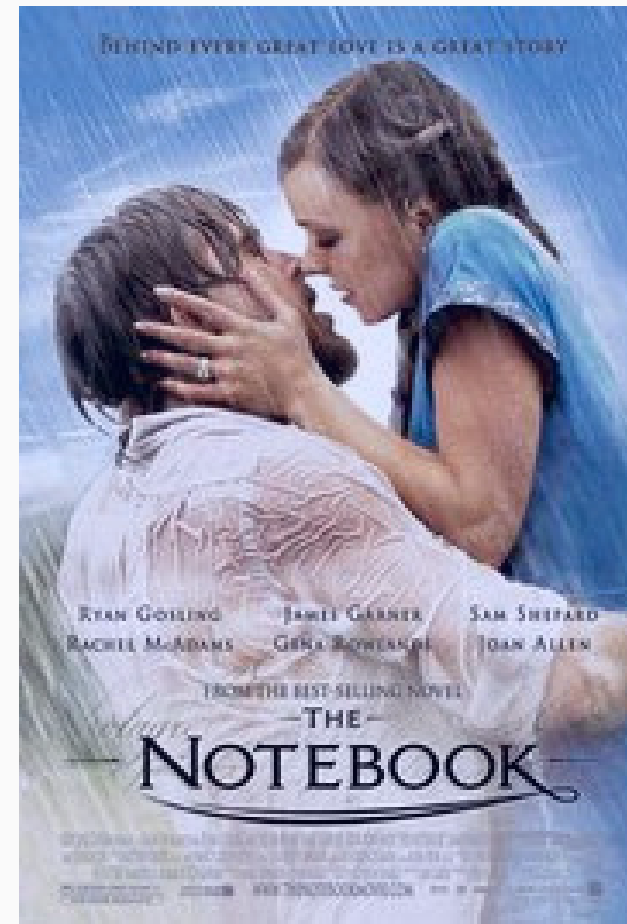


MEDIA & SOCIETY

THE TEARJERKER TREND

By Christina Holgado

Why did I choose this topic?





Research Question

Do people enjoy watching sad movies? If so, why?

Hypothesis

People *do* enjoy watching sad movies. This is because of the catharsis hypothesis and people's ability to empathize with characters and their experiences.



Definitions

KEY WORDS

"Sad" Movie (n.)

a film dealing with tragic events, human suffering, and an unhappy ending, especially one featuring the downfall of a main character.

Catharsis (n.)

the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions

Original Catharsis Hypothesis (n.)

the media help us release aggressive and violent impulses in a safe and non-violent way.



THE TEARJERKER TREND

Literature Review

Literature Review

Why Only Humans Weep: Unraveling the Mysteries of Tears by Ad Vingerhoets

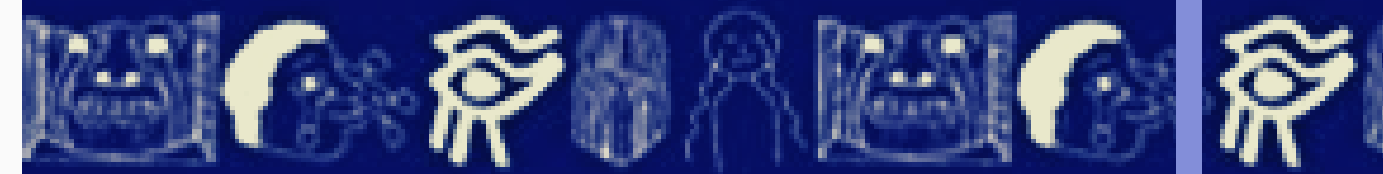
- Phenomenon in Japan: "The Crying Bar"
- "A paradoxical **relationship was found between the intensity of empathetic distress during film watching and the degree of enjoyment reported afterwards.**"
- Learn how to cope with the emotions experienced
- Catharsis: "experience their own sadness in a safe context that helps them to overcome it"

OXFORD



WHY ONLY
HUMANS WEEP

UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERIES OF TEARS



AD VINGERHOETS

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Literature Review

"When Is Crying Cathartic? An International Study" by Lauren Bylsma

Explored crying for emotional release in general

People experienced catharsis when the event that made them cry is **resolved**.

