

# How has cohabiting vs living alone impacted social touch during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Preliminary results from an online study

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A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a black t-shirt, sitting on a light-colored wicker couch. He is looking intently at a black laptop screen held in his lap. The background is dark, and a window is visible on the left side of the frame.

Our social lives have  
changed dramatically

Photo by Andrew Neel  
on Unsplash

# An online study with mainly Nordic participants

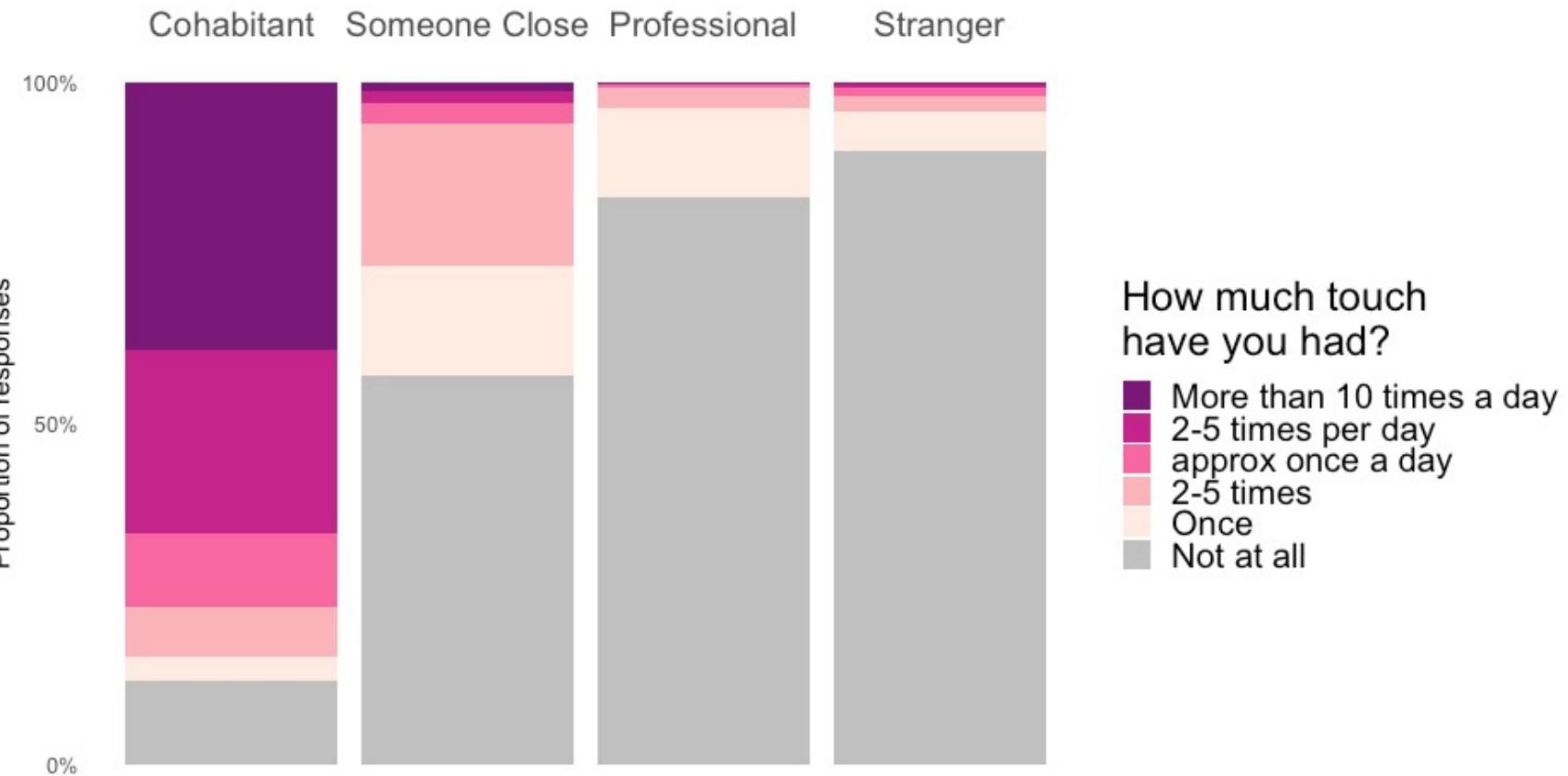
- Online study run on Qualtrics
- Data collection October 2020 -> ongoing (data shown here were collected prior to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021)

	Residence	n (%)		Language	n (%)
	Denmark	68 (18.4)		Danish	68 (18.4)
	Finland	90 (24.4)		Finnish	81 (21.9)
	Norway	68 (18.4)		Norwegian	63 (17)
	Sweden	102 (27.6)		Swedish	92 (24.9)
	Others	42 (11.4)		English	66 (17.8)

