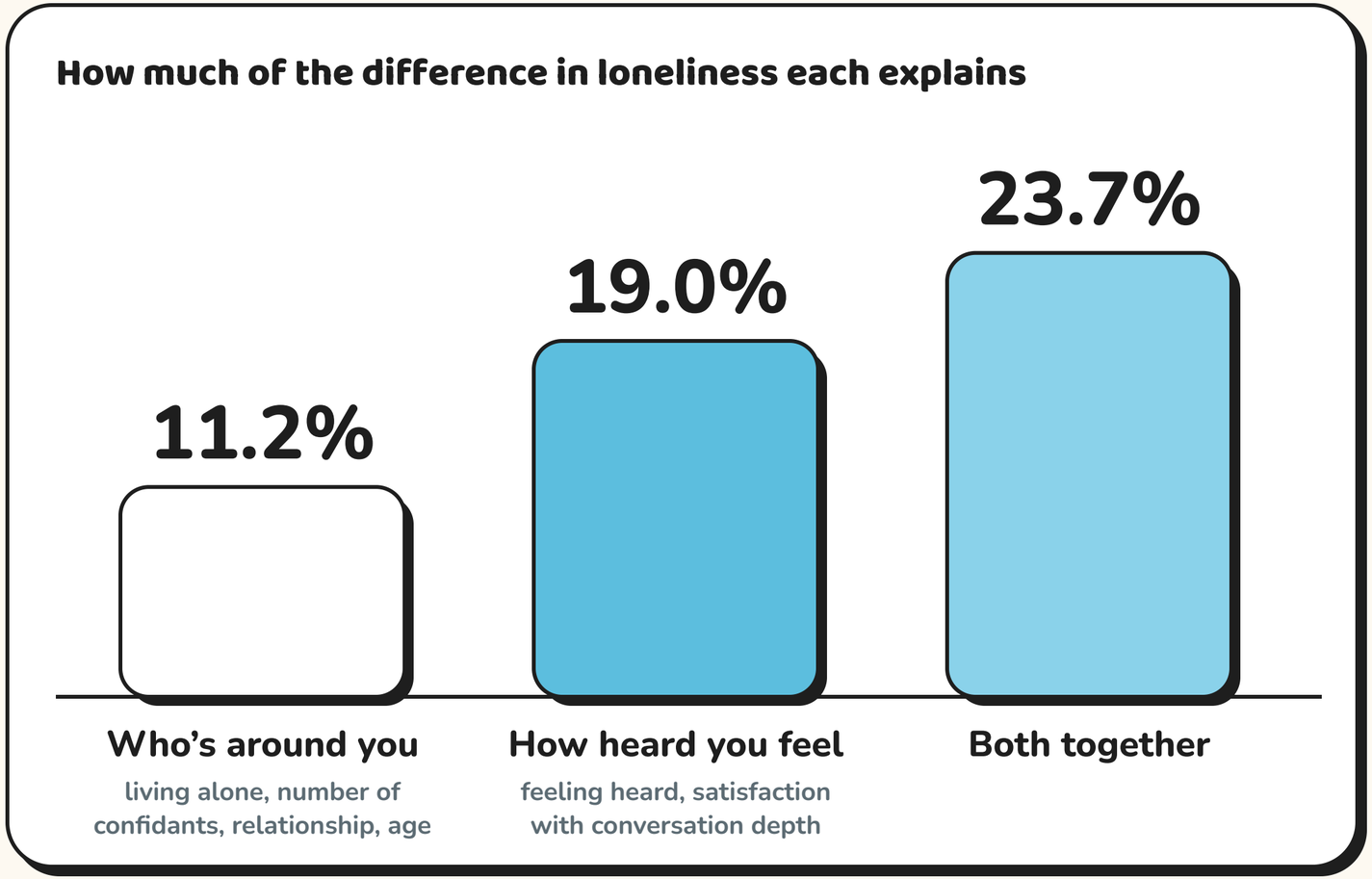
Being heard explains more than headcount

How heard you feel explains much more of the difference in loneliness than how many people you have around you.

