A Conversation about What JAFF Readers want

Boundaries, Definitions, and Tropes Readers Can’t Resist



JAFFCON 2026 • Author Talk by Melissa Anne

Who answered the survey?

Over 250 JAFF readers responded

Multiple response questions permitted several selections.

Answer counts vary by question.

These are self-selected readers, not a representative sample of every JAFF reader.

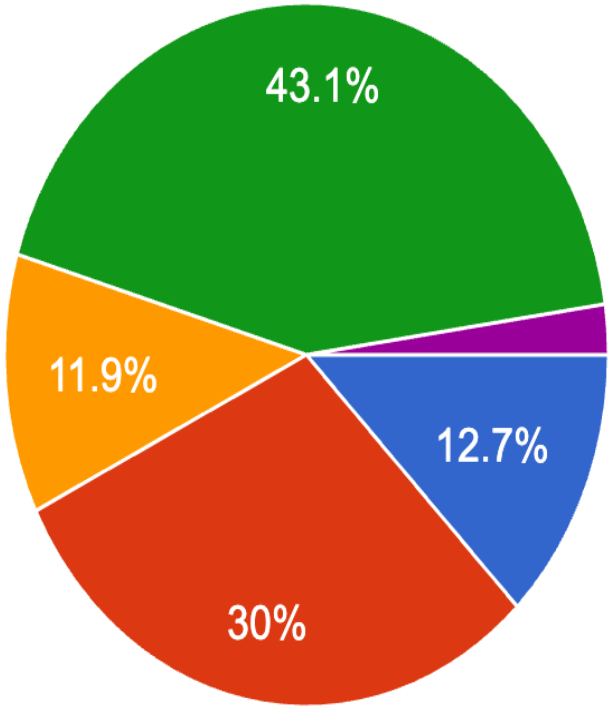


ACT 1

How much angst is okay?

How much angst do you like in your JAFF?

260 responses



- Sweet and low-angst only
- A little angst keeps it interesting
- Bring on the drama
- No preference — a good story wins
- Other

Drama is welcome. Heartbreak isn't.

BRING ON THE DRAMA	19 of 31 (61.3%) still reject unhappy endings
SWEET AND LOW-ANGST ONLY	29 of 32 (90.6%) reject unhappy endings