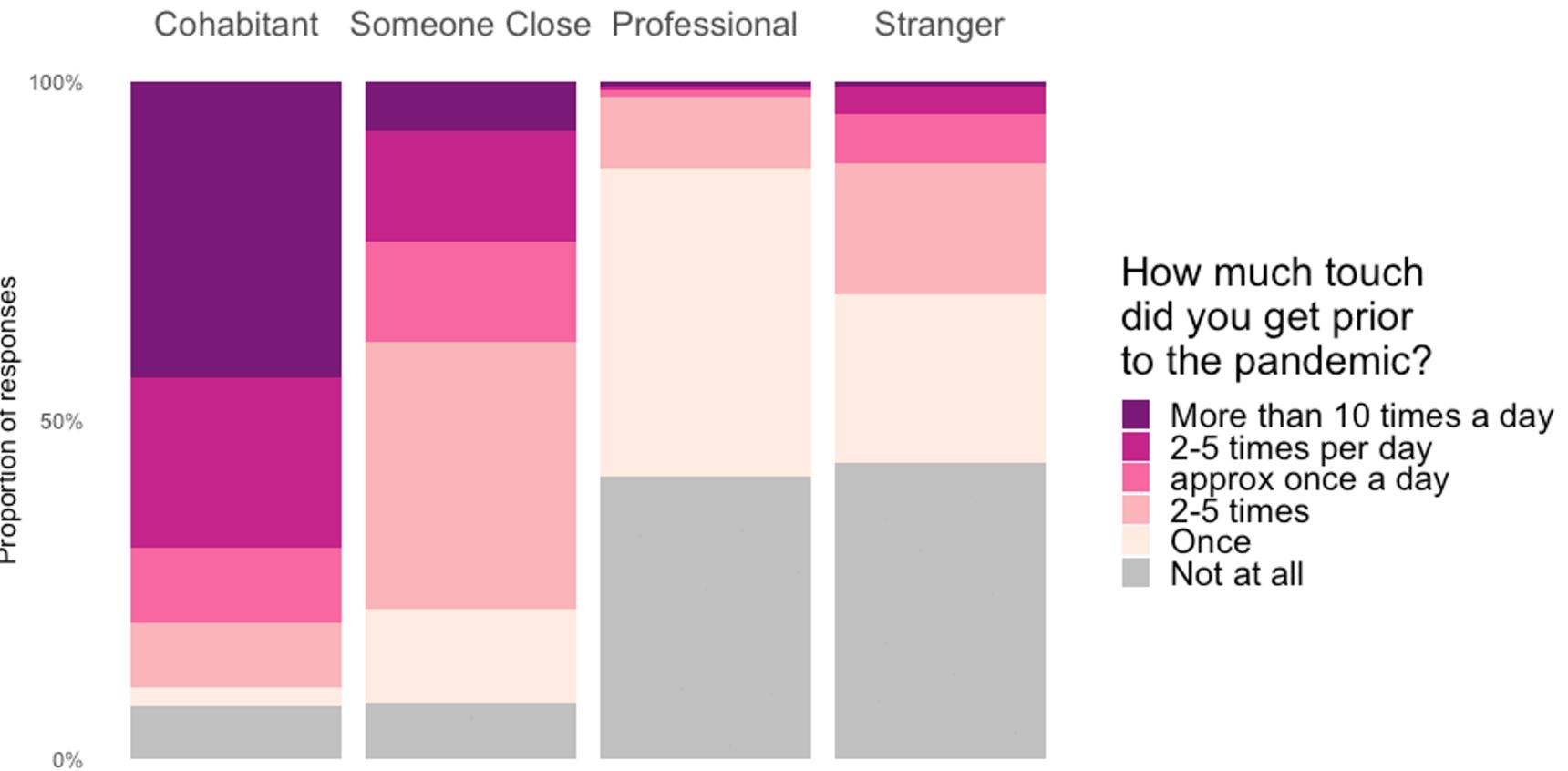
# Participants

		Total sample (n=370)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	84 (22.7)
n (%)	Female	272 (73.5)
	Other/rather not say	14 (3.8)
<b>Age</b>	Mean (sd)	41.7 (15)
	Min-max	18-81
<b>Living situation</b>	Lives alone	99 (26.8)
n (%)	1 cohabitant	138 (37.4)
	2 cohabitants	58 (15.7)
	3 cohabitants	41 (11.1)
	More than 3 cohabitants	33 (8.9)

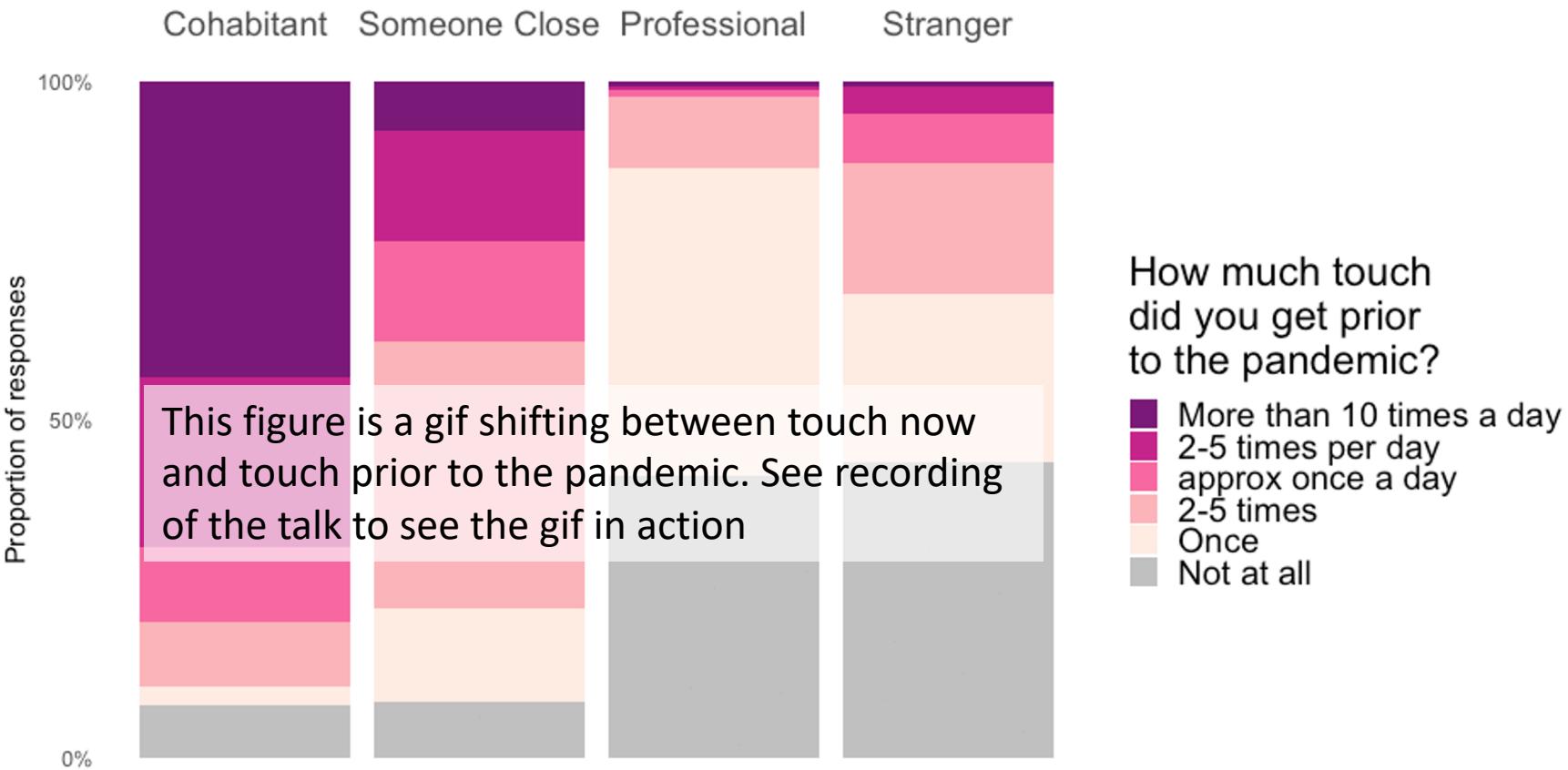
Participants reported the amount of touches they had in the past week



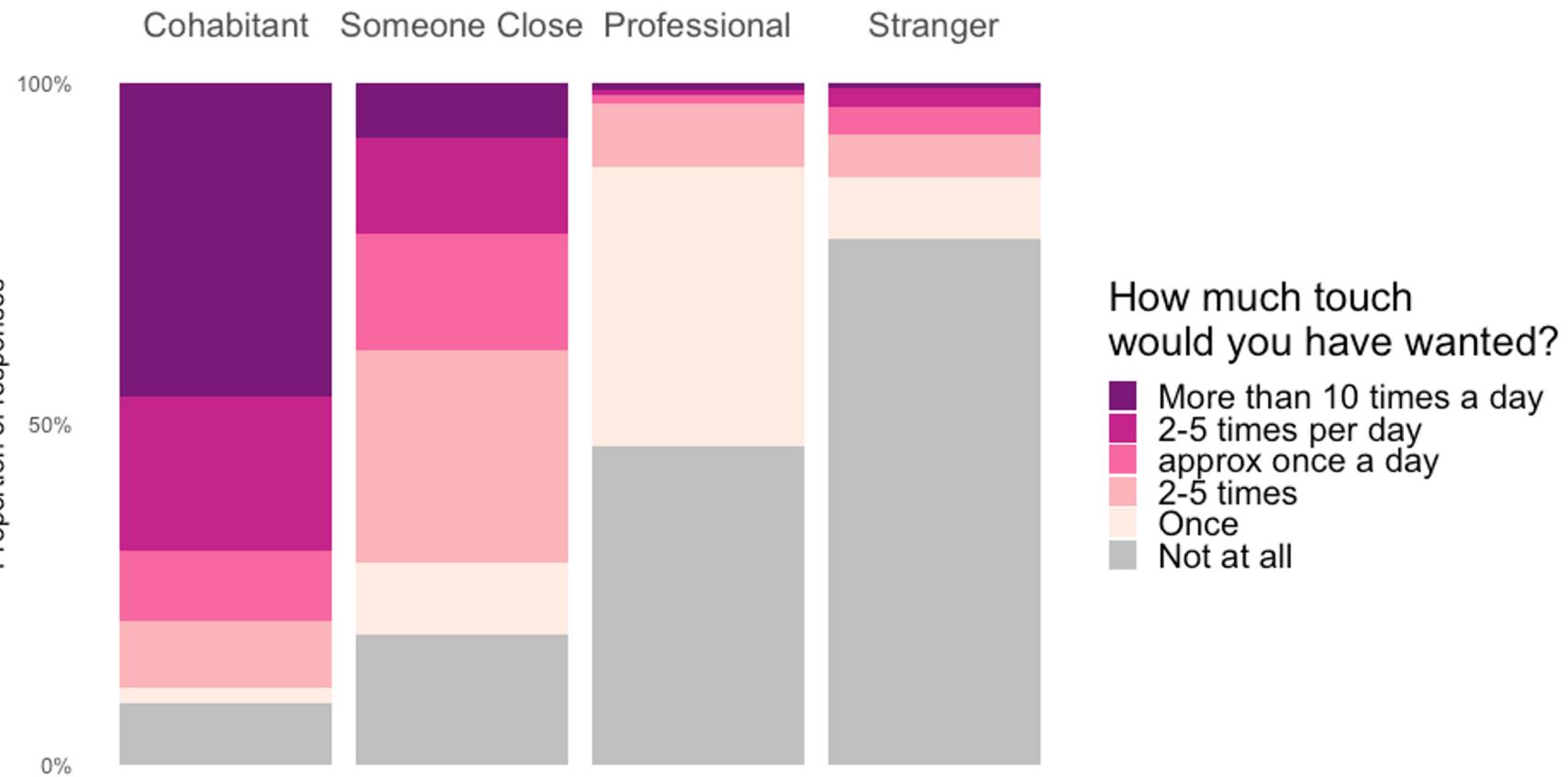
..and the amount of touches they would have had in a typical week prior to the pandemic



