


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 man with dark hair and a beard is sitting in a light-colored, textured armchair in a dimly lit room. He is looking down at a black laptop with a white Apple logo on the lid, which is resting on his lap. The room is dark, with light coming from a window on the left, casting shadows on the chair and the man's face. The overall mood is contemplative and focused.

Our social lives have
changed dramatically

Photo by Andrew Neel
on Unsplash

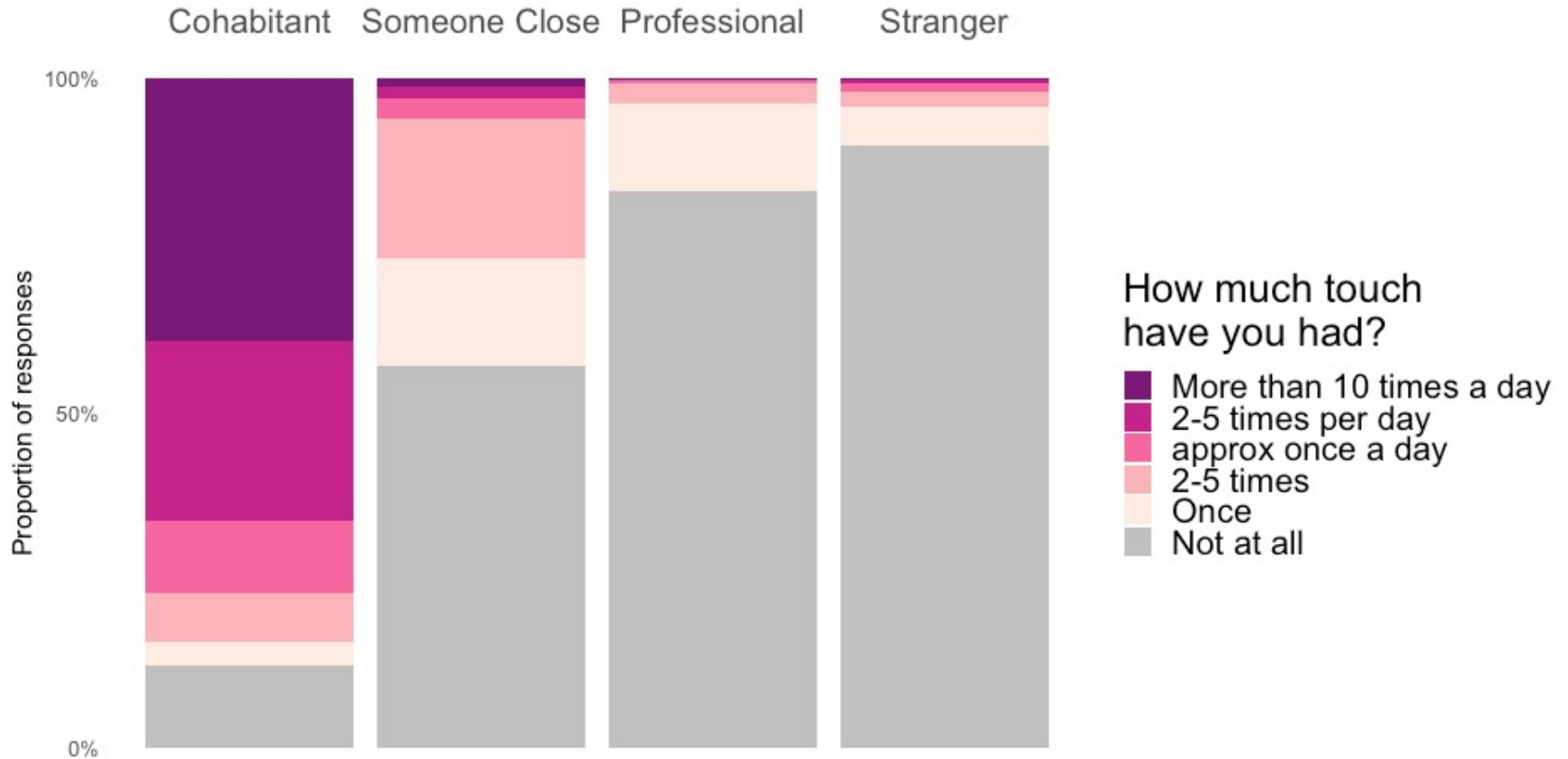
An online study with mainly Nordic participants