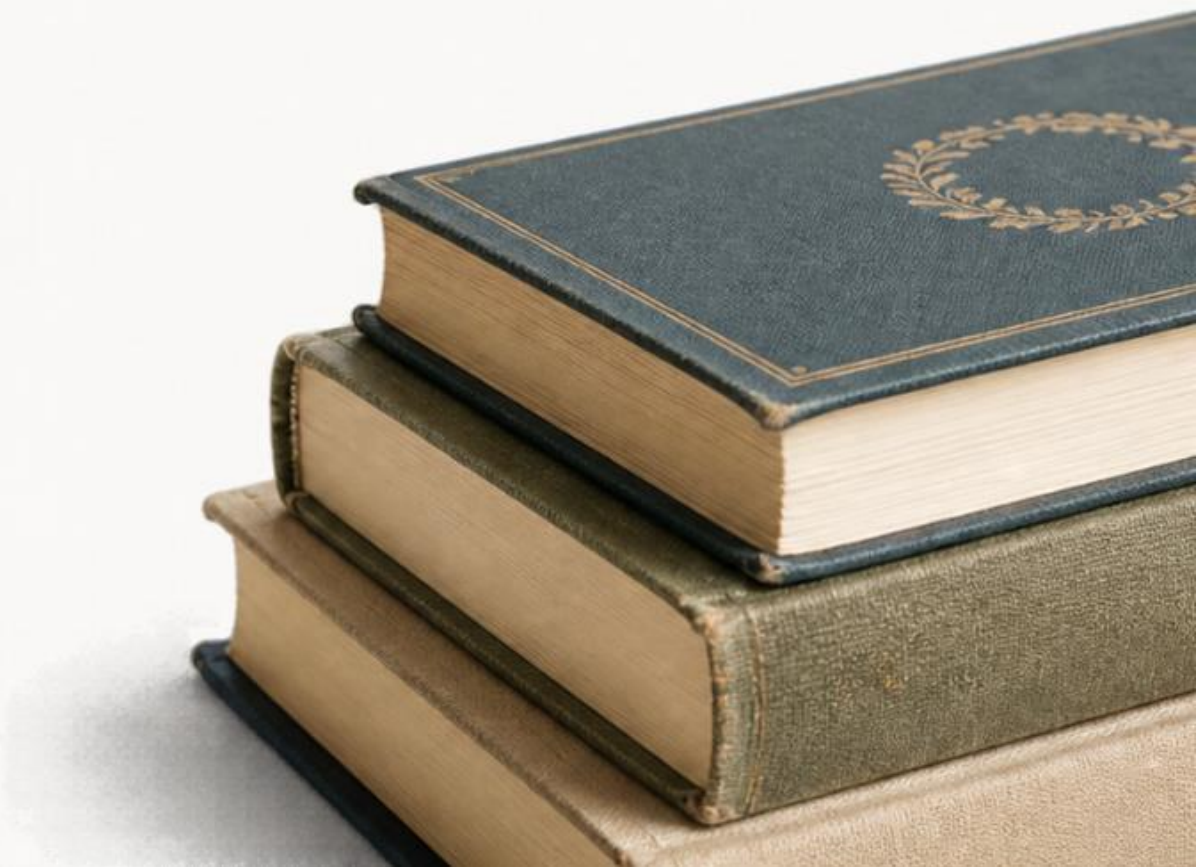
TAKEAWAY

Enjoying conflict does not necessarily mean wanting a tragic ending.



In their words

“I will not read books where the angst stems from something stupid like an incorrect assumption, an easily corrected misunderstanding, or a partial overhearing.”



As for angst - any good story does win out, but too much angst can be a killer, too.

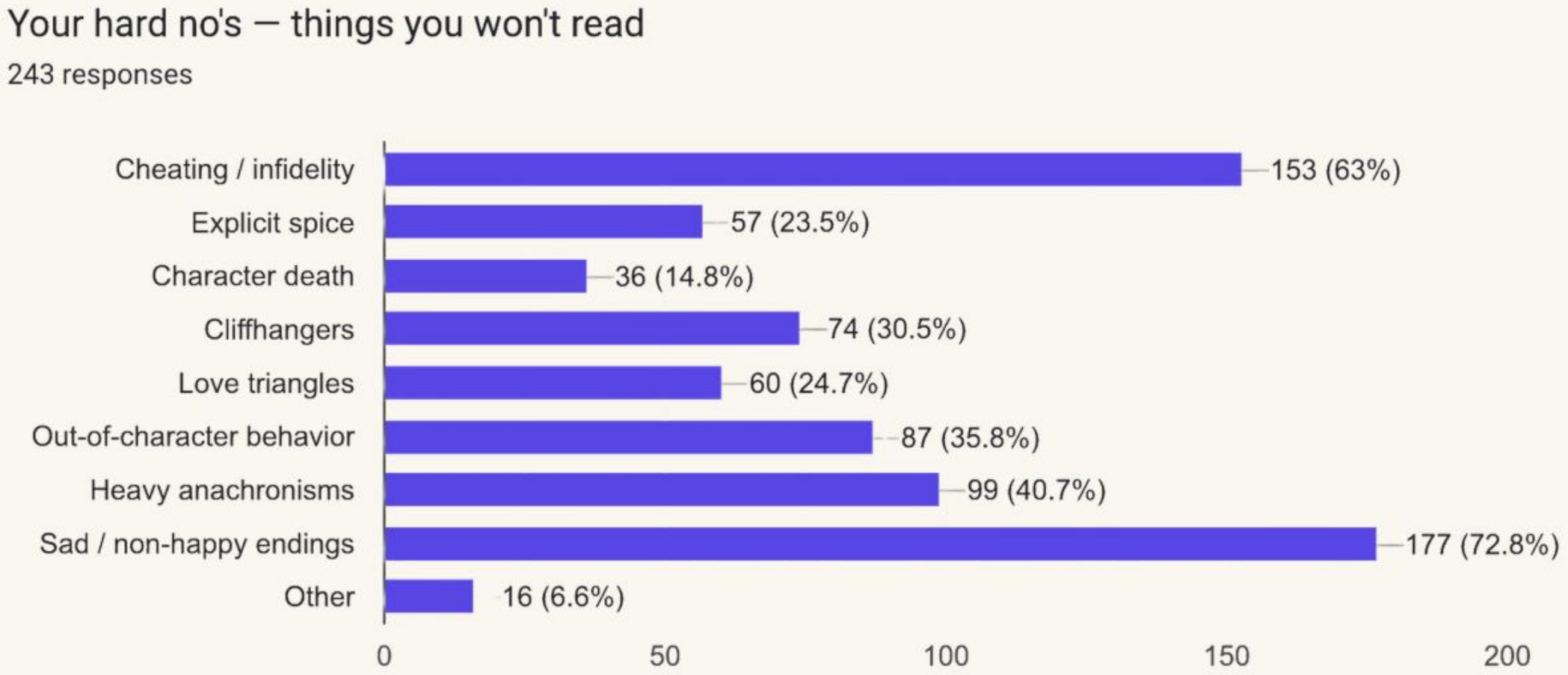
I like to read all kinds of JAFF, but if I read a high angst book, I really need some story showing them happy. I need to properly cleanse the angst away.