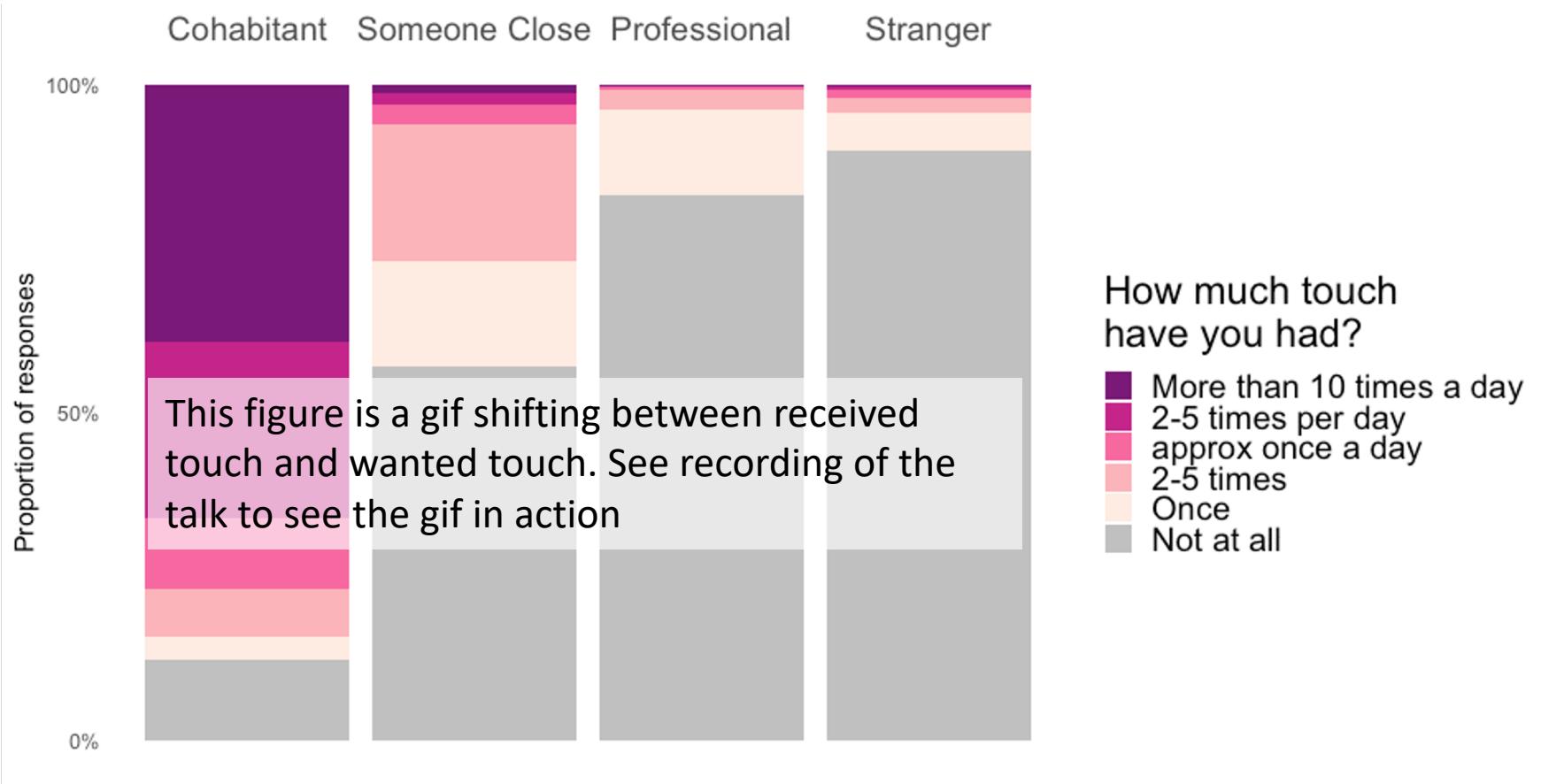
# The amount of touch from non-cohabitants is significantly less than prior to the pandemic



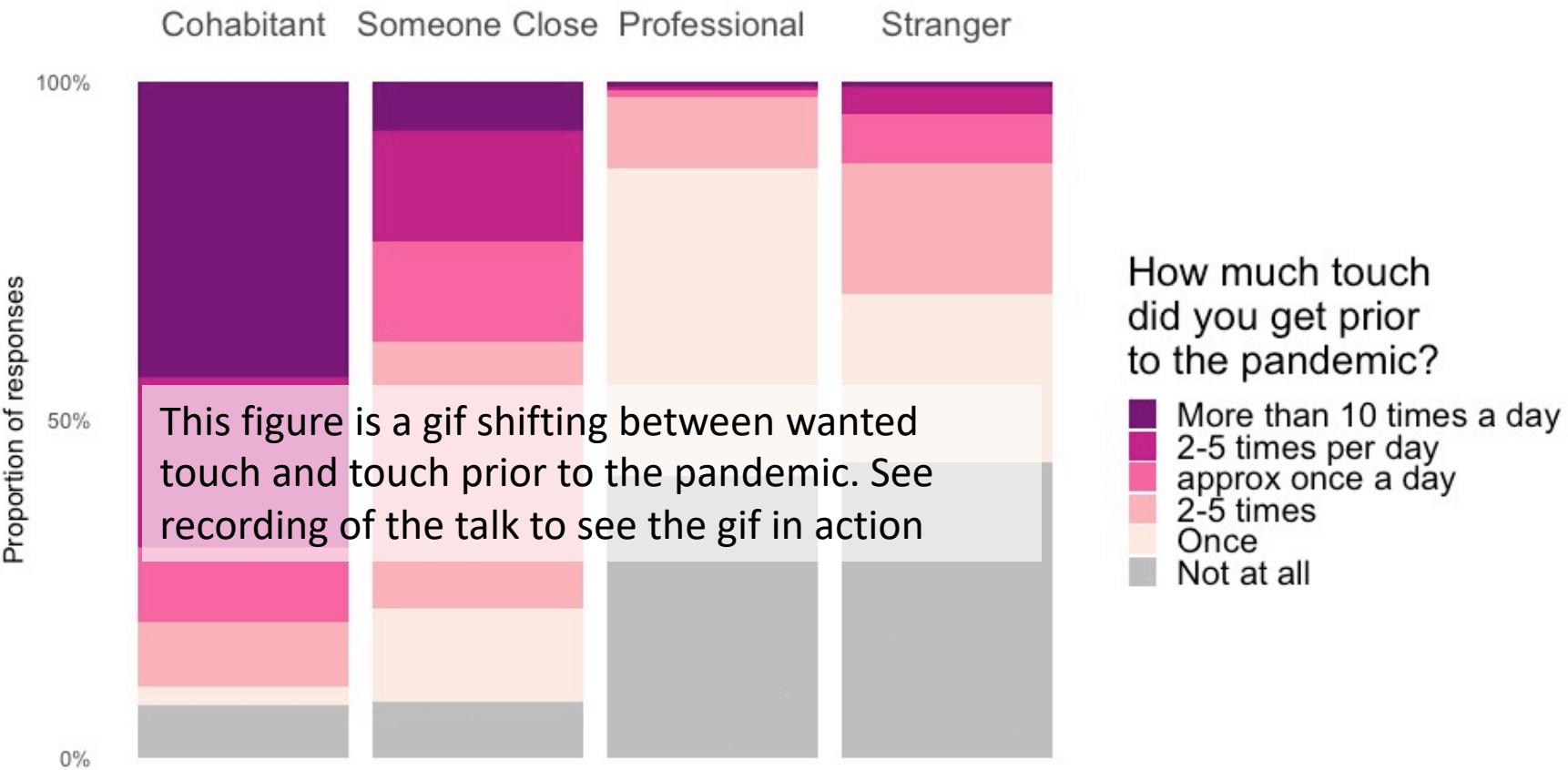
Participants also reported how much touch they would have wanted to receive in the past week



