

SENIOR THESIS RESEARCH:
OUR TABLE

Annie Lee | Branding and Art Direction ST 403-03



Illustration by: Sarah Van Dongen

“See you at Our Table!”

Our Table is a New York based concept space designed to break urban isolation and encourage exchange in the local neighborhoods.

We believe everyone has something to bring to the table. Through creative activations, our inclusive, accessible, and versatile space is here to connect like-minded individuals and celebrate the community.

01 DESCRIPTION

“Perhaps being surrounded by 8 million people is the worst kind of loneliness.”

Loneliness is rarely brought to the public’s attention as a serious health issue, but rather a private feeling one deals alone internally. Therefore, my thesis will study the urban architecture and city culture of New York to bring loneliness in conversation and build spaces for genuine connections.

02 OBJECTIVE

“I don’t know
any of my neighbors...”

We are hyper-exposed and weirdly isolated by the architecture of the city including the tall skyscrapers and divided office and apartment units;
not to mention the highly transient population -- more than 68% of the city is renting and there is constantly someone moving to and leaving the city.

03 OBSERVATIONS

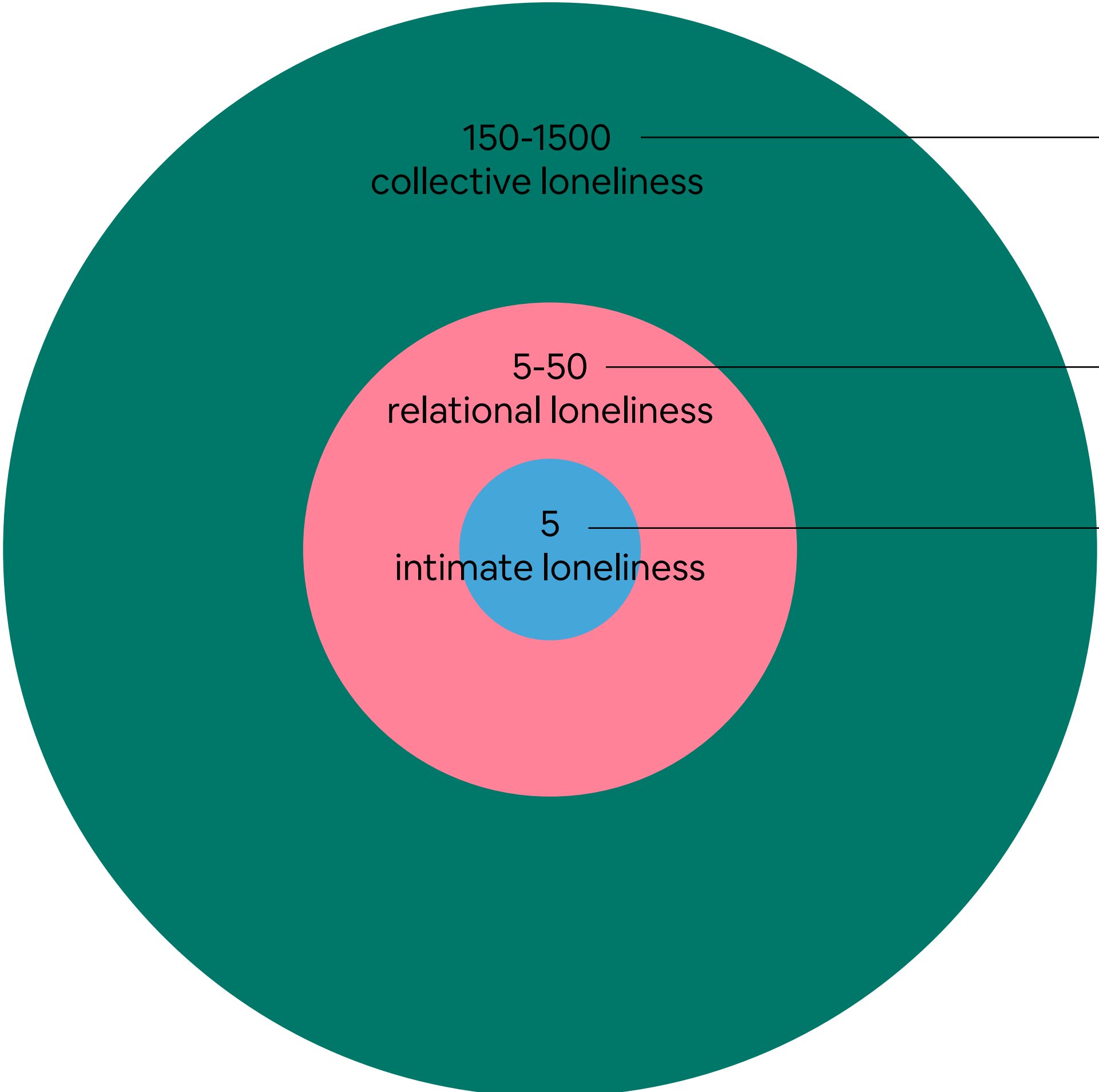
“We desire to be
seen and understood -”

Loneliness resembles a U-curve; highest in adolescent and young adulthood, declines through middle age, and rises again in old age.

The target audience are young adults and young professionals (Age 18-35) living in NYC who seeks to be heard and make friends.

04 AUDIENCE

Urban loneliness describes lonely individuals living in cities; an intersection between a mental state with the built environment. People **come and go** in New York City and it can be difficult to build connections and feel heard all the time.



3 Dimensions of Loneliness:

Collective loneliness: how one identifies in a network of 150-1500 people consisting usually of weak ties.

Social loneliness: lack of social partners such as friends and family and frequent contact.

Emotional loneliness: lack of an intimate partner or someone who offers a strong emotional support or connection.

Background

Survey and Insight

Case Studies

Consequences of Loneliness

Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

It contributes to the symptoms of:

Alcoholism

Depression

Suicidal Thoughts

Anxiety

How is collective loneliness intensified in the city?

More renters and more transient population means less community engagement;

Prioritization of career and the fast-paced lifestyle;

Desire for protection and privacy over social intimacy and interactions;

Hesitation to intervene in another person's space without a strong cause;

Constantly surrounded by people who seem to be having a great time.

05

RESEARCH

Third Places by Ray Oldenburg

First place : the private space of home

Second places: where we formally spend significant amount of time
e.g. workplace, college

Third places: public or commercial spaces that provide informal opportunities for local people to mix socially on neutral ground.
e.g. public parks, libraries, cafes, farmers' markets...

How it works

Create a sense of community on a smaller scale as a relief from the overwhelming sensory experience of a large and unfamiliar city.

Accessibility

Encourage familiarity through repeated incidental interactions between local regulars and newcomers.

Homely atmosphere

Free to come and go without obligations.
Low-profile, comfortable and conversational.

