

Dil, Dosti, Data 2

How young, digitally-connected
Indians are navigating love,
friendship and family

YOUTH KI AWAAZ



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About the study

Dil Dosti Data has now been conducted twice. The first wave, published as Dil, Dosti, Data: Young Love and Loneliness in 17 Data Snaps, was fielded between August and October 2025 and drew responses from nearly 3,000 young Indians across 30 states and union territories. This second wave adds another 3,072 respondents. Together, the two waves have now received participation from more than 6,000 young people, making this one of the larger studies of its kind.

This report, however, draws only on the second wave. The two waves are separate, self-selected samples collected at different points in time, so they are analysed independently rather than combined into a single dataset. Unless stated otherwise, every figure and analysis in this report is based on the 3,072 respondents in Wave 2. Findings from the first wave are used only for questions that were asked in both rounds, and only where comparing responses collected six to nine months apart is analytically meaningful.

Respondents

The survey was conducted using Yoot, Youth Ki Awaaz's WhatsApp-based polling infrastructure in the month of May 2026. A total of 3,072 people responded. Participating in the survey was voluntary, so about 18% of all the potential participants who we fielded this survey actually opted to participate.

This is a self-selected group, and not a random probabilistic sample. Respondents are largely young (about six in ten are 18 to 24 years of age), urban (over seven in ten reside in cities/towns), and male (about three-quarters). Across the two waves combined (about six thousand participants), participants were about 69 per cent men and 31 per cent women, around 74 per cent reported living in urban areas, and overwhelmingly young with nearly half of them in the age group 18 to 24 years. Therefore, it is best read as a close look at digitally-connected young Indians, and young men in particular, who are usually under-represented in this area of research, rather than a representative cross-section of all Indian youth. These are the unweighted characteristics of those who responded before applying the survey weights described in the following section.

How we adjusted for the demographic skew

To keep the demographic composition balanced, the answers are weighted so that the mix of states, ages, genders and urban or rural backgrounds is closer to the national population. The figures throughout are these weighted estimates. It is important to add that even though weighting somewhat improves the balance, it cannot fully correct for the biases related to opt-in (responses of those choosing to answer a poll may differ from those who did not take part) and digital exclusion. To counter these biases, the presentation of findings leans mostly on relationships across the responses to the questions ('variables') in the dataset, to make numbers quoted throughout far less sensitive to demographic composition of survey participants.

How the numbers were analysed

Three kinds of evidence appear in the report. Most findings are simple shares of an answer, reported as weighted percentages. Some are correlations, measured with Spearman's coefficient, which captures whether answers to two ordered response questions are statistically associated; we report only those that are statistically reliable. A few are odds ratios from logistic regressions that hold age and gender constant, so a relationship is not just an age or gender difference in disguise. Because many comparisons were made between this round and the last, those cross-round tests were adjusted for multiple comparisons to avoid mistaking the chance for change.

Comparing with the previous Dil, Dosti, Data report

The first wave of Dil Dosti Data had asked fifteen questions. For the second wave we kept all fifteen and added six more, which brought the total to twenty-one. The new questions look at relationship status, what people do first when something feels emotionally heavy, who people count as family beyond their own, what changed most in their idea of family, and a set of questions specifically focusing on the experiences of young men and boys, which included education boys receive about showing emotions and their past experience of trying to open up.

Where a question appears in both waves, we compare the two rounds carefully. Fourteen of the fifteen questions were fielded unchanged. The remaining one question about parental support was also fielded in the first wave but with a slightly different version, asking how parents react when you share relationship stress rather than whether you feel emotionally supported by them. Since the framing was substantially different, those two sets of responses can't be compared side by side.

The two rounds are also not two like-for-like panels; they are different self-selected groups with only partial overlap consisting of 419 people who participated in both rounds. We have treated something as a real change only when it holds among these repeat respondents.

Precision and Limitations

The readers are recommended to treat every percentage as give or take about five percentage points. Differences smaller than that are not meaningful. We have also been careful about which patterns to bring to your attention to avoid chances of over-reading. A few correlations that looked dramatic turned out to be quirks of very small subgroups and the sample base to support those was very thin. We have set those aside rather than present them as findings.

Some associations (such as the one between how boys were taught to handle feelings and them confiding in no one) are reliable, but they point to only a correlation, not a cause. We have indicated some findings throughout the report with the label **Read with Caution**. These estimates carry an important signal for the reader to pay attention to, but these are either based on smaller sample bases or depend heavily on the demographic characteristics of the survey participants, and should not be generalised as a population-level trend.

How to read this report

This report sets out 23 findings and each one stands on its own. These can be read in any order, or used singly for sharing with someone or bringing into a conversation.

Where it can, each finding rests on a relationship in the data, meaning which answers tend to go together, rather than on a single headline figure. There is a reason for this. People who volunteered to take part in and respond to a poll are not a perfect mirror of all young Indians, so a lone percentage might be misleading. The connections between answers, such as the link between how boys were taught to handle feelings and whether they confide in anyone, hold up with less sensitivity to exactly what the demographic composition of respondents was.

A few of the findings use two ideas that are worth a plain word:

A correlation is simply a measure of whether and how strongly two things are associated. It ranges from -1 to +1. A value near zero means there is no statistical link; a positive value means the two rise together; a negative value means one rises as the other falls. In surveys like this one, a correlation of around 0.1 is small, and around 0.3 is a moderate and somewhat notable link. We only mention correlations that are statistically reliable, meaning they are less likely to be a fluke of who participated in the poll.

An odds ratio comes from a model that holds some set of information steady, so that a pattern or an association is not an effect of that set of information. An odds ratio above 1 means the odds of something rise as the other thing rises: 1.4, for instance, means roughly 40 per cent higher odds at each step up. Below 1 means the odds fall and it is an inverse relationship.

The fuller account of how the survey was designed and how the data collection was conducted, along with the methods used for analysis, is presented at the end of the report.

Part One

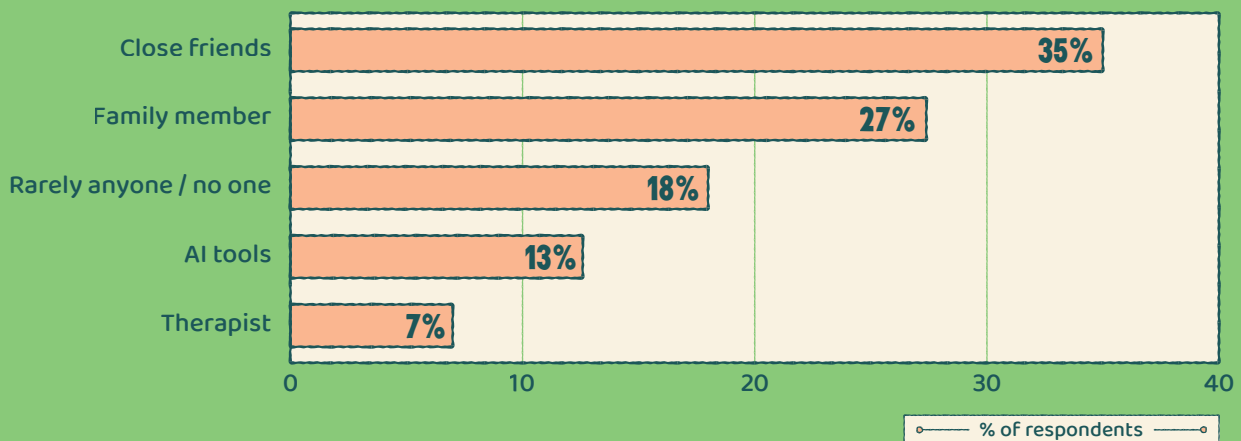
Loneliness and Reaching Out



1. For dealing with heartache, friends come first, and AI now comes before a therapist

When something in their love life turns painful, most young people still reach first for the people closest to them. About 35 per cent would talk to close friends before anyone else, and 27 per cent to a family member. Roughly one in eight, 13 per cent, would turn first to an AI tool such as ChatGPT, ahead of the 7 per cent who would go first to a therapist. The difference between the two is modest but statistically clear, and the ranking is what matters: for this group a chatbot has become a more likely first confidant than a professional. About 18 per cent said they would turn to no one. The youngest (18-21 years) lean most often on friends, while the proportion of those turning first to a family member rises steadily from about a fifth of under-25s to roughly a third of those in their thirties, indicating that family re-enters the picture in higher age groups.

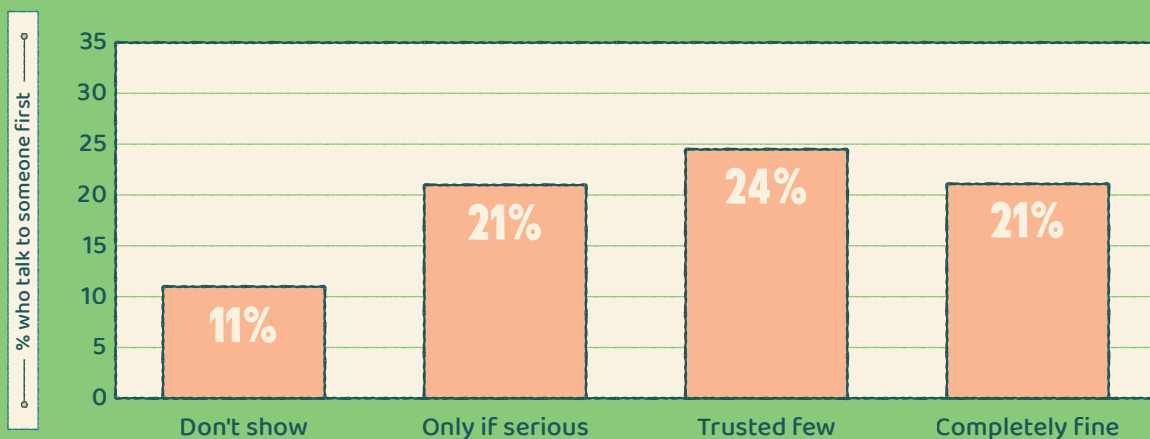
When things get emotionally heavy in your love life, who do you talk to first?



2. What young men were taught about feelings is strongly associated with whether they reach out to anyone

How a young man handles a hard feeling is tied to what he was told about feelings as a boy. Among men raised to believe that boys do not show emotion, only about 11 per cent say that when something feels heavy they talk to someone they trust first. Among those who grew up hearing it was more acceptable to be open, the figure is roughly double, in the low twenties. With age and gender held steady in a statistical model, each step towards a more open upbringing raises the odds of reaching out by about 28 per cent. It is a firm enough link to rely on and suggest that **the handling of emotions that a boy learns during his upbringing can predict his inclination to talk to anyone about emotionally challenging situations later on in his life.**

Growing up, what message did you get about boys and men showing their feelings?