"Achieving a **new understanding or perception** of the event that precipitated the crying episode was also positively related to catharsis"

Less likely to experience catharsis when they were embarrassed or shamed for crying.

A vertical image on the left side of the slide showing an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg is visible above the water line, while the much larger, submerged part of the iceberg is visible below the water line. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue. The iceberg is white and jagged.

Literature Review

"Exploring the Paradox of the Enjoyment of Sad Films" by Mary Beth Oliver

- Meta-experience of moods and emotions
- A mood or emotion can be experienced at two levels: direct vs reflective
- Enjoyment of tearjerkers should be **positively related to sad responses** if responses are positively evaluated
- Greater empathy = higher levels of sadness
- Caused by the process of identification with characters and their emotional responses or through concern for and caring about characters and the outcomes that they may experience.

Literature Review

"Tragedy Viewers Count Their Blessings"
by Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick

- “Greater negative affect change led more life reflection. This life reflection, in turn, increased tragedy enjoyment.”
- Individuals enjoy tragedies because they **facilitate reflecting upon one’s own life.**
- Self-enhancing comparisons with the tragedy characters in bad situations ("At least I'm not that person!")
- Reminded of one’s valued relationships
- “Being in a negative affective state may signal the individual that his or her current situation is problematic and requires detailed attention.”



The background is a solid blue color with faint, stylized line art illustrations. On the left, there is a document with horizontal lines and a pencil. In the center, there is a larger document with several checkmarks and horizontal lines. On the right, there is a pie chart with several segments. The overall theme is business or administrative work.

THE TEARJERKER TREND

Method



Survey Questions

What is your age?

Under 16 years

16-25 years

29-49 years

50-65 years

Over 65 years

On a scale of 1 to 10, how emotionally affected were you after watching this scene? (0 = Not At All, 10 = Extremely Affected)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how sad did you feel as a result of watching the scene?



Survey Questions

After watching the scene, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

I was in a better mood after watching the scene.

The scene made me reflect on my own life in some way.

I enjoyed watching the scene.

I would watch the scene again.

Did you physically react in these ways while watching the scene? (Check all that apply)

Cry

“Tear up”

Frown

Smile

Laugh

Other





Survey Questions

Do you enjoy watching sad movies?

Yes

No

If you enjoy watching sad movies, why do you enjoy them? (Select all that apply)

My mood improves after watching sad movies.

I enjoy the emotional release.

I am able to connect to the story/characters.

I find sad movies entertaining.

Sad movies are more realistic.

I do not enjoy watching sad movies.

Do you feel an emotional release while watching sad movies? Please explain.

