



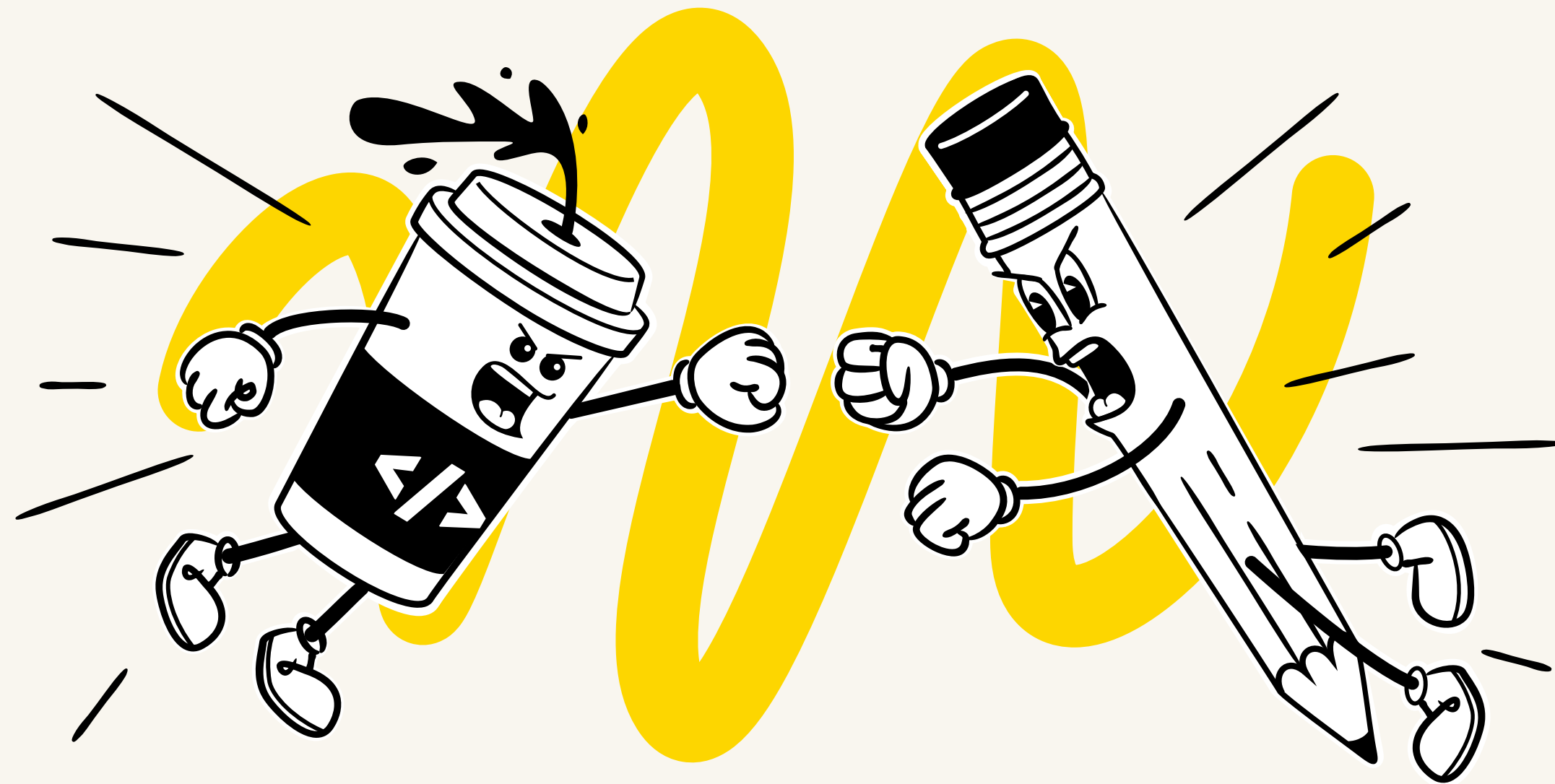
Pixels vs Code:

The designer-developer relationship in 2025

A report on how designers really feel about working with developers

[CollabSoft.com](https://collabsoft.com)

Designers and developers working together is like a buddy cop movie:



They clash, things explode, and by the end they realize they're on the same side.

In 2023, Figma asked 200 developers about why collaborating with designers isn't always easy. We wanted to hear the other side of the story.

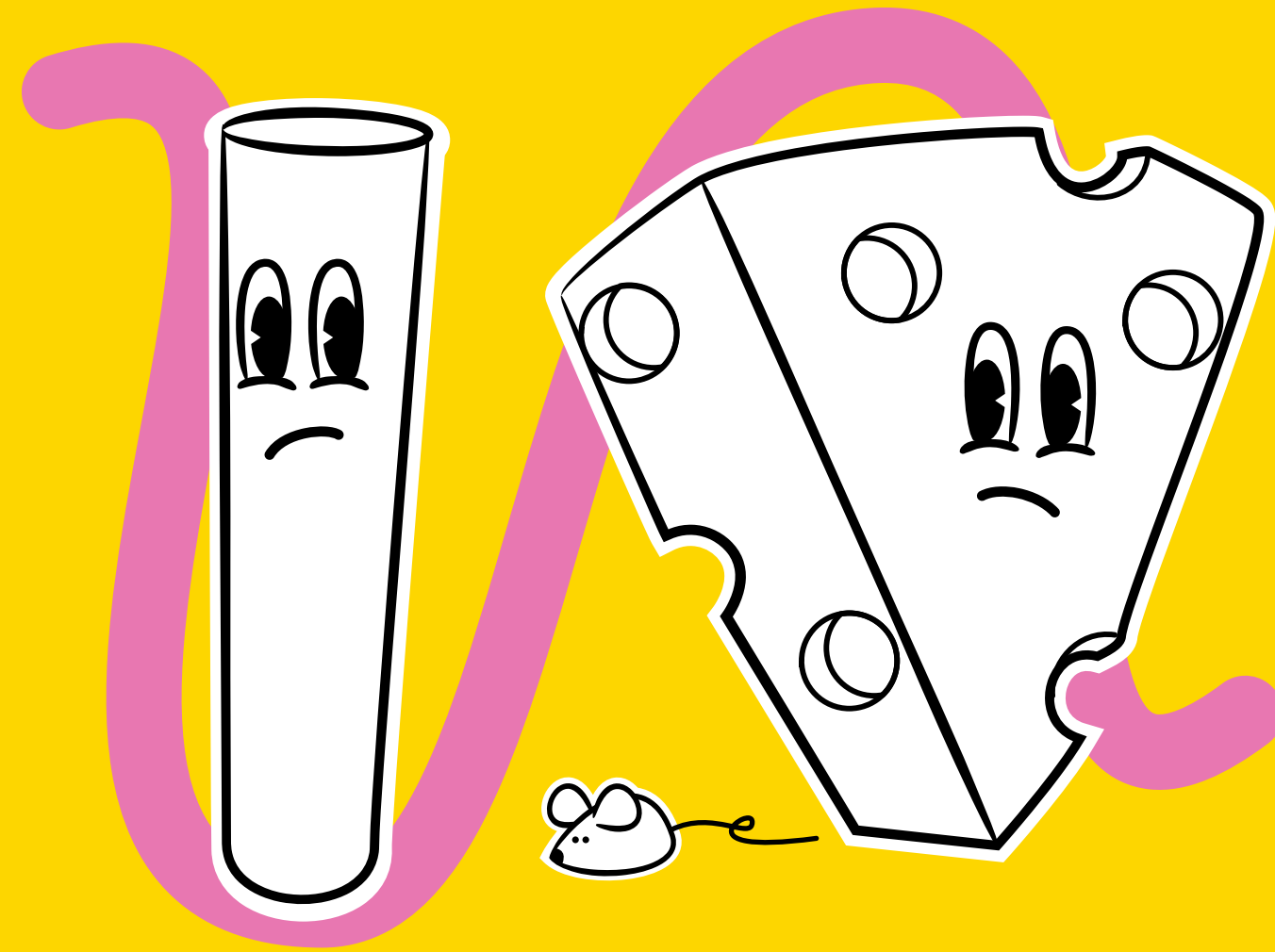
We asked 500 designers
about the dynamics of their
relationships with developers and
what needs to change.

“

Ah, the age-old tug-of-war between UX designers and frontend developers. It's like watching two different artists fight over how to paint the same canvas.

**Shaheer Malik, Senior Product Designer,
PureLogics**

Here's what we learned.