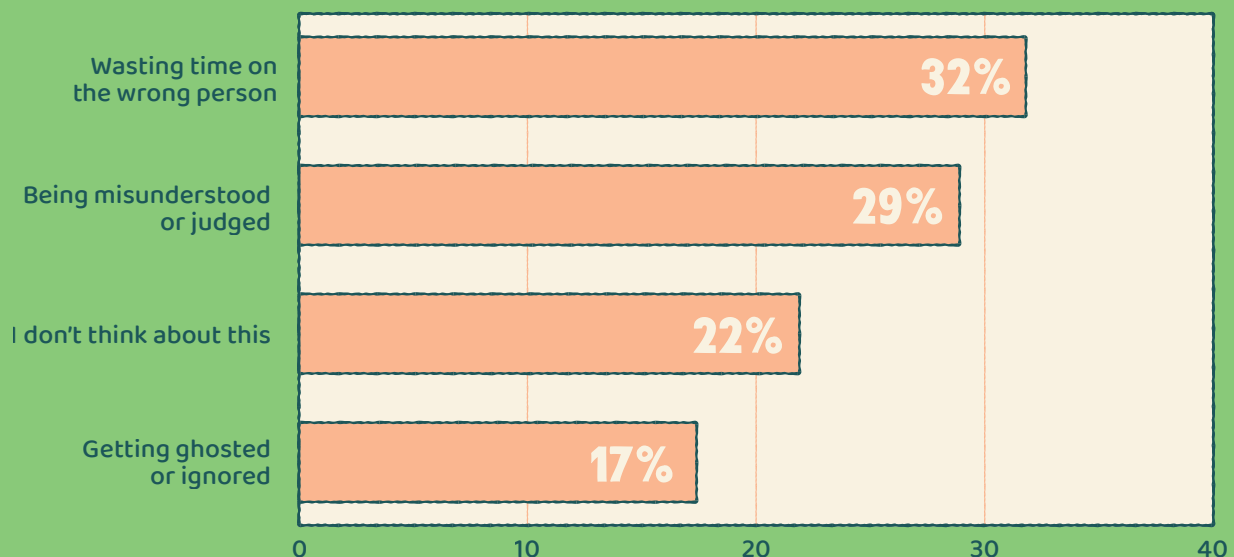


3. Most prominent fears about dating are wasting time and being misjudged

Asked what they fear most about dating, young people are least troubled by fear of rejection, which is often assumed as the key part of dating experience. Being ghosted or ignored is a familiar image of modern dating, but it ranked last and it was named only by about 17 per cent. The fears that loom largest are: wasting time on the wrong person, at 32 per cent, and being misunderstood or judged, at 29 per cent, which sit level with each other at the top. A further 22 per cent said they do not really think about it. What weighs on the young people is less the sting of rejection than the cost of misspent time and the fear of being misunderstood.

Women are markedly more likely than men to name 'wasting time on the wrong person', at 43 per cent against 31 per cent, one of the rather clear gender gaps in the study, while men are a little more likely to say they do not think about it at all.

What's your biggest fear when it comes to dating?

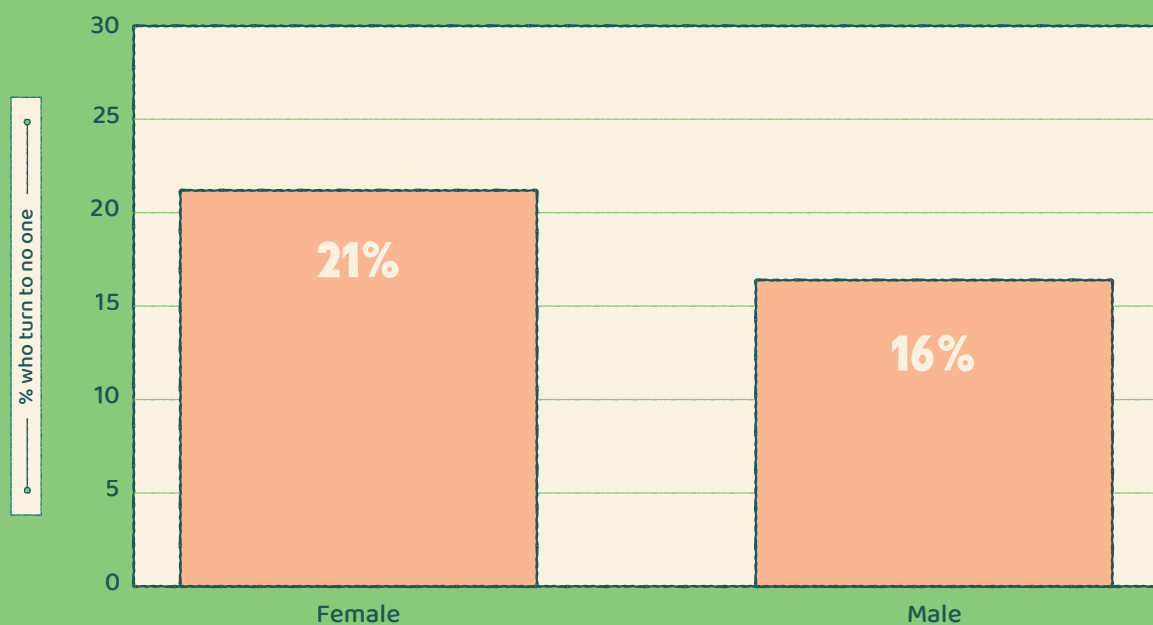


— % of respondents —

4. Women report turning to no one a little more often than men, but the gap is small

This is a modest difference, and one to **read with caution**. When emotional troubles in love life arise, about 21 per cent of women say they turn to no one, against 16 per cent of men, a gap of around five percentage points that is at the edge of being meaningful. It also holds up when age is taken into account, with young men somewhat less likely than young women to say they confide in no one. The finding cuts mildly against the assumption that young men are the most likely to keep love troubles to themselves, but the difference is too small to carry much more weight than that.

When things get emotionally heavy in your love life, who do you talk to first?

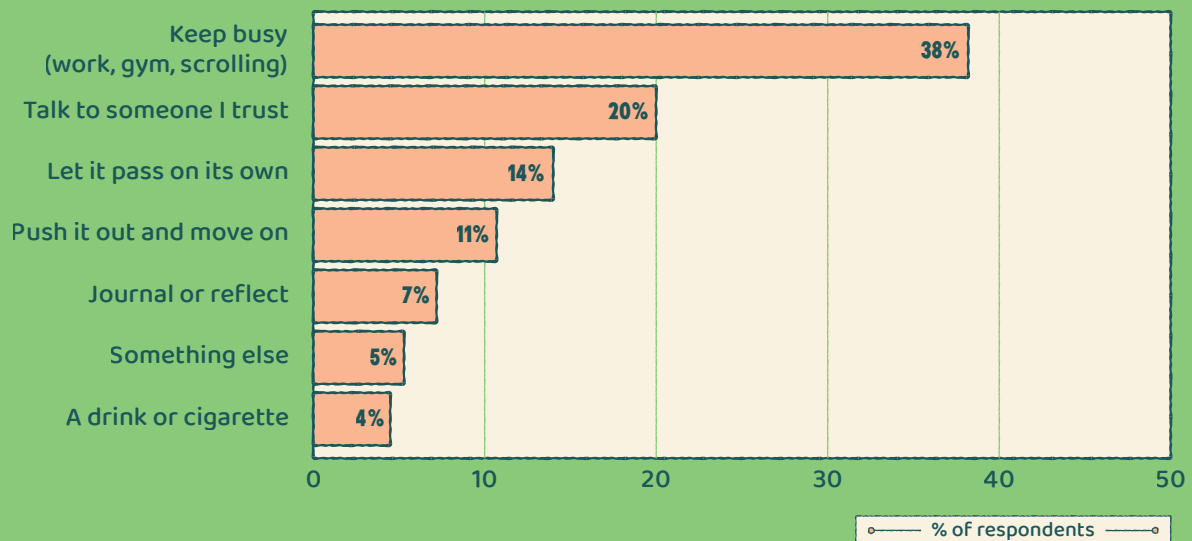


5. Under emotional strain, the first instinct among the young people is to get busy, not to talk

When something feels emotionally heavy, in any part of life, the most common first response is not to talk but to stay busy. About 38 per cent said they keep themselves occupied with work, study, the gym, games or scrolling. Only around 20 per cent talk to someone they trust first. The rest are spread across other categories: 14 per cent let the feeling pass on its own, 11 per cent push it out of their mind, 7 per cent write or reflect privately, and a small group of about 4 per cent reach for a drink or a cigarette. For many young people, the first thing to do when something hurts is to manage it alone and keep going.

There is a generational divide too on this. **Handling feelings alone is most pronounced among the very youngest. Talking to someone one trusts increases from less than one in six among the 18-21 years age group (at less than 15 per cent) to about a quarter of those for 30-34**, while keeping busy stays the most common answer at every age.

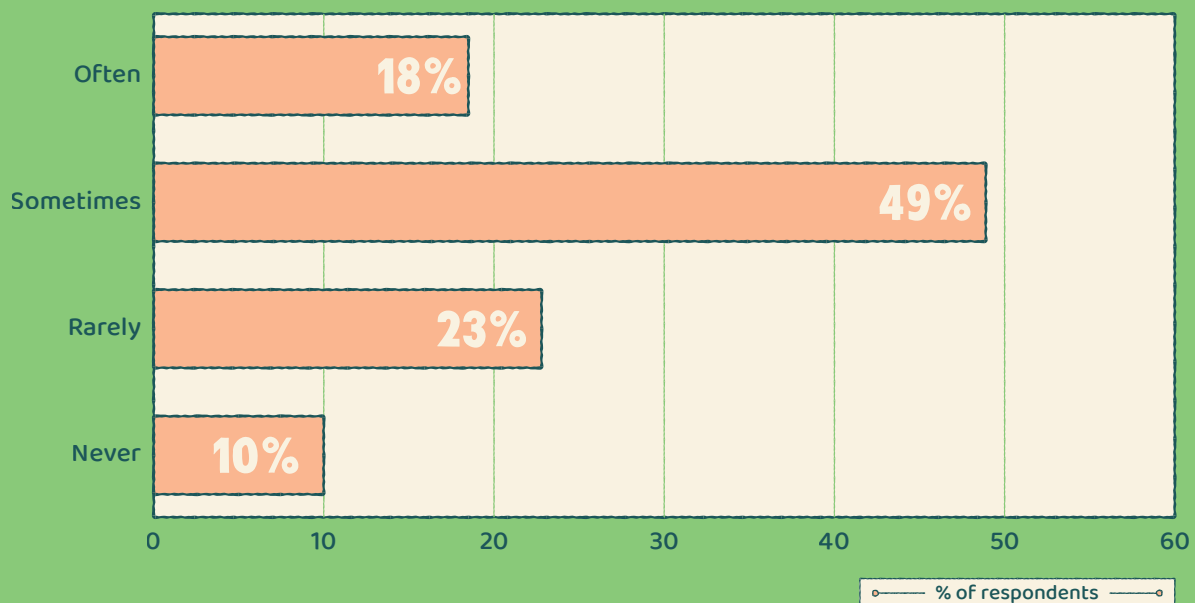
When something feels emotionally heavy, in any part of life, what do you usually do first?