	Residence	n (%)		Language	n (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online study run on Qualtrics• Data collection October 2020 -> ongoing (data shown here were collected prior to 8th June 2021)	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)
Gender n (%)	Male	84 (22.7)
	Female	272 (73.5)
	Other/rather not say	14 (3.8)
Age	Mean (sd)	41.7 (15)
	Min-max	18-81
Living situation n (%)	Lives alone	99 (26.8)
	1 cohabitant	138 (37.4)
	2 cohabitants	58 (15.7)
	3 cohabitants	41 (11.1)
	More than 3 cohabitants	33 (8.9)

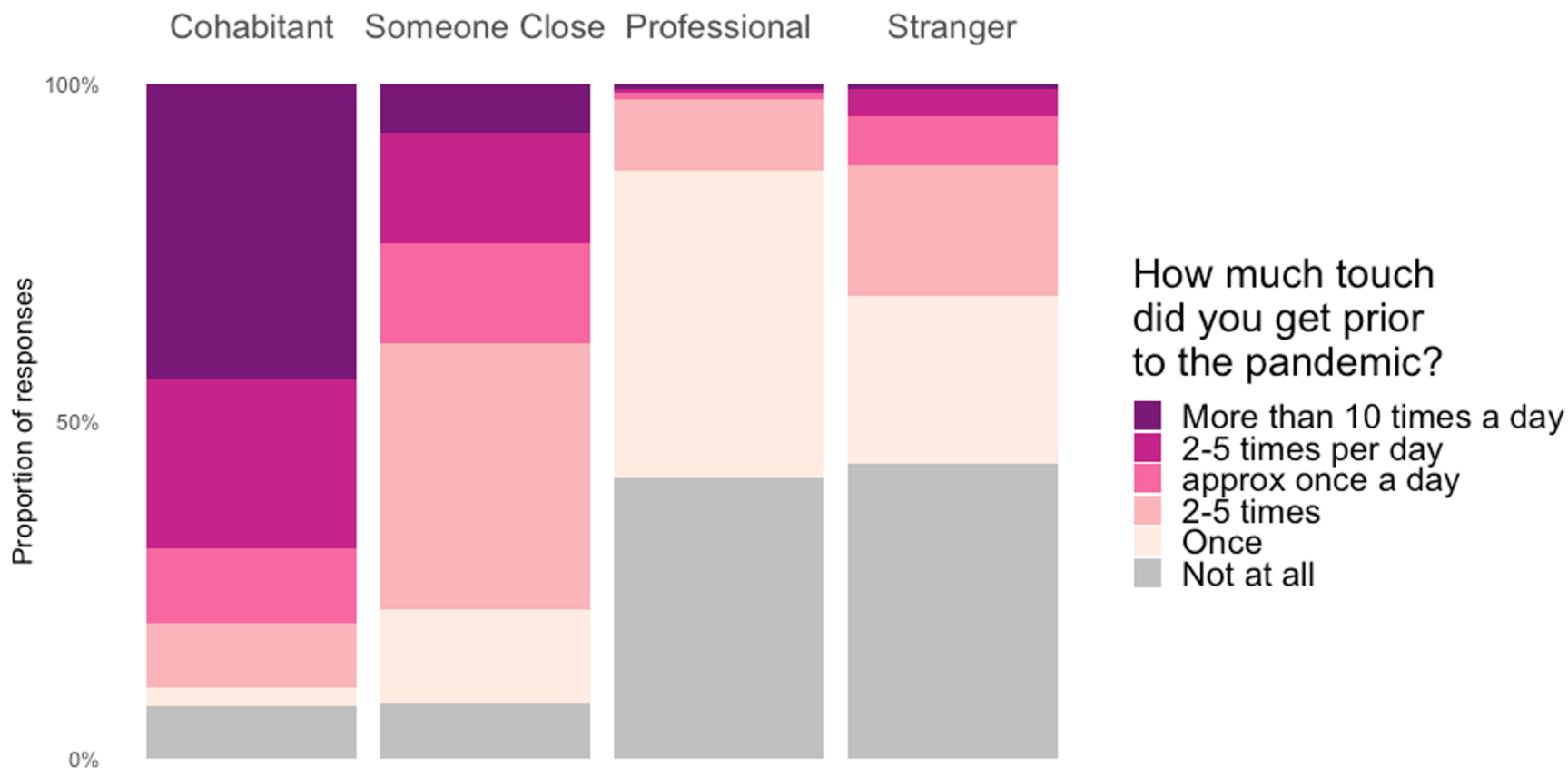
Participants reported the amount of touches they had in the past week