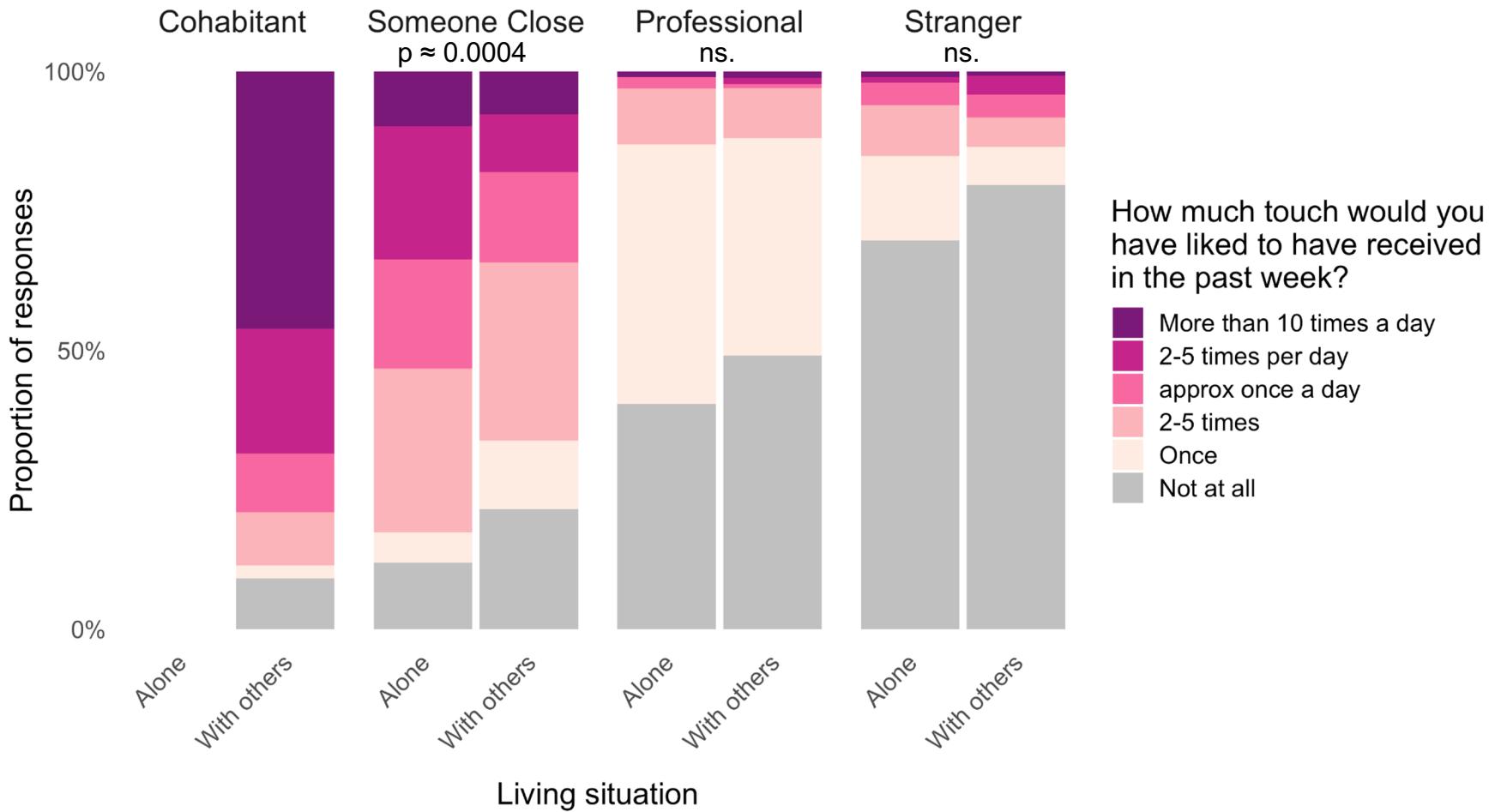
# Participants wanted much more touch than they received (except from cohabitant)



# Wanted touch was equal to or less than typical touch prior to the pandemic

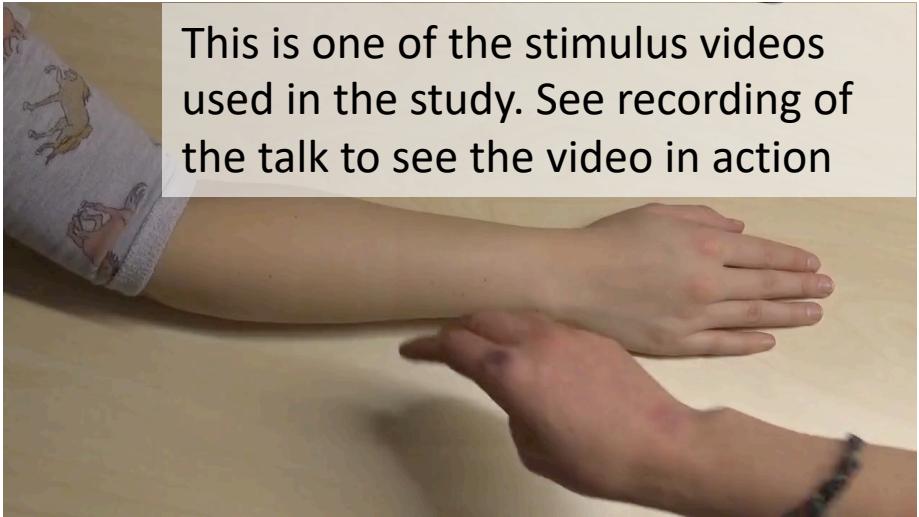


# Participants living alone wanted significantly more touch from a close non-cohabitant than participants living with others