The angst (should come) from outside sources not between them!

ACT 2

Boundaries & comfort zones

Hard no's


Your hard no's — things you won't read
243 responses
Cheating / infidelity
153 (63%)
Explicit spice
57 (23.5%)
Character death
36 (14.8%)
Cliffhangers
74 (30.5%)
Love triangles
60 (24.7%)
Out-of-character behavior
87 (35.8%)
Heavy anachronisms
99 (40.7%)
Sad / non-happy endings
177 (72.8%)
Other
16 (6.6%)
0
50
100
150
200

In their words

“No unhappy endings, please. The world is dark and reading a good happily ever after is an escape.”



no-way I read it: Elizabeth and Darcy do not have an HEA, Darcy is mean most of the book

HEA mandatory or I won't read

I said hard no for character death, but I only mean Darcy or Elizabeth.

It is not a hard no but I would probably not read a P &P when the final ending is that Darcy did not end up with Elizabeth

ODC not having a HEA together is a very HARD NO

In their words: Spice or No Spice?

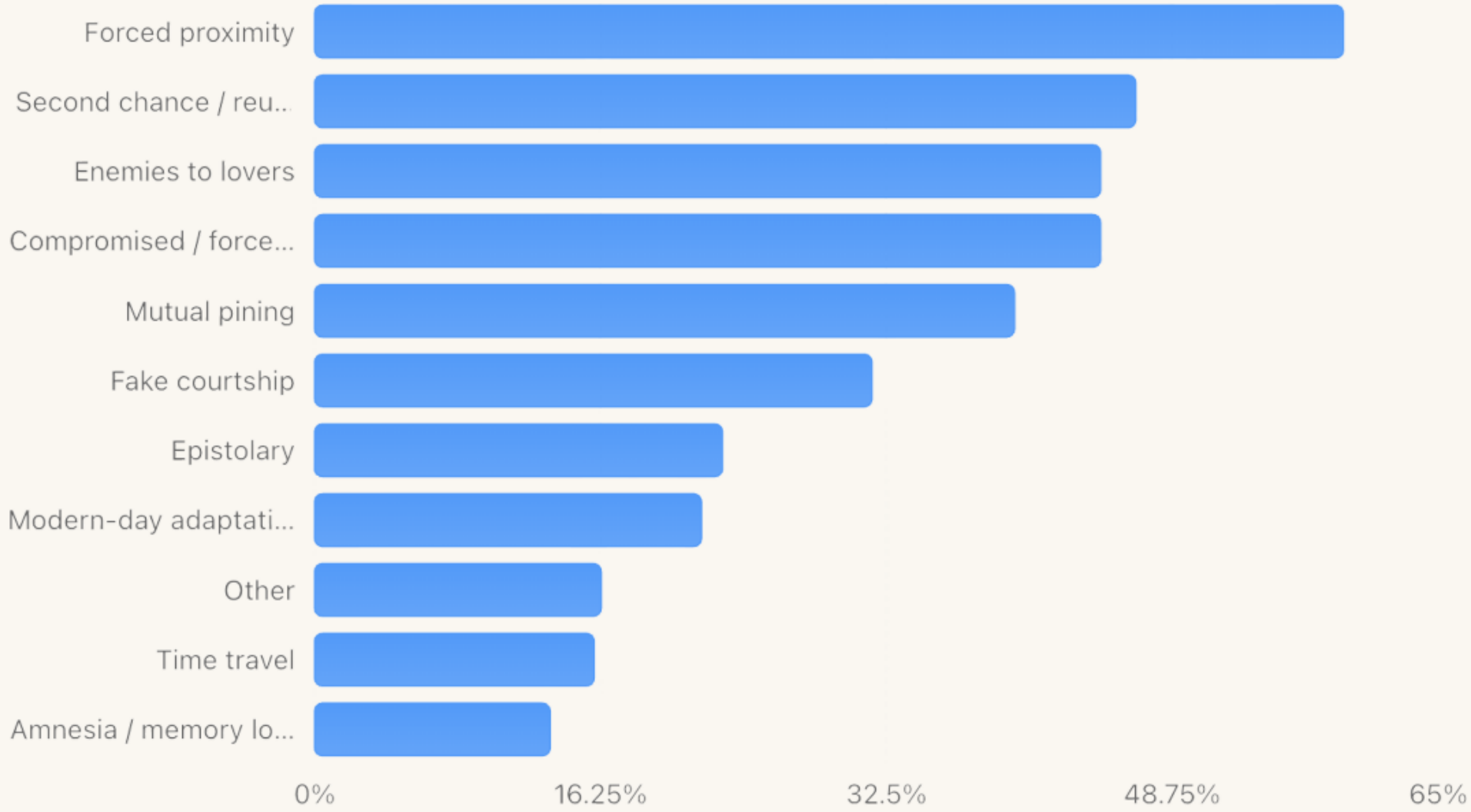
“The closed door people had really taken over JAFF for the last few years. Glad to see a few brave, well-known authors putting out some spice!”