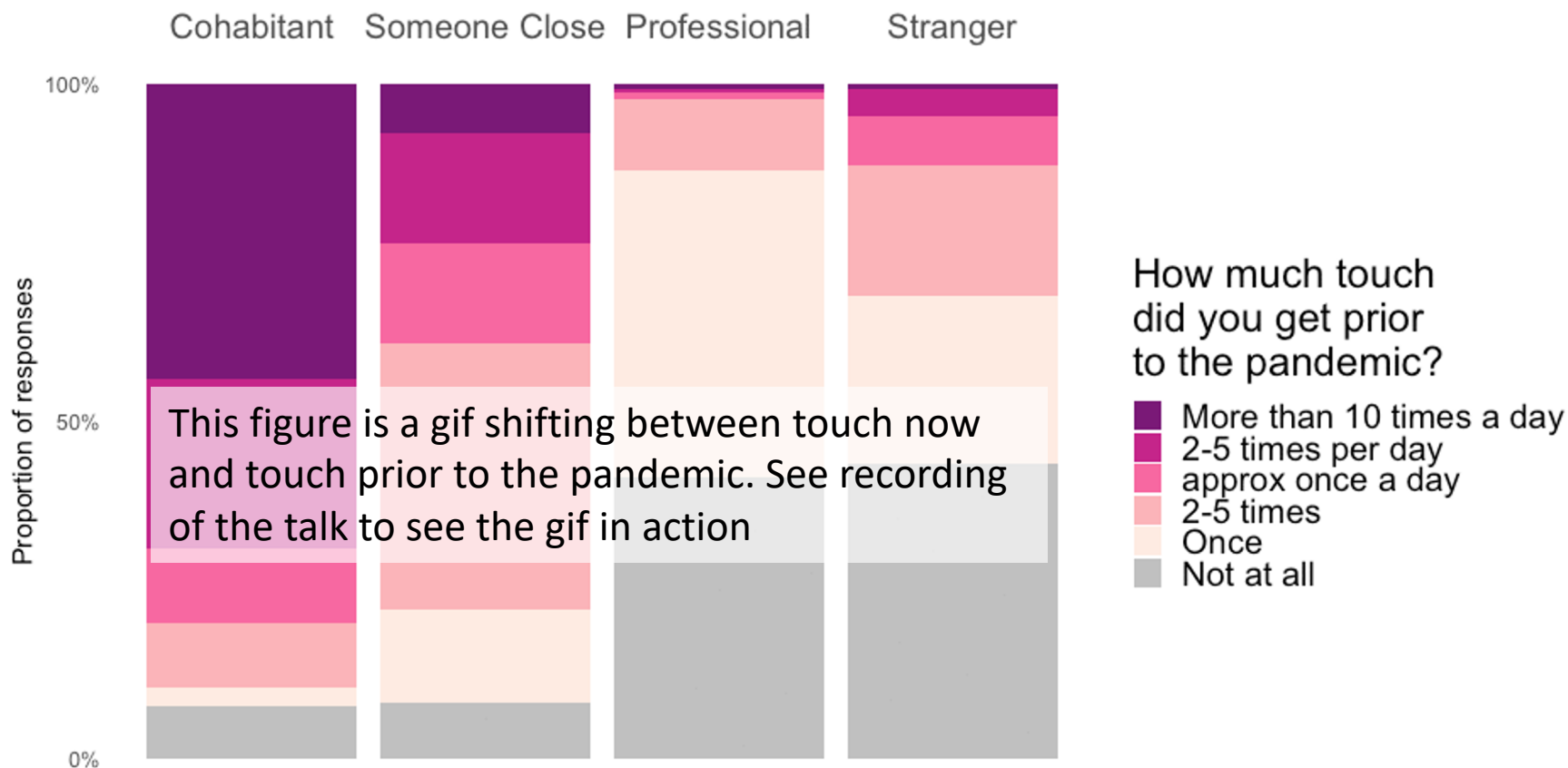
How much touch have you had?