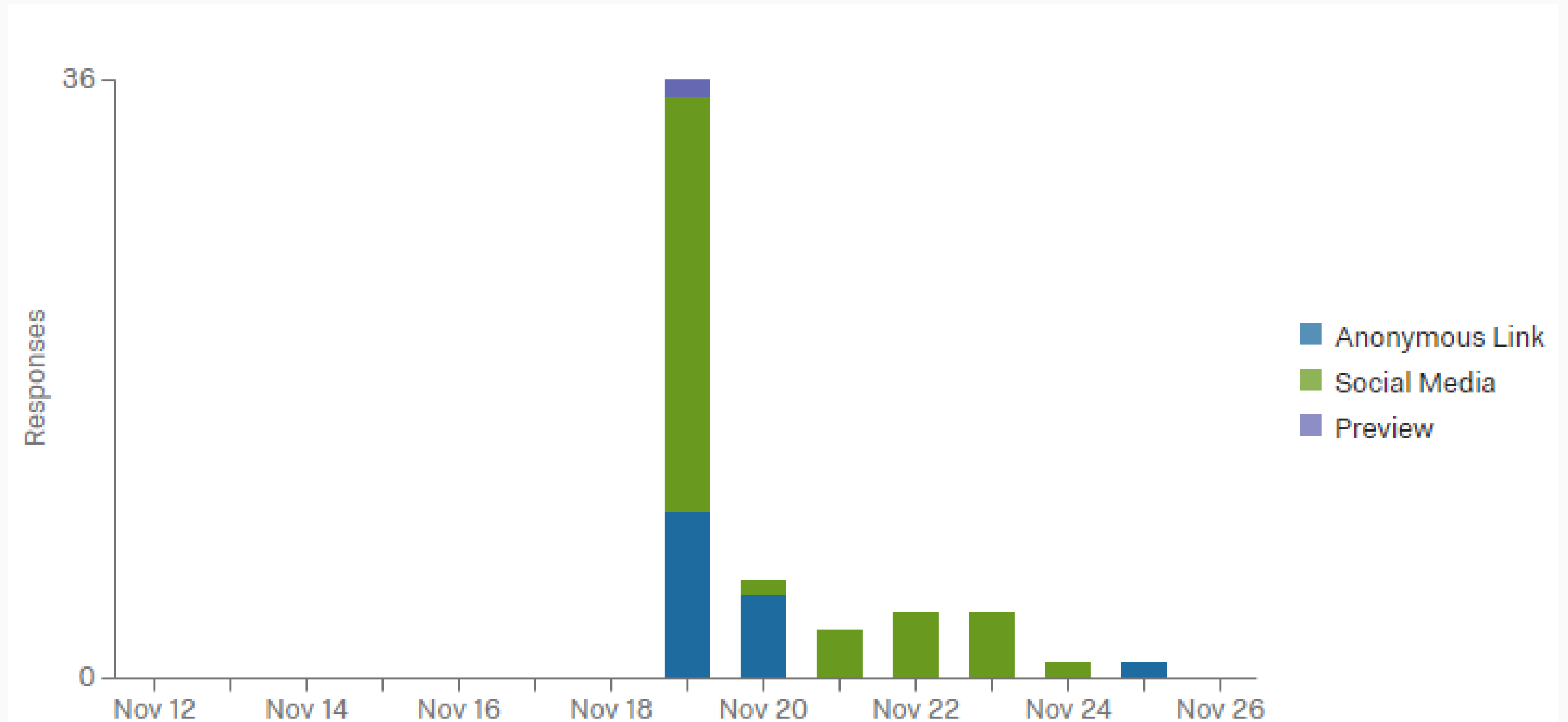
Distribution

52

Finished Responses

7

Days the Survey was Available

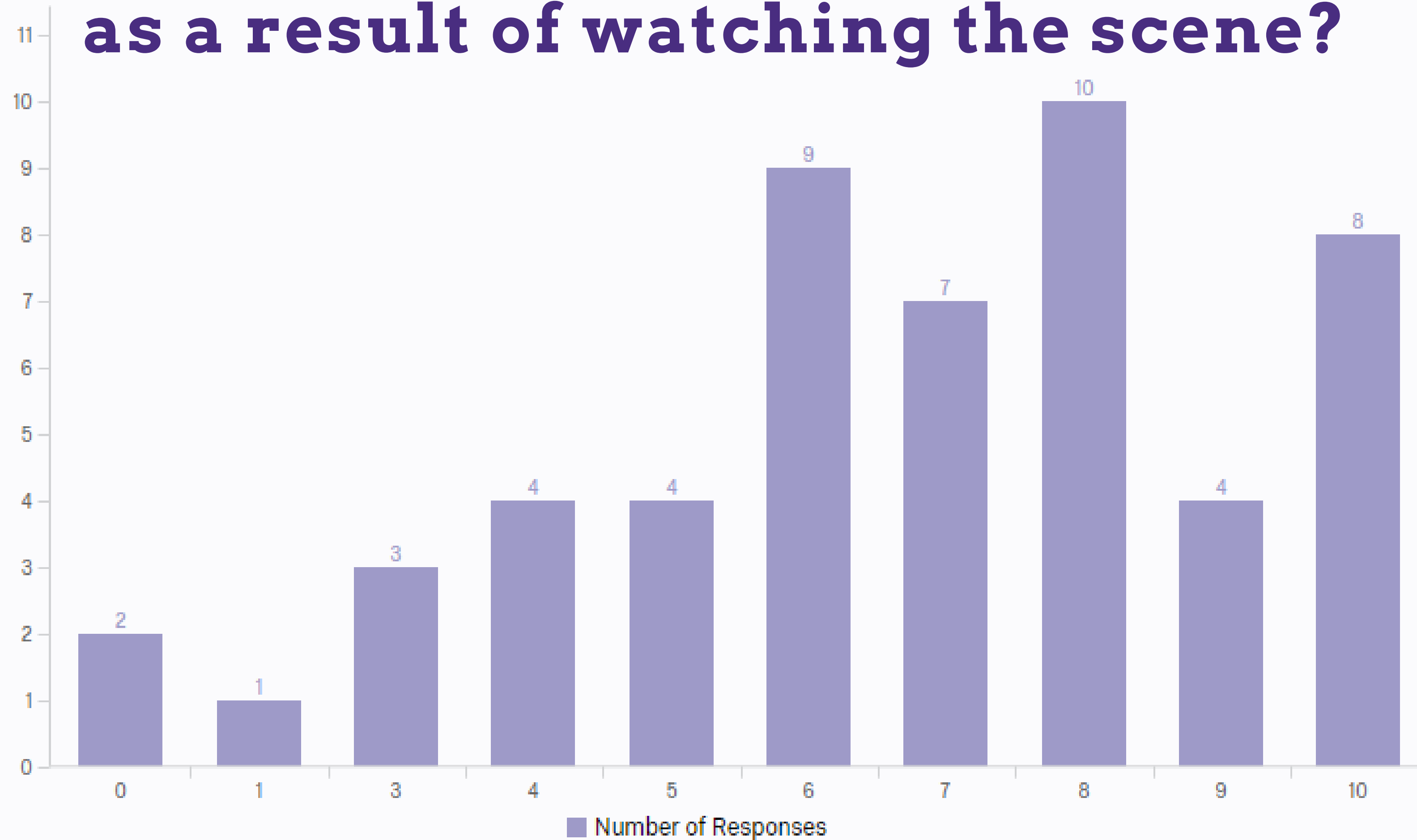