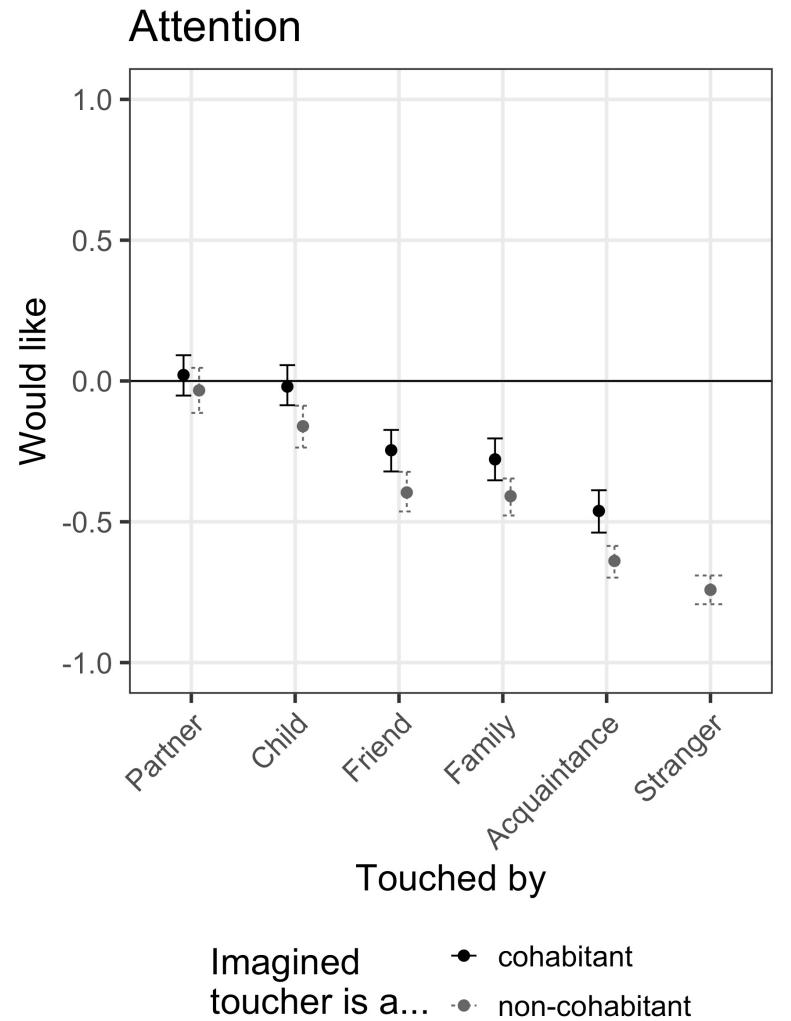
# Videos of touch communication

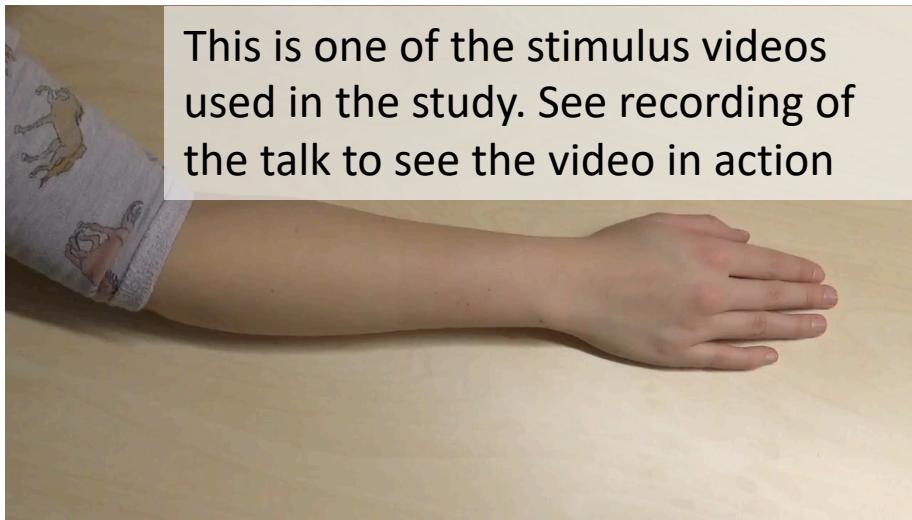
- Participants were shown short video clips showing a stereotypical patterns of communicating a particular sentiment via touch<sup>1</sup>
- We showed six different videos, conveying the following messages: attention-getting, calming, gratitude, happiness, love, and sadness
- We asked if the participant would like to be touched like this by 11 different touchers
  - Partner, a family member, a friend, a child, an acquaintance, a stranger
  - Either one who lives with you or one that does not (apart from stranger, who was only presented as non-cohabitant)



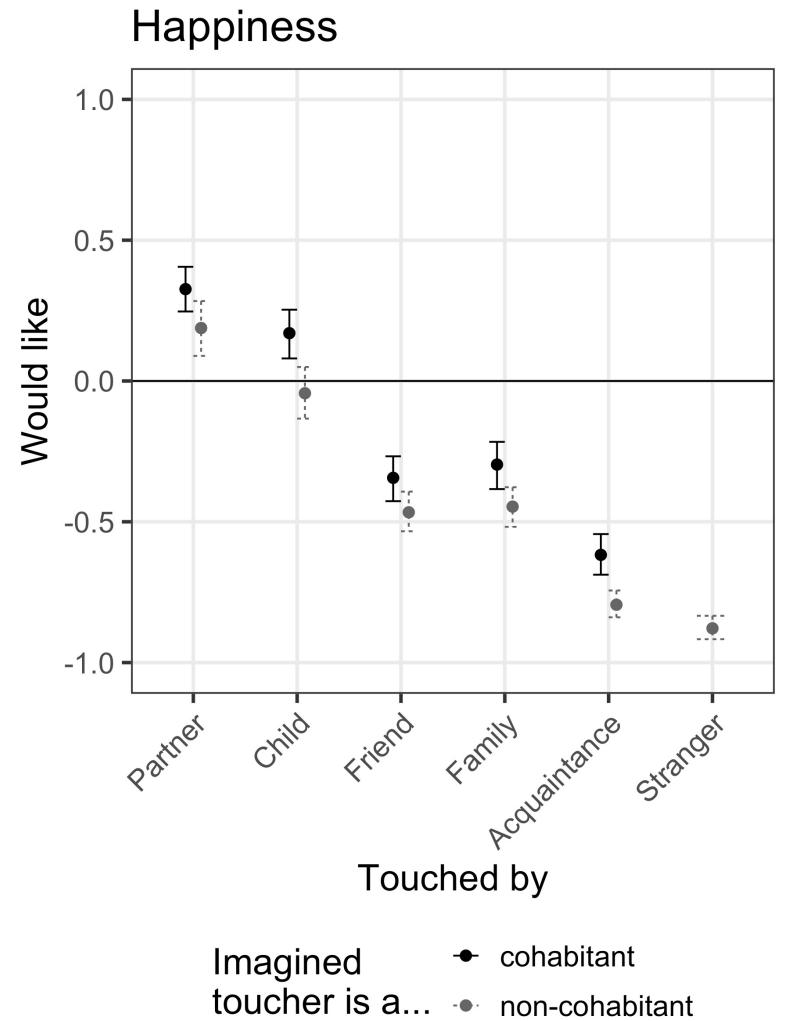
This is one of the stimulus videos used in the study. See recording of the talk to see the video in action

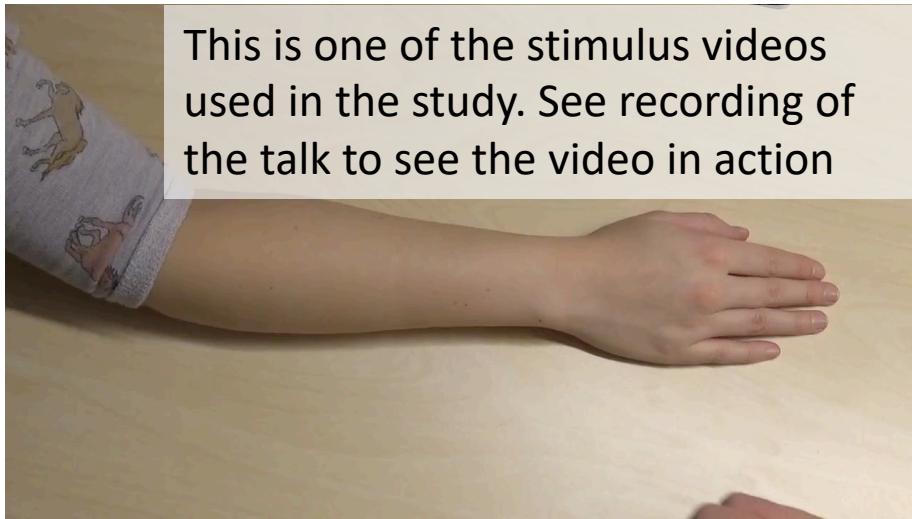
At the moment, how much would you like it if any of these people *who live with you / who do not live with you* touched you in this way?