Encourage Interaction

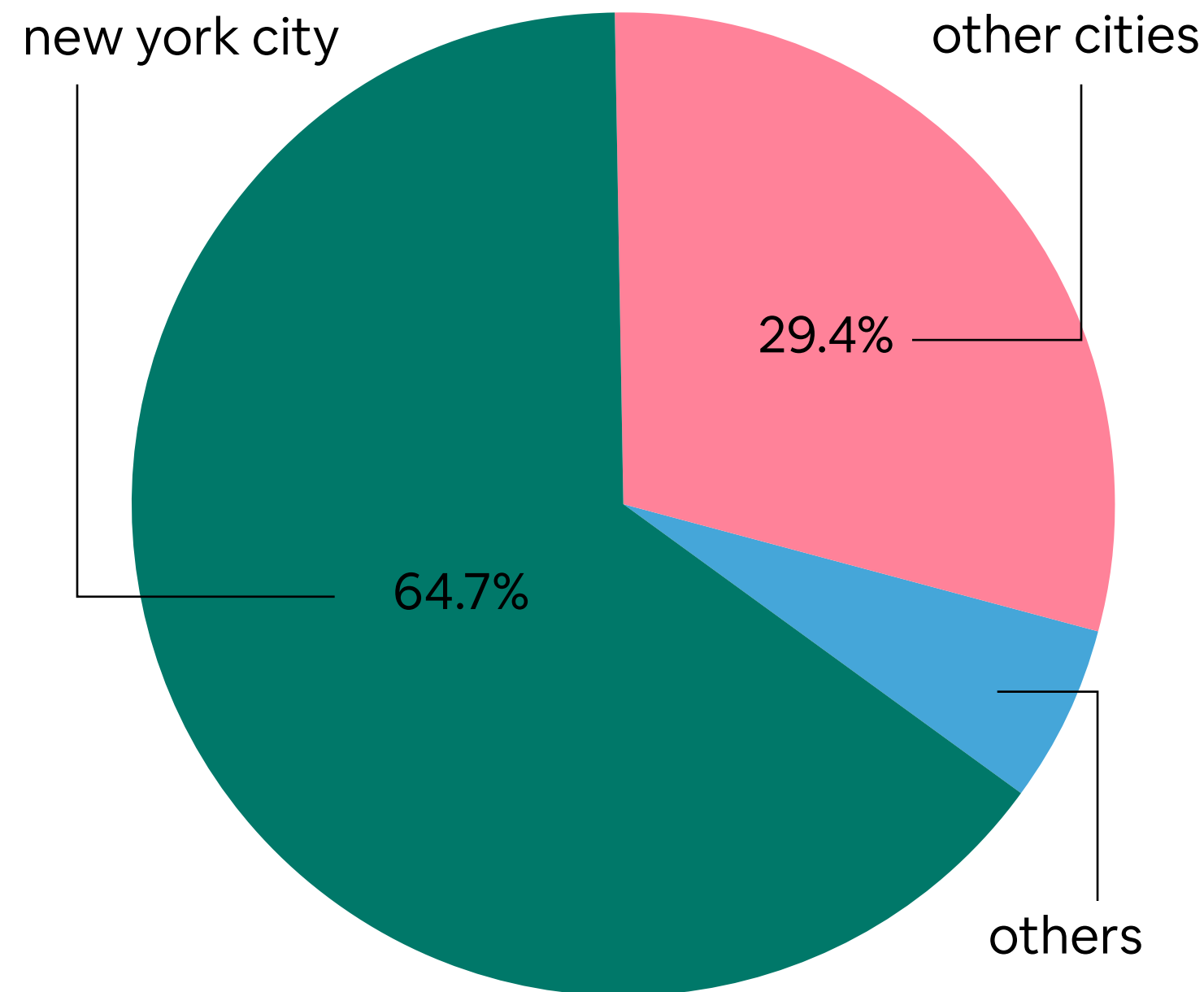
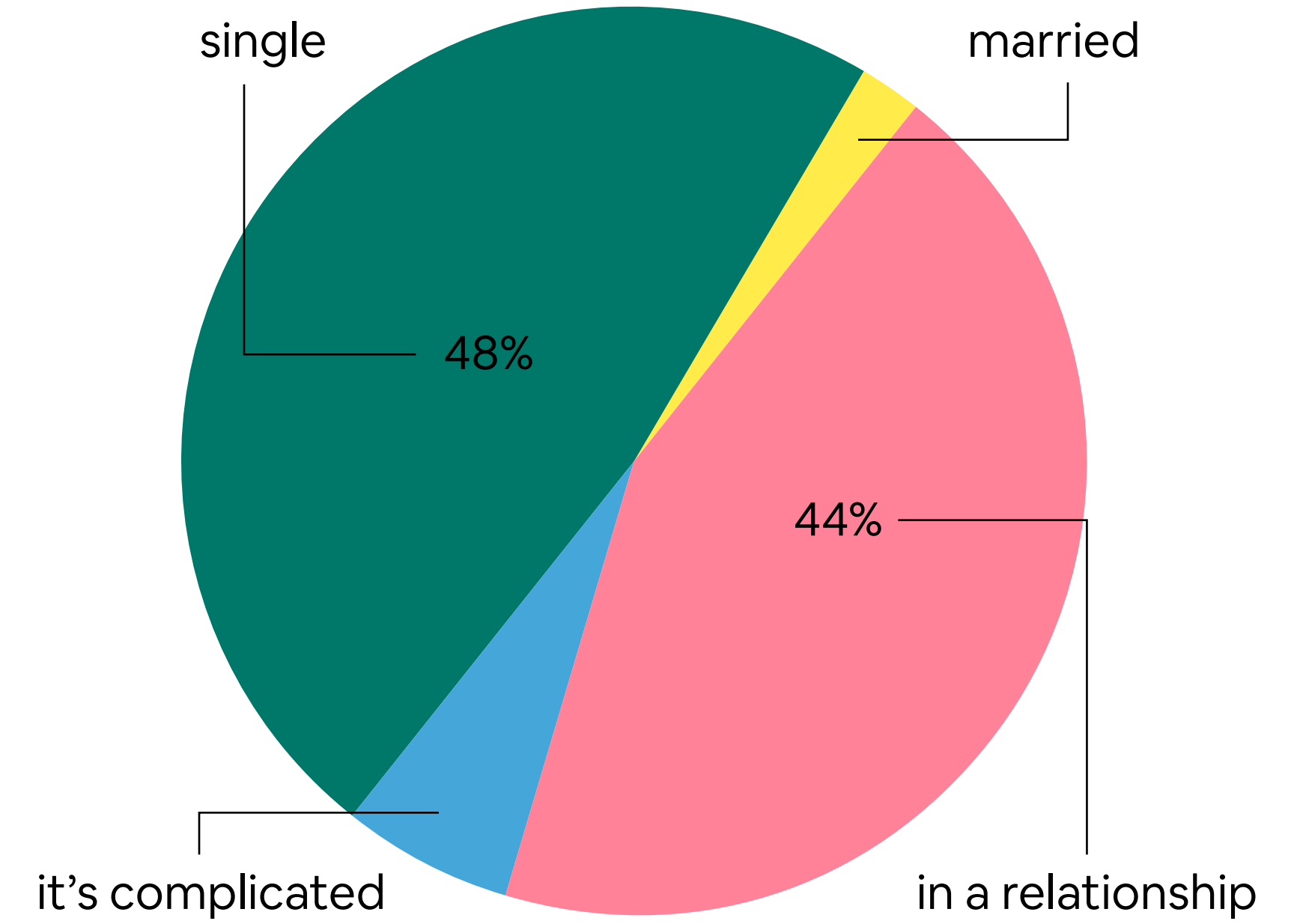
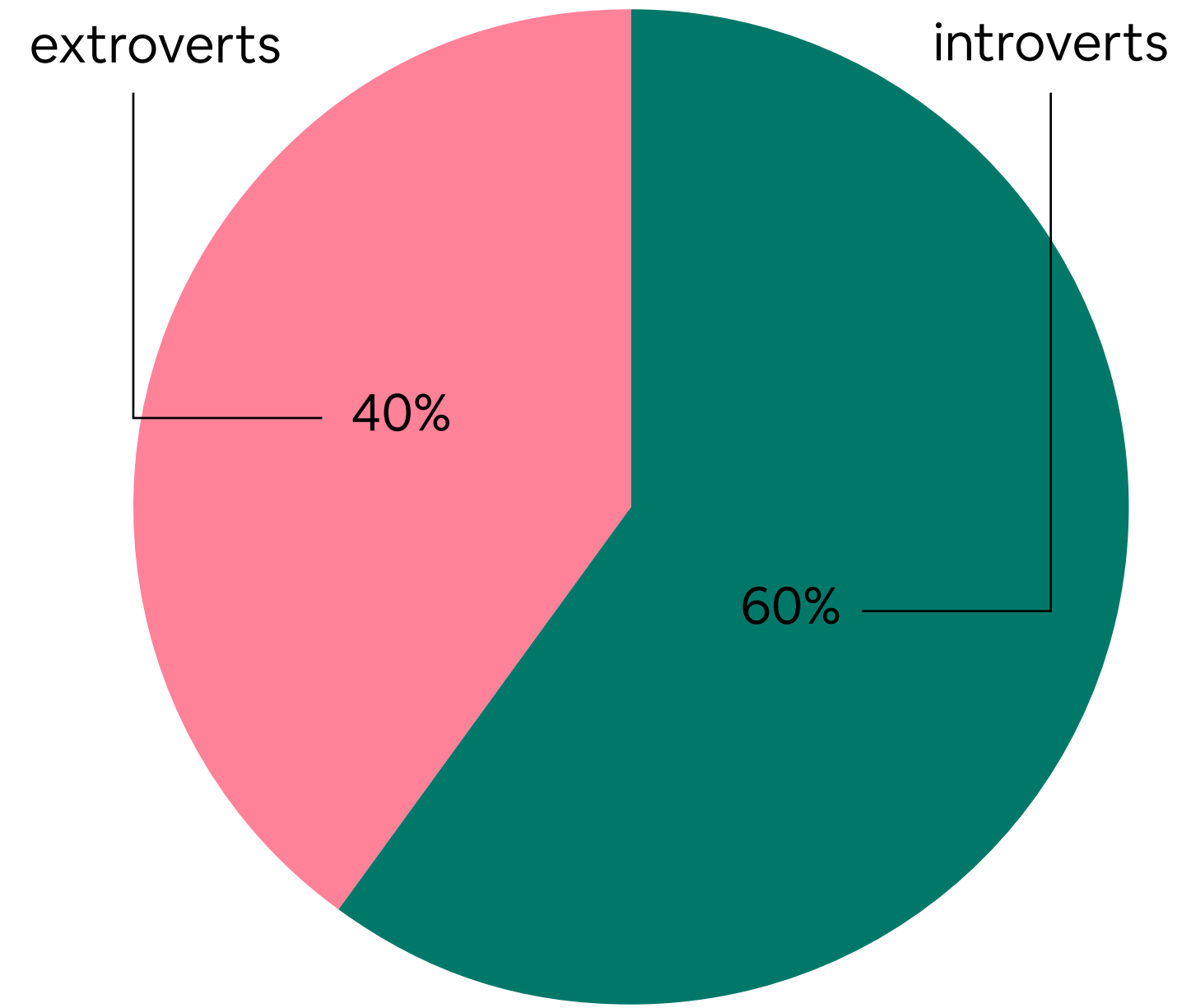
bring people together based on shared space.