THE TEARJERKER TREND

Results & Analysis

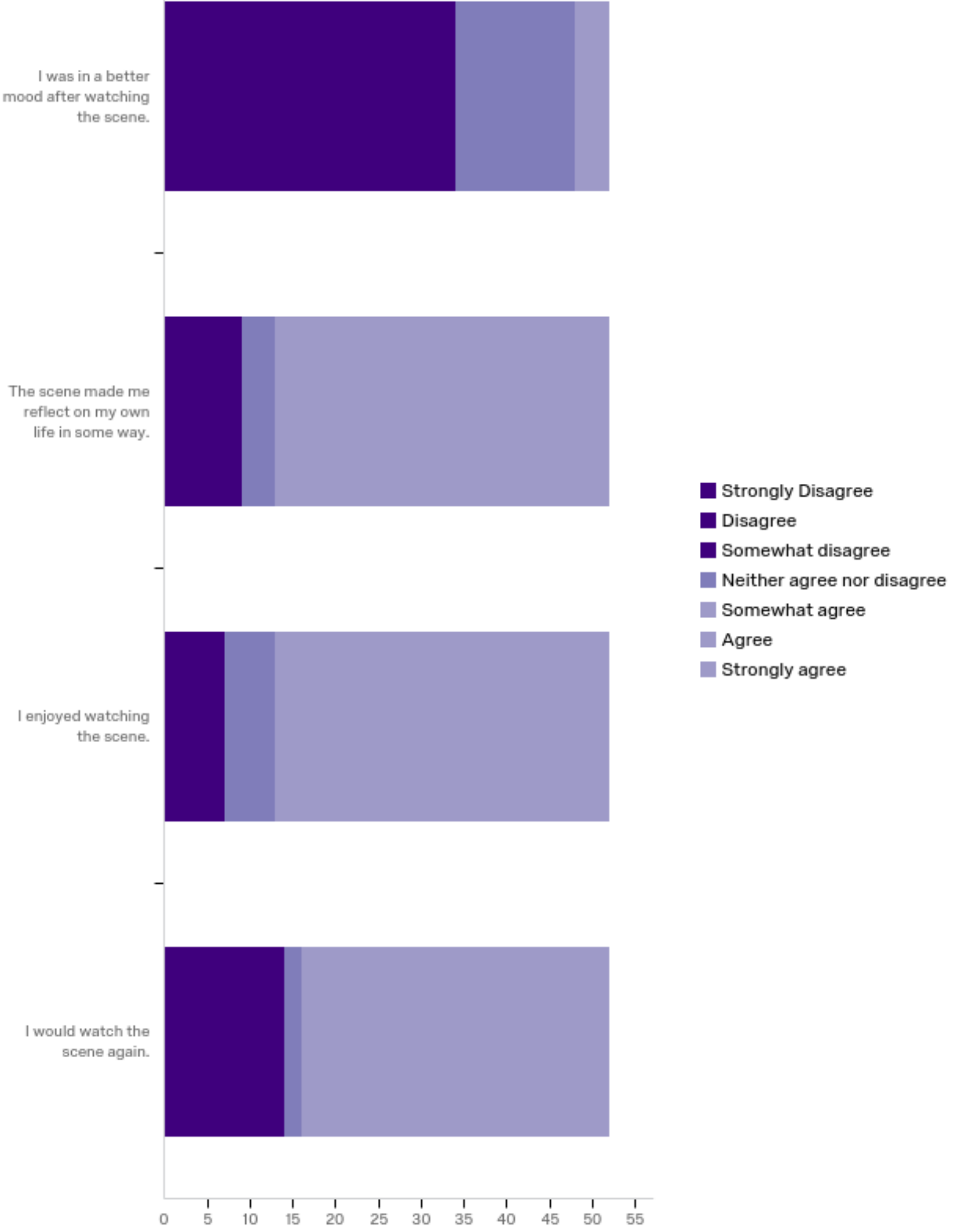


On a scale of 1 to 10, how sad did you feel as a result of watching the scene?