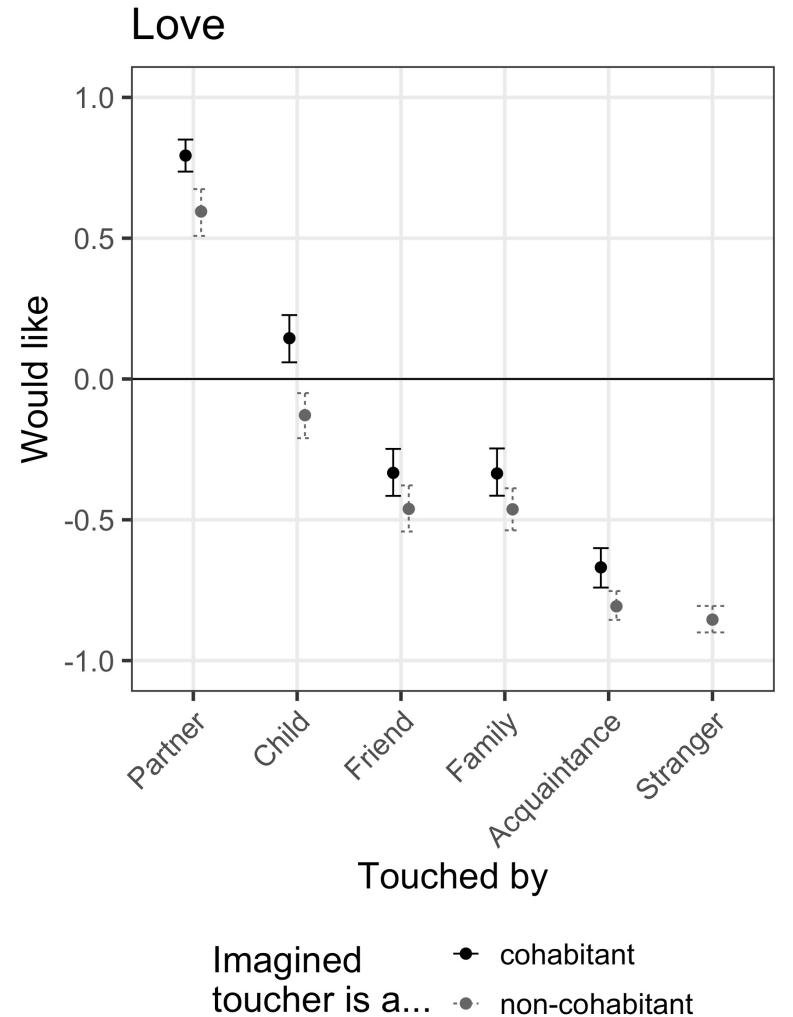


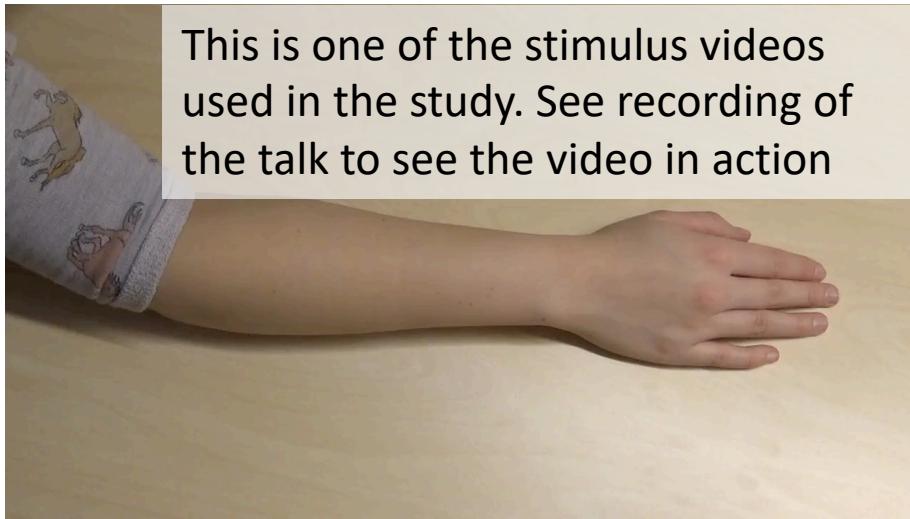
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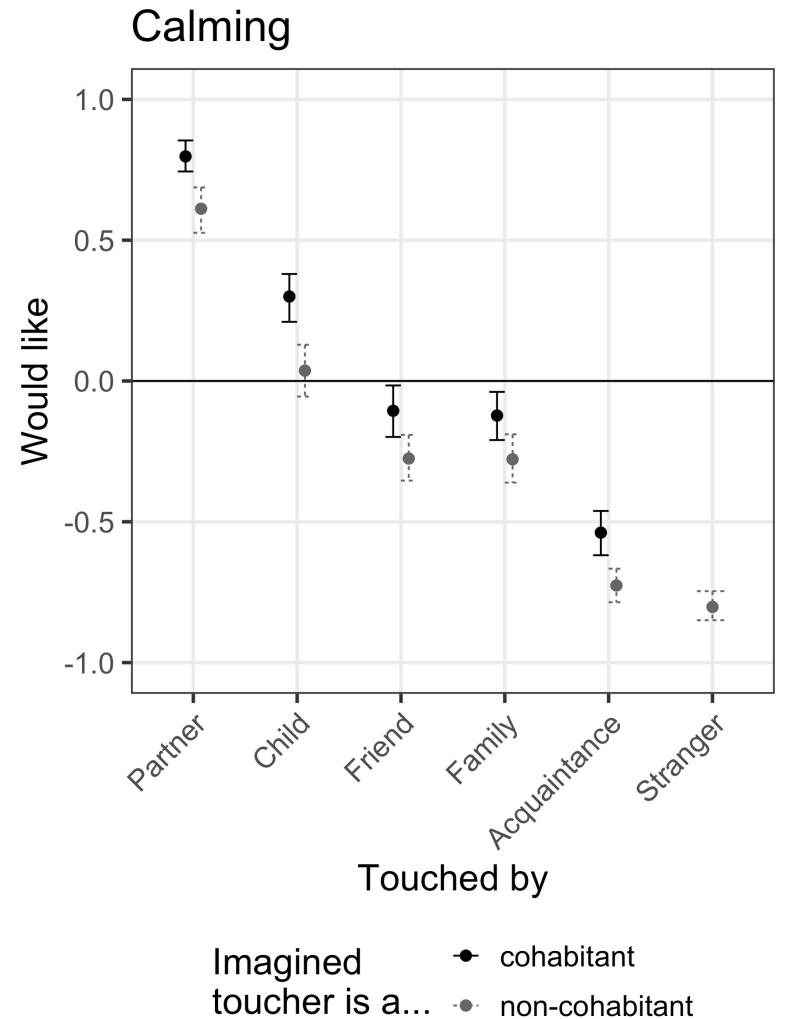