“Kisses only. Closed door intimacy is best when they are married. Let readers’ imaginations do the work.”

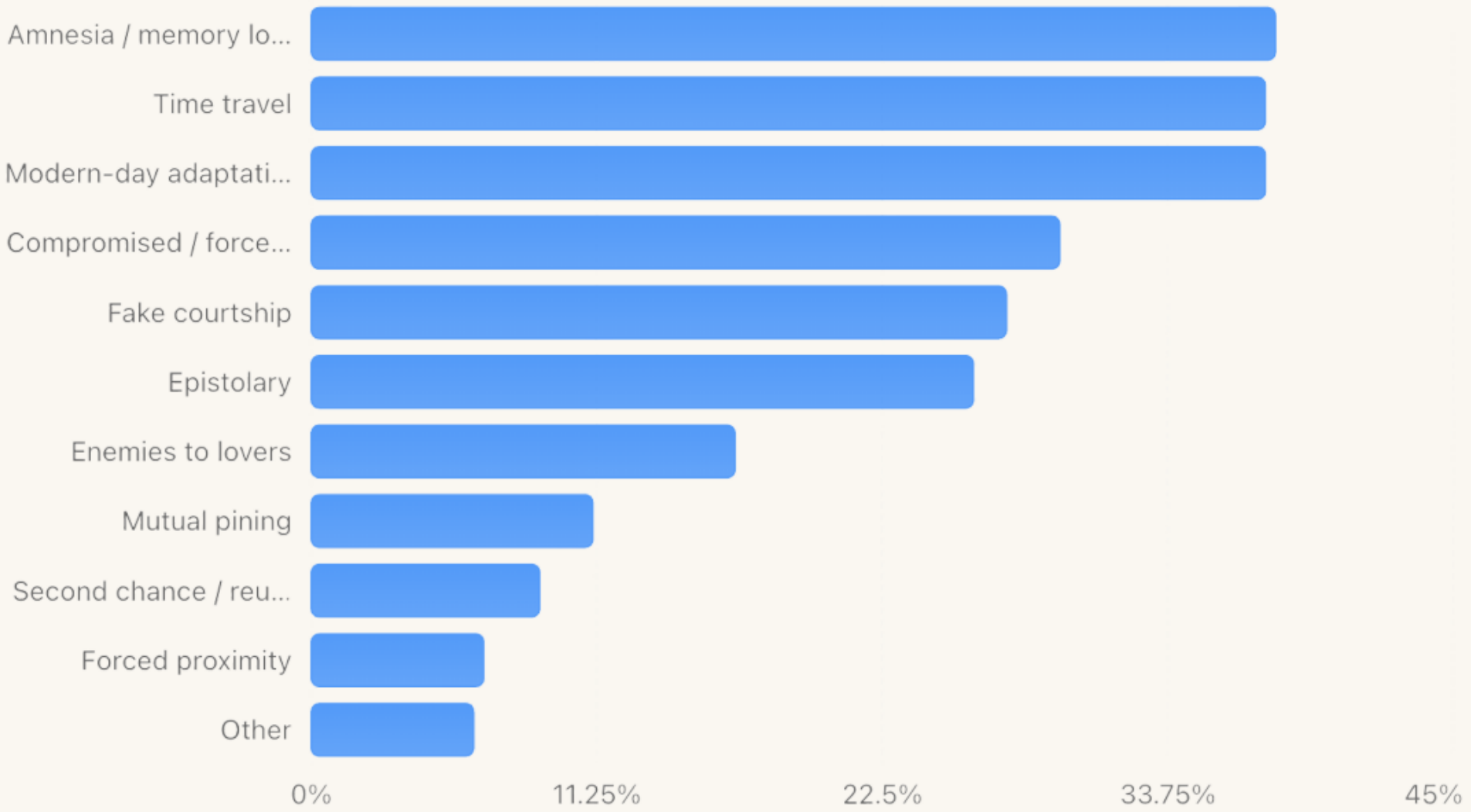
ACT 3

Tropes readers can't resist