Designers and developers are like chalk and cheese

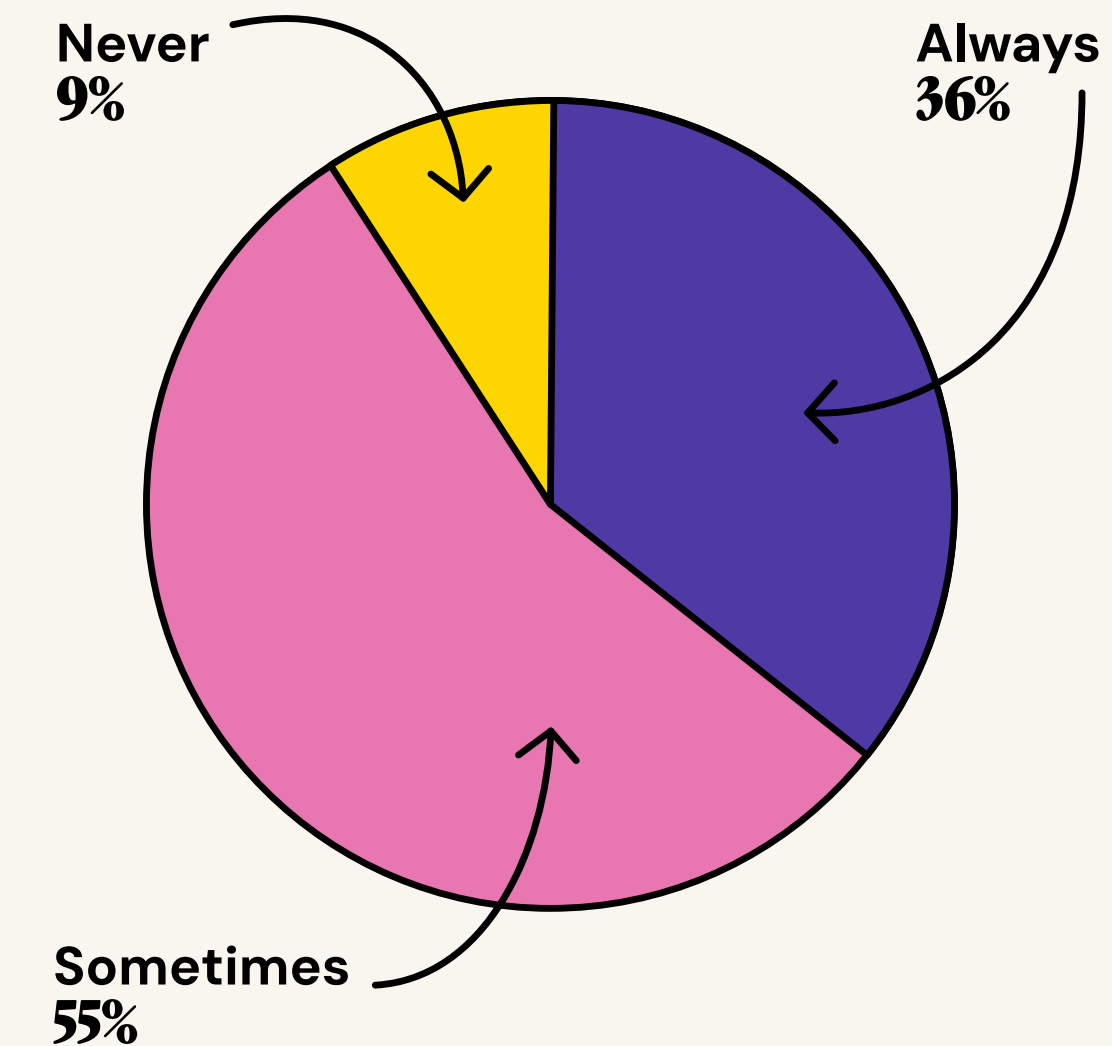
It seems that a lot of designers are resigned to never totally seeing eye to eye.

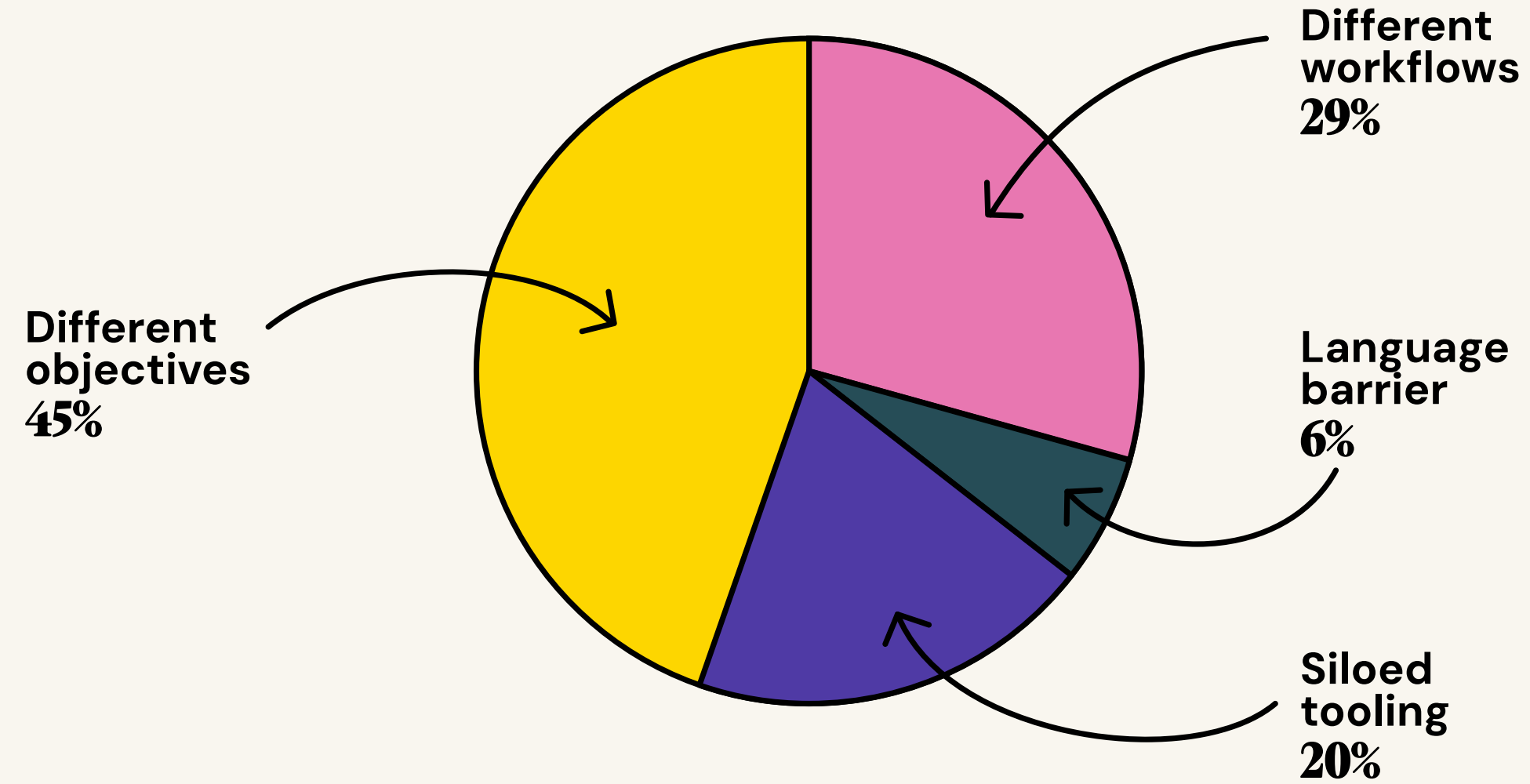
55%

of designers think designers and developers are sometimes too different to work together well.

36%

said they're always too different.