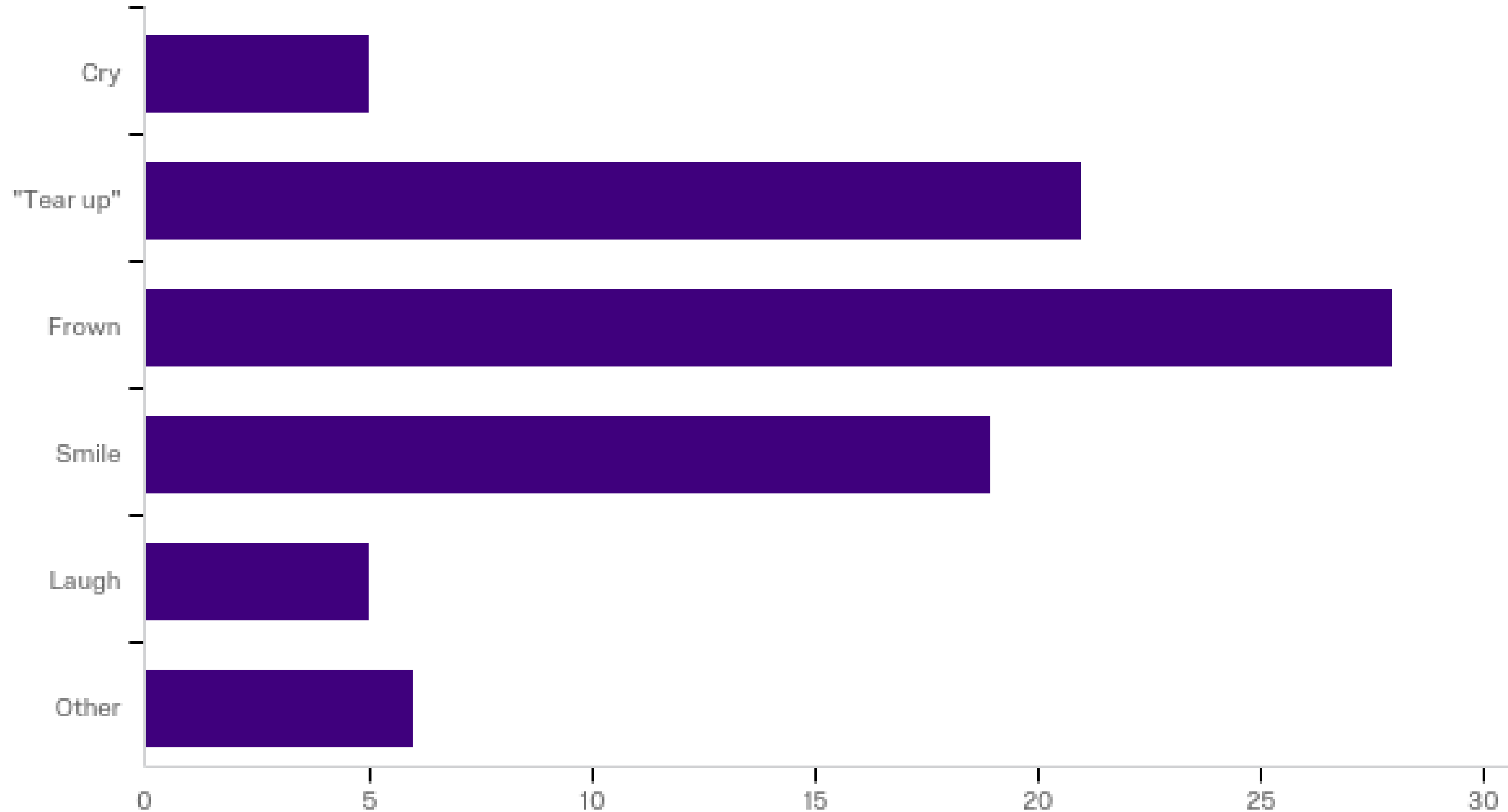


After watching the scene, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

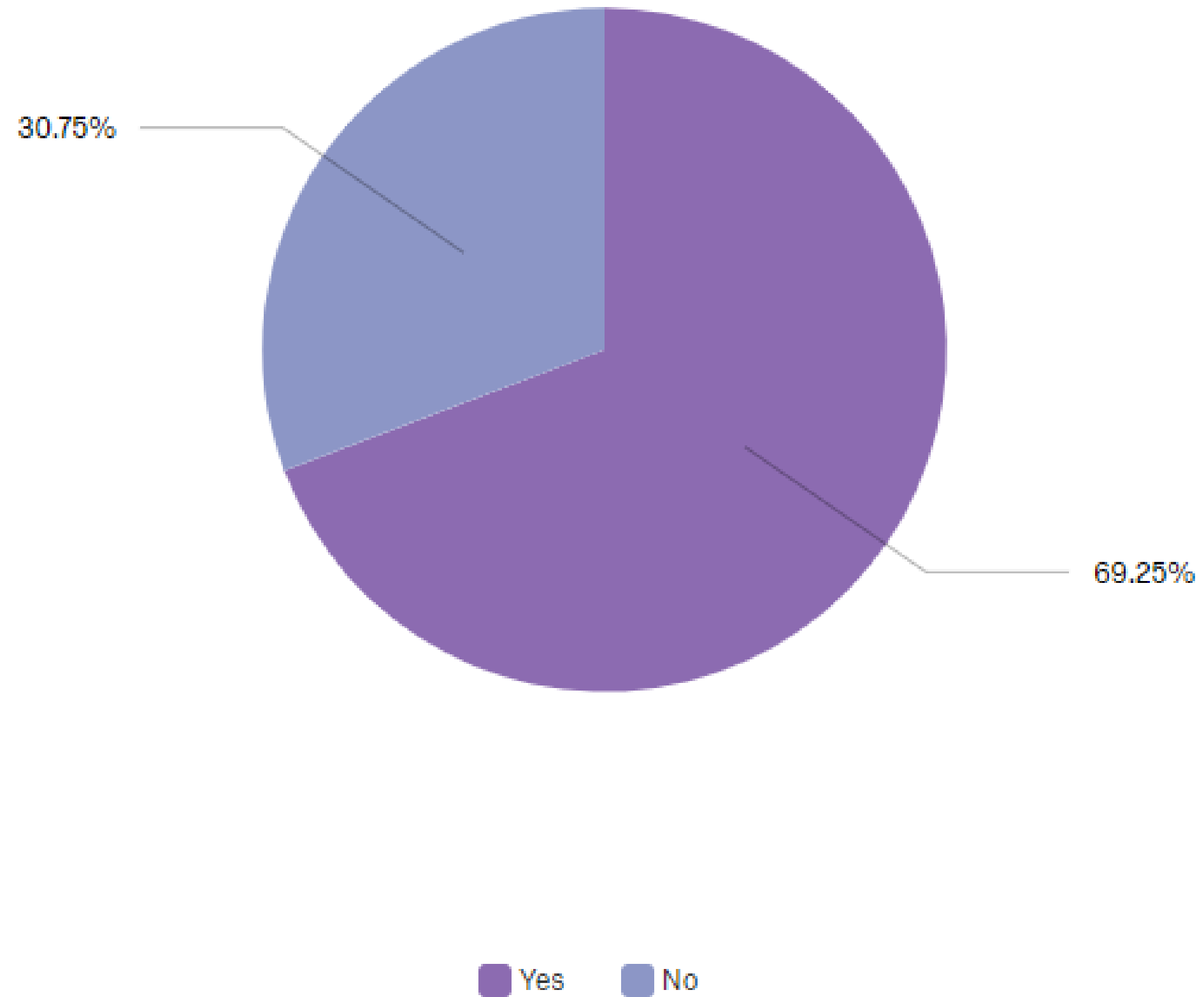
#	Field	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1	I was in a better mood after watching the scene.	17.31% 9.00	30.77% 16.00	17.31% 9.00	26.92% 14.00	5.77% 3.00	1.92% 1.00	0.00% 0.00	52.00
2	The scene made me reflect on my own life in some way.	3.85% 2.00	9.62% 5.00	3.85% 2.00	7.69% 4.00	25.00% 13.00	28.85% 15.00	21.15% 11.00	52.00
3	I enjoyed watching the scene.	0.00% 0.00	1.92% 1.00	11.54% 6.00	11.54% 6.00	25.00% 13.00	30.77% 16.00	19.23% 10.00	52.00
4	I would watch the scene again.	5.77% 3.00	11.54% 6.00	9.62% 5.00	3.85% 2.00	9.62% 5.00	36.54% 19.00	23.08% 12.00	52.00