6. Feeling lonely while being in a relationship is common, and having good friendships does not completely explain it

The wave 2 of Dil Dosti Data reiterates that loneliness is not confined only to people without partners. Among those who have been in a relationship, about two in three say they have felt lonely within one **at least sometimes**, and only one in ten say never. The quality of someone's friendships, which might be expected to soften this kind of loneliness, shows no strong association with it: those with strong friendships feel lonely in relationships at a broadly similar rate to everyone else. Loneliness inside a relationship appears to be its own kind of experience, rather than a simple shortage of good friends. Women and men, and the different age groups, report it at much the same rate. The experience is broadly shared rather than concentrated in any one group.

Have you ever felt lonely while being in a relationship or situationship?





Part Two

The landscape of love and romance

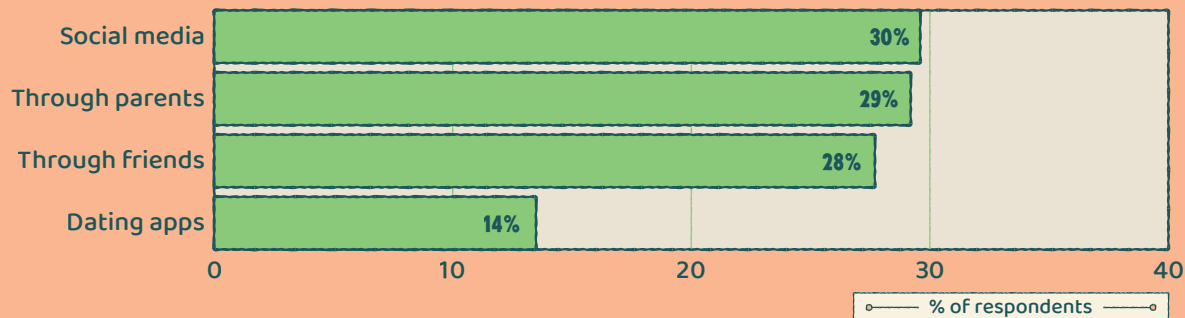


7. Partners are found through friends and social media, with dating apps a distant last as a place to find a partner

For all the attention paid to dating apps, they are the least common way young people are looking for a partner. Asked how they would seek someone out, young people pointed first to friends and to social media, each named by about 28 to 30 per cent, and to their parents, at 29 per cent. Dedicated dating apps came in last, at 14 per cent, less than half the rate of the others. Romance seems to travel mainly through existing circles and through family, with purpose-built digital tech finding itself on the margins.

Women lean more on friends to find a partner, at 40 per cent against 30 per cent of men, while men lean more on social media, at 33 per cent against 24 per cent. And there is a shift with age: well over half of under-18s would go through friends, a share that falls to about a fifth by the thirties as dating apps take on more of the role.

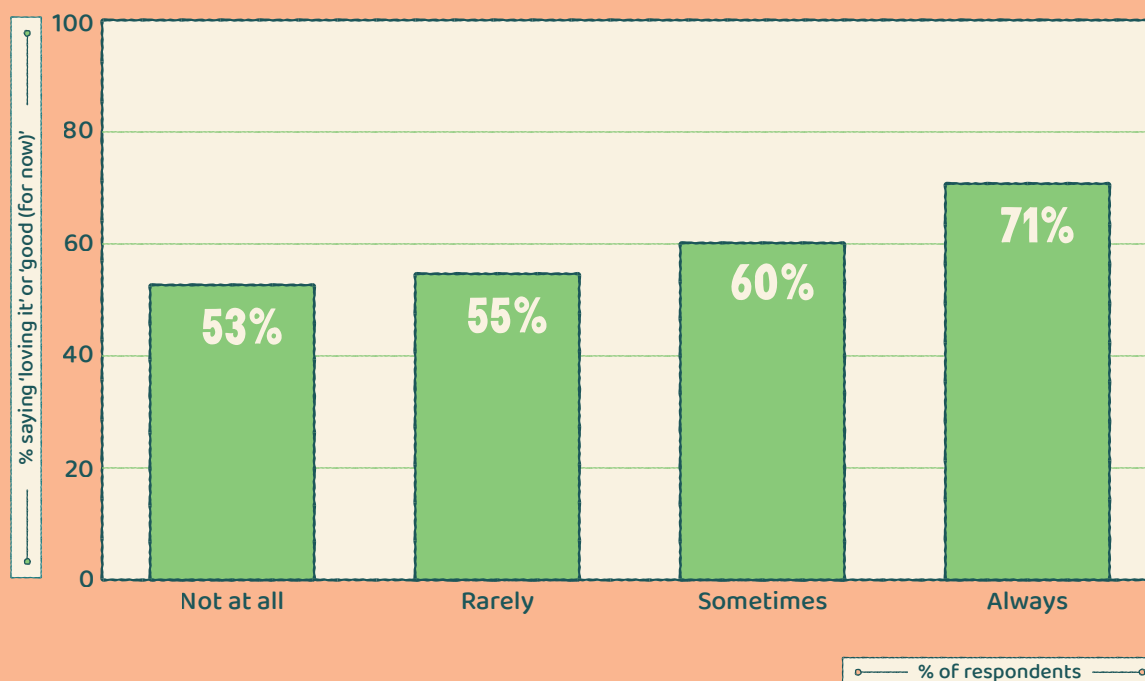
What are your preferred avenues for finding a potential partner?



8. Ease with being single is a little higher among those who feel supported by parents

How someone feels about being single is associated, gently, with what they feel about the extent of support at home. This survey suggests that most single young people are at ease with being single, but that ease is a little more common among those who feel emotionally supported by their parents. As reported parental support rises from none to steady, comfort with being single edges up alongside it. The association is consistent though not large, as indicated by a rank correlation coefficient of 0.17. This indicates that parental backing might be one of the several effective supports that make being single feel less like a lack.

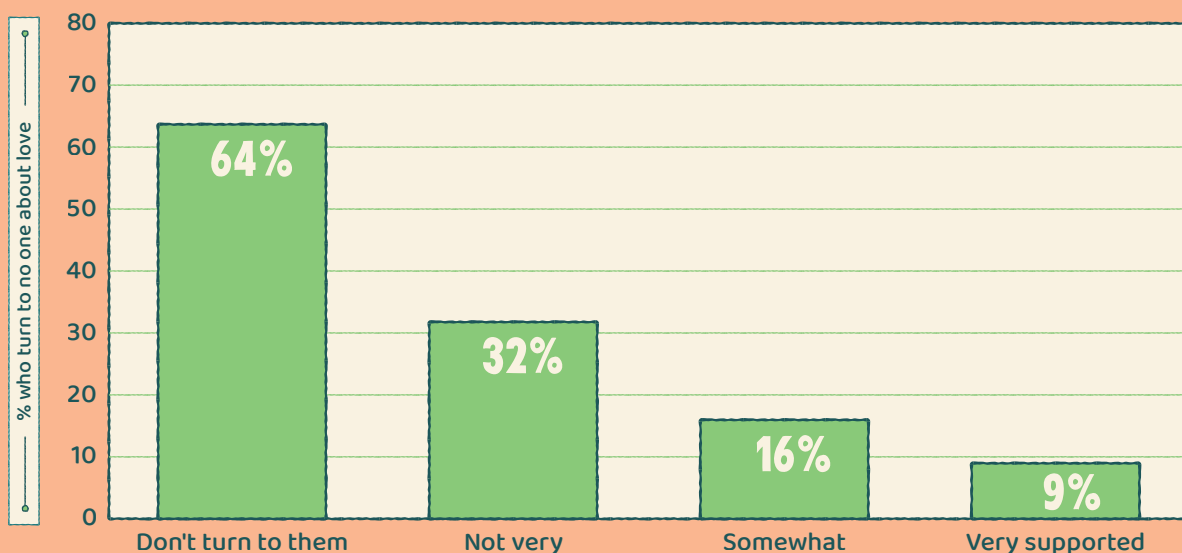
Do you feel emotionally supported by your parents when it comes to mental health or relationships?



9. When there is an emotionally difficult period, whether you have anyone to turn to depends on the strength of your friendships

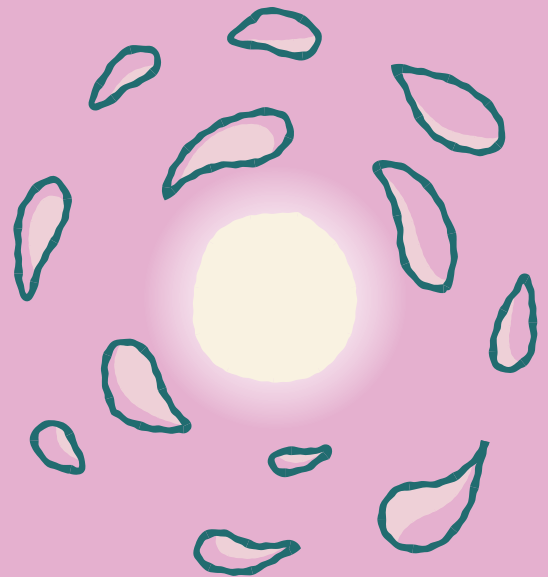
Among young people who feel very supported by their friends, only about 9 per cent say they turn to no one when difficult phases arrive in love relationships. That share rises to 16 per cent among those who feel only somewhat supported, and climbs steeply, to around a third and beyond, among those whose friendships feel thin. It is one of the strongest patterns in the study: each step up in how supported someone feels by friends cuts the odds of having no one to turn to in love by roughly sixty per cent, and the association holds when age and gender are taken into account. A strong friendship, it seems, is not only good company in itself but something that keeps people from having to bear the hardest parts of their love lives entirely alone.

How supported do you feel by your close friends when you're going through a tough time?