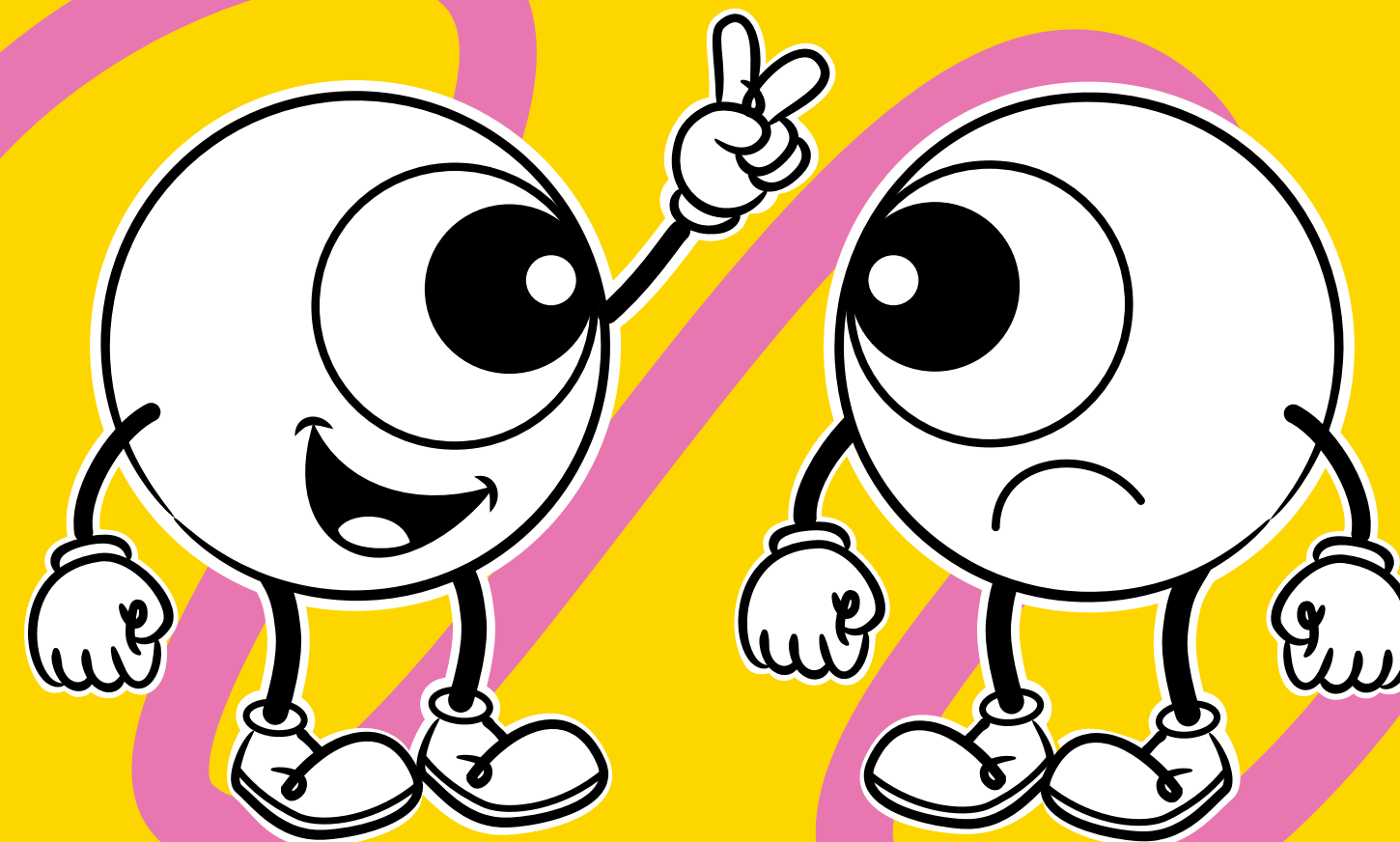




But why?

We asked what's the **#1** frustration of collaborating with devs, and the top response (45%) was **different objectives**, followed by **different workflows** (29%).

It's hard to see eye to eye when you do **different jobs with different priorities and schedules.**



“

A designer's dream is a developer's nightmare.
Every designer and developer in the world

Designers and developers try to be cooperative and respectful of each other's roles

Despite finding some differences hard to reconcile, designers and developers are *trying* to work together well.

81%

of designers said they feel developers understand and value their work.

57%

said developers are very open to feedback from designers.

72%

said designers are very open to feedback from devs.

It's not perfect. 37% of designers said devs are a bit dismissive sometimes.



This comes back to different objectives and ways of working. Designers are creatives, limited only by their imagination. But developers must think about technical feasibility. They're probably dismissive when a designer proposes something they don't think will work.

Similarly, **24% of designers said they "try to be" open to devs' feedback**, which suggests some aren't always receptive to technical limitations being imposed by devs.

Designers and developers should learn how to do each other's job

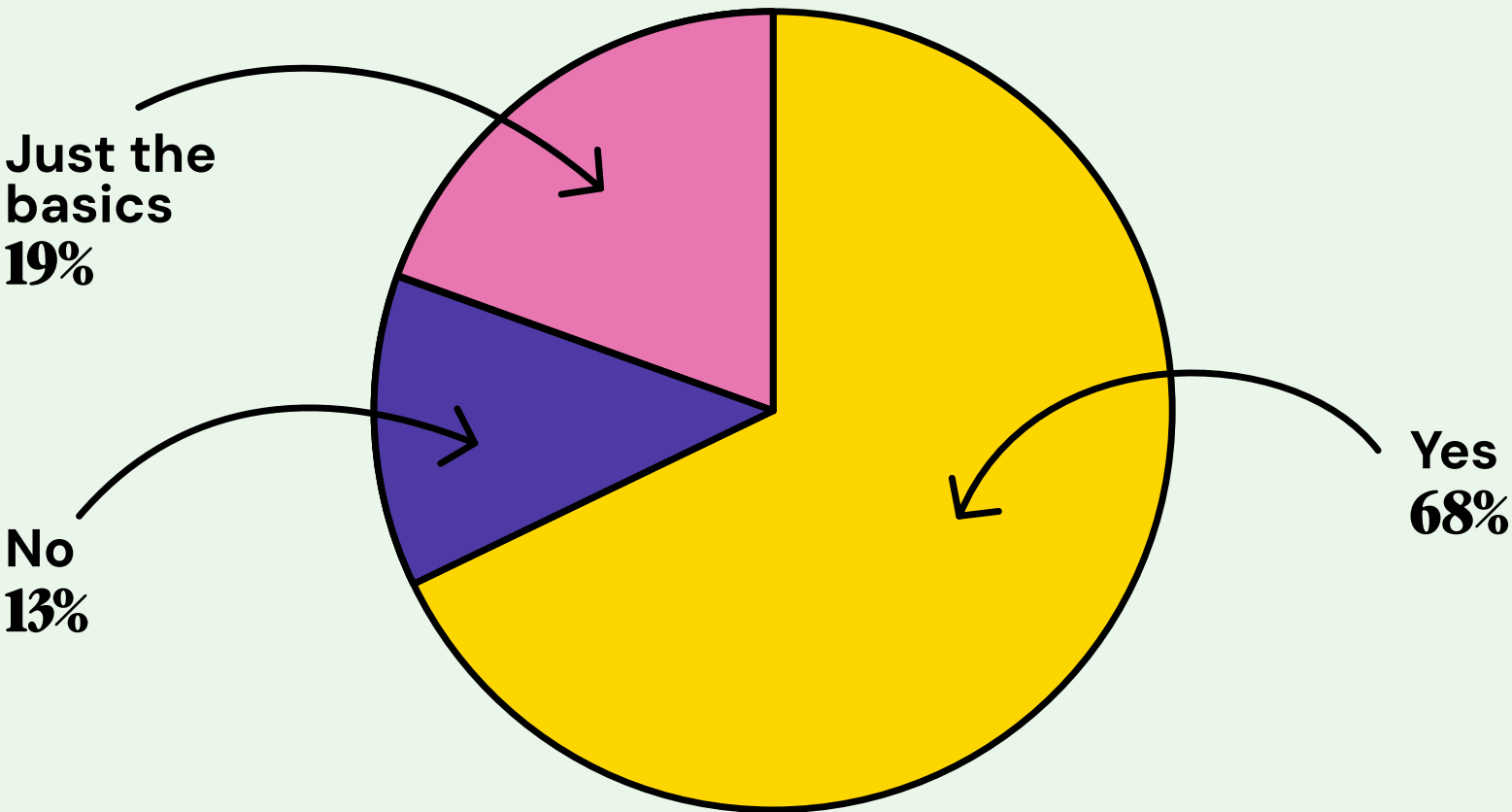
Reducing situations where designers propose things that obviously won't work, and developers dismiss ideas instead of finding solutions, could be achieved by designers and developers learning what each other do.