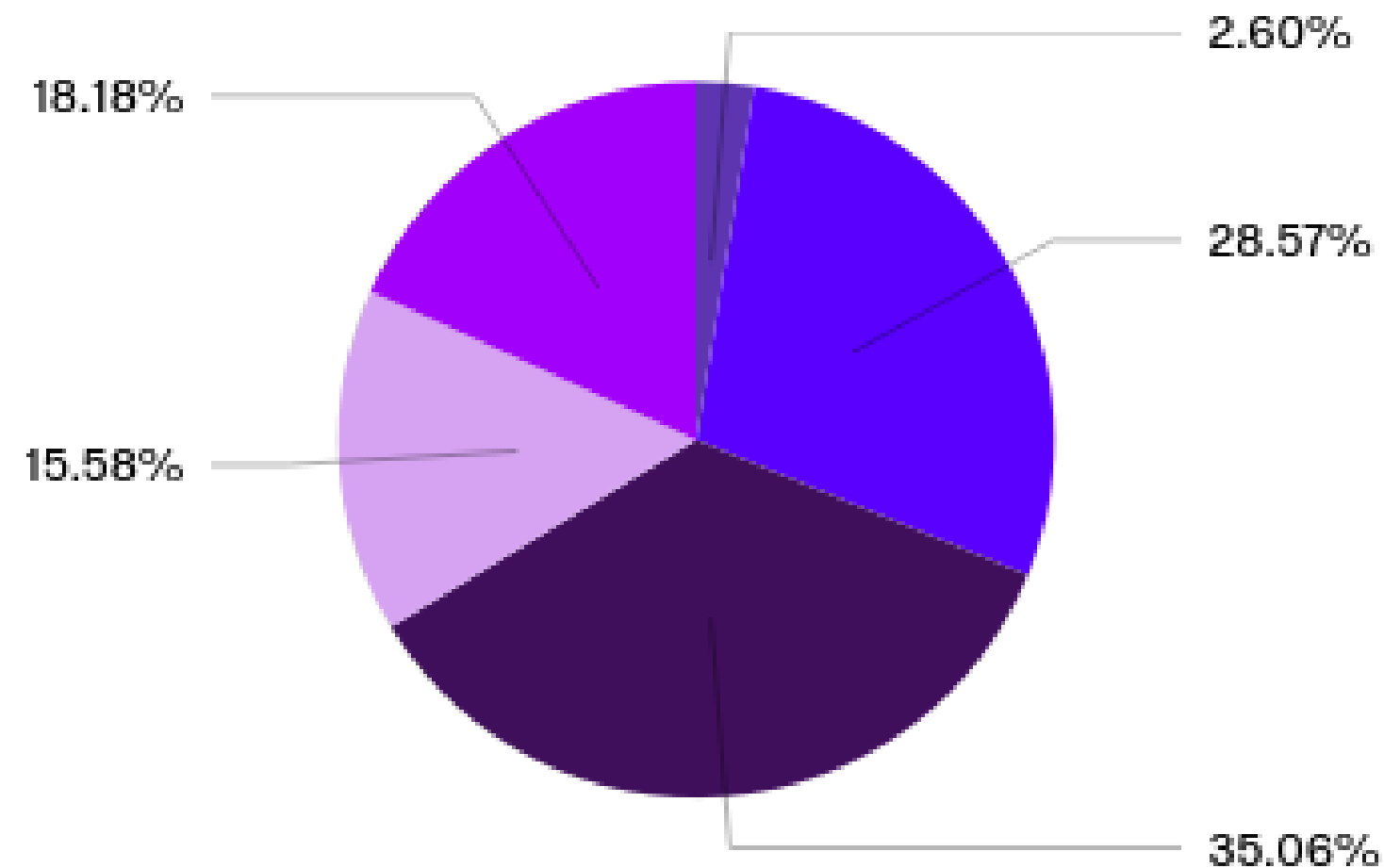
Did you physically react in these ways while watching the scene?