- More than 10 times a day
- 2-5 times per day
- approx once a day
- 2-5 times
- Once
- Not at all

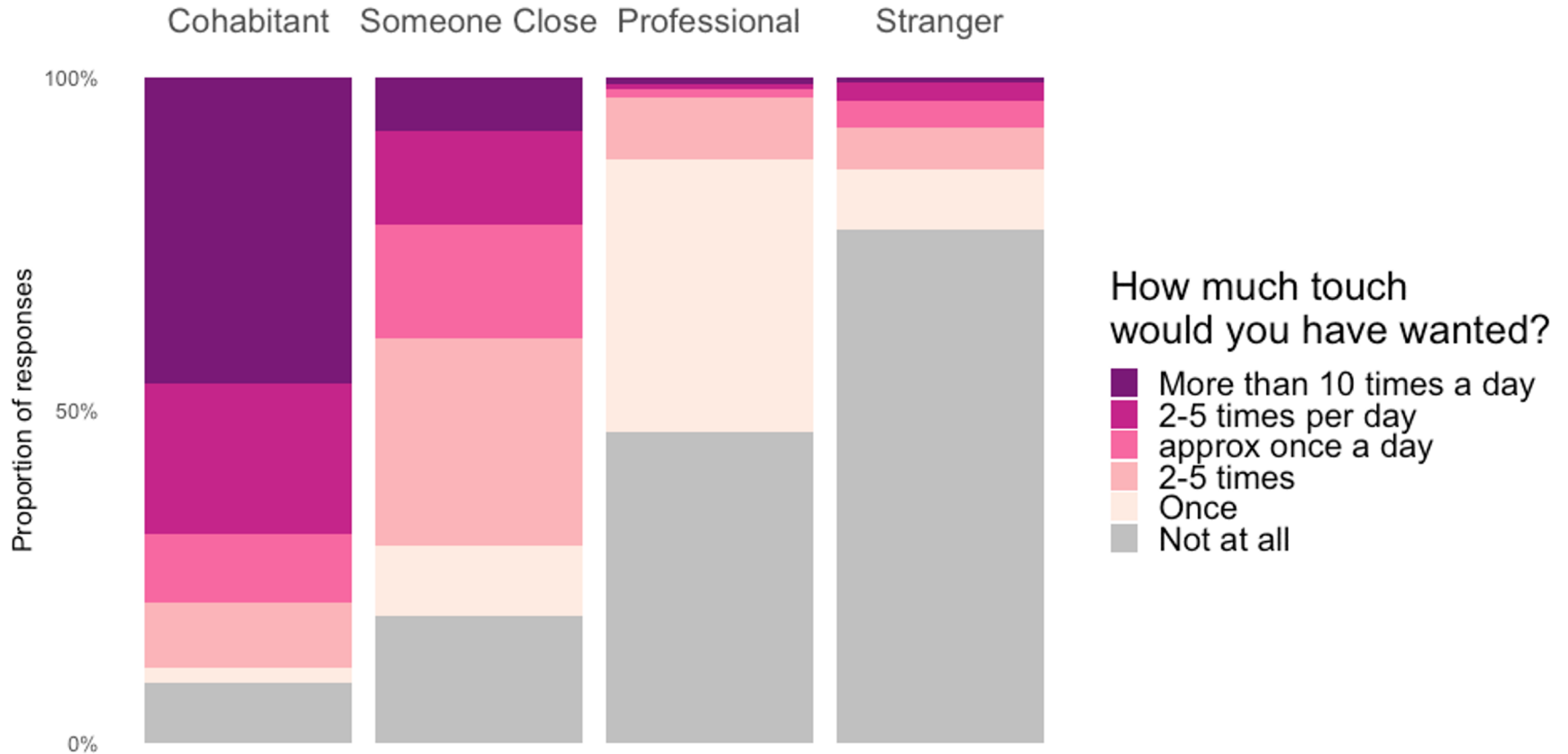
..and the amount of touches they would have had in a typical week prior to the pandemic