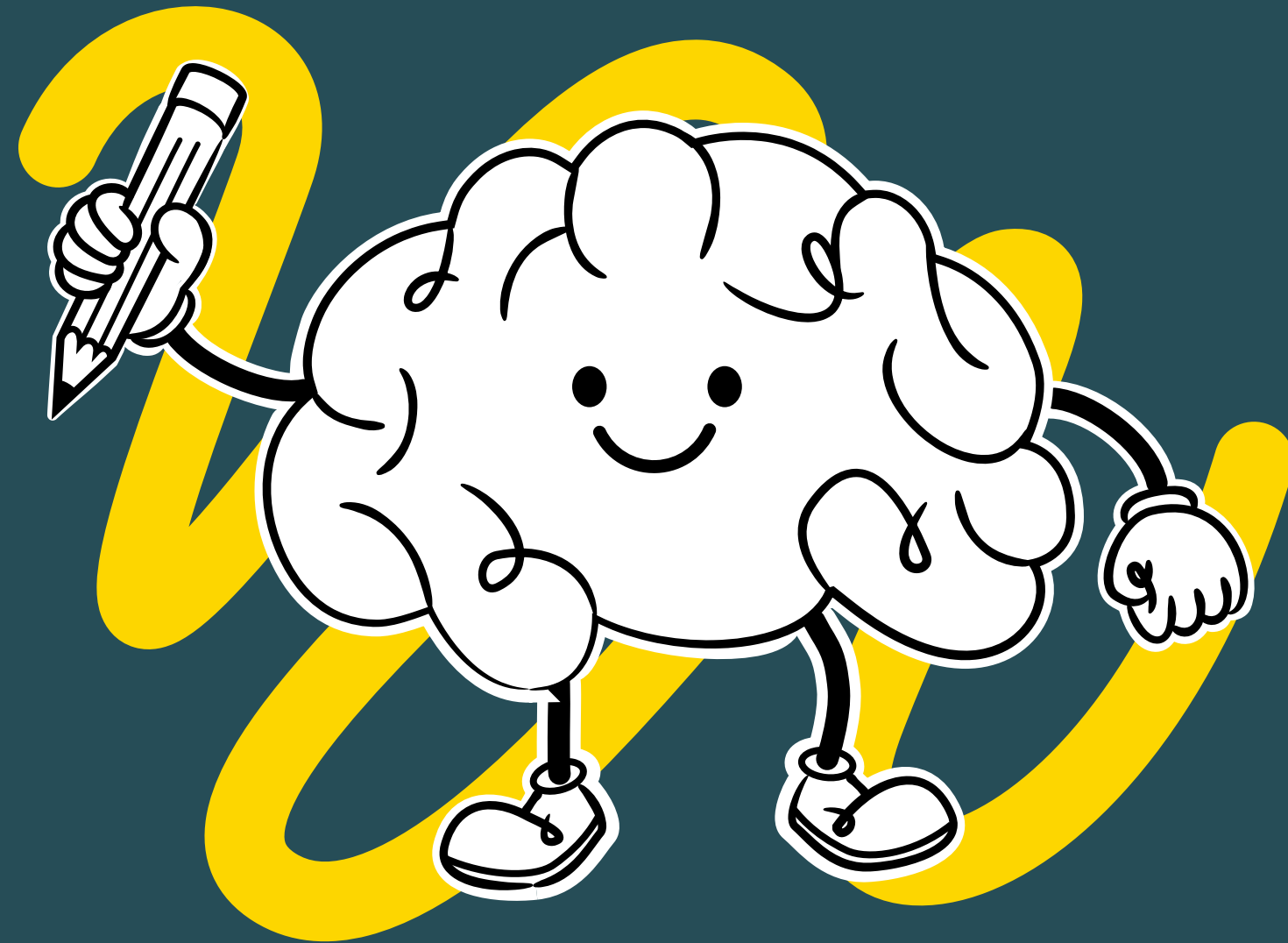
But how much?

In Figma's survey, 91% of developers said designers should know how to code. We wanted to know if designers felt the same... and they do.

68%

of designers think they should know how to code. So, designers feel less strongly than devs, but the majority still think it's a good idea.





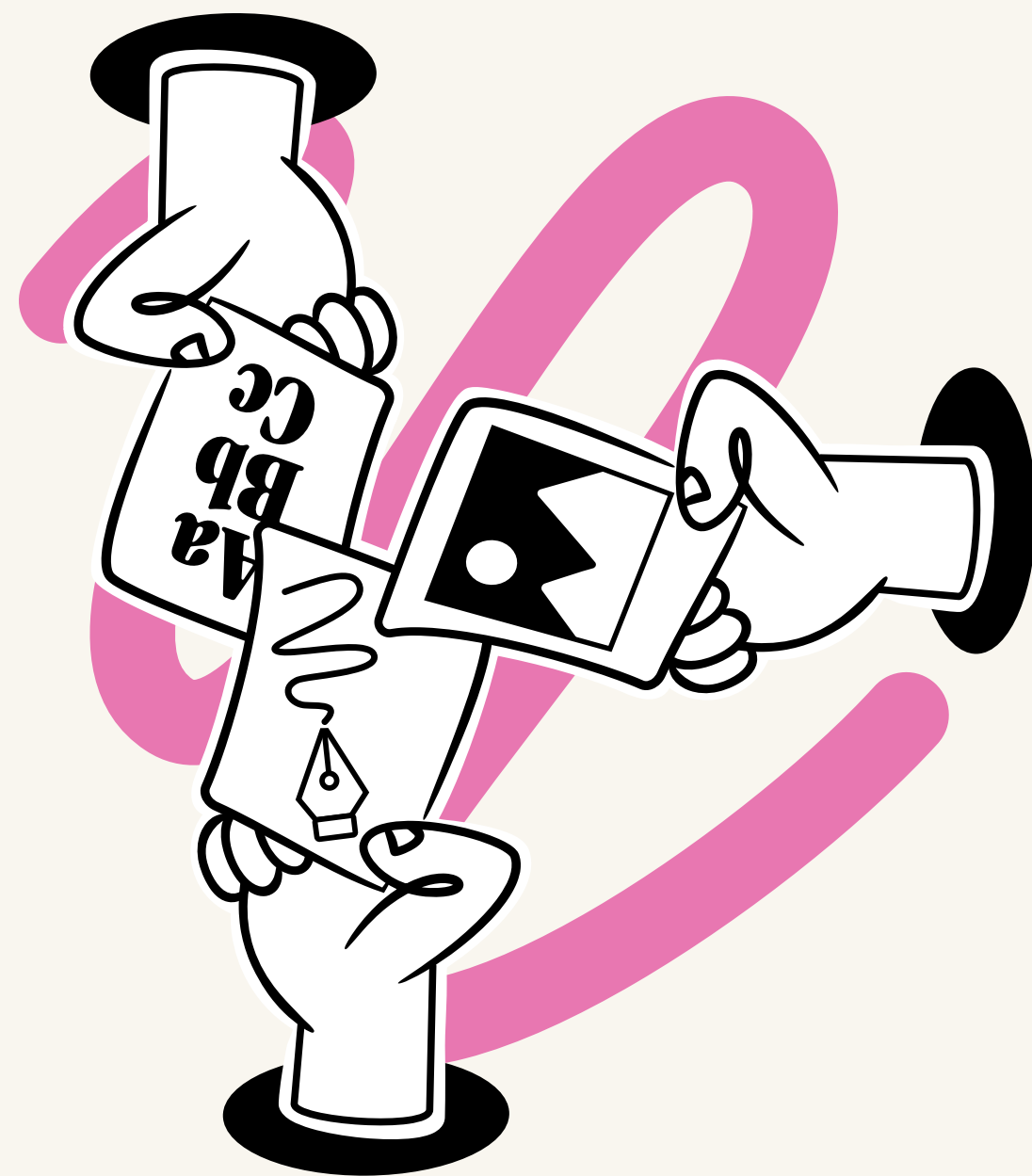
Something the Figma survey didn't ask was **whether developers should return the favor and learn how to design.** We asked designers this question and 67% said yes.

It seems like a lack of understanding of the other side is what's holding everyone back.