51 Survey Responses
11 Follow up interviews



<https://forms.gle/Ktj8Nyd7PghJPZoB9>

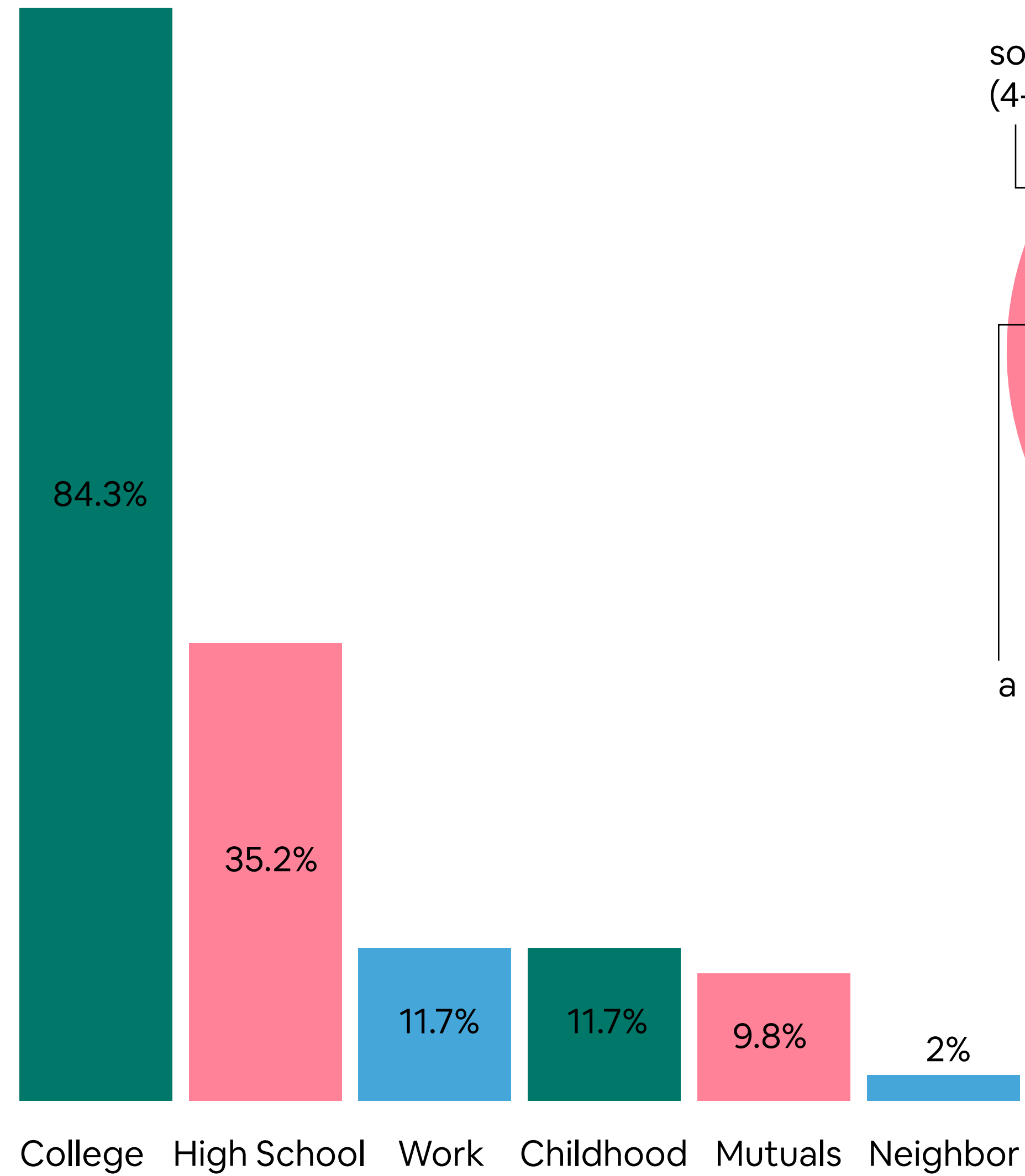
05 RESEARCH



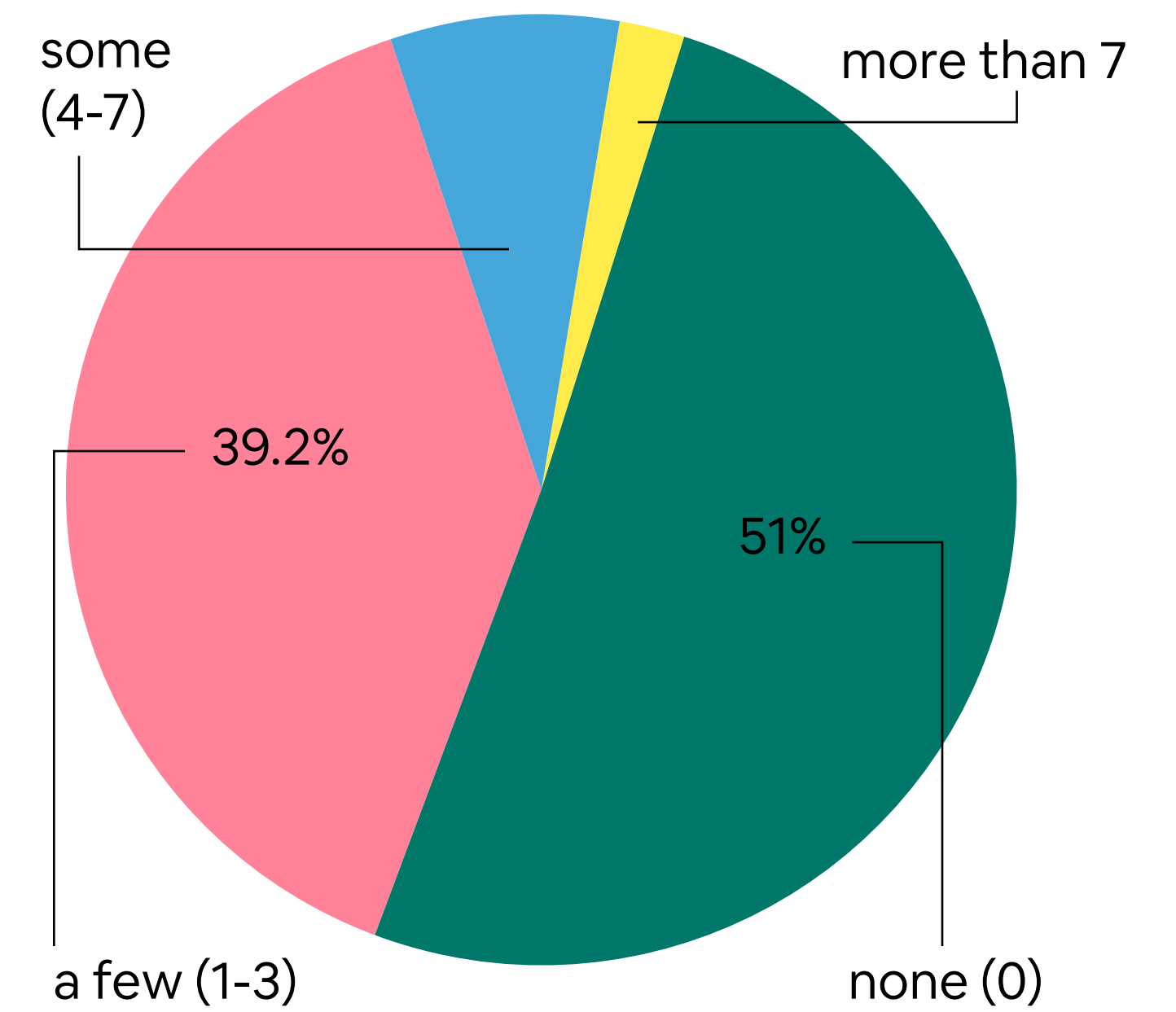
Most of the recipients are based in New York City, there are equal single and taken individuals, and slightly more introverts than extroverts.