HEADCOUNT FADES

The number of people you can confide in matters on its own. But once we know how heard someone feels, it adds very little.

The same pattern research has found for decades: the quality of relationships matters more than their quantity.



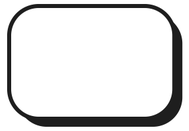
It’s not how easily you open up. It’s whether you’re heard.

Feeling heard by the people close to you



0.40

Finding it easy to open up to new people



0.12 no clear link

0 = no link

1 = a perfect link

WHAT THIS MEANS

Loneliness here tracked whether people feel heard by those close to them, not how easily they open up to new people.

FOLLOW-UP TEST

Among the 203 people who answered both questions, the gap between the two links is clear: 0.30, likely between 0.13 and 0.45.

CIRCLE SIZE VS FEELING HEARD

Feeling heard matters more than circle size

	Small circle 0–3 people to confide in	Wider circle 4 or more people
Feels heard	**4.80** 54 people	**4.64** 44 people
Doesn't reliably feel heard	**6.12** 76 people	**5.35** 31 people

Average loneliness score

3 = least · 9 = most

IN A SMALL CIRCLE

Feeling heard goes with 1.3 points lower loneliness.

FOLLOW-UP TEST

Among people who feel heard, circle size makes no large difference.

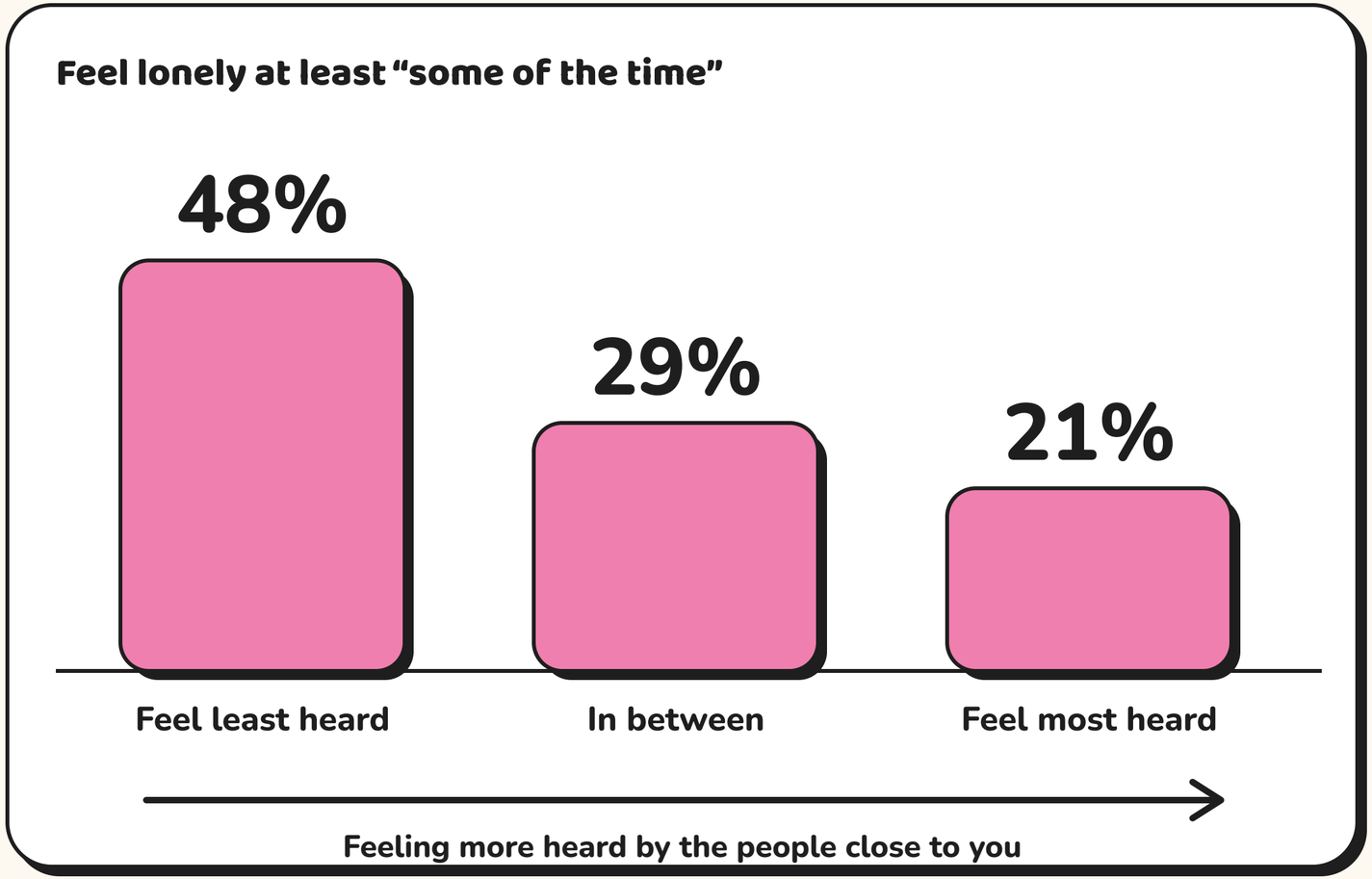
A CLEAR GRADIENT

The more heard, the less lonely

55%

lower odds of feeling lonely at least some of the time, for each step up in feeling heard

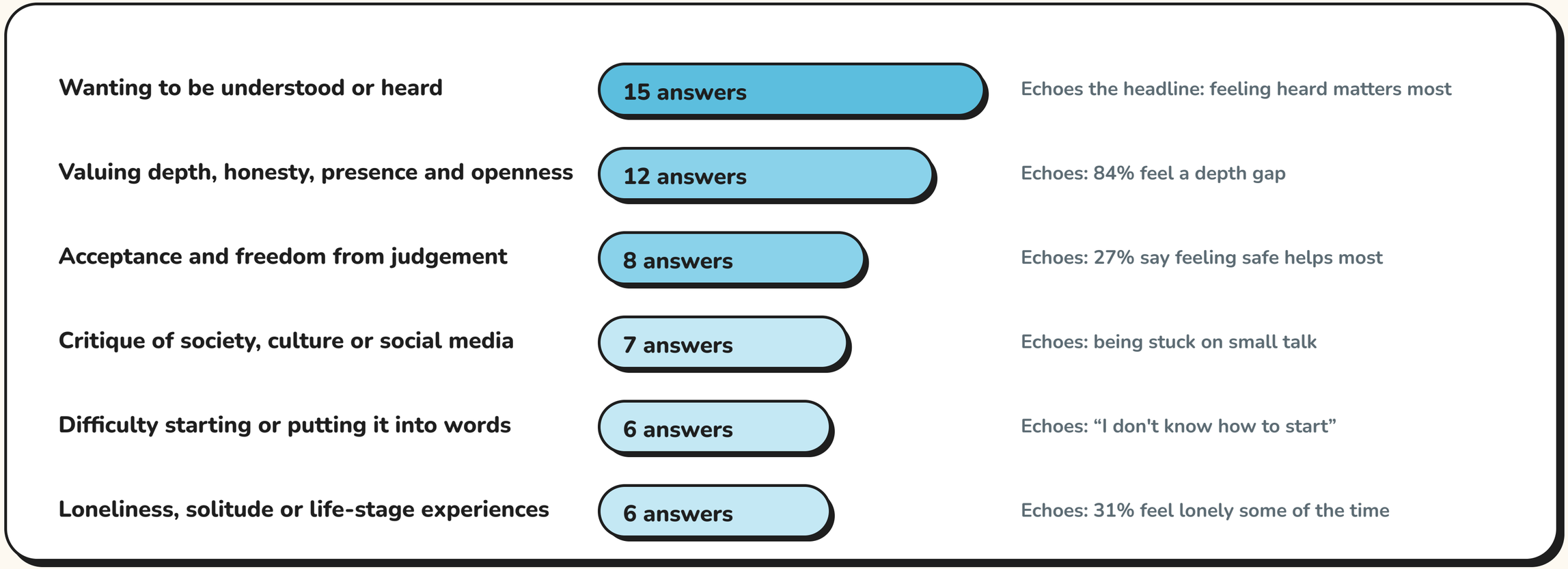
Each step is one point on a five-point scale of how heard people feel by those closest to them.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Anything you would want someone to understand?”