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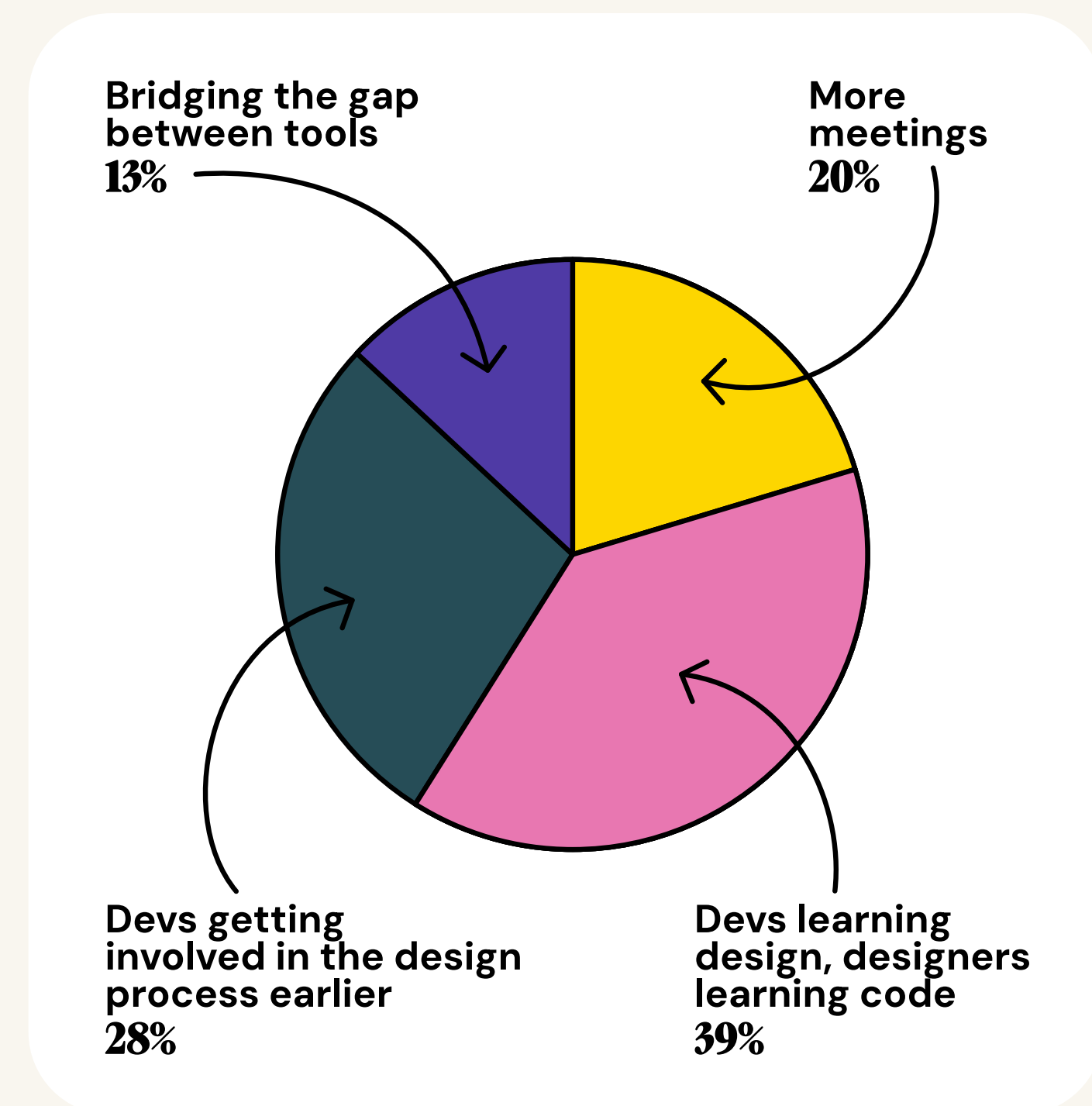
There are often debates on whether 'designers should learn to code.' In reality, I think we all need to learn something of the language, skills, and priorities of the other people on our teams.

Rachel Andrew, Developer Content Lead for Chrome, Google

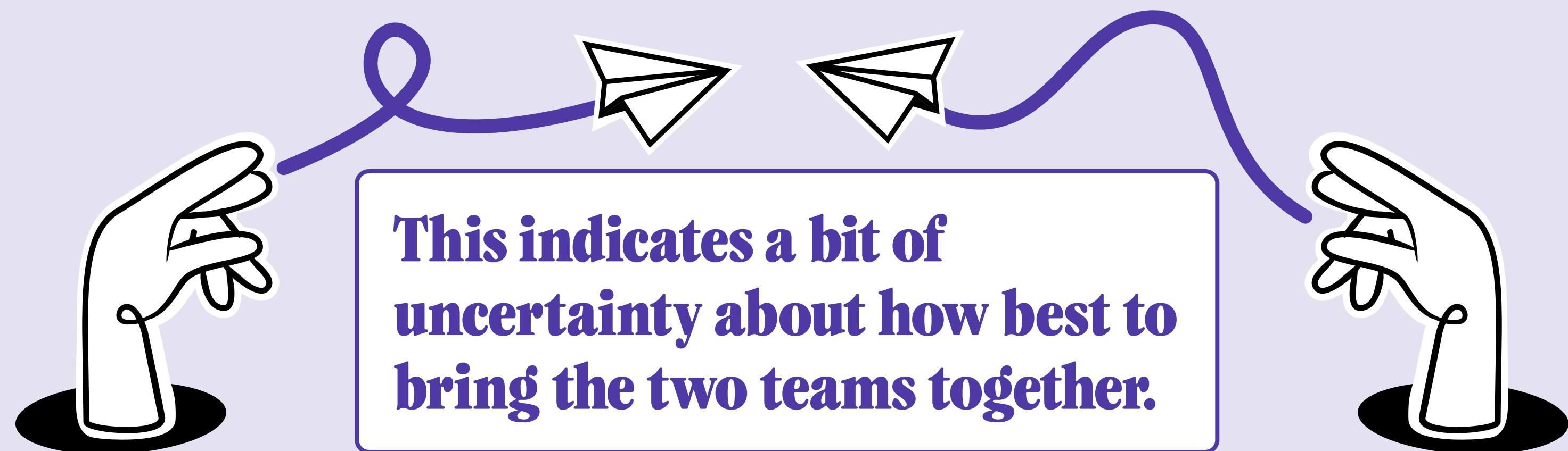


Learning each other's job is the main thing that can improve collaboration

We asked what could improve collaboration between designers and developers, and the most common response (39%) was devs learning design and designers learning code. Clearly most designers believe that the key to alignment is a better understanding of each other's processes.



Clearly designers are a bit more divided on this question. 28% think devs getting involved in the design process earlier would help, while 20% think more meetings is the answer.

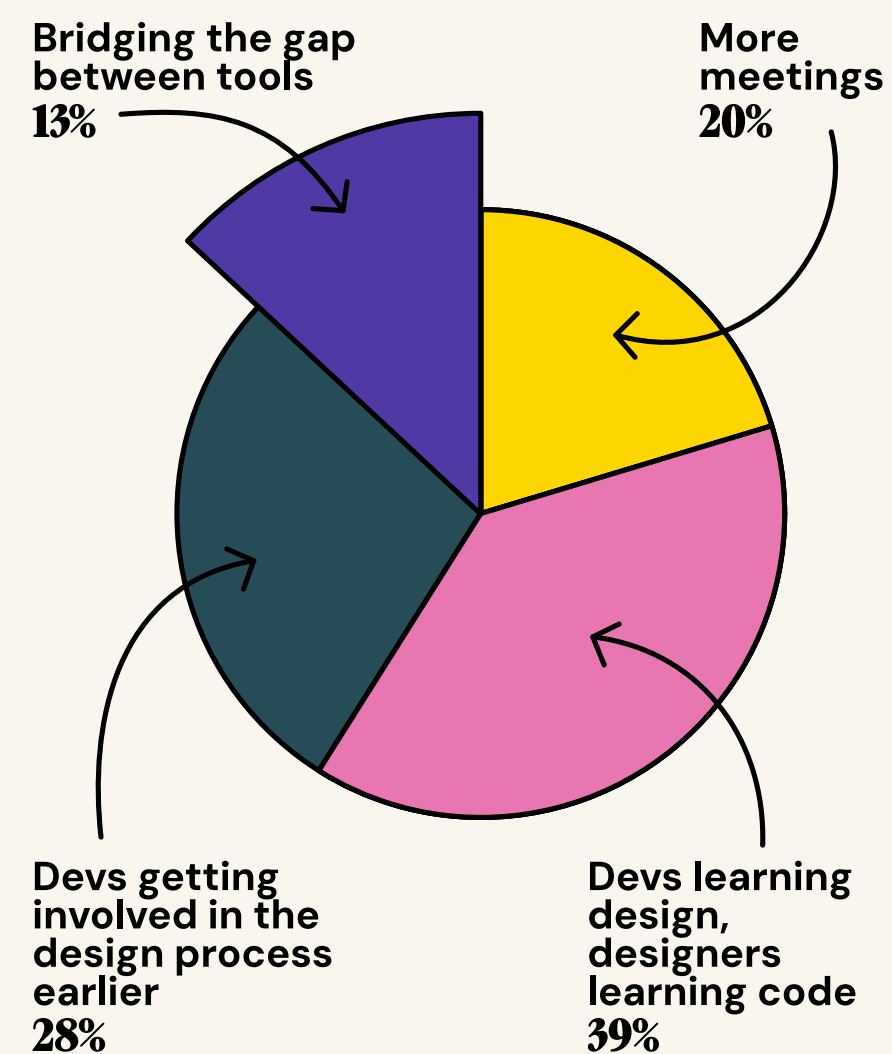


This indicates a bit of uncertainty about how best to bring the two teams together.