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When/ Where are most of your friends from?

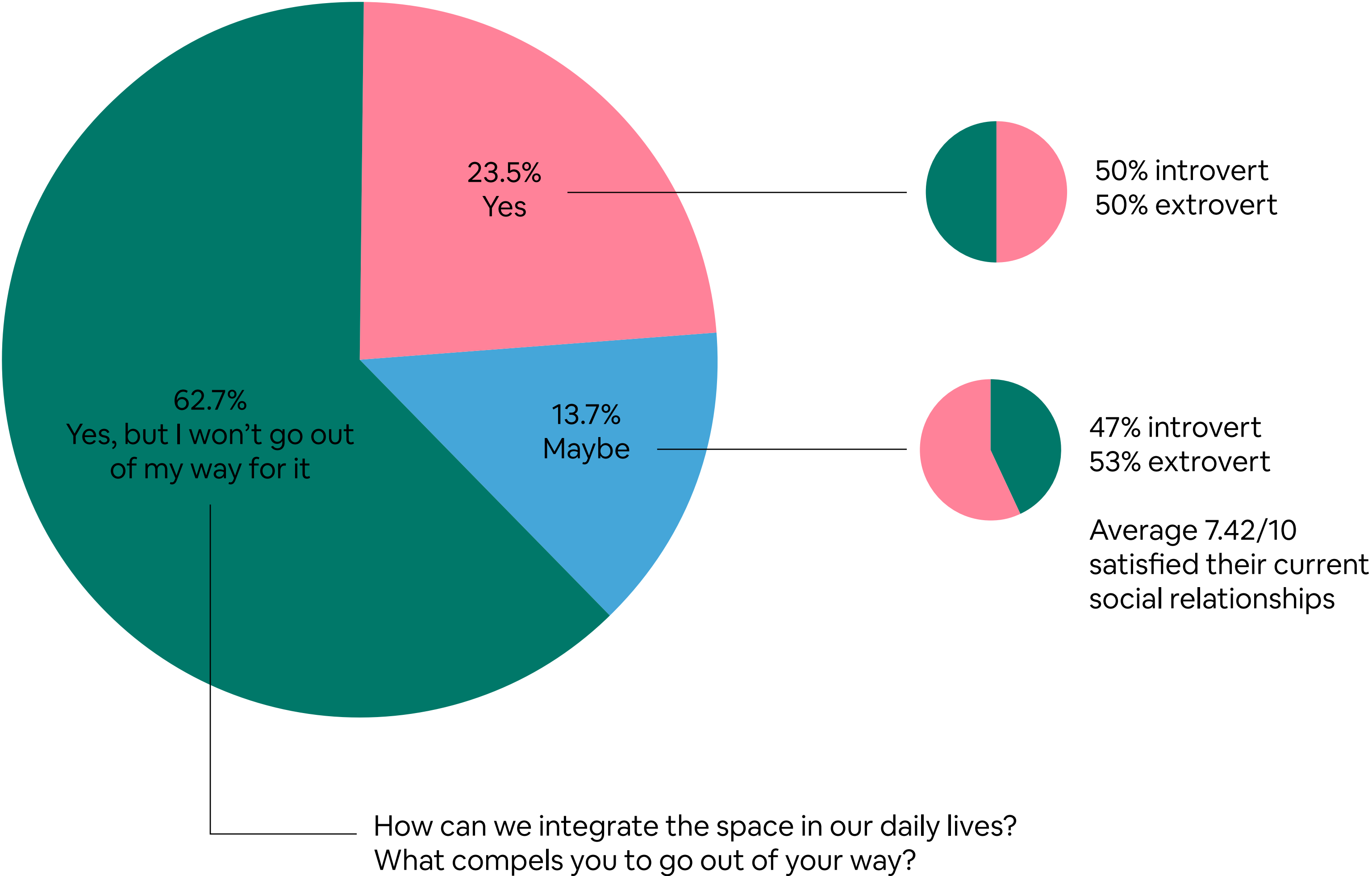


Do you know your neighbors or local store owners?



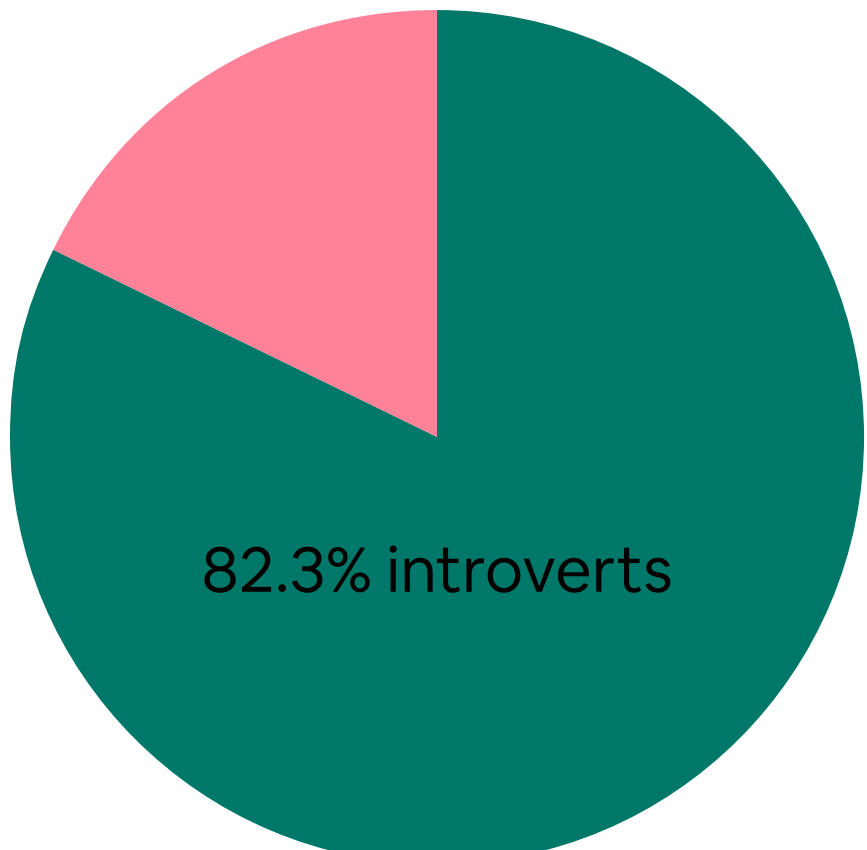
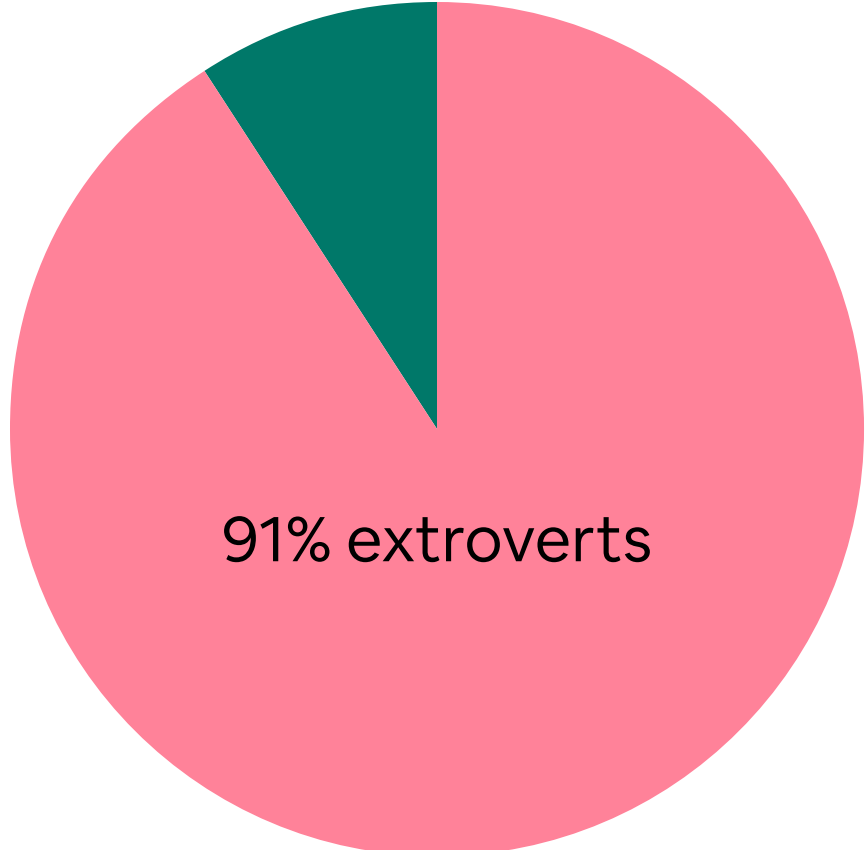
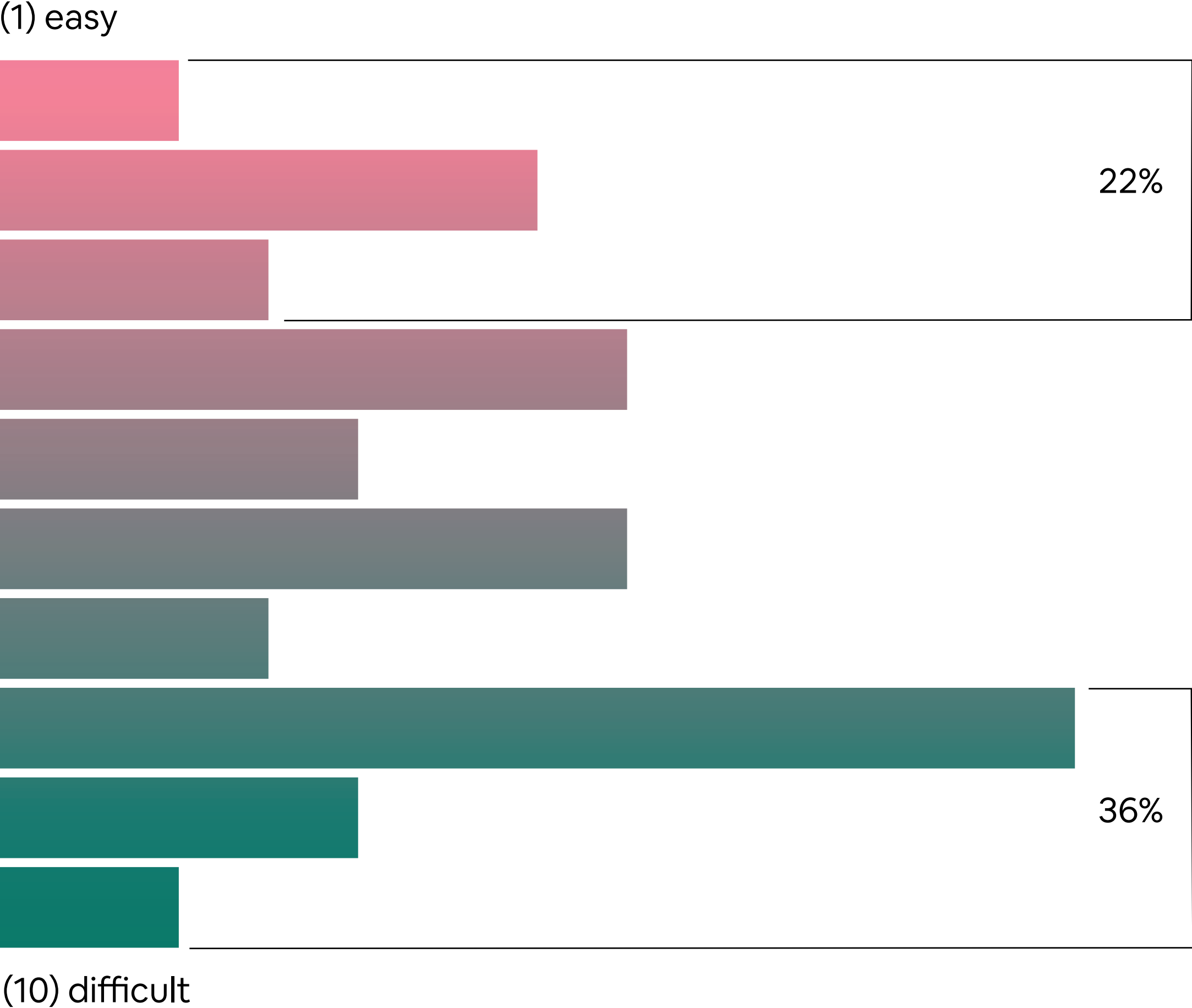
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Are you looking to expand your social circle and meeting new friends?