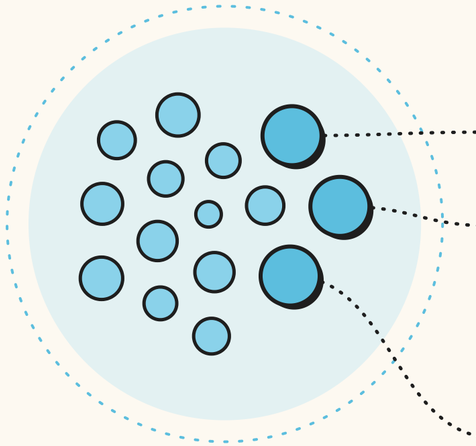
The themes in people’s answers to our open, optional closing question.



In their words: being heard

Each dot is one answer. The darker, outlined dots are the answers quoted here, exactly as written and shared with permission.

15 Wanting to be understood or heard

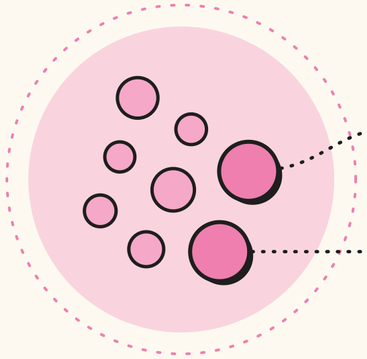


"I want people around me to understand that I need to be in their life. I don't want an update of our lives once a month. I want to live life with them and experience more"

"I want my partner to understand me better on a deep soulful level, but I don't know how"

"The way I see things or understand them, and also my fears"

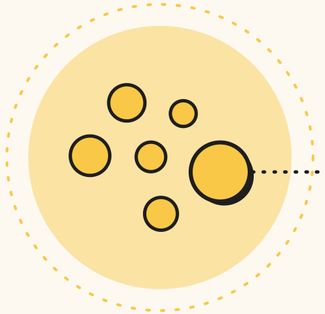
8 Acceptance and freedom from judgement



"I want to be free and not judged by you."

"That everyone has its own way to express themselves and share with others and that is okay, as long as it is respected."

6 Difficulty starting or putting it into words

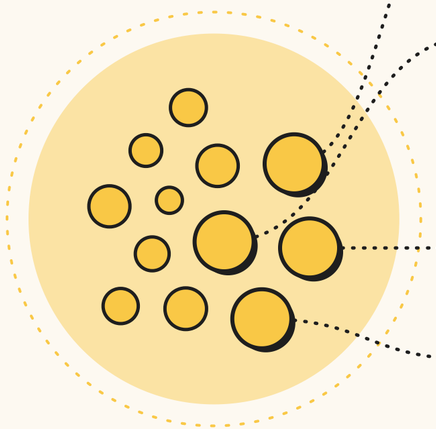


"I talk with hugs, not words"

In their words: depth, presence and balance

Each dot is one answer. The darker, outlined dots are the answers quoted here, exactly as written and shared with permission.

12 Valuing depth, honesty, presence and openness



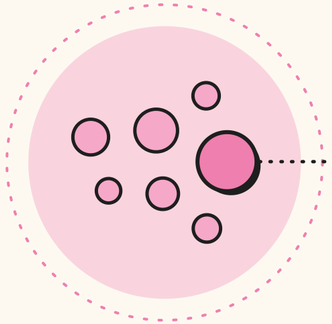
"Being present is the key"

"I wish people would cut to the chase and be honest."

"Surround yourself with people that you can open up to and with people that you don't feel drained after a long time being with them."

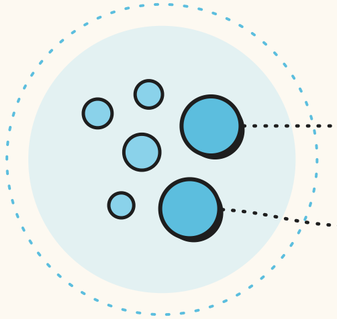
"As humans we thrive on connection. It is important to ditch the hyper independence and individualism. We need people around us we can trust enough and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Usually that also encourages others to be open too and that only creates a deeper bond."