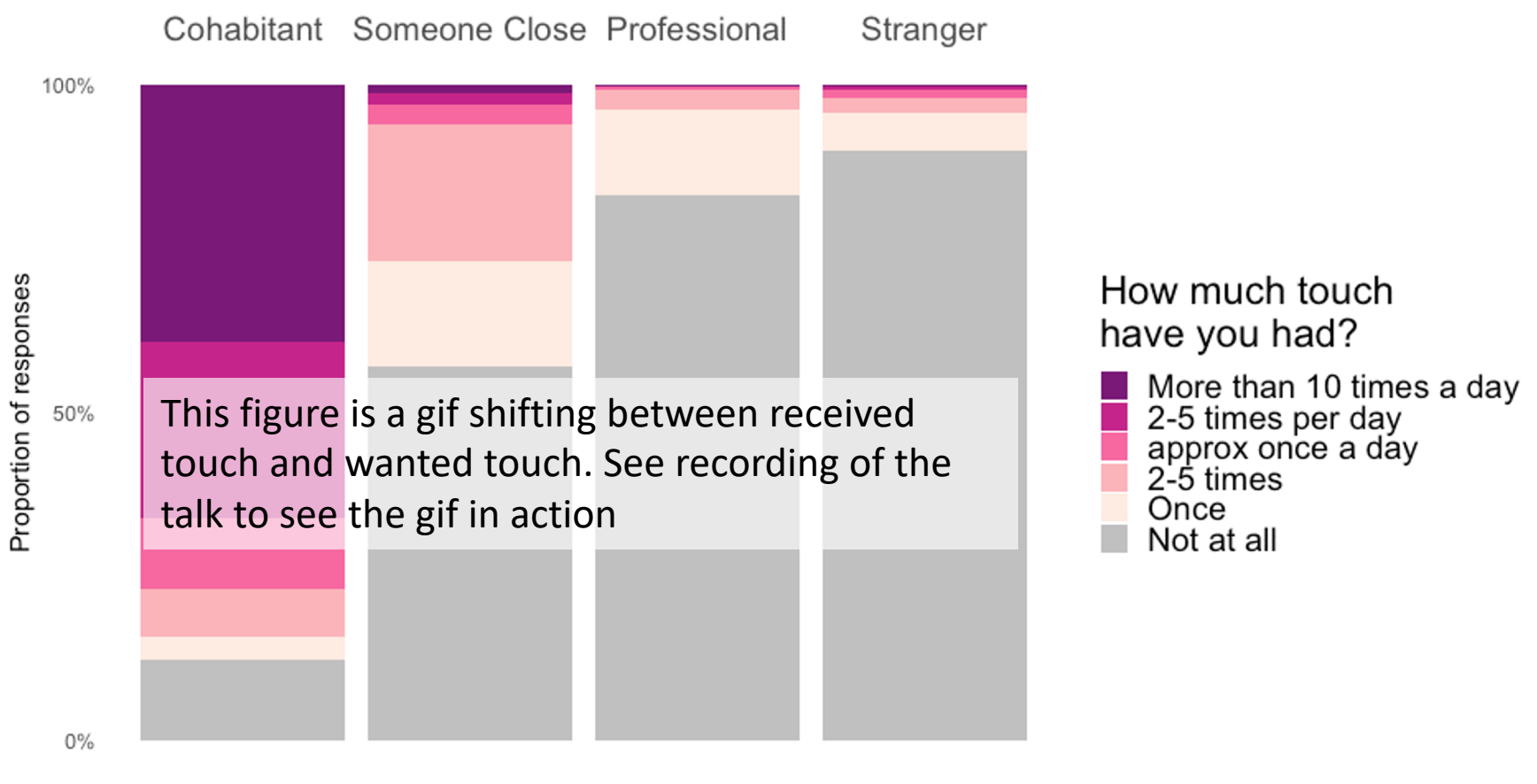
The amount of touch from non-cohabitants is significantly less than prior to the pandemic