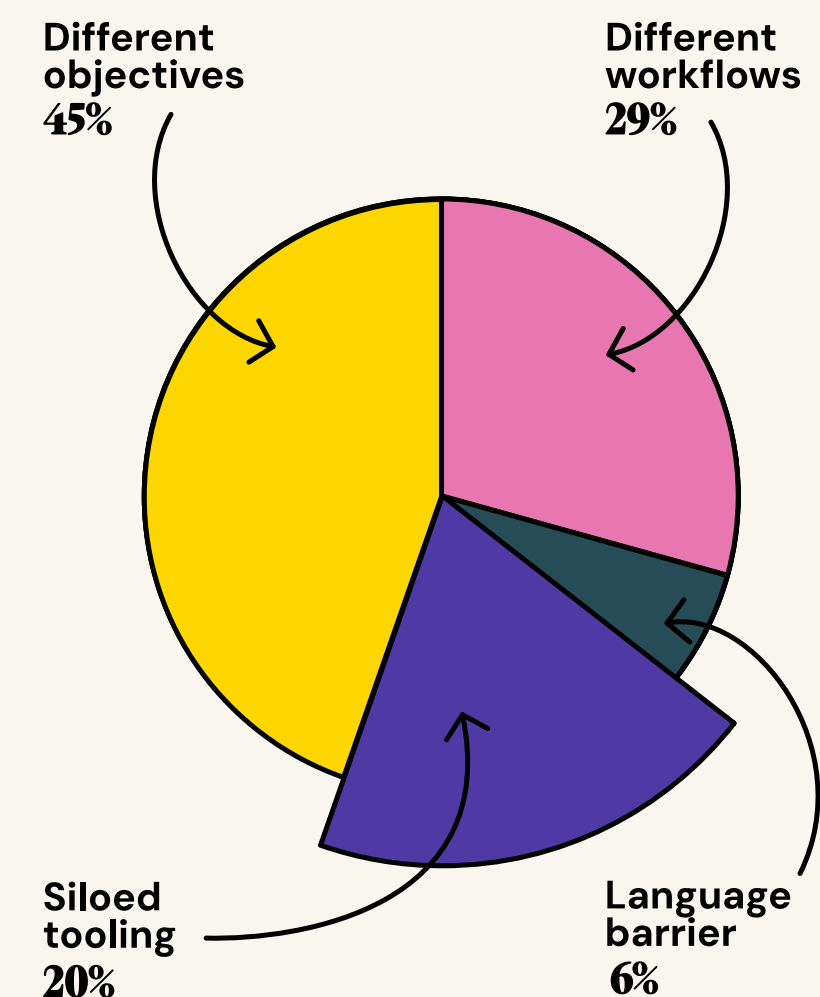
Siloed tooling isn't a problem... or is it?



Only **13%** of designers said that **bridging the gap between tools** could improve designer-developer collaboration.

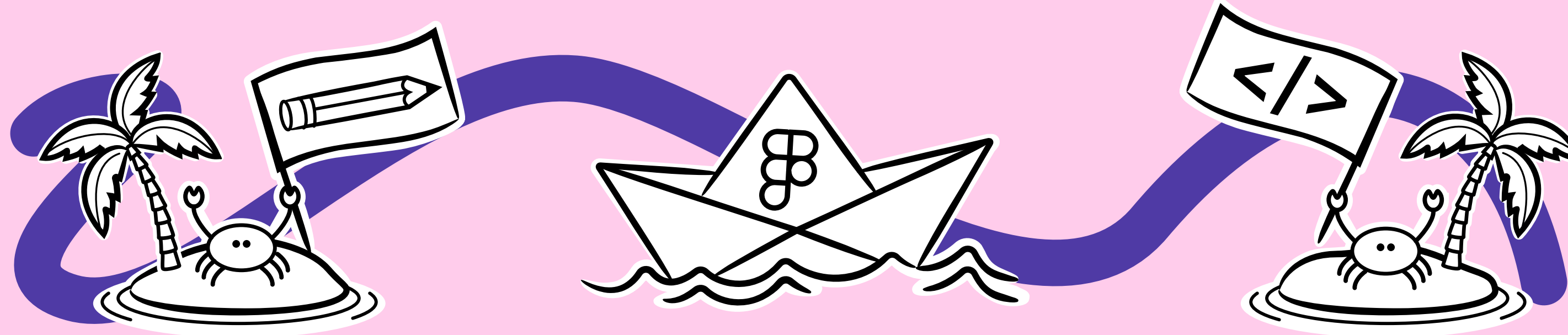
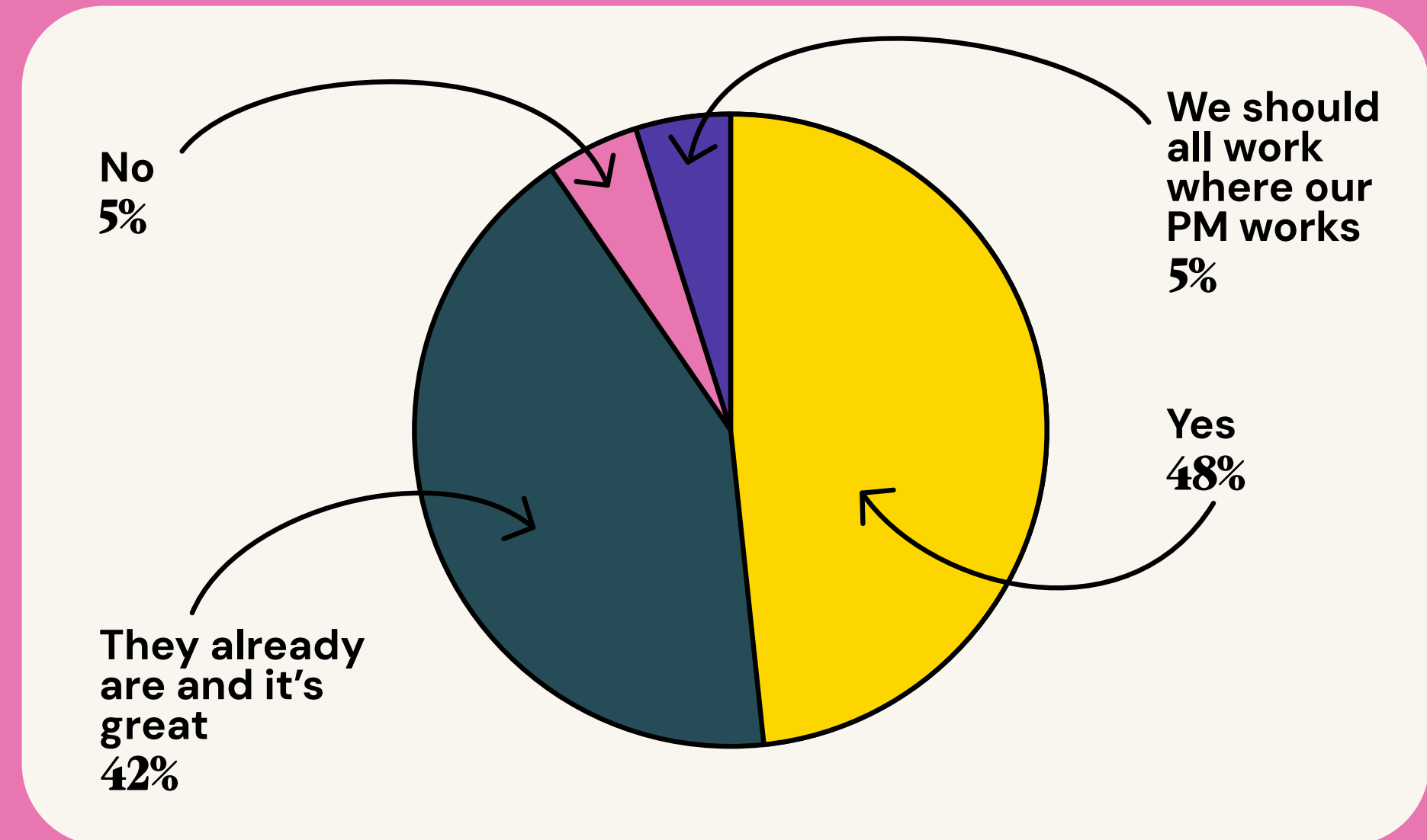


Only **20%** cited **siloed tooling** as the **#1** frustration of collaborating with devs.



At the same time, when we asked if designers wished their devs worked in Figma dev mode, the most common answer (48%) was yes.

That means they do see different tooling as a problem, and think the solution is getting devs to come into the design tool.