Part Three

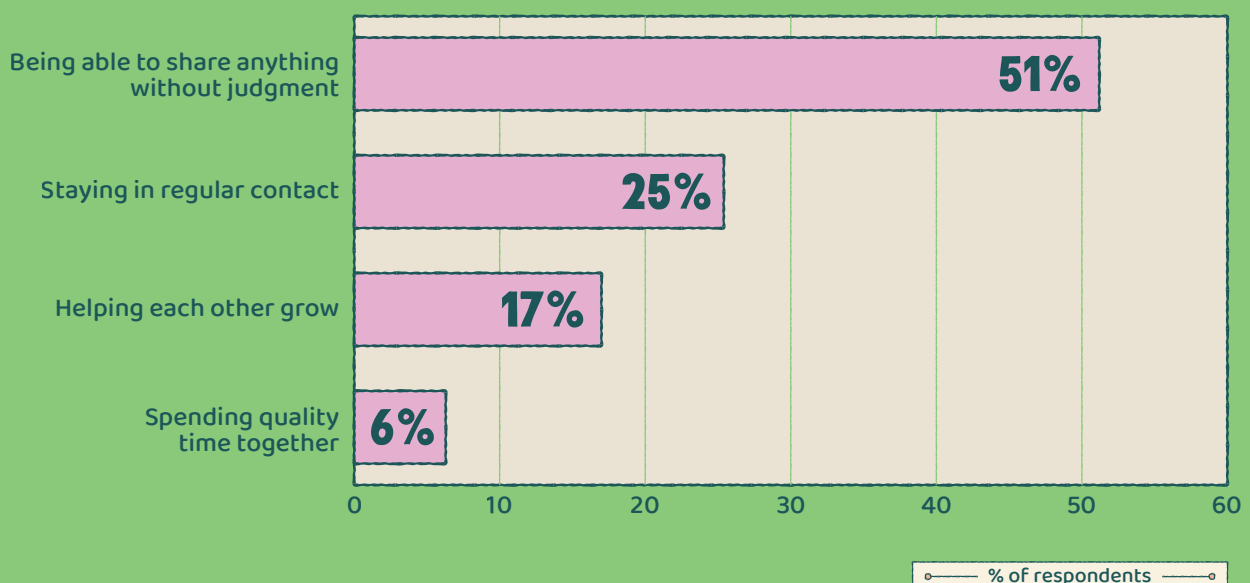
About Friends And Followers



10. Friendship is defined, above all, as a place to speak without being judged

Asked what real friendship means to them, young people place one quality well above the rest. Being able to share anything without being judged was chosen by 51 per cent, far ahead of other options: staying in regular contact (25 per cent), helping each other grow (17 per cent), spending quality time together (6 per cent). In other words, what makes a friendship feel real for most young people is having a safe space where they can be honest more than regularity of interaction. Women hold to this even more firmly than men: 61 per cent of women named being able to share without judgment as the heart of friendship, against 52 per cent of men, who leaned a little more towards staying in regular contact and spending time together.

Which of these best describes what “real” friendship means to you?

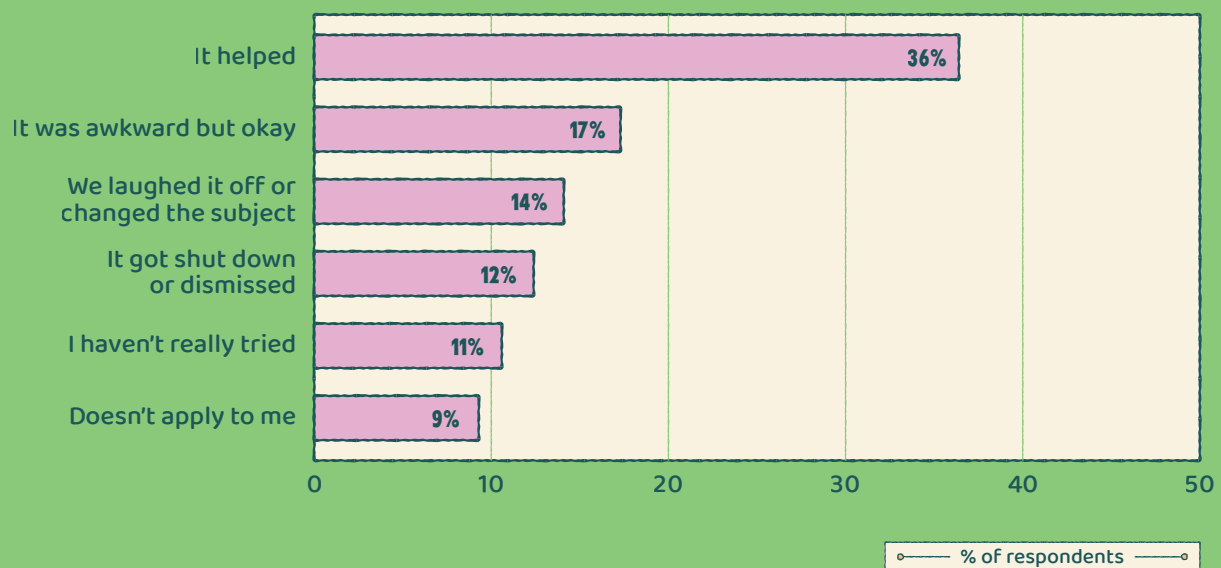


11. Opening up to others usually helps, but often enough it does not

For most young people, the risk of opening up to someone they know usually helps. When asked to recollect the last time they confided something emotional to someone close, 36 per cent said it helped. About 17 per cent found it awkward but fine. A substantial minority of respondents reported facing challenges: more than a quarter were either met with a colder response, or the moment got laughed off, or the subject got changed, or the feeling got shut down. Reaching out to people around them is a gamble for some young people. **When expressing yourself honestly can as easily be brushed aside, holding back begins to look like the safer choice. This tends to explain why many young people might fall back on managing their feelings on their own.**

One gender difference, though small, is worth noting: men were more likely than women to have had the moment laughed off or the subject changed, at 16 per cent against 12 per cent, a small sign that deflection is the more common way young men's disclosures are met.

The last time you tried to open up to someone close, a friend, classmate, sibling, colleague, or family member, about something emotional, how did it go?

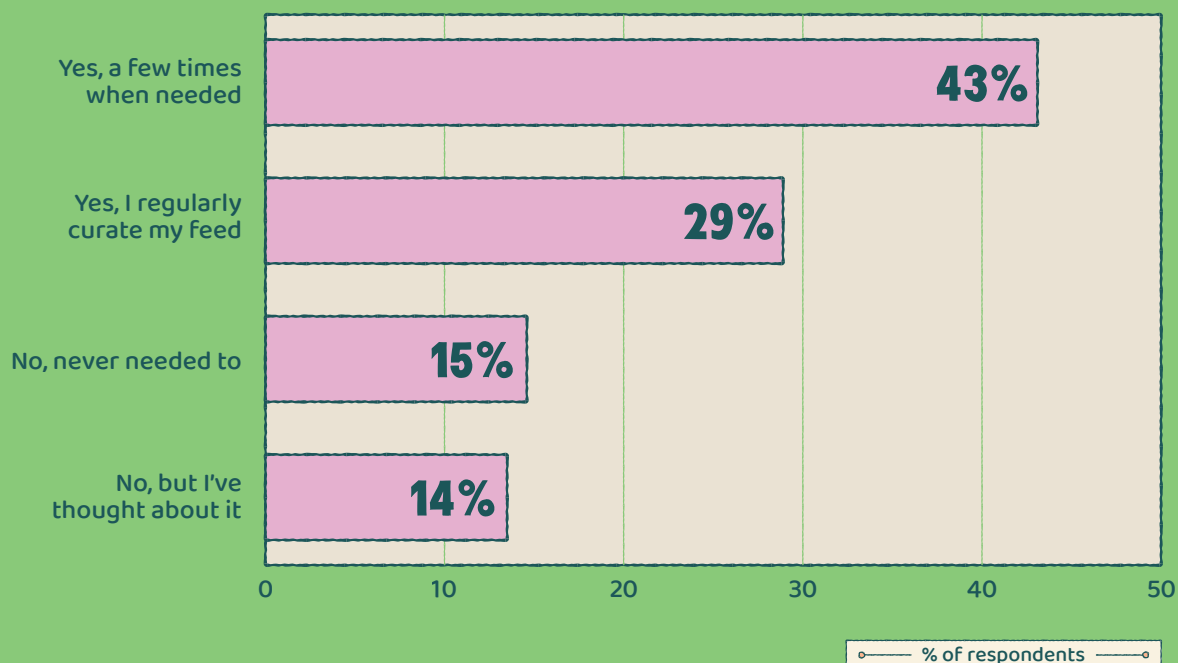


12. Curating who you follow has become a routine act of self-protection

Quietly removing people from your feed has become an ordinary form of self-care. About seven in ten have unfollowed someone to protect their own wellbeing, many of them more than once, and a substantial proportion of youth do it regularly as a way of keeping their social media feed bearable. For the young generation, managing who appears in front of them online is treated less as a dramatic break than as routine maintenance of their own peace of mind.

Women report it more than men, at 76 per cent against 67 per cent. The survey findings also do not support the hypothesis that it is a teenage reflex. Unfollowing is least common among under-25s (at 66 per cent) and rises to around 75 per cent among those in their late twenties and thirties, so it comes across as a habit people grow into rather than out of.

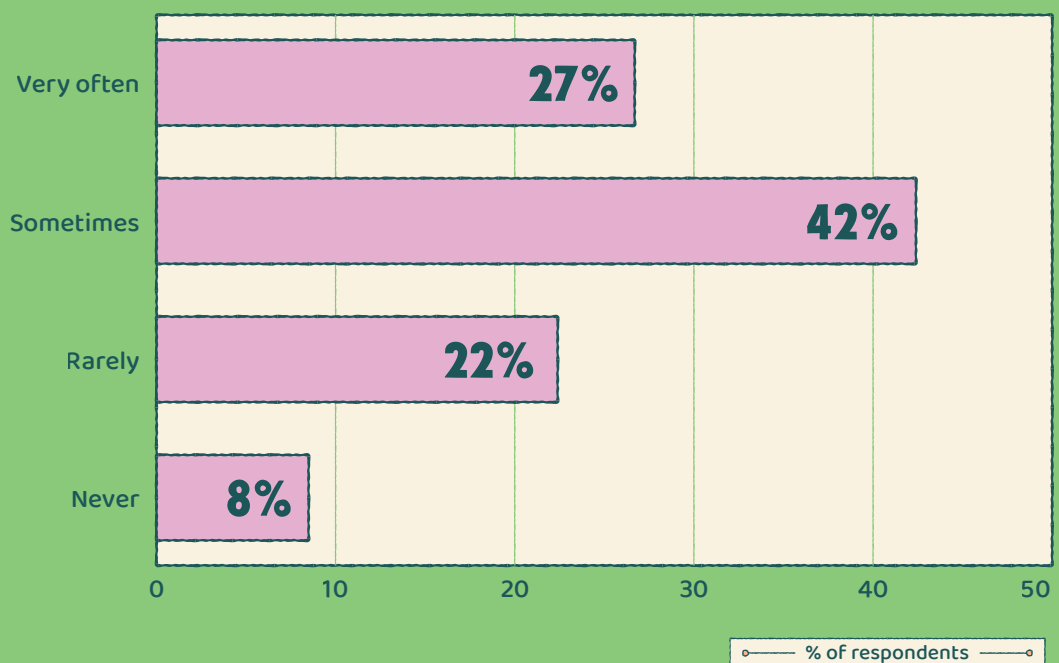
Have you ever “unfollowed” someone to protect your mental health?