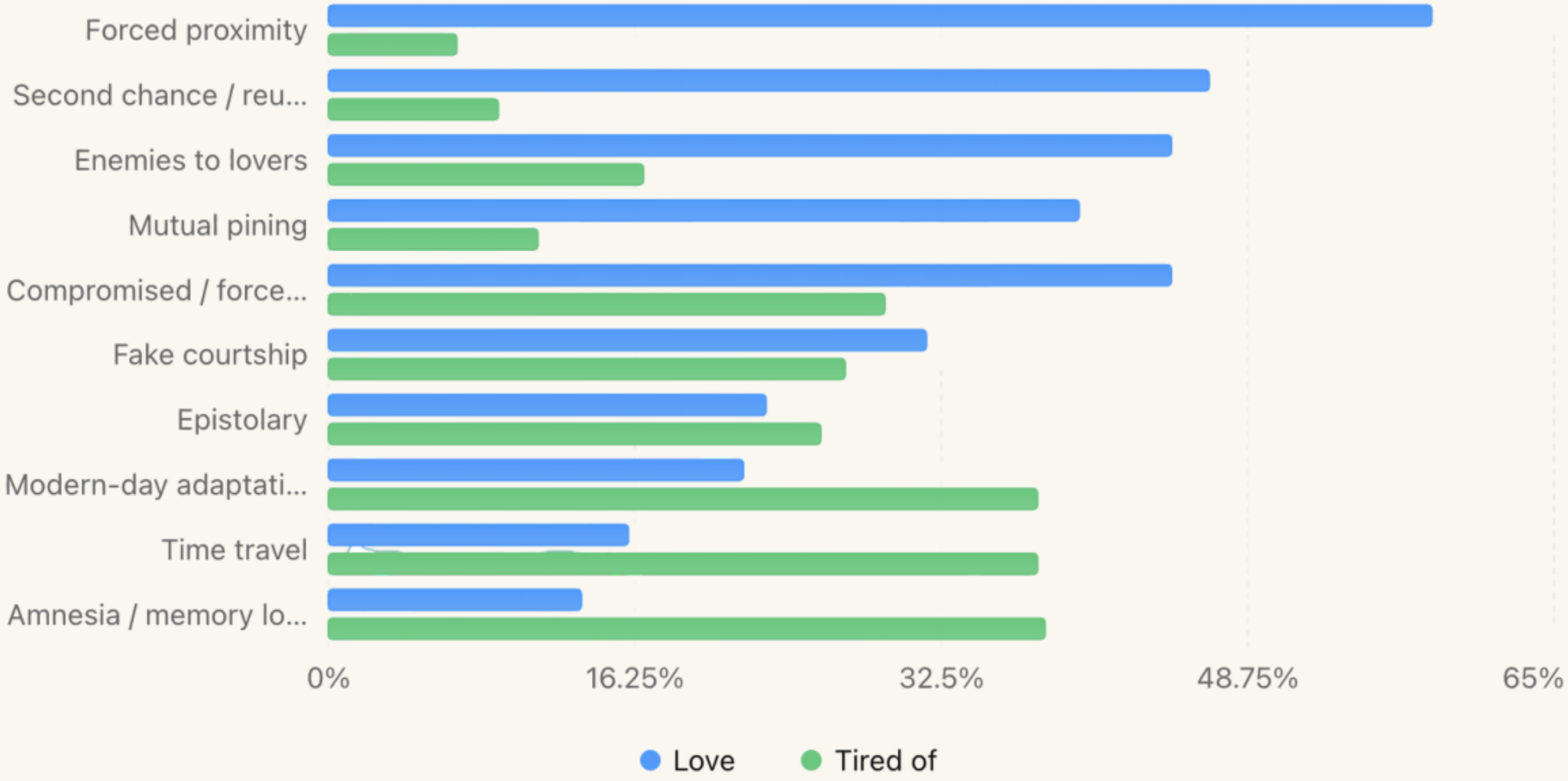
Tropes we're loving



Tropes we're tired of



Reader Favorites or Reader Fatigue? The Tropes That Unite—and Divide—JAFF Readers.