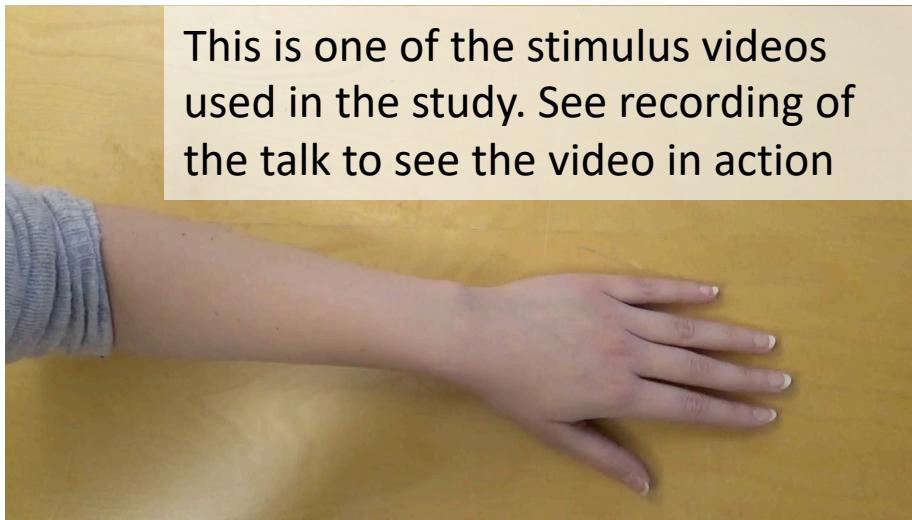
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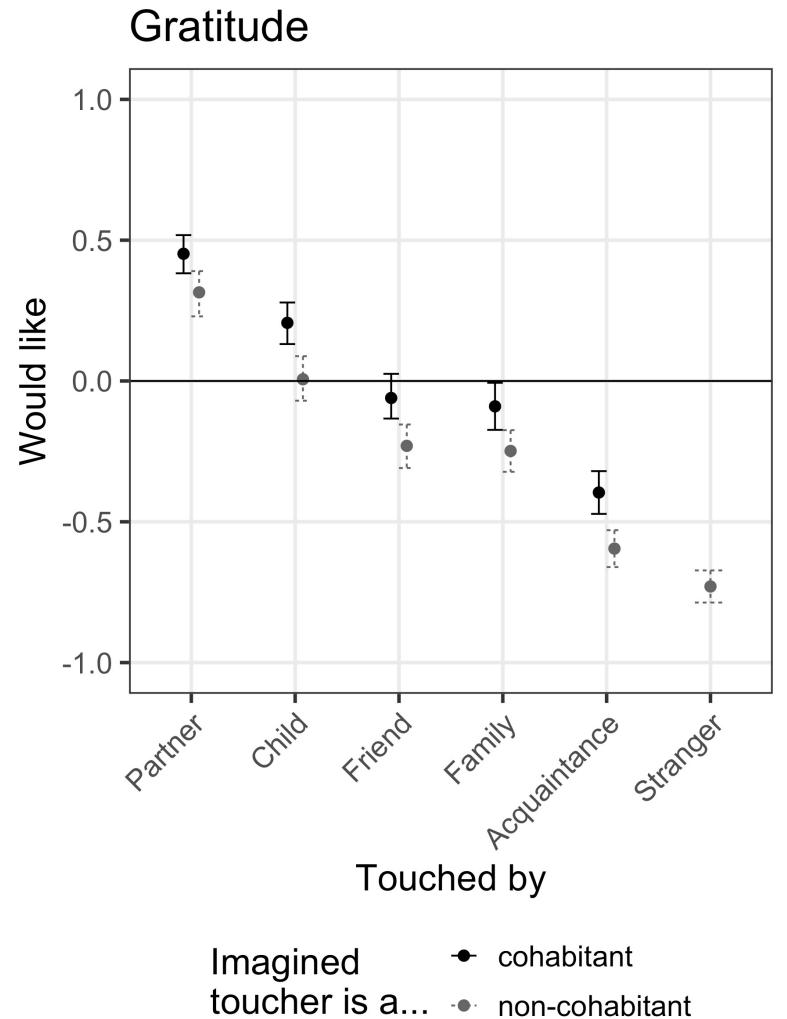
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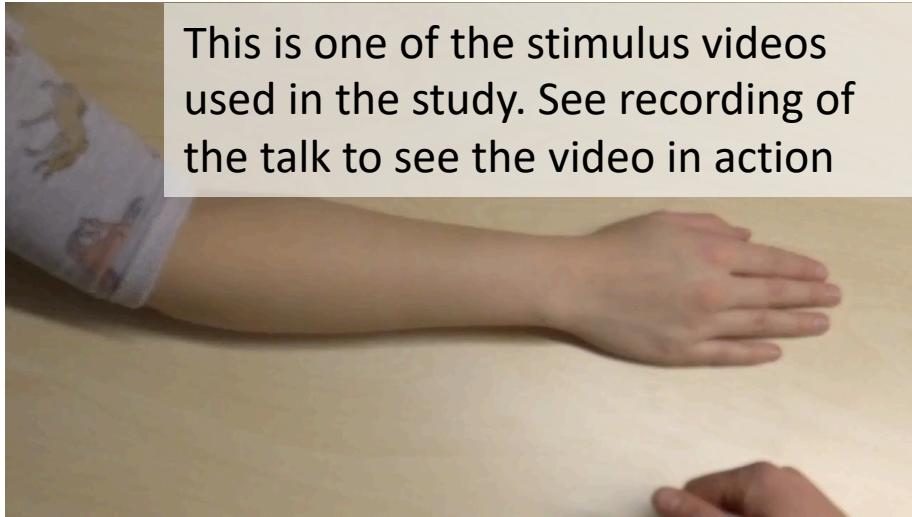