13. Feeling left out is part of ordinary social life, and it is strongly associated with feeling of loneliness

The feeling of being left out in one's friendships is also common. Only about one in twelve say they never feel left out when friends meet or post without them; for everyone else it happens at least now and then, with "sometimes" the most common answer. It also has a positive association with a deeper feeling of loneliness: those who feel left out more often are also more likely to report feeling lonely in general, with a modest but statistically significant correlation coefficient of 0.2. **Everyday feelings of being excluded in your peer circle and a wider sense of social isolation appear to feed into one another.**

How often do you feel left out when your friends hang out or meet/post online without you?



Part Four

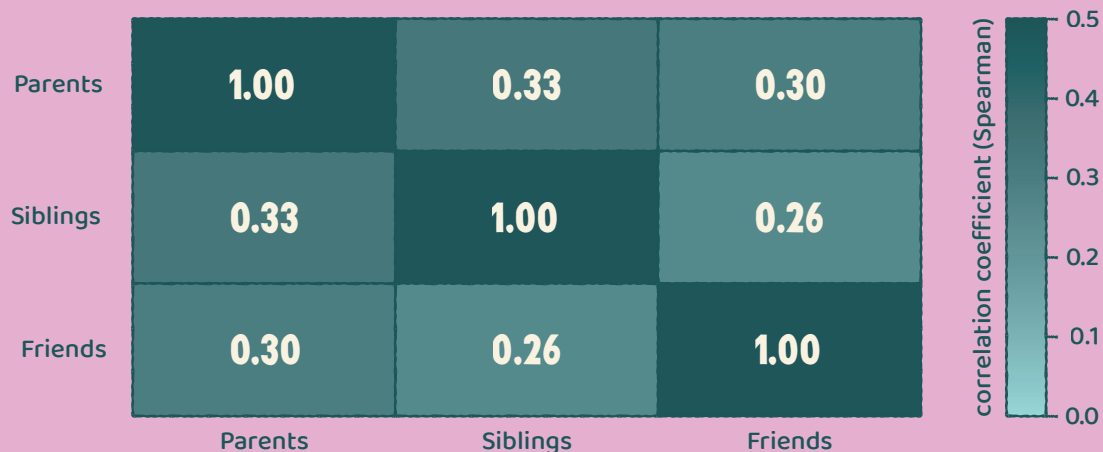
About Family and Feeling Supported

14. Those who can lean on parents can also lean on siblings and friends

Probably the strongest pattern in this wave of Dil Dosti Data is about how much (emotional) support young people feel they have in their key relationships. The findings suggest that support is highly clustered. Young people who can lean on their parents are markedly more likely to be able to lean on their siblings as well, and on their friends. The levels of support felt in different relationships are mutually and positively associated, with correlations of around 0.26 to 0.33, the strongest statistical associations anywhere in this data. Rather than the support being present in one or the other relationship (for example, good friends or a sibling making up for difficult parents), it tends to be available in multiple relationships for fewer people and leaving many young people feeling no emotional support from anywhere.



How supported do you feel by your close friends when you're going through a tough time?

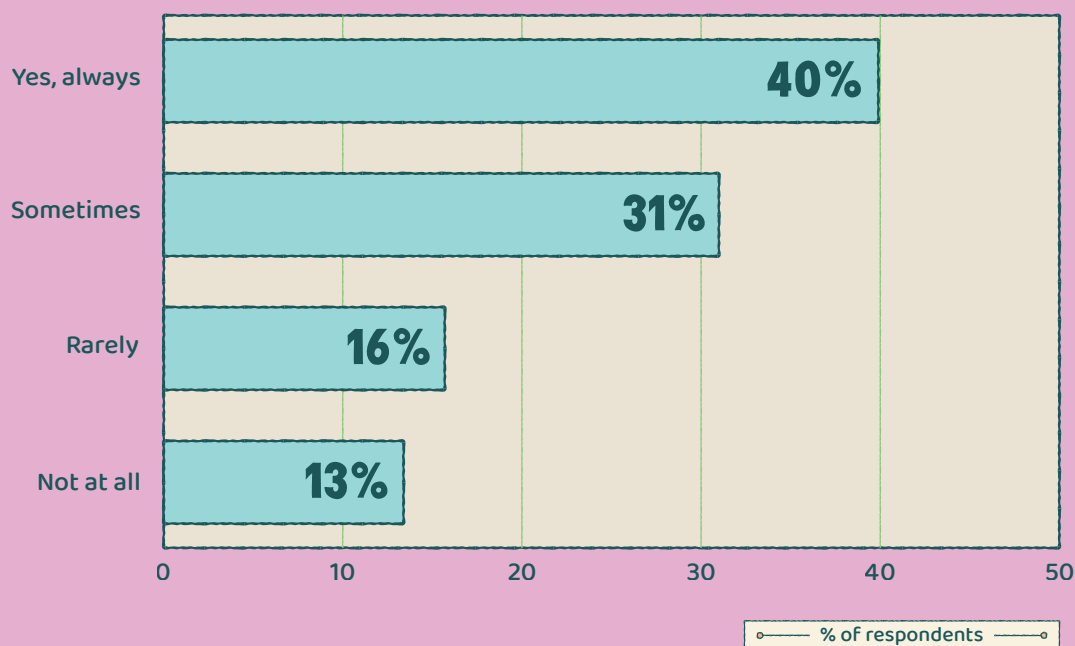


15. Parents are a dependable support for some young people, and largely absent for others

Parents are a steady emotional presence for less than half of young people and largely absent for one in three youth. About 40 per cent said they always feel supported by their parents when it comes to mental health or relationships, and another 31 per cent responded 'sometimes'. The remaining 30% of them said 'rarely' or 'not at all'. 42 per cent of men say they are always supported by their parents versus 31 per cent of women, and women are more likely to say rarely or never (38 per cent against 27 per cent).

Support grows with age: among under-25s only about a third feel reliably supported and a third feel rarely or never, while from the late twenties onward the always-supported share rises to around 47 per cent. Women feel the absence more sharply than men: 42 per cent of men say they are always supported by their parents, against 31 per cent of women, and women are correspondingly more likely to say rarely or never, at 38 per cent against 27 per cent. **It is the youngest, and women, who are least likely to find in their parents a place to bring matters of mental health or relationships.**

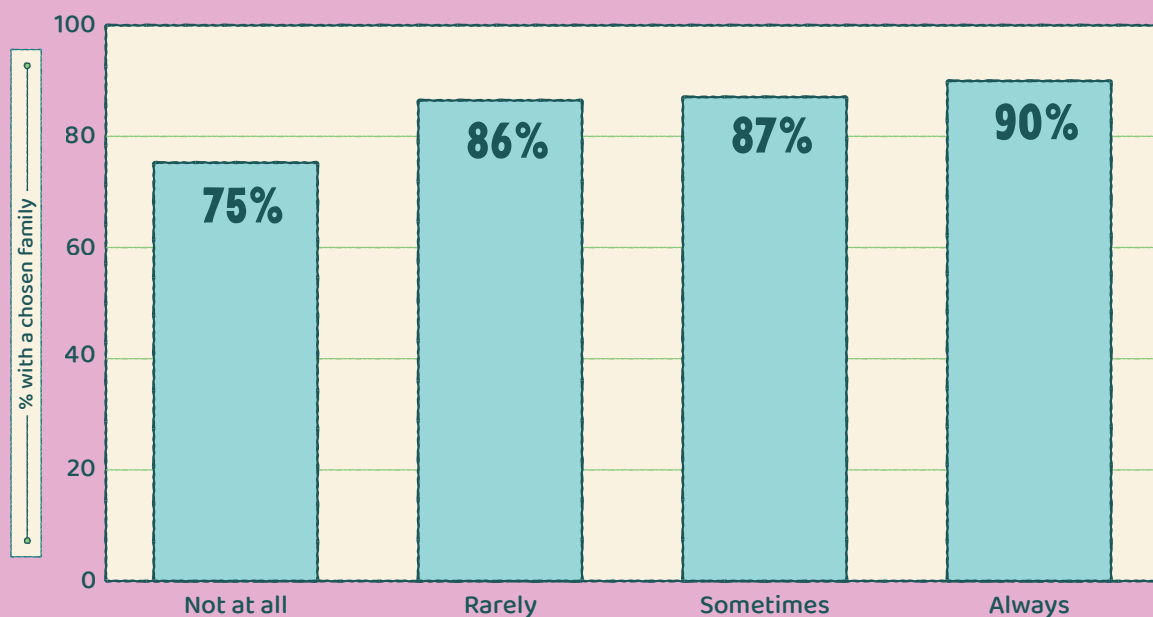
Do you feel emotionally supported by your parents when it comes to mental health or relationships?



16. A chosen family adds to support at home rather than making up for its absence

Where parental support falls short, it would be natural to expect young people to build a supportive relational system to make up the difference. However, the survey findings point the other way. Those who feel no parental support are also the least likely to have a chosen family to turn to instead. Among those who feel no parental support, about 25 per cent have no one outside their given family they can lean on as family; among those who feel Full support from family, that falls to less than 10 per cent. With age and gender held steady, each step up in parental support raises the odds of having a chosen family by about 40 per cent. A chosen family, in other words, tends to add to existing support rather than fill in for missing emotional support, so the gap left by absent parents remains unlikely to be filled.