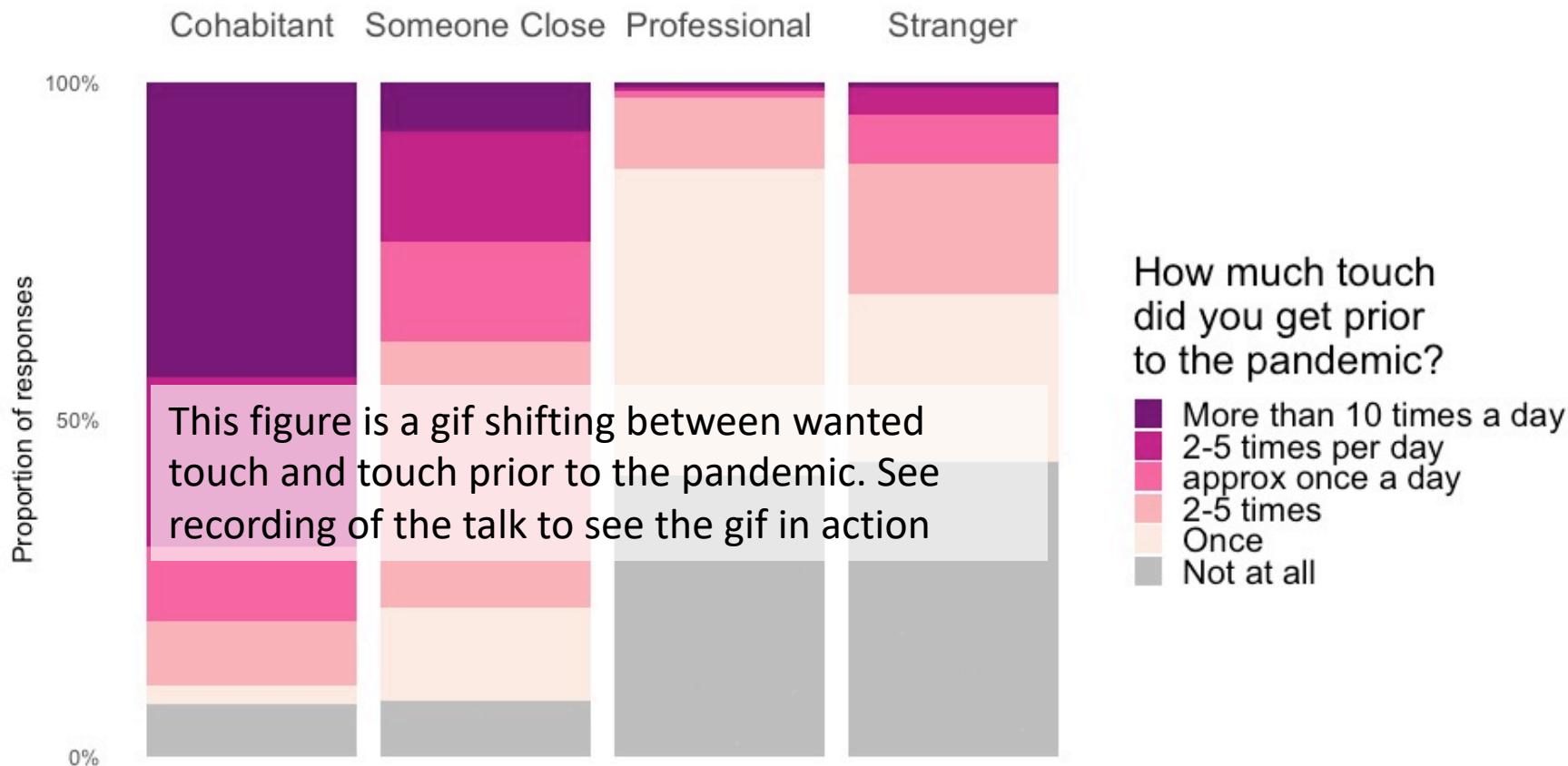
Participants also reported how much touch they would have wanted to receive in the past week