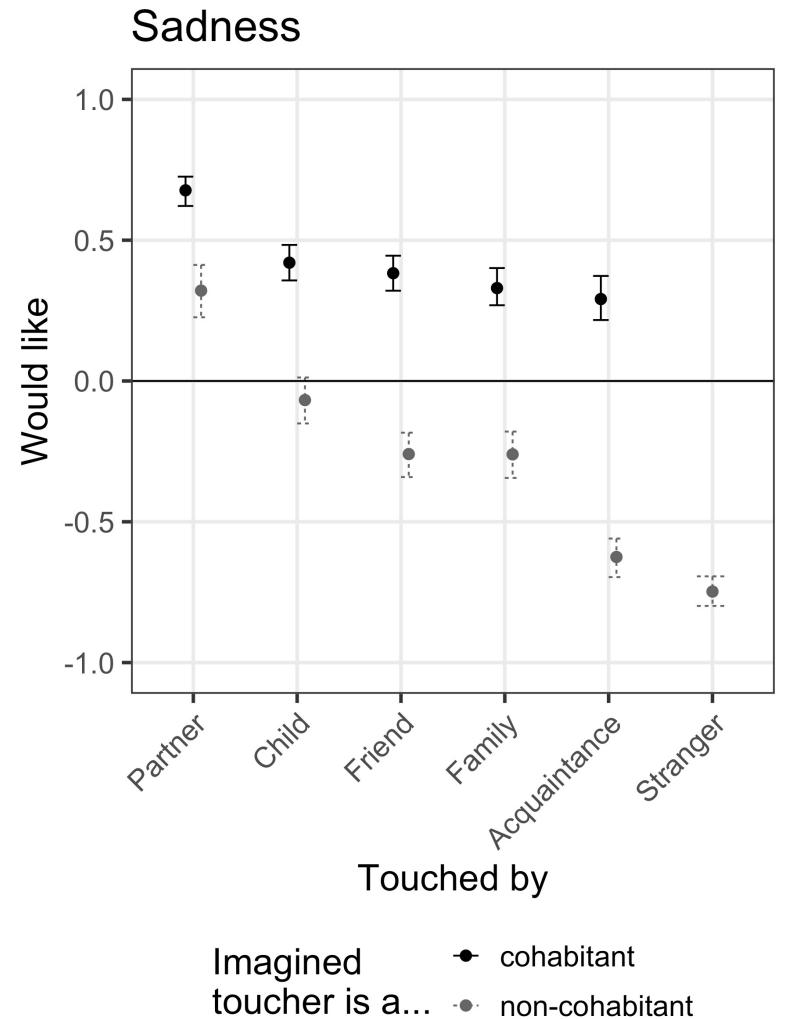
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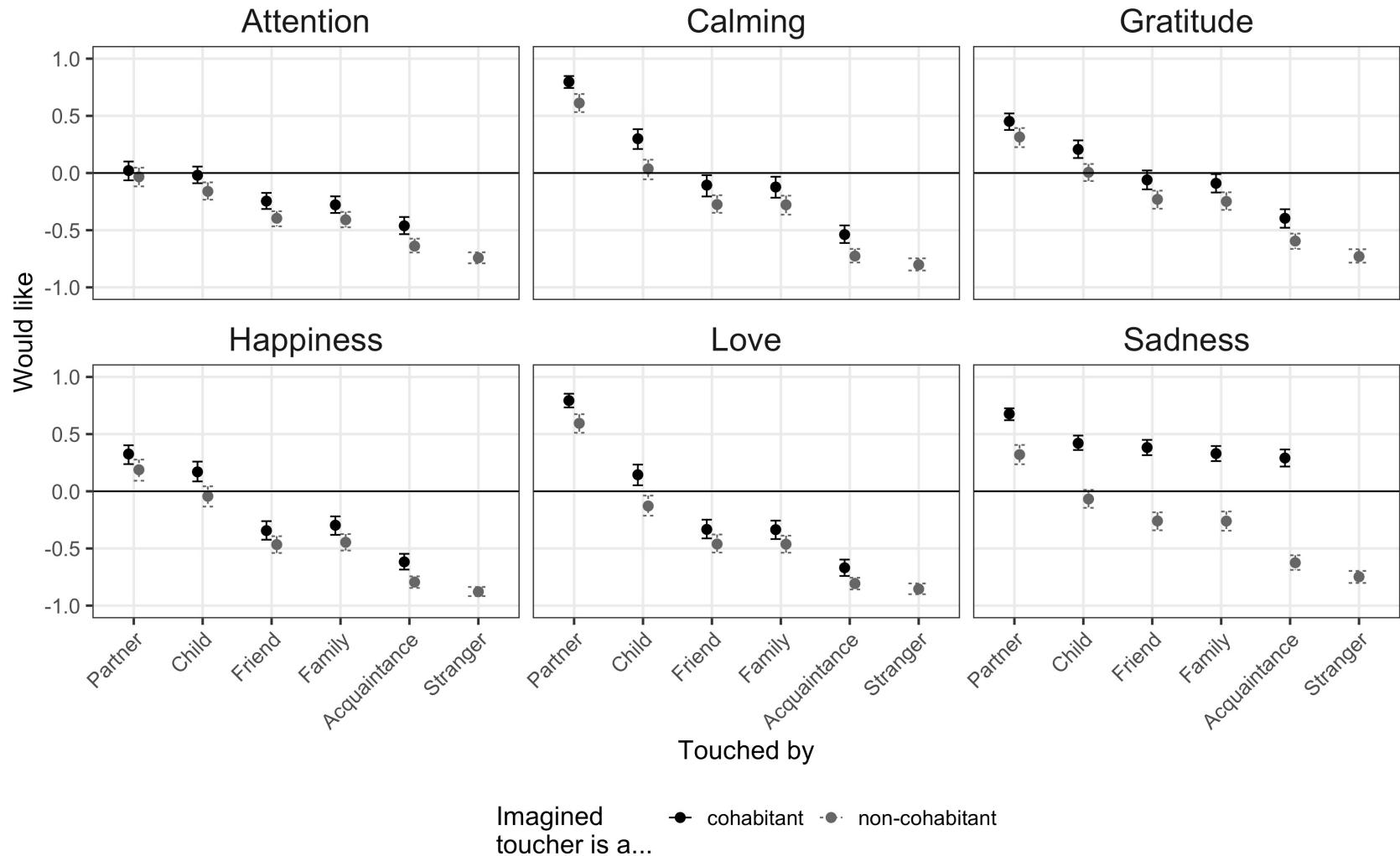




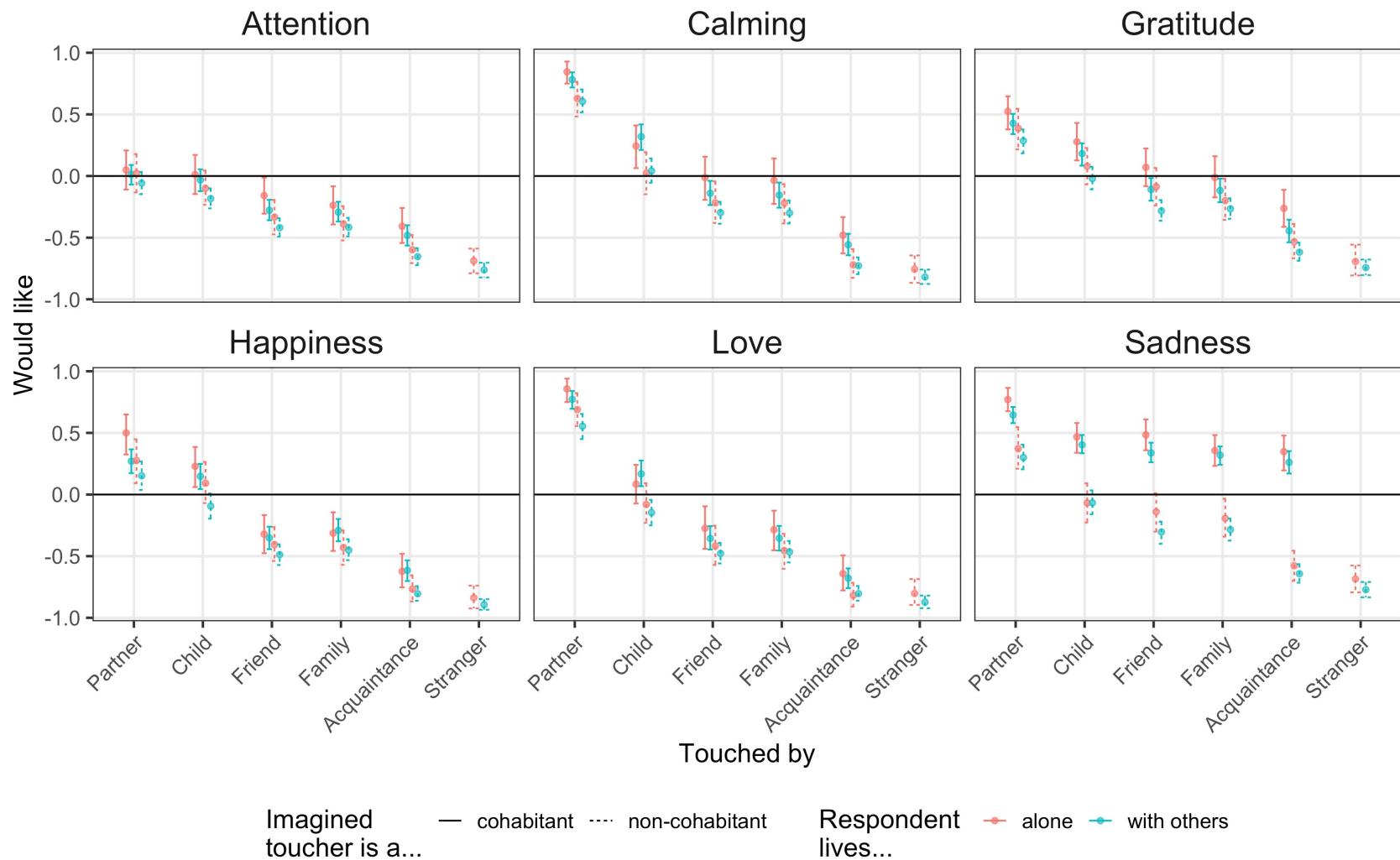
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Response to touch videos, by "message" being communicated.



## No main effect of participant's living situation (alone or with others)



# Summary of preliminary findings

- Frequency of touch from non-cohabitants similar between people living with others & people living alone
- People living alone reported wanting more frequent touch from a (non-cohabiting) close other
- People would like the same touch more from a cohabitant than someone of the same relationship type they don't live with
  - This effect is particularly clear in the touch video communicating sadness

# The team

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