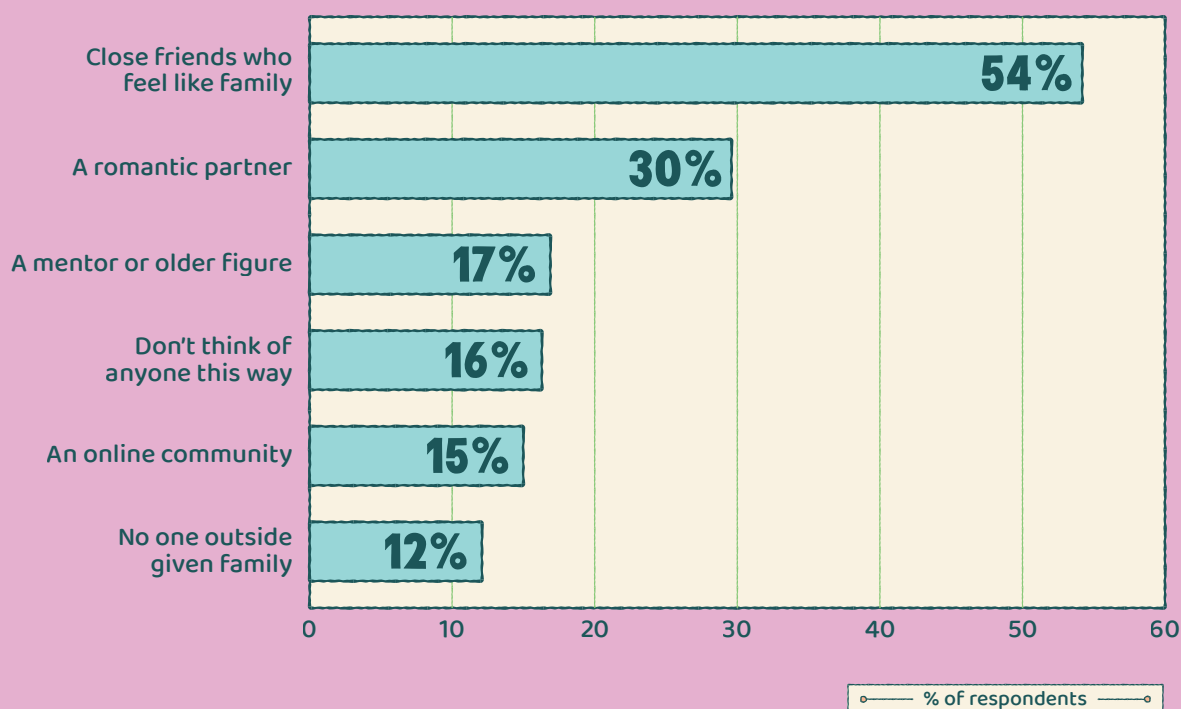
Do you feel emotionally supported by your parents when it comes to mental health or relationships?



17. Half of young people count close friends as family

For a substantial share of young people, the idea of family reaches well beyond blood and marriage. Asked who they lean on as “family” outside the one they were born or married into, 54 per cent named close friends who feel like family, ahead of a romantic partner at 30 per cent, and mentors or an older figure at 17 per cent. About one in eight said there was no one outside their given family, and a further one in six said they did not think of anyone in that way: for about one in four young people, family remains defined solely by blood or marriage. For the clear majority, though, the word family has already stretched to take in people they chose. Who fills the role differs a little by gender: women are more likely than men to name a romantic partner as chosen family, at 34 per cent against 28 per cent, while men lean slightly more on online communities and are marginally more likely to say there is no one at all like family outside their given family.

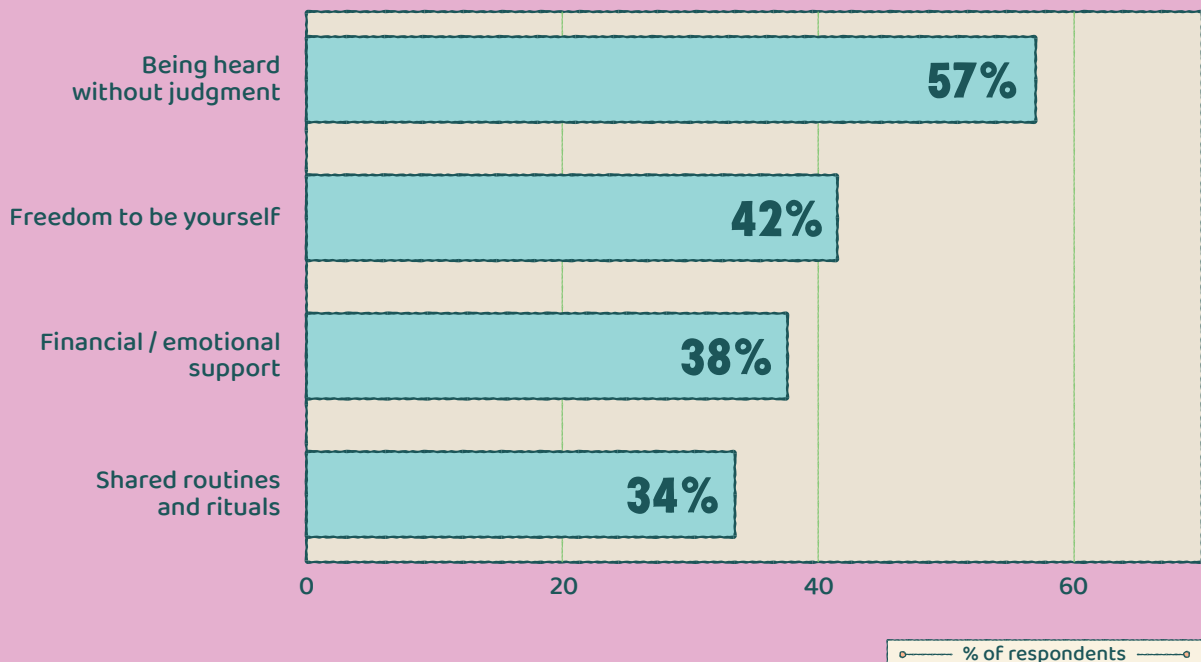
Outside of the family you were born into or married into, who do you lean on as “family”?



18. What makes a family feel safe is being heard, well above money

Asked what makes a family feel safe, young people put one thing clearly first. Being heard without judgment was chosen by 57 per cent, well ahead of freedom to be yourself at 42 per cent, financial or emotional support at 38 per cent, and shared routines at 34 per cent. A safe family, in their account, is one where a person can speak and be received, rather than one defined by what it provides. On this question the genders diverge more than anywhere else: women are far more likely than men to say that what makes a family safe is the freedom to be yourself, at 54 per cent against 36 per cent, the single largest gender gap in the study, and they place more weight on being heard too. A safe family, for women, is defined more by space to be oneself, an emphasis that is strongest among the youngest and reduces for higher age groups.

In your opinion, what makes a family feel like a safe space?

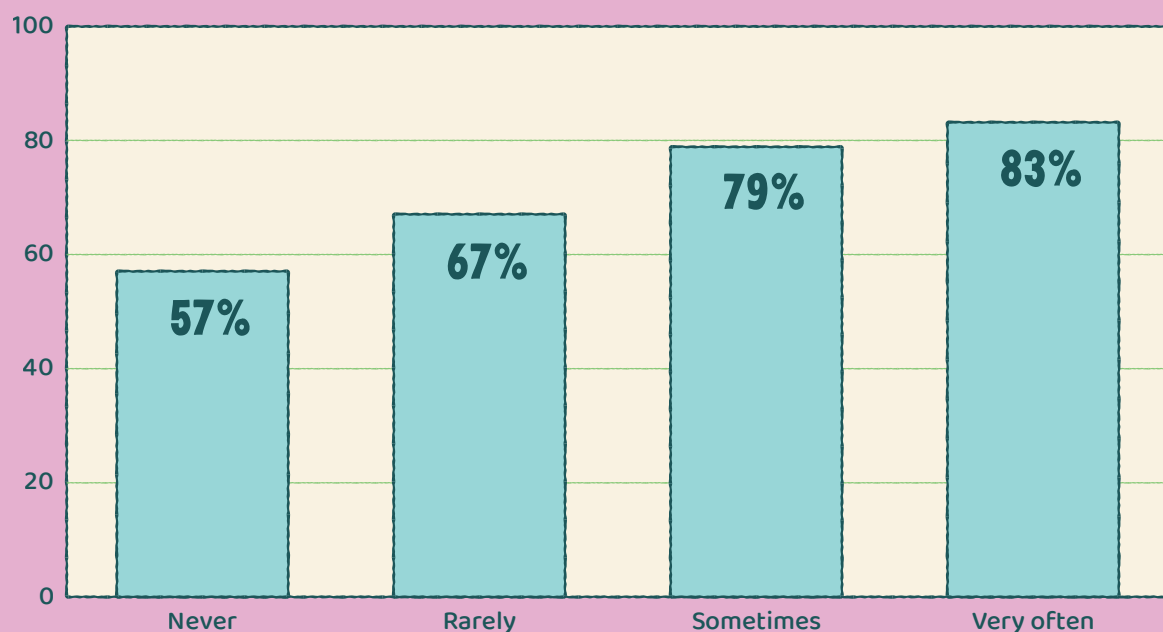


19. The young people who feel left out by friends are also the likeliest to have rethought family

One of the clearer threads running between the social and family halves of this study connects feeling left out with rethinking what family means. Among those who say they never feel left out by friends, 57 per cent report that their idea of family has changed in recent years. Among those who often feel left out, that rises to 83 per cent. The pattern holds even with age and gender accounted for, which makes it one of the more robust associations in the study. The more excluded a young person feels among friends, the more likely they are to have redrawn the boundaries of family. It can be seen as a way in which young people struggling with lack of reliability in their social world cope with and rethink the idea of family.

Young people who feel excluded by friends may actively seek belonging elsewhere, leading them to redefine family to include partners, mentors, or close friends. Moreover, people who are dissatisfied with their existing social world may simply be more likely to question and renegotiate social categories in general, including family. Thus, redefining family may be one way some young people respond to an unstable sense of belonging.

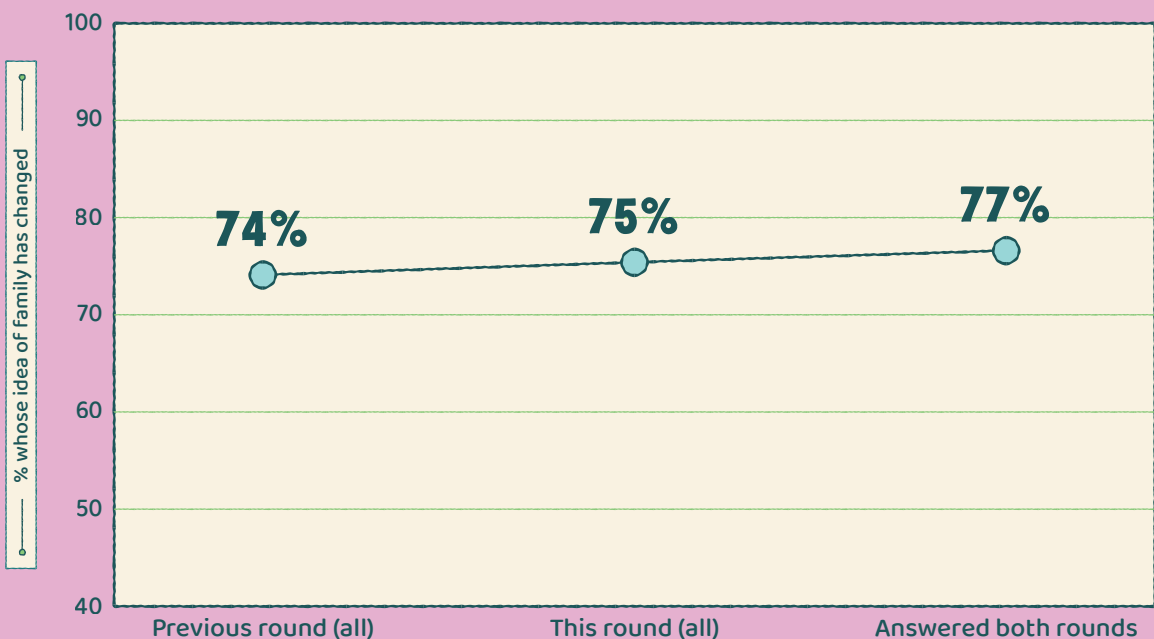
How often do you feel left out when your friends hang out or meet/post online without you?