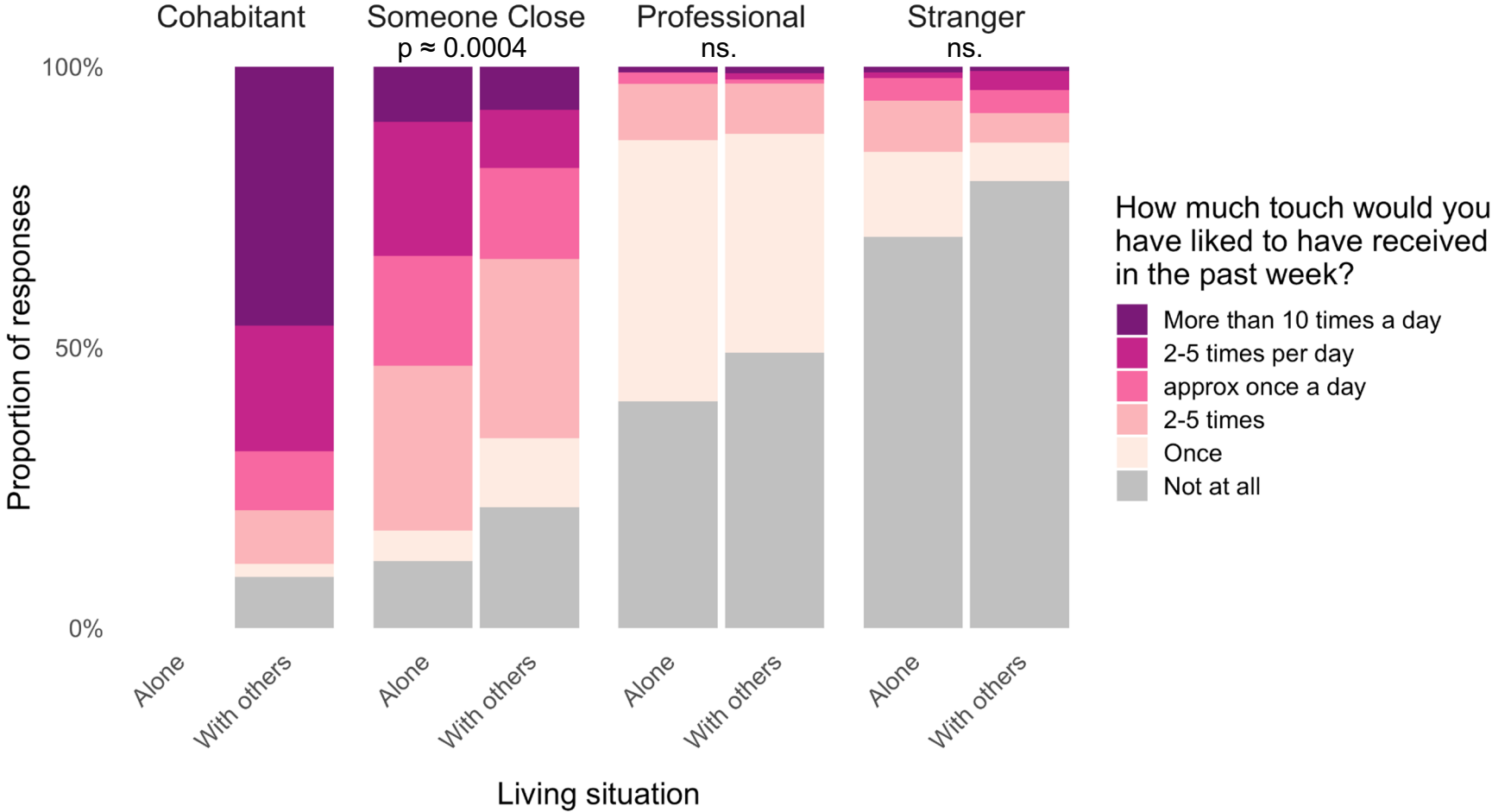
Participants wanted much more touch than they received (except from cohabitant)