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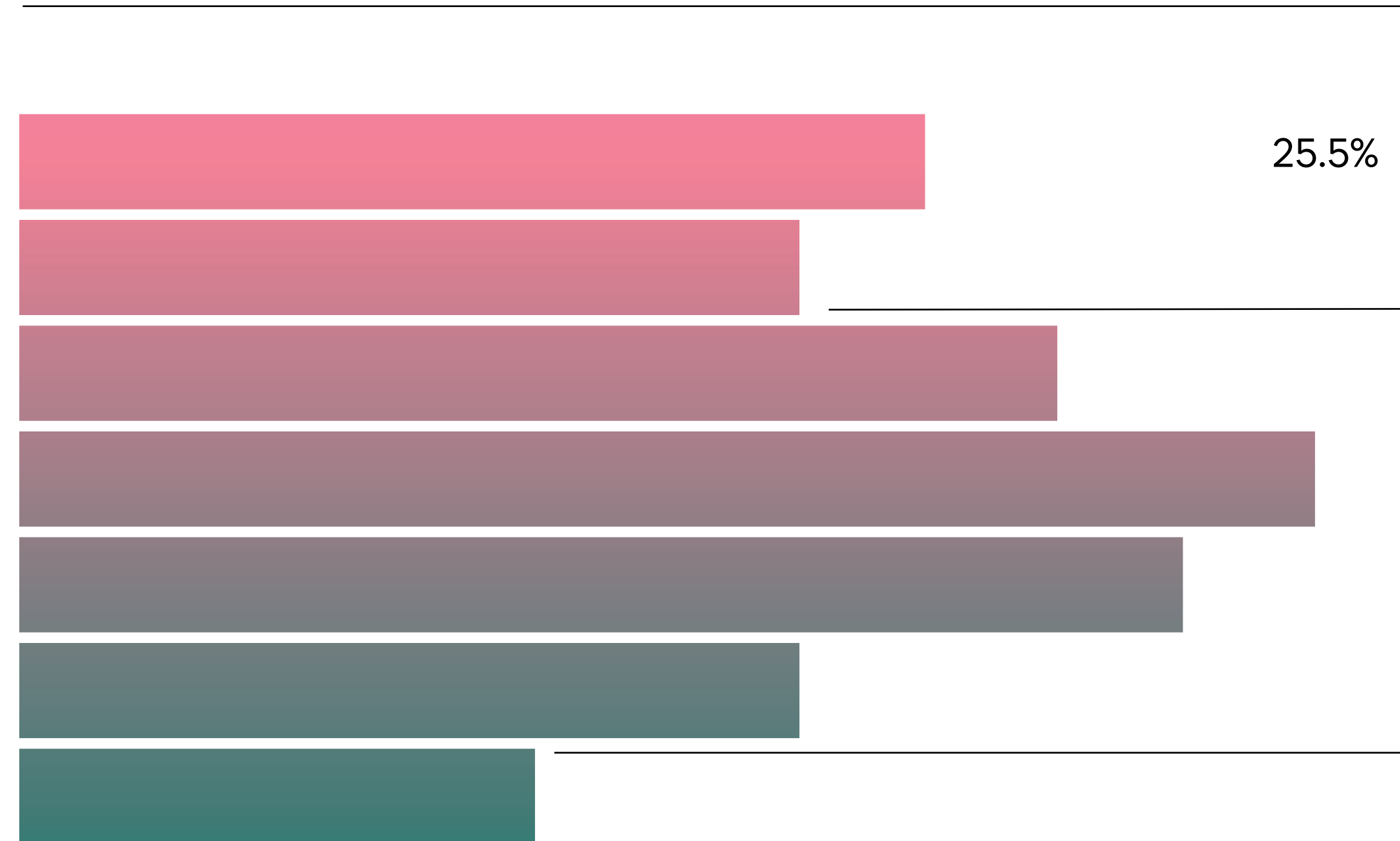
On the scale of 1-10,
how easy is it for you to make new friends?



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On the scale of 1-10, how often do you feel lonely?