READER PREFERENCES

One trope. Different readers.

“I like the weird ones. A good Collins, a mean Jane, a heroic Wickham. I love mashups.”

“I like a plot to surprise or even shock me, but the characters still have to be true to JA.”

Different preferences can coexist in the same readership.

Tropes I love: ones that explains why Elizabeth is better than her family, ie, not a Bennet, raised as other than a Bennet, a better behaved/situated Bennet family due to some interesting circumstances, etc.

Trope I am tired of: Elizabeth is not a Bennet or other reconfigurations of the family, such as missing sisters.

“I love all tropes as long as the story is good.”



I like crazy situations (kidnapping, sudden fortunes, someone is a duke, etc)

Found family is one of my favorite tropes,

I LOVE fantasy tropes, too.

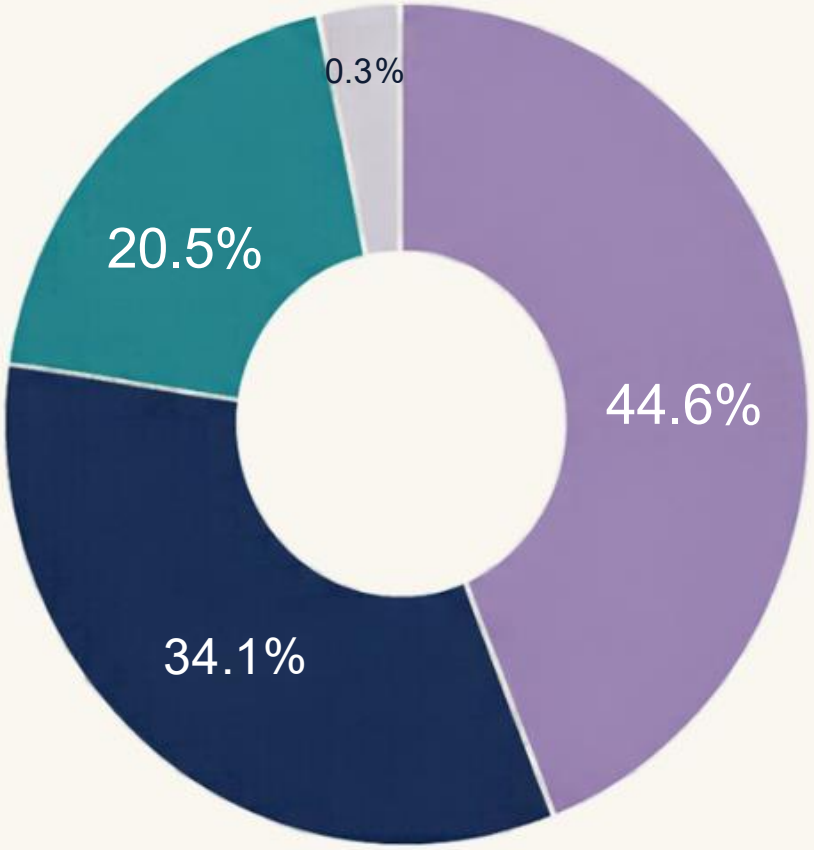
Darcy and Lizzy against the world,

I really really enjoy soul mark stories.

I will read mysteries, fantasy, periods other than modern or Regency, a secondary character as hero or heroine and non-P&P variations.

Modern JAFF

DO YOU READ MODERN-DAY ADAPTATIONS?



111 (44.6%)
Sometimes

85 (34.1%)
No — keep it Regency

51 (20.5%)
Yes, love them

65.1%

chose either Sometimes or Yes.