20. Most young people have rethought what family means

Across this generation, the idea of family is being actively rethought. **About three in four say their definition of family has changed at least somewhat in recent years. This is the steadiest figure across the two waves of this study: it lands in almost the same place in the previous round, in this round, and among the people who answered both.** When three separate measures agree this closely, the finding is about as firm as a survey like this can offer, and it says the rethinking of family is broad and settled, not a passing mood. The fact of change is even across the group; the degree differs a little.

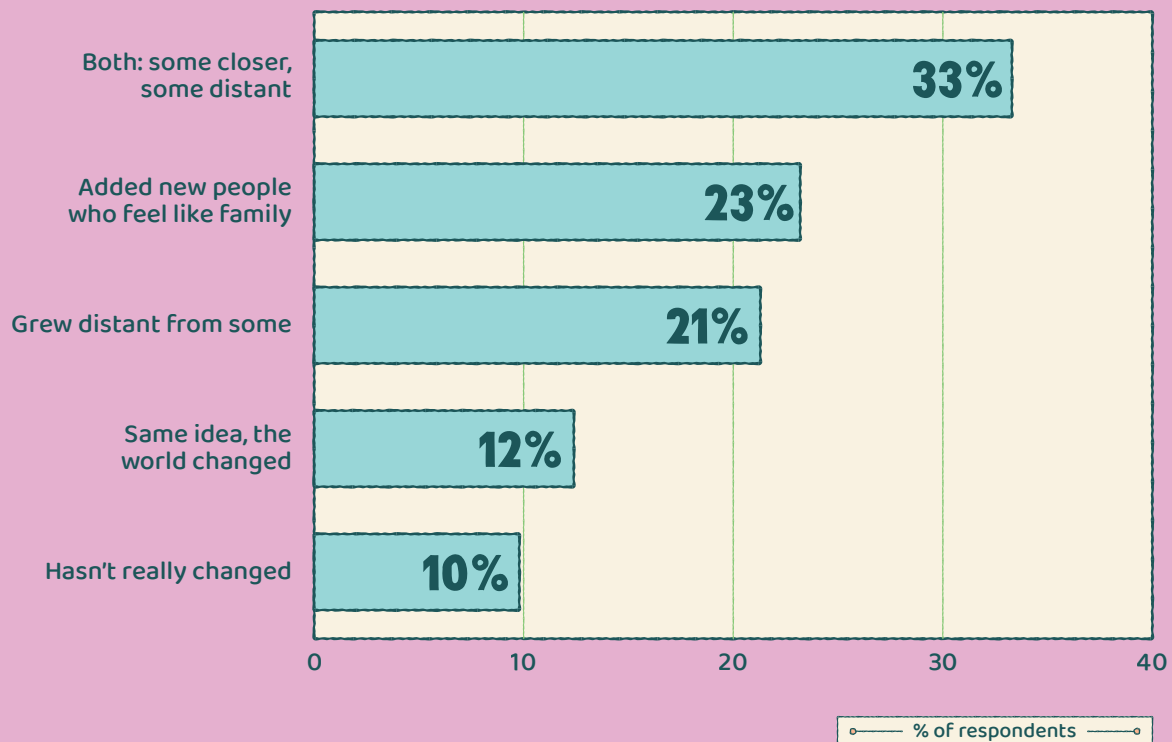
How much has your definition of “family” changed in the last 5 years?



21. When the idea of family changed, it grew and frayed at the same time

When young people describe how their idea of family changed, it is centred not on loss but on restructuring of relationships. The largest group among respondents (33 per cent of them), said both things happened at once: some relational bonds grew closer while others grew distant. Adding new people who feel like family came next, at 23 per cent, ahead of simply growing apart, at 21 per cent. Men and women frame the change a little differently: men more often describe it as addition, with 26 per cent saying they brought in new people who feel like family against 19 per cent of women, while women more often describe a two-way reshuffle, some bonds becoming closer and others becoming more distant, at 38 per cent against 30 per cent. Family, for this generation, is less something that erodes than something continually rebuilt, with some people let go and others drawn in at the same time.

If your idea of family has changed in recent years, what changed most?



Part Five

A closer look within young men's loneliness

Until now the report has compared young men and young women, and on most of these questions the differences are small. Where they do show up, they lean, if anything, towards women carrying a little more of the strain rather than less. This closing section looks only within young men, to see which of them are most at risk of drifting into isolation, and what could possibly be determining it. People who work with young men's loneliness, in clinics, schools and helplines, do not need to know which young men to reach and what could be the effective entry points. This section is an exploration in that direction, based on the patterns reflected in this survey.

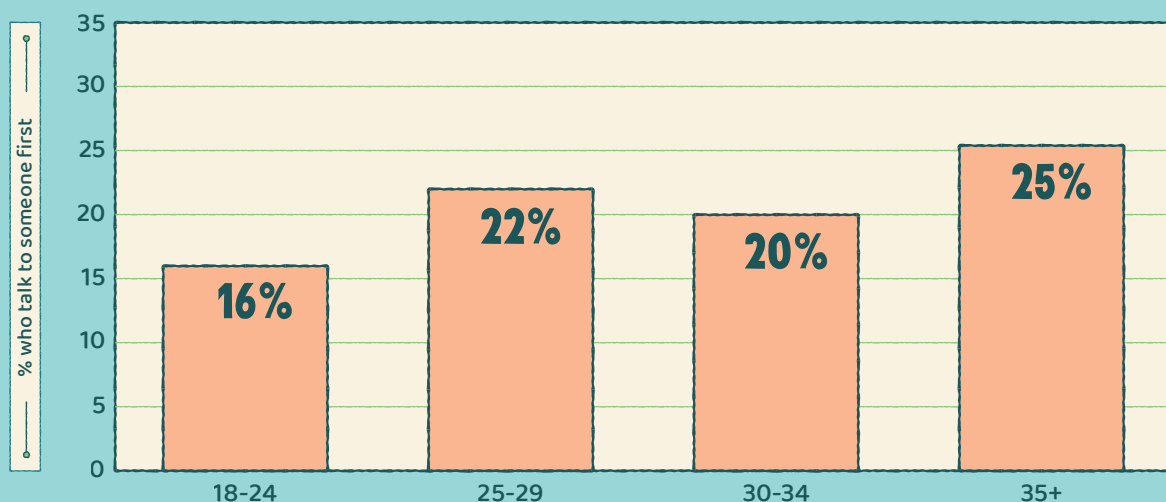
Across questions on friendship, emotional support, help-seeking and AI use, young men, especially the youngest, repeatedly appear to have fewer sources of support and a lower tendency to reach out when struggling. Taken together, these patterns suggest few places where efforts to address loneliness among young men could make the greatest difference.



22. The youngest men are the most likely to face distress alone

Among young men, the instinct to reach out when something feels heavy grows steadily with age. Talking first to someone they trust rises from about 16 per cent of men aged 18 to 24, to 22 per cent at 25 to 29, and 25 per cent among those 30-34. The youngest are the most likely to carry distress alone and the habit of reaching out is weakest when men are younger. For those trying to build that habit, the findings argue for intervening early rather than waiting for it to develop on its own.

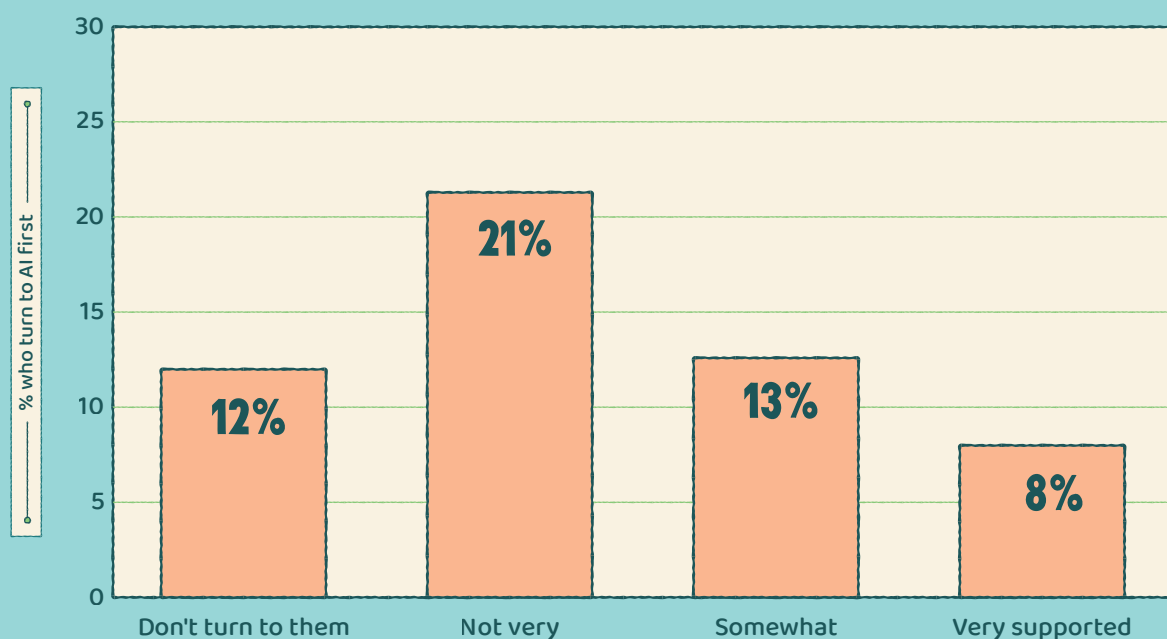
When something feels emotionally heavy, in any part of life, what do you usually do first?