(1) rarely



53% introverts



61.5% in a relationship



60% extroverts



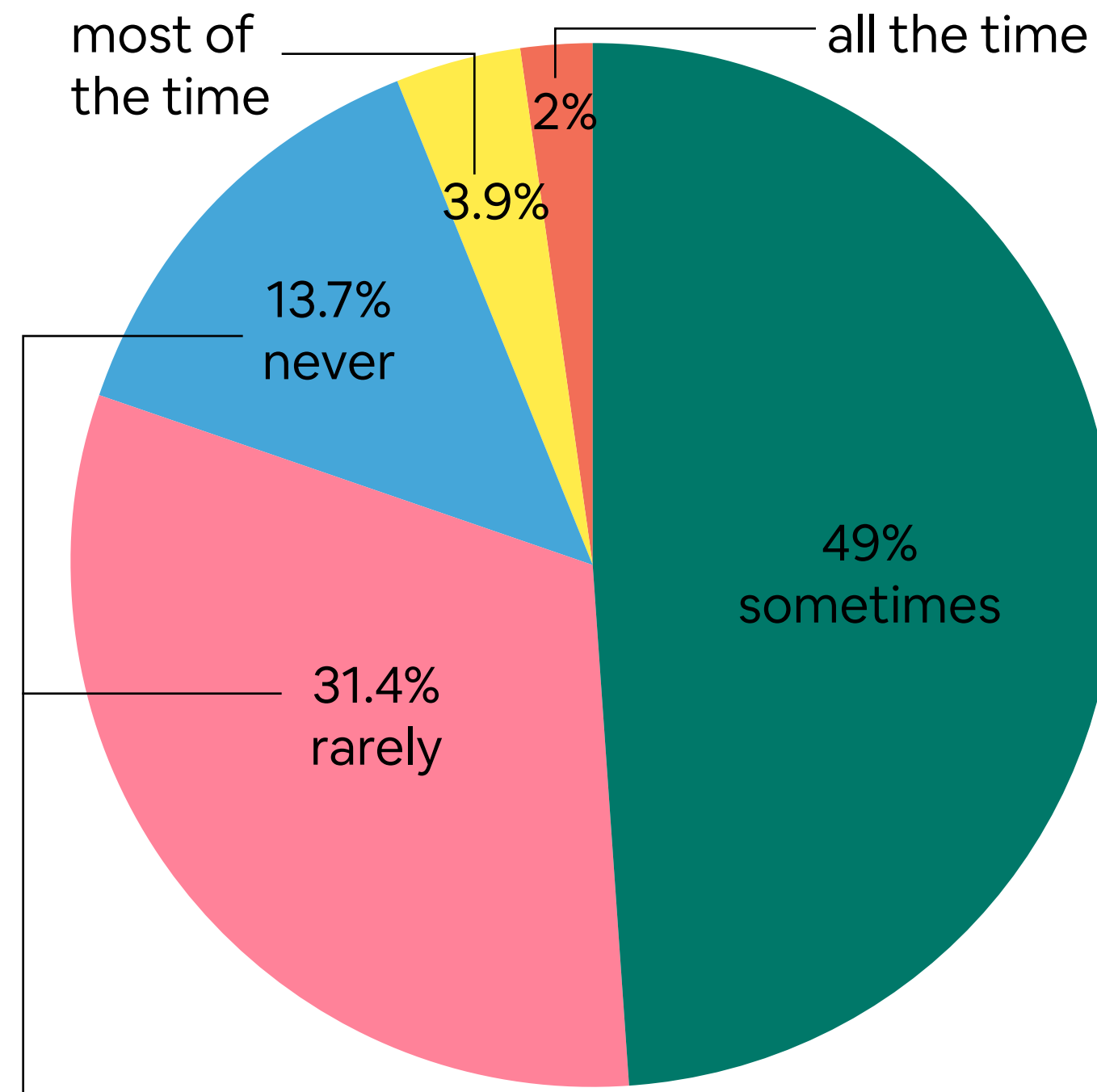
20% single

20% complicated

(10) all the time

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Do you make small talks with strangers? What do you feel about small talks?

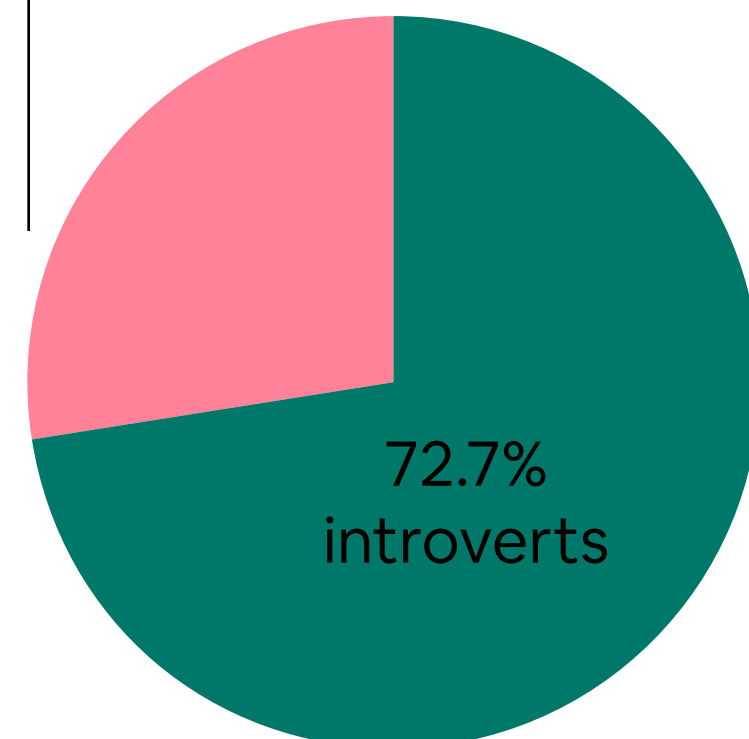


natural (18)
neutral (9)
depends (6)

“It’s a **nice feeling** that you are able to connect with a stranger for like 5min.”

“It’s a matter of **cultural difference** for me. I don’t mind it but at the same time I wouldn’t be the first one to initiate it.”



“I would enjoy if there is **certain topic** to talk about —like dogs or design”

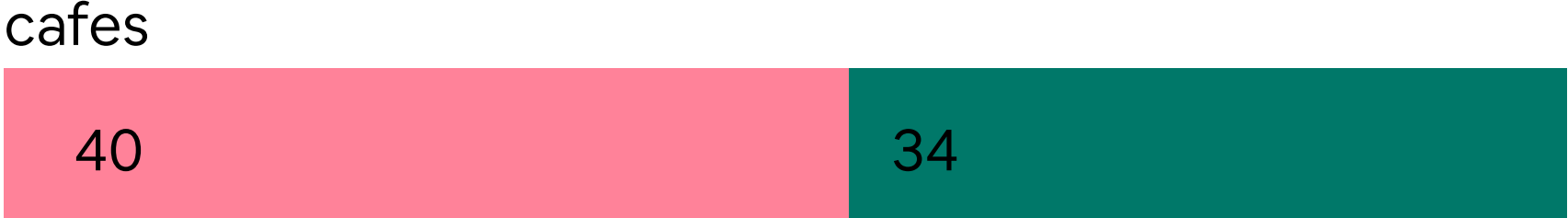
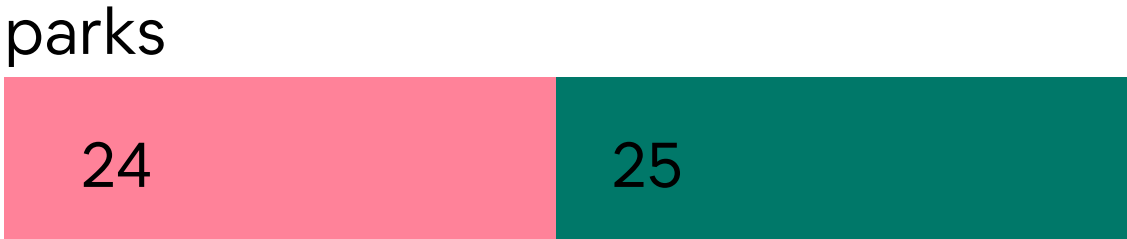


somewhat uncomfortable (5)
scared, anxious (3)

“**difficult to initiate**”, “don’t know where to start” (2)
“**stay on guard**” (3)
“**waste of time**”, “as long as it doesn’t drag” (2)