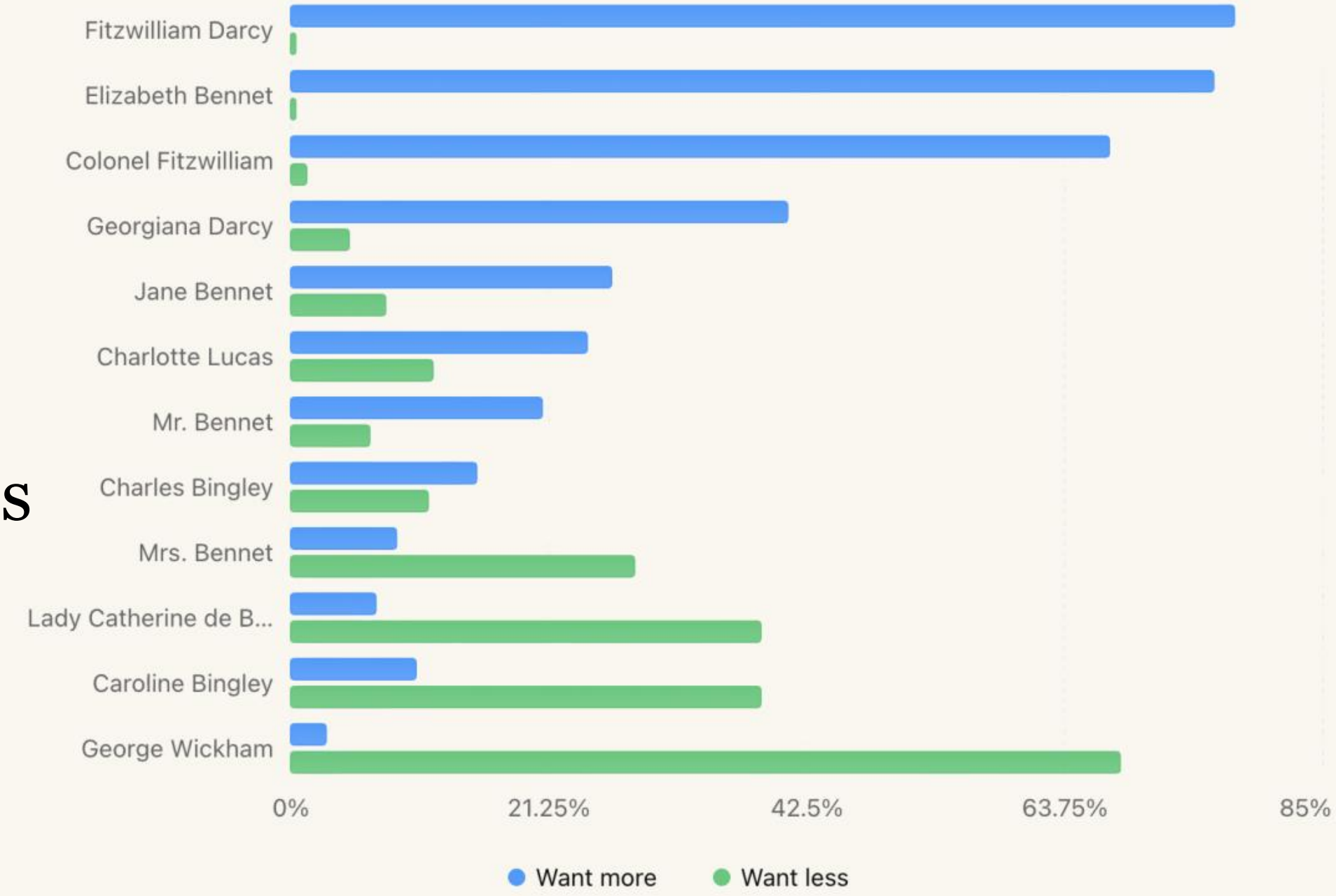
However, openness does not equal preference



ACT 4

Characters in JAFF

Where Reader Preferences Overlap



A moment for Colonel Fitzwilliam

67.4%
(163 of 242)

WANT MORE

242 readers answered they want more Colonel Fitzwilliam.

1.3%
(3 of 230)

WANT LESS

230 readers answered they want less Colonel Fitzwilliam.



Why do you think the colonel has such enduring appeal?

CHARACTER & CHEMISTRY

Who do we want them to be?

“My favorite stories tend to be ones where Lizzy is uncommonly intelligent or extremely accomplished.”

“I love forced proximity. Any reason for ODC to be forced to sit down and listen to each other!”

In their words

“I always like seeing Anne de Bourgh —a strong Anne, or one becoming stronger, learning to stand up to Lady Catherine.”

My favourite "trope" is one where Jane is either so wrapped up in herself and her own beauty that she’s horrible or she gains a backbone and says no to CB and marries someone else.

CHARACTER GROWTH

Redemption has its fans

“I like seeing the redemption of characters, such as Lydia, Kitty, Mary, Wickham, Caroline, even Collins and Lady C.”

Even familiar characters can surprise us.