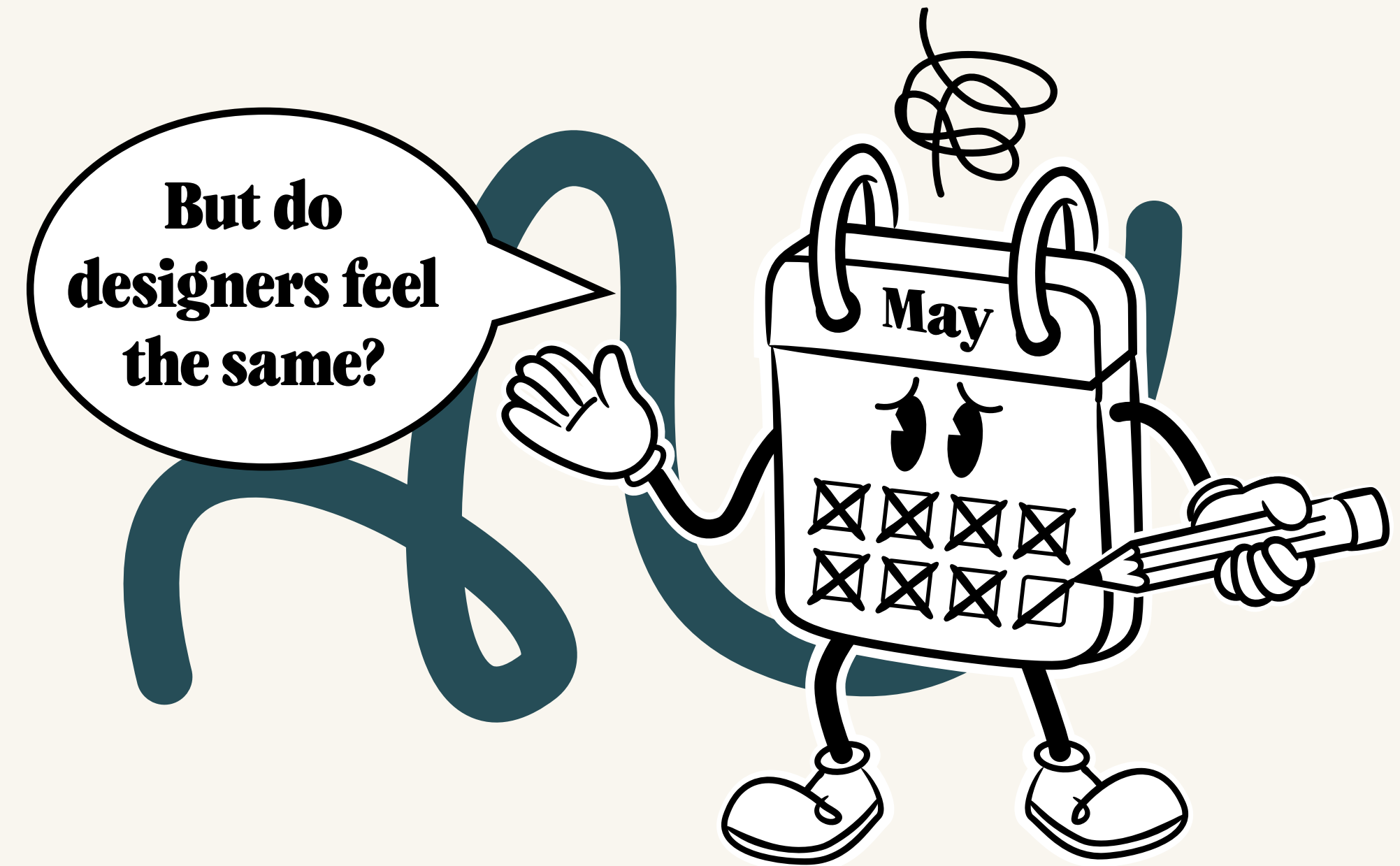


Also, 42% said their devs are already working in Figma dev mode, which could explain why a lot of respondents don't see siloed tooling as a problem...

The devs have broken that silo by adopting Figma!

Daily collaboration might be too much

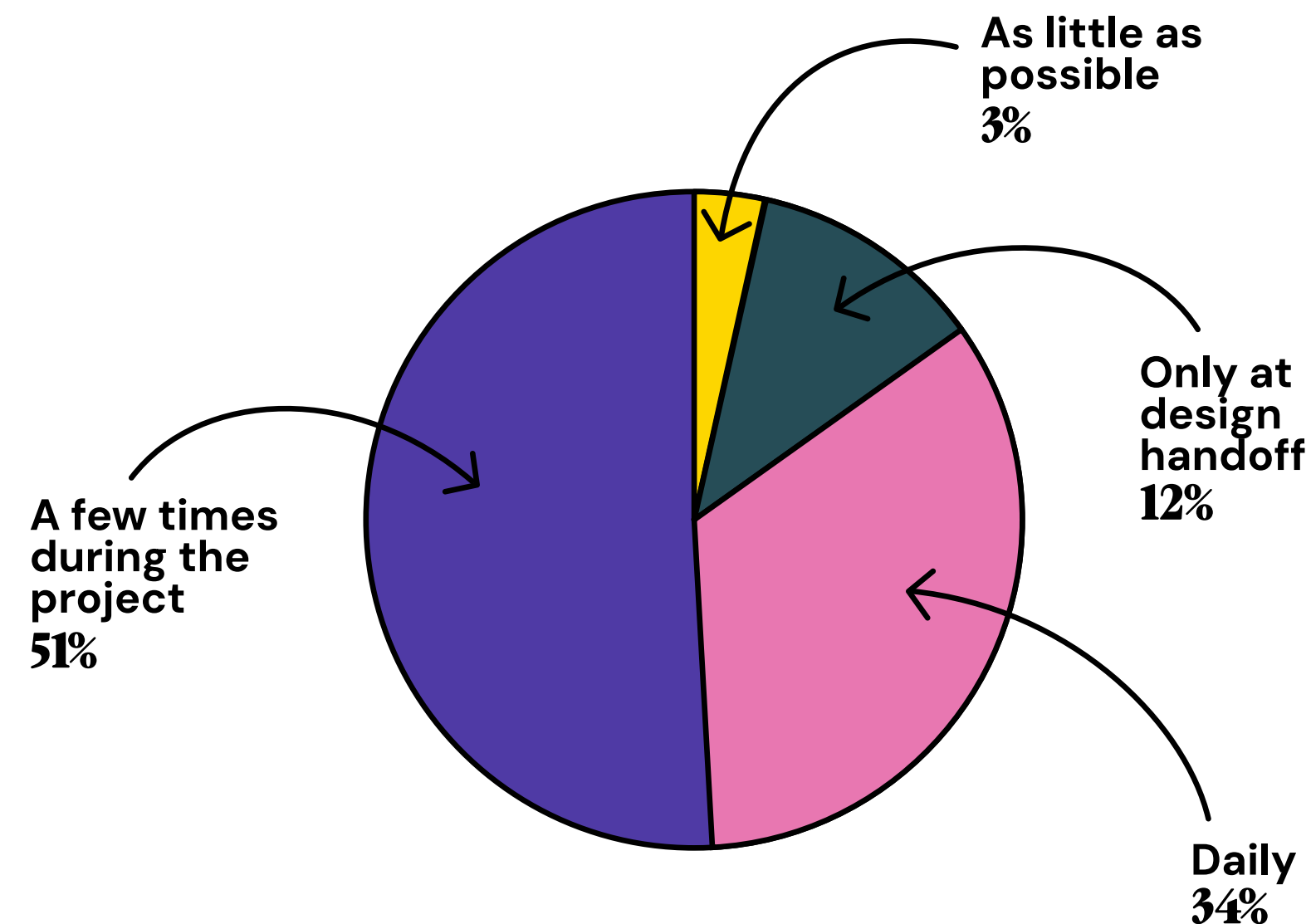
According to the developers surveyed by Figma, developer–designer partnerships are more effective if they collaborate daily.



We asked designers how they felt about communicating more frequently with developers and the majority (54%) said it would be helpful. However, 30% said it would be “ultimately worth it”.

So even though it pays off in the end, more frequent communication can sometimes be a struggle.

This is consistent with most respondents (**51%**) saying that developers and designers should collaborate a few times during the project and only **34%** saying they should collaborate daily. **12%** think it's only required at design handoff.



So, designers think there is such a thing as too much collaboration between the two teams. This is probably because they do completely different jobs and don't want to be stepping on each other's toes the whole time.

Interestingly some people advocate for a “no handoff” approach to creating and implementing designs. They say that iterating together on prototypes, with a constant back and forth between designer and developer, is more efficient and enjoyable.