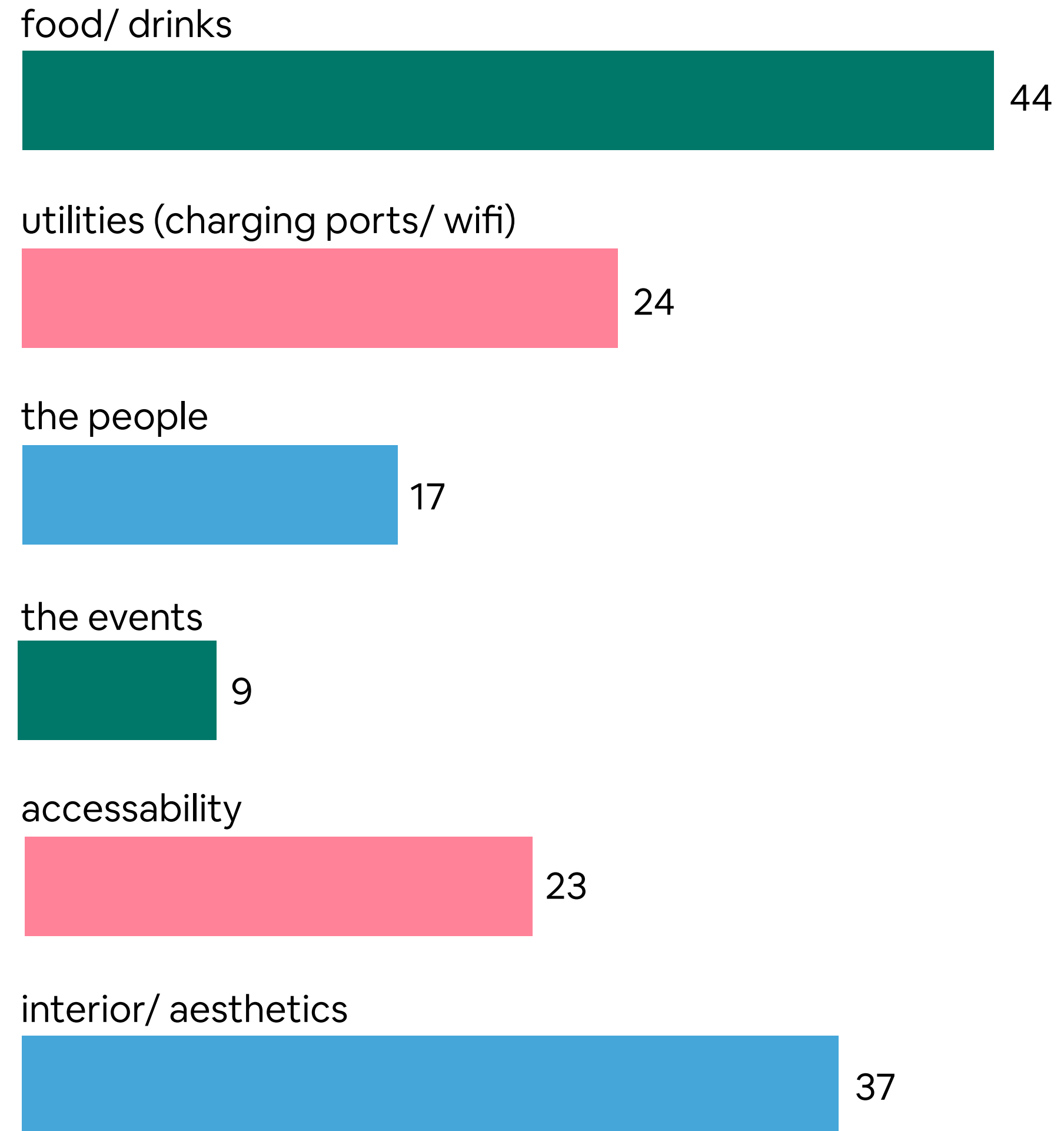
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Where do you visit often in your neighborhood? 
and where would you go by yourself? 



05 RESEARCH

What usually draws you to a space?



05 RESEARCH

Persona (I)

David: introverted, 23 y/o Male

David recently graduated from Parsons and is currently a social media manager working from home in NYC.

He lives in a high-rise apartment building in Long Island City, Queens with his dog. His average weekday consists of working 9-5, going to the gym, order delivery, online gaming, and sleep.

He has a few friends in the city but they don't see each other as often as they did in college. He does not like unfamiliar crowds so he avoids big parties and networking events

David walks around the city with his film camera on the weekends. He tries to make dinner plans with some friends, but if no one is available, he usually goes home and microwave trader joe's meals.

0 Face to face interaction and does not have a strong reason to leave the apartment.

David gets anxious in a larger group since he doesn't know how to initiate a conversation or leave one politely.



Illustration by: Irina Molchanova

05
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Persona (II)

Zoe: extroverted, 29 y/o Female

Zoe recently moved from Albany to NYC for her new job in advertising.

She lives in a townhouse in Greenpoint with 2 other roommates she linked up with on Facebook. Her average weekday consists of commute to work in midtown Manhattan, SweetGreen for lunch, more working, and back in her apartment.

She imagined her life in NYC would be more fun - perhaps she meets her work best friend or parties with her roommates - but it is a little disappointing right now.

Zoe is drained from work on weekdays, but on weekends, she tries to go to as many events such as pop-ups in soho, group boxing classes, and concerts. She made a few new friends from nights out but they all have their busy lives to get back to in the day.

Zoe imagined the life in NYC to be fun and wild, but in real life, she has to worry about paying rent and balancing work and fun is not easy!



Illustration by: Irina Molchanova

Persona (III)

James: extroverted, 26 y/o Male

James works for Citibank as an accountant and his goal is to be promoted associate by the end of the year.

He lives alone in a studio in Financial District. His average weekday consists of walking to the office, grabbing halal food, intensive working, and sometimes a drink with his co-workers.

He actually really enjoys cooking but since he doesn't have time on the weekdays, he tries a new recipe from the New York Times every weekend. He invites his co-workers and their partners sometimes, but never more than 5 people or else they won't fit in his apartment.

James is not actively looking to expand his social circle beyond his career, but it will be nice if he can find company for his journey to success.



Illustration by: Irina Molchanova

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Persona (IV)

Subin: introverted, 20 y/o Female

Subin is a junior at NYU studying business. She is an international student from Korea and she hasn't been home in 2 years.

She lives on campus with one other roommate and spends most of her time studying. She calls her long distance boyfriend every night and hangs with her two best friends on the weekends.

Small talks with strangers are uncommon in Asia. Therefore, Subin is always uncomfortable and alerted when someone approaches her.

Subin is also a plant mom and collects prints for decorating her dorm room.

NYC is home to a lot of international students. (33% of Pratt's undergrad are international, and 27.6% of NYU)

Cultural differences and wariness to new environment often make it more difficult to make connections.



Illustration by: Irina Molchanova

05 RESEARCH



DAVID

I'd love to **share my film photography** with my neighbors at Our Table - maybe I can find someone to take photos with me!

Keeping it **casual** though, this is only my hobby and I don't want to give a whole speech and have everyone's attention.



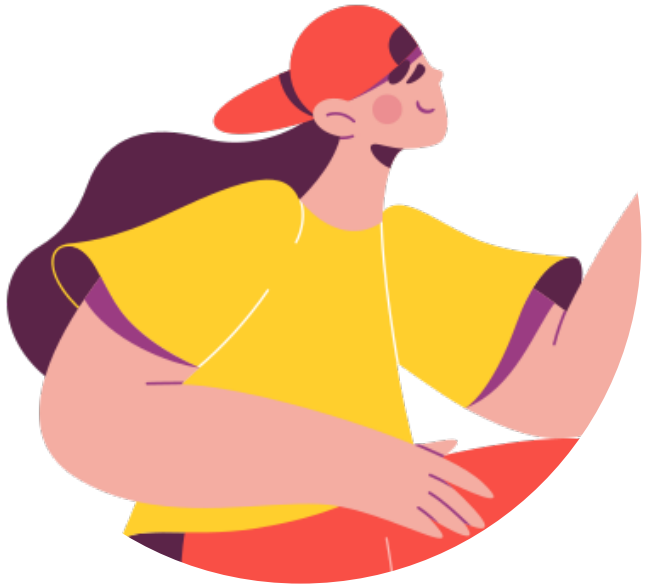
ZOE

Oooh the **pop up picnic event** of Our Table at Central Park was such a great time! I should check out what event they're hosting in our neighborhood this week!



JAMES

My friends and I are looking for a space to host a dinner party - maybe I can **pitch the idea** at Our Table and see who would like to join!



SUBIN

I stop by Our Table almost every week when there isn't an event. I get a coffee and look around to see **what everyone is up to!**

I found these really cute prints for my wall last week - maybe I should go to their next art fair!

05 RESEARCH

* Some events/ activation for the space to attract local community.



From the beginning, Starbucks set out to be a different kind of company. One that **not only celebrated coffee but also connection**. We're a **neighborhood gathering place**, a part of your daily routine.

Mission: To inspire and nurture the human spirit - one person, one cup and **one neighborhood at a time**.



- > Successfully created a third place for in between home and work.
- > Customized interior and merchandise for different neighborhoods.
- > However, the space does not encourage interaction with individual tables and working culture.