The Things Readers Wish We'd Asked

- **More Mary, Kitty, Anne, and the Gardiners**
  - **Several respondents specifically requested expanded roles for less prominent characters, including Mary and Kitty Bennet, Anne de Bourgh, and the Gardiners.**
- **Elizabeth isn't a Bennet**
  - **Multiple respondents named secret heiresses, wealthy Bennets, and alternative family backgrounds as favourite variations. Others explicitly disliked these storylines.**
- **Spice is genuinely divisive**
  - **Some want more explicit romance, while others prefer closed-door stories and say explicit content is a deal-breaker. The comments suggest strongly different reader audiences.**
- **Believable characters matter**
  - **Readers mentioned concerns about poor editing, repetitive misunderstandings, implausible behaviour, and characters becoming caricatures of themselves.**

In their words

“ A good author can change my mind about all my selections.”



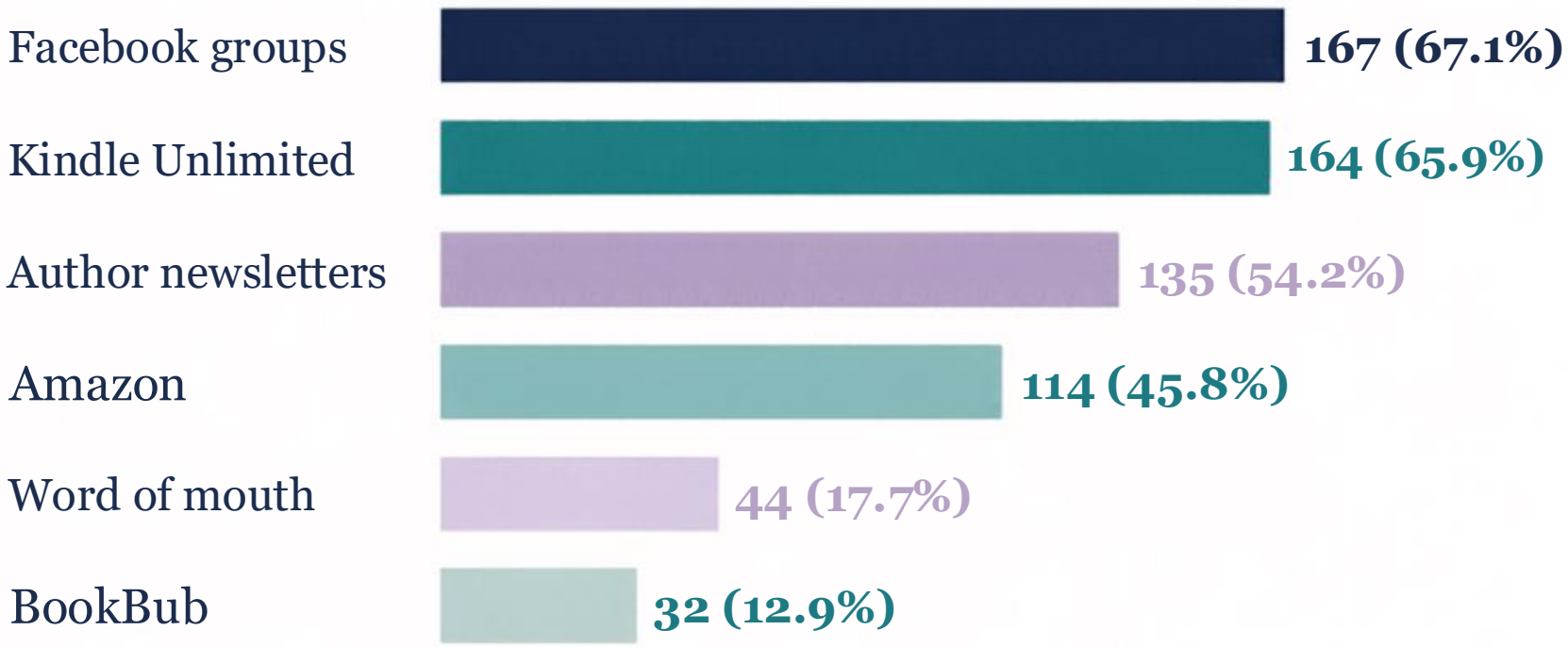
Ultimately.

- Readers want more of the characters they love—not necessarily more conflict from the characters they love to hate.

ACT 5

Other things Readers want Authors to Know

Where readers find their next JAFF book



All percentages out of 249. Multiple channels could be selected.



IN THEIR WORDS

A variation that feels true

“I don’t mind when a character does something unexpected from canon but I need to understand and believe the character change.”

“I like variety. I like different. Not boring and repeat of the original.”



A good story wins.

Definitions matter. Boundaries matter. Tropes matter. But readers will follow craft, chemistry, and emotional truth anywhere.