23. The chatbot is becoming the confidant of the under-supported

There is another pattern associated with the earlier snapshot that a chatbot now outranks a therapist as a first confidant. Turning first to an AI tool peaks among young men who feel only somewhat or barely supported by friends, at around one in five, against fewer than one in ten of the well-supported. It is those with lack of real friendships, not as much those who have supportive friends, who are driving AI's arrival as a confidant. **The most isolated (those who do not lean on friends at all) among the youngest generation mostly turn to no one rather than to a chatbot.** This suggests that AI may be serving as a supportive space primarily for those whose support from friends is present but fragile, not to the young boys experiencing the deeper isolation. The level barely moves across age, holding at roughly the same levels for every age band from the early twenties to the mid-thirties, so it is the state of a man's friendships rather than how old he is that marks out whether an AI chatbot across the screen is his top confidant. Another way to read this could be to think of a young person's heavy reliance on AI for emotional matters as a visible sign of a thinning support network.

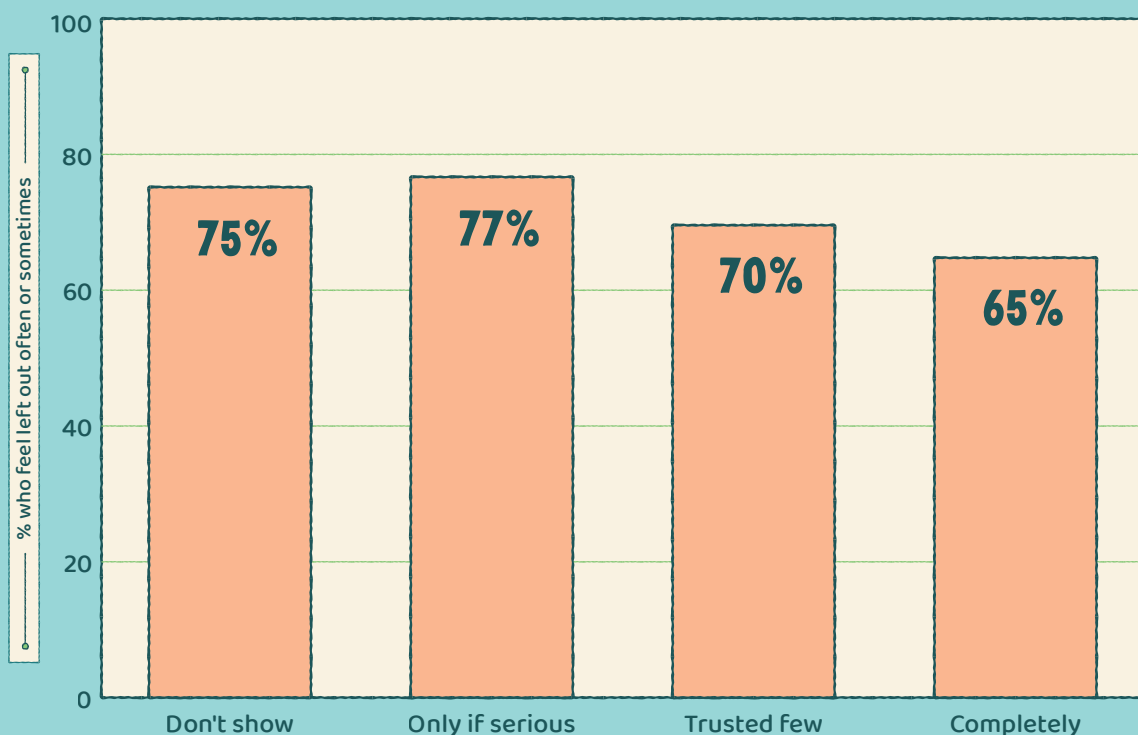
How supported do you feel by your close friends when you're going through a tough time?



24. Boys taught to hide emotions are more likely to feel left out

Among young men, those who recall being taught to keep their feelings hidden are more likely to report feeling chronically left out. The share who say they often or sometimes feel left out falls from about three-quarters among those given the most restrictive message to around two-thirds among those told it was fine to be open. While this is only a modest difference, it comes against a backdrop of very high levels of exclusion across the board. The association holds after accounting for age, suggesting that the emotional messages boys receive while growing up may shape how easily they seek connection later in life. Put simply, openness seems to help but the problem is much bigger than emotional norms alone.

Growing up, what message did you get about boys and men showing their feelings?



None of this means young men are lonelier than young women. The earlier comparisons, if anything, run the other way. Where men and women differ, the gaps are usually small, and tend to tilt slightly towards women.

Appendix A: Methodology

More than three thousand young Indians, 3,072 in all, took part in the second wave of Dil Dosti Data. They were spread across 35 states and union territories, and they answered through Youth Ki Awaaz's WhatsApp-based daily poll panel, known as YOOT. Responses were weighted to match demographic projections by age, gender, state, and urban or rural residence. Throughout this report, "young Indians" means our weighted estimates of digitally-connected Indians aged 18 to 40.

We have weighted responses to better match the wider demographic pattern, but this is not a fully representative picture of all young Indians. Our sample captures people with internet access, smartphone use, and a willingness to take part in a survey: a significant and growing group, though not the whole of the country's youth.

Non-binary respondents were too few for reliable generalisation and were not analysed as a separate group. Age and gender combinations yielding fewer than twenty responses were left out of the demographic breakdowns, so that patterns from very small groups are not over-read. All responses still contribute to the overall estimates.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

The survey was fielded over WhatsApp through the YOOT poll panel in three themed sets, with respondents tapping or typing to answer. Every question was single-select unless marked otherwise. A few questions were shown only to some respondents on the basis of an earlier answer, and those routing rules are noted below.

Six questions were new in this wave and are marked as such; the other fifteen were carried over unchanged from Wave 1. Basic demographic details, namely age, gender, state and urban or rural residence, were collected separately through the panel and used for weighting. Age and gender information was used also for the demographic breakdowns in this report.

The questions and answer options below are reproduced exactly as they were asked.

Set 1: Modern Love and Loneliness

Q1. What best describes your current dating status?

- A. Not dating
- B. Mostly casual
- C. Dating for something long-term
- D. It's complicated

Q2. Which of these best describes your current relationship status?

[New in Wave 2]

- A. Single — never been in a relationship
- B. Single — but have been in relationships before
- C. In a committed relationship (not married)
- D. Married
- E. Engaged
- F. Separated / divorced / widowed
- G. It's complicated / prefer not to say

Q3. What are your preferred avenues for finding a potential partner?

- A. Social media
- B. Dating apps
- C. Through parents
- D. Through friends

Q4. What's your biggest fear when it comes to dating?

- A. Getting ghosted or ignored
- B. Being misunderstood or judged
- C. Wasting time on the wrong person
- D. I don't think about this

Q5. Have you ever felt lonely while being in a relationship or situationship?

- A. Often
- B. Sometimes
- C. Rarely
- D. Never

(Shown to everyone except those who had never been in a relationship.)

Q6. When things get emotionally heavy in your love life, who do you talk to first?

- A. Close friends
- B. Family member
- C. Therapist
- D. AI tools (like ChatGPT)
- E. Rarely anyone / no one

Q7. How do you feel about being single right now?

- A. Loving it
 - B. Good (for now)
 - C. Mixed feelings — I'd prefer to be in a relationship
 - D. Not great
- (Shown only to respondents who were currently single.)

Q8. How have past dating experiences impacted your mental health?

- A. No major impact
 - B. Positively overall: helped me grow
 - C. Negatively overall: gave me setbacks
 - D. Mixed: both growth and setbacks
- (Shown to everyone except those who had never been in a relationship.)

Q9. When something feels emotionally heavy — in any part of life — what do you usually do first? [New in Wave 2]

- A. Keep myself busy — work, studies, gym, games, scrolling
- B. Push it out of my head and move on
- C. Talk to someone I trust
- D. Let it pass on its own — give it time to fade
- E. Journal, write it out, or reflect privately
- F. Have a drink, a cigarette, or something similar to take the edge off
- G. Something else

Q10. Growing up, what message did you get about boys and men showing their feelings? [New in Wave 2]

- A. Boys and men don't do that
- B. Only show it if it's a serious problem
- C. Show it, but only with a few trusted people
- D. It's completely fine to be open about feelings
- E. I never got a clear message about this

Q11. The last time you tried to open up to someone close — a friend, classmate, sibling, colleague, or family member — about something emotional, how did it go? [New in Wave 2]

- A. It helped
- B. It was awkward but okay
- C. We laughed it off or changed the subject
- D. It got shut down or dismissed
- E. I haven't really tried
- F. Doesn't apply to me

Set 2: Friends and Followers

Q12. How supported do you feel by your close friends when you're going through a tough time?

- A. Very supported
- B. Somewhat supported
- C. Not very supported
- D. I don't really turn to friends for support

Q13. Which of these best describes what "real" friendship means to you?

(Multiple answers allowed.)

- A. Being able to share anything without judgment
- B. Staying in regular contact
- C. Helping each other grow
- D. Spending quality time together

Q14. How often do you feel left out when your friends hang out or meet/post online without you?

- A. Very often
- B. Sometimes
- C. Rarely
- D. Never

Q15. Have you ever "unfollowed" someone to protect your mental health?

- A. Yes, I regularly curate my feed for my wellbeing
- B. Yes, a few times when I really needed to
- C. No, but I've thought about it
- D. No, never needed to

Set 3: Rethinking Family

Q16. Do you feel emotionally supported by your parents when it comes to mental health or relationships?

- A. Yes, always
- B. Sometimes
- C. Rarely
- D. Not at all

Q17. When you are going through something emotionally difficult, how likely are you to confide in a sibling?

- A. Very likely, they're my go-to
- B. Sometimes, depends on the situation
- C. Rarely, it's awkward or we're not close
- D. Never, we don't share that kind of bond

(Respondents who had no siblings were routed past this question.)

Q18. In your opinion, what makes a family feel like a safe space?

(Multiple answers allowed.)

- A. Being heard without judgment
- B. Shared routines and rituals
- C. Financial / emotional support
- D. Freedom to be yourself

Q19. Outside of the family you were born into or married into, who do you lean on as “family”? [New in Wave 2]

- A. Close friends who feel like family
- B. A romantic partner
- C. An online community or group
- D. A mentor, teacher, or older figure
- E. No one outside my given family
- F. I don't think of anyone outside my family this way

Q20. How much has your definition of “family” changed in the last 5 (or 10) years?

- A. Completely
- B. Somewhat
- C. Not much
- D. Not sure

Q21. If your idea of family has changed in recent years, what changed most?

[New in Wave 2]

- A. I added new people who feel like family
 - B. I grew distant from some I once called family
 - C. Both — some grew closer, others grew distant
 - D. My idea is the same; the world around it changed
 - E. My idea of family hasn't really changed
- (Shown to everyone except those who were unsure whether their definition of family had changed.)

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