Do you enjoy watching sad movies?



If you enjoy watching sad movies, why do you enjoy them?



- My mood improves after watching sad movies.
- I enjoy the emotional release.
- I am able to connect to the story/characters.
- I find sad movies entertaining.
- Sad movies are more realistic.

“Sometimes I am so busy, responsible, etc that I don’t realize I hardly feel at all. Sadness in a movie reminds me of feelings and helps me to know if I need to slow down and step back a little.”

“Sometimes when I haven’t cried in a while, sad movies make me cry and release all the tears I’ve been holding in, even sometimes making me cry when I didn’t realize that I needed to cry.”

Do you feel an emotional release while watching sad movies?

“Sad movies give me the opportunity to be sad and cry about not only what’s going on in the movie, but things that have been making me sad in my own life that I haven’t necessarily been able to cry about.”

“Yes, only if it’s sad enough to make me cry. Crying is a good cathartic experience, especially if you are someone who doesn’t usually cry. However, other times sad movies will only leave me feeling depressed because I feel like nothing was resolved.”



Analysis

- Sadness Ranking Average: 6.75 (Fairly Sad)
- Majority of participants indicated a sadness ranking of 6 or above
- 75% of participants enjoyed watching the scene
- People experience catharsis when the event that caused them to cry is resolved, like while watching movies.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO FEEL AN EMOTIONAL RELEASE WHILE WATCHING SAD MOVES:

Yes: 44 (84.6%)

No: 8 (15.4%)

Analysis

THE TOP 2 REASONS WHY
PEOPLE LIKE WATCHING
SAD MOVIES:

"I enjoy the emotional release."

"I am able to connect to the
story/characters."

- Catharsis
- Empathy





THE TEARJERKER TREND

Conclusion

Hypothesis accepted

People *do* enjoy watching sad movies. This is because of the catharsis hypothesis and people's ability to empathize with characters and their experiences.



A P P L I C A T I O N O F R E S E A R C H

Media Producers:

People respond to, and enjoy watching sad content. A television show or film featuring a tragedy or human suffering is likely to attract many viewers, and therefore make more money. The more the audience is able to connect to the plot and characters, the more effective the media message.

Media Consumers:

Watching media content that centers around loss, tragedy, and similar themes has a cathartic effect. Consumers are able to experience strong emotions in a safe environment. If you are feeling stressed or need an emotional release, consume media that allows you to cope with these emotions.



What is the next Step?

- Further research on enjoyment of sad movies and relationship to gender.
- Does the viewing of a sad movie cause any action/change in the participants' lives?

Works Cited

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