- > Accessibility 
- > Homely 
- > Interaction 

05 RESEARCH

BOWERY SHOWROOM

Bowery Showroom is a New York-based **concept store and cultural hub** focused on independent designers, local artists, and vintage clothing. Through creative activations, we enable our members to **express themselves in an inclusive, accessible, future-facing atmosphere.**

As an all-in-one concept store that merges both the **digital and physical experience of product discovery**, we allow our guests to develop a relationship with the brands in a new way.

Designed to be **modular**, the space and furniture allow our collaborators to have full creative freedom within the space.



- > Has a specific niche that attracts like-minded crowd.
- > Created a community with loyal members.

- > Accessibility 
- > Homely 
- > Interaction 



05 RESEARCH



Not Just Library is a 83-year-old bathhouse transformed into library and cultural space to embracing heritage while creating spaces to nurture learning and relaxation.

The main space is a **sunken reading space** built upon the bath structure so one can be “immersed in knowledge”. The books are all arts and culture related attracting a specific niche of audience.

The library is also intended to act as a **cultural venue** for events and meetings. They invite speakers and studios to showcase their work to promote exchange in the local arts and design field.



05 RESEARCH



- > Accessibility 
- > Homely 
- > Interaction 



The Museum of Us was a campaign, exhibition, project space and programme of events designed to bring together members of the local community in the Old Kent Road Area.

The center of the project was a refurbished shop on Old Kent Road transformed into a positive and democratic space to enable conversations and engagement on the long-term plans for the area.

From there the exhibition invited people to contribute their opinions on what matters in the area.

> Use of logo sticker as a nudge for participation.



05 RESEARCH



- > Accessibility 
- > Homely 
- > Interaction 

Both introverts and extroverts are wired for social connections -- even people who are satisfied with their current social circles are open to making new friends.

However, that is generally more difficult for introverts. They prefer to connect with **a smaller group (8-15) of like-minded people in a safe and familiar environment.**

Since conversations don't start naturally between any groups of people, common events, exhibitions, and experiences are ways to bring together a niche.

A successful third space is accessible and build trust through familiarity. The space should promote exchange and **give voice to the community.**

06 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Branding:

Write Mission and Vision Statement
Establish Brand Tone and Personality
Create Style Guide (Logo & Interior)

Activation:

Design community board and interactive prompts.
Develop mock up events for each persona.
Picnic Pop Up
Film Photography Exhibit
Artist Fair
Host a Dinner Party

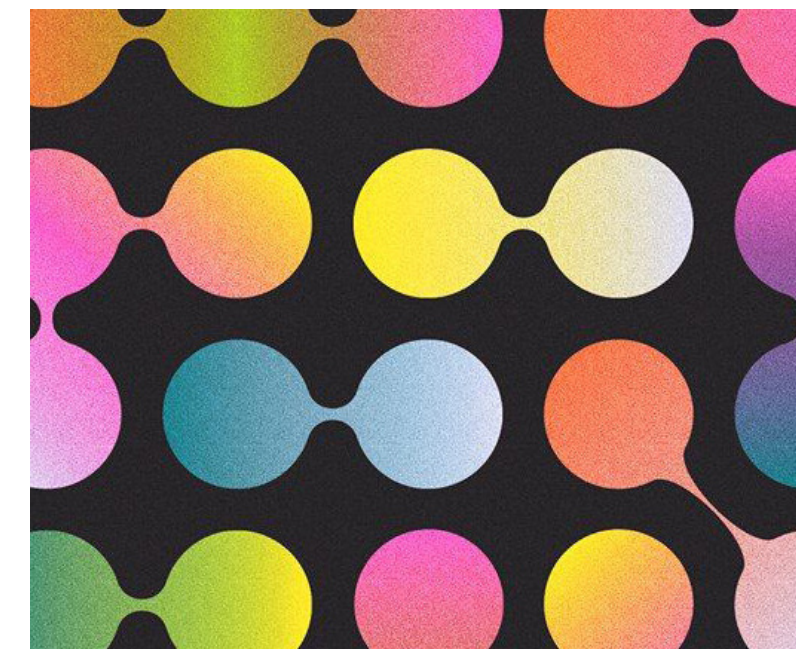
07

NEXT STEPS

08 MOODBOARD

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Brand Identity



Activation/ Space Design



2/14
Research:
The City

2/21
Research:
Survey

2/28*
Research
Presentation

3/7
Brand Structure

3/14
Brand Design

3/21
Interior +
Activation
Campaign

3/28
Interior +
Event Assets
Assets Progress

4/4
Event Assets +
Website

4/11
Social Media +
Refinement

4/18
Refinement

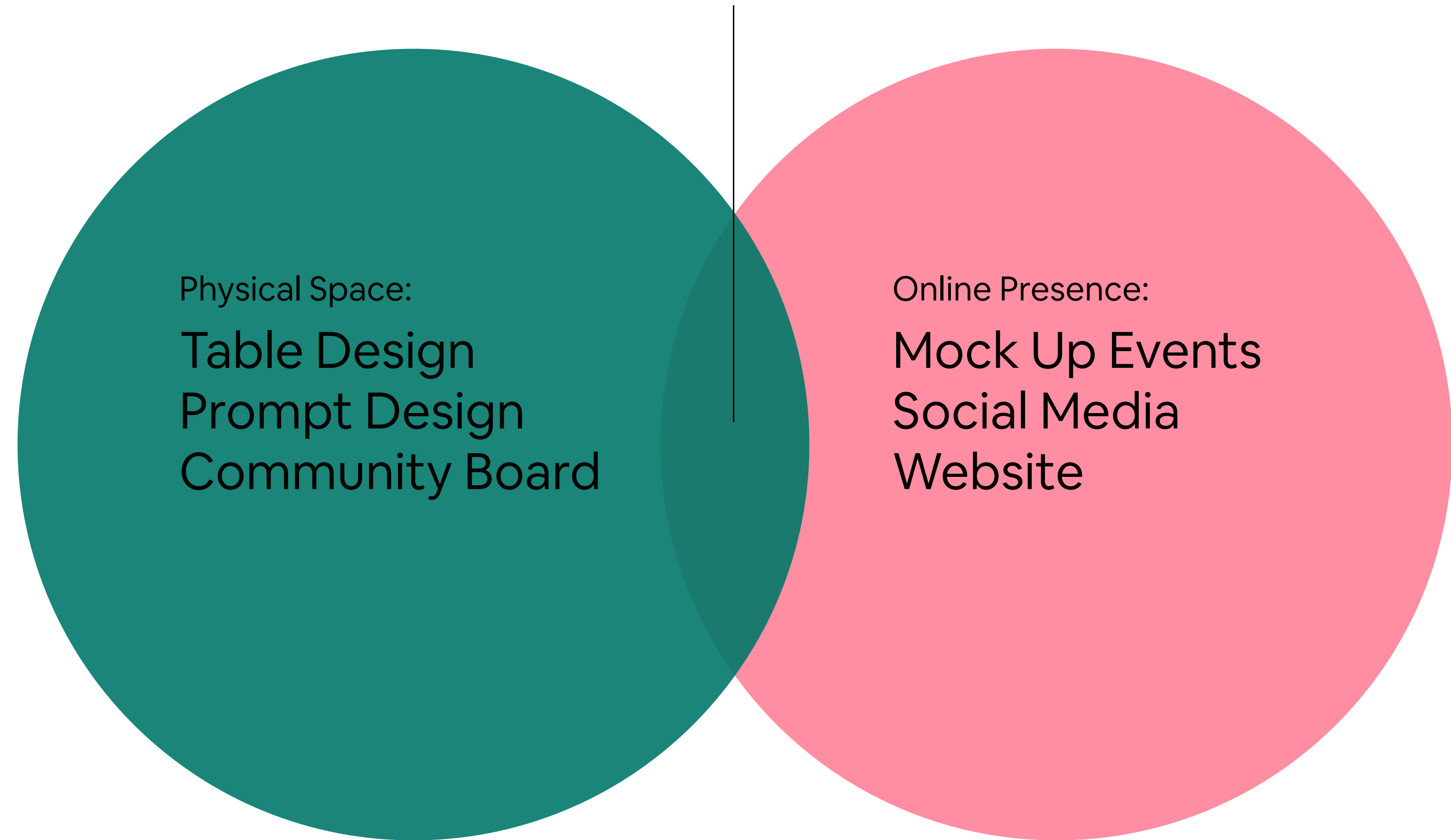
4/25
Rehearsal

5/2*
Panel Review

09 TIMELINE

Area of Concentration:

Branding & Activation



10 REVISED ASSET LIST

Thank You!



THE END