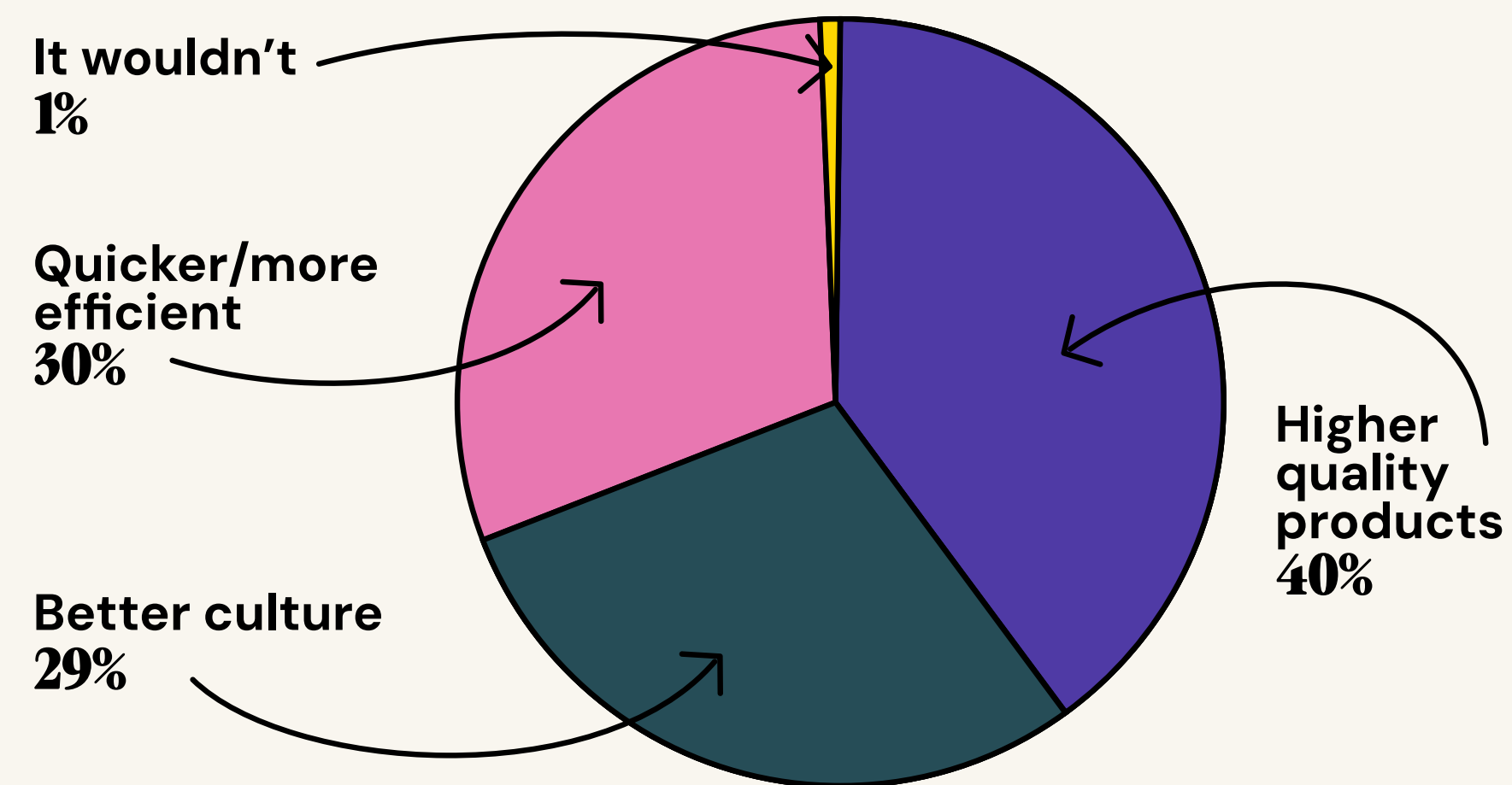
We're not sure designers agree.

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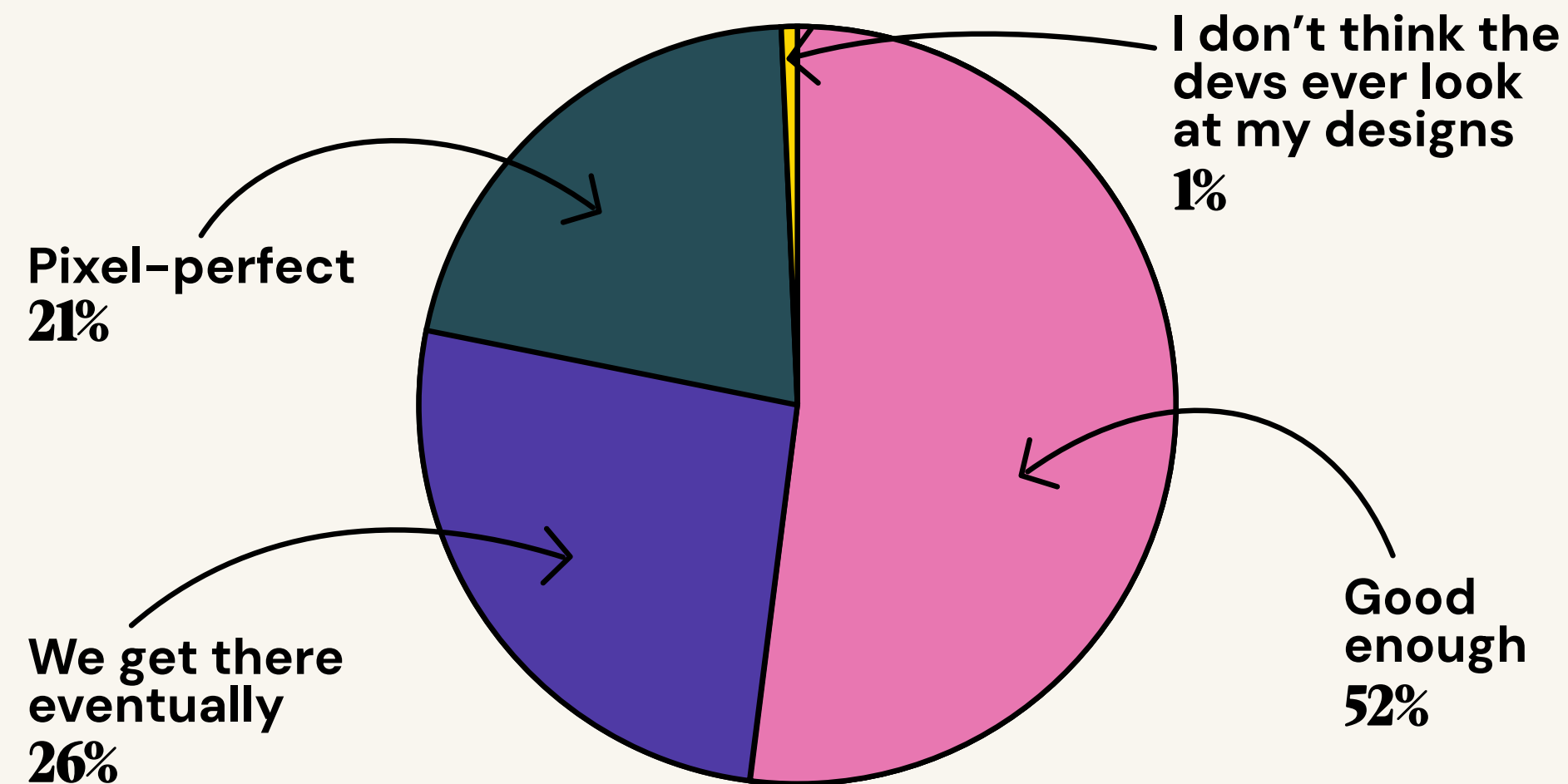
Like most things, collaboration is great in moderation. With too much too frequently, it's slowing us down and reducing our ability to get much needed focus time

Stella Garber, Co-Founder and CEO, Hoop.app

If they collaborated better, designers and developers would make better products



We asked designers how their businesses would benefit from better developer-designer collaboration. The biggest percentage (**40%**) think that better collaboration would lead to higher-quality products.



This corresponds to most designers (52%) saying that implementations of their designs are just “good enough”. 26% said they get there eventually, after too much back and forth, and only 21% said they were pixel-perfect.

This indicates that there is work to be done. If the final build doesn't match what designers intend, there's been a compromise on usability, and it's the customer who loses out.

“

When both sides get it, we end up with something cohesive—a product that looks amazing and works like a dream.

**Nikhil Sharma, Head of Product Design,
Airtel Payments Bank**

Summary highlights

1

Better developer-designer collaboration is needed to create great products, and achieved mostly by designers learning code and developers learning design.

2

But there are other things that can improve collaboration, and thought should be given to developers getting involved in the design process earlier.



3

More communication between the two teams would be helpful, but a few times during the project is preferable to collaborating daily.

4

A lot of designers want developers to work in Figma dev mode, which means they see this as way of improving developer-designer collaboration.

Want to bridge the gap between developers and designers?

Then maybe Figma dev mode isn't the right call. Integrate Confluence and Jira with your design and development tools and allow the two teams to collaborate in a neutral, central space.

With Figma for Confluence and Jira, you can:



Embed locked-in Figma designs in Confluence pages and Jira tickets



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About CollabSoft's Designer Research

CollabSoft conducted this survey in January 2025. We reached out to designers in LinkedIn, Slack, and Reddit groups and the response and completion rates were overwhelmingly positive. 500 designers completed the survey, with 86% of respondents from the USA, 9% from the UK, and 1% from the Netherlands.



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