7 Critique of society, culture or social media



"Let's talk about something more important like we used to before covid. We used to talk about politics, ideas, arts. Now it's all gone"

6 Loneliness, solitude or life-stage experiences



"There are levels of solitude and companionship. Balance is the key, neither is bad."

"My need for connection and freedom at the same time"

FROM RESEARCH TO PRODUCT

How we use this research to build Bonded

We ask. We learn. We build. Then we ask again.

The Research Lab is how we stay honest about what people actually need. What you see in this report goes straight into the decisions we make next.

It shapes what we write. Knowing that people most want to feel listened to, and safe from judgement, guides which decks and questions we create and how deep each one goes.

It shaped how Bonded begins. The Connection Profile quiz, the depth and pace you choose before you play, and the practice round all answer the same finding: many people want depth but need a gentler way in.

We keep asking. We run the survey in waves, and each wave feeds our roadmap. Next, with people's consent, we will study Bonded itself: a Bonded session side by side with a small-talk version, with follow-ups afterwards.

Throughout, the survey stays anonymous. Taking part is a choice, small groups are never reported, and we only quote people who gave us permission.

OUR APPROACH

Built for being heard

Both of you speak. Both of you listen.

Bonded gives two people the same question at the same time, so nobody has to find the words to start. One of you answers first, then the turn swaps: both of you speak, and both of you listen.

You choose how deep to go and how quickly. Passing is always free and never shown to your partner as a judgement, and nothing you say is typed or recorded. Our free 36 Questions deck builds closeness step by step, based on a well-known study by Aron and colleagues.

Each of these choices answers something people told us: they want to be listened to, to feel safe, and to have an easier way past small talk.

What we can’t say yet is whether Bonded reduces loneliness. A survey shows what goes together, not what causes what. That is why our next study puts Bonded itself to the test.

FROM EVIDENCE TO DESIGN

How Bonded is built on this

Being heard explains more than headcount

Made for the people already in your life

Bonded is for two people, or a group of 3 to 6, to go deeper together: partners, dates, friends, family, colleagues.

"I don't know how to start" is the most common main barrier

The first question is on us

Both people see the same prompt at the same time, so nobody has to find the words to start.

"Feeling listened to" helps most (37%)

Turns, so everyone is heard

One person answers first, then it swaps. Taking turns builds more closeness than long monologues.

"Feeling safe and unjudged" comes next (27%)

Pass any time, no judgement

Passing is free and never shown as a judgement. Nothing you say is typed or recorded.

38% feel a noticeable or large depth gap

Depth you choose, step by step

Choose how deep to go and how many easy questions come first. The free 36 Questions deck builds closeness gradually.

An honest limit

Bonded needs someone to invite. People who said "I don't have the right person" were among the loneliest, and may be the hardest to reach.

READING THIS RESPONSIBLY

What we can say, and what comes next

We can say

In our survey of 238 people, feeling heard by those closest to them was more closely linked to loneliness than how many people they could confide in.

We can't say yet

That being heard causes less loneliness, or that Bonded reduces it. A one-off survey can't show cause and effect.

Good to know

- People chose to take part. Most were aged 25–34 and in Greek time zones.
- Everything was self-reported, at one moment in time.
- Most had 2–3 people to confide in, so circle size varied less.

What comes next

- A Bonded session side by side with a small-talk version.
- Follow-ups to see what lasts.
- A new wave with people who use Bonded.

ABOUT THE DATA

How we did it

- An anonymous online survey, 7 Aug – 4 Oct 2026, with 238 people who agreed to take part and answered with care.
- Loneliness was measured with two standard, widely used questionnaires, kept separate.
- Feeling heard and conversation depth were measured with our own questions. They hold together well but are not yet independently validated.
- We looked at how answers move together, and checked each result several ways, including with and without people who rushed.
- Groups smaller than five are never shown. Quotes appear only with permission.