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



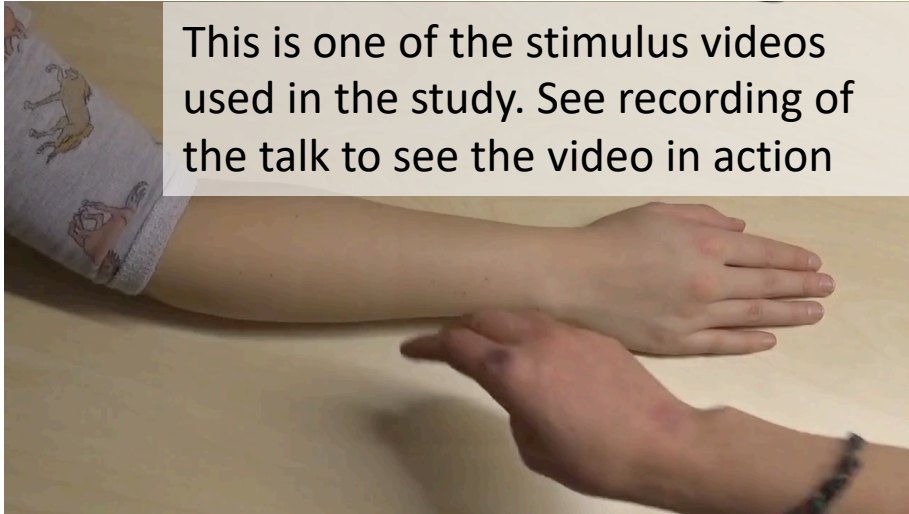
Participants living alone wanted significantly more touch from a close non-cohabitant than participants living with others



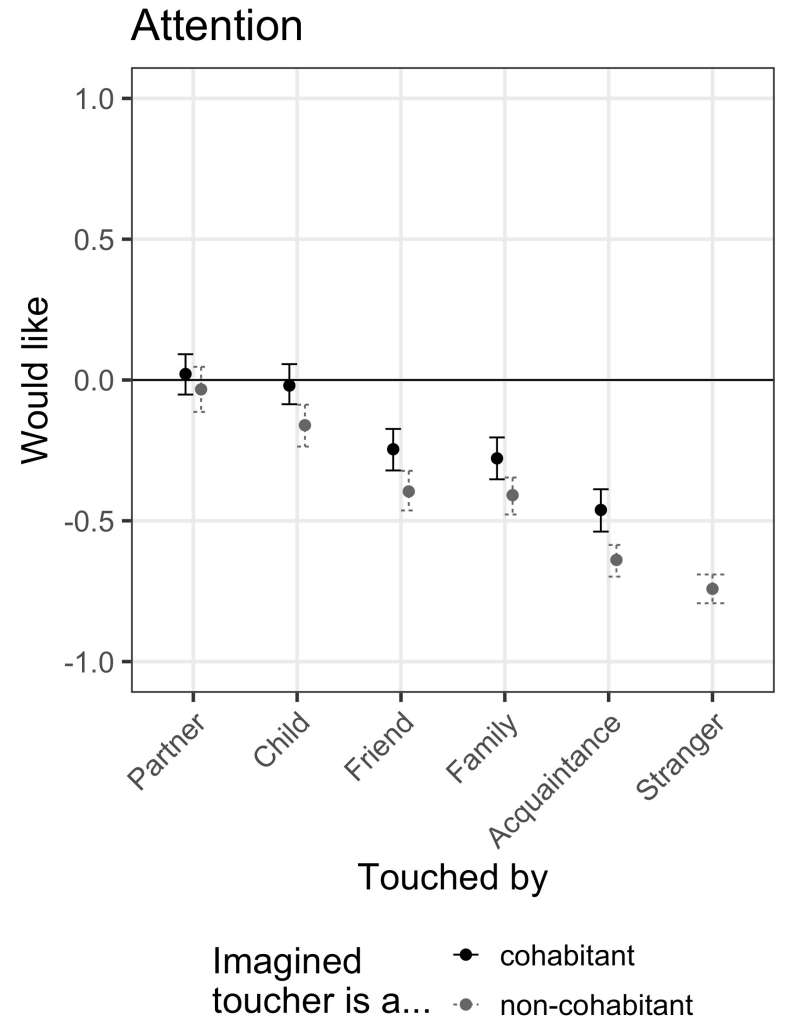
Videos of touch communication

- Participants were shown short video clips showing a stereotypical patterns of communicating a particular sentiment via touch¹
- 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)