Bonded Studio

bonded.studio

Key references

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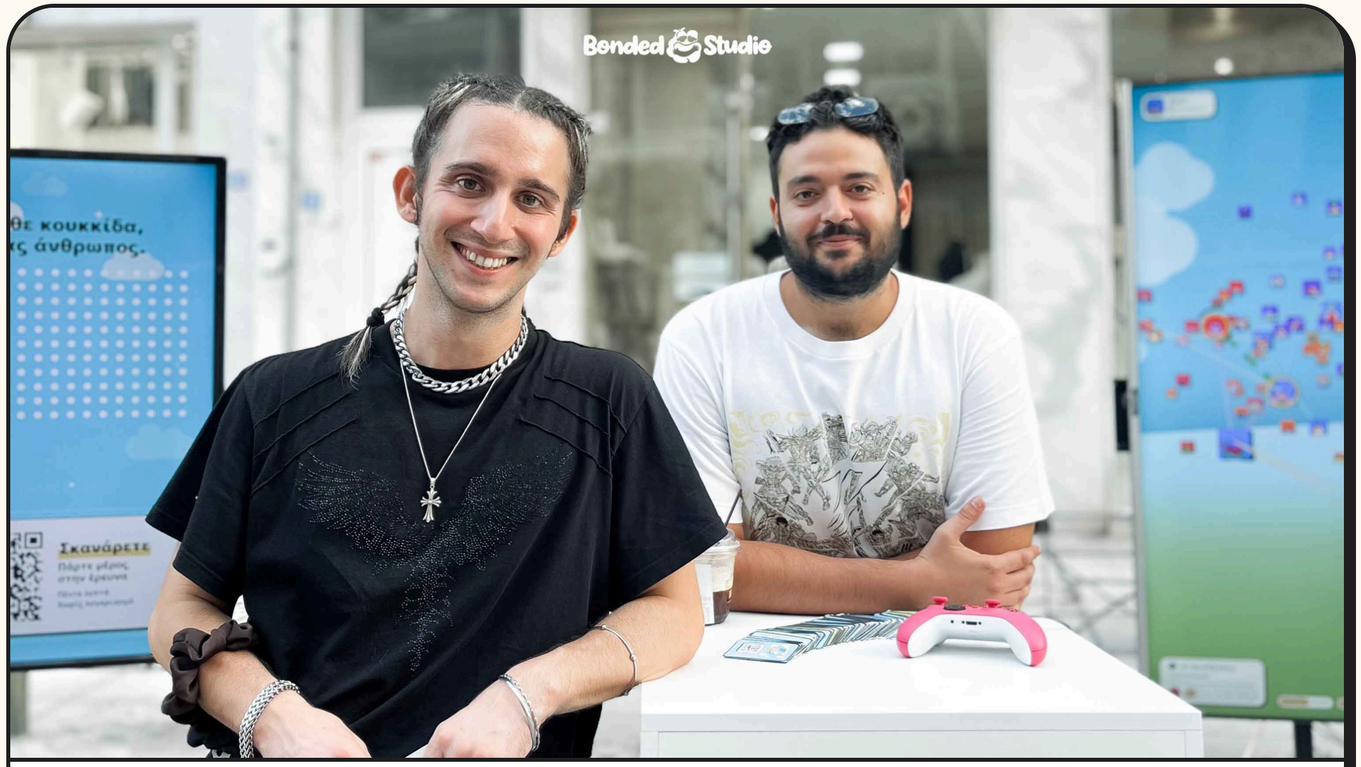
Source for every chart in this deck: Bonded Research Lab survey, 2026 (238 people, 7 Aug – 4 Oct 2026). Groups smaller than five are never shown; where a group was too small, we combined it with its neighbour. Outside figures: WHO (2025) and the EU Loneliness Survey (2022).



Steve and Akis at Lefki Nixta, Thessaloniki.

GET IN TOUCH

Let’s talk

Questions about this research, press, or working with us? Write to us. We’d love to hear from you.

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You will hear back from one of us directly.

Bonded

Technology should bring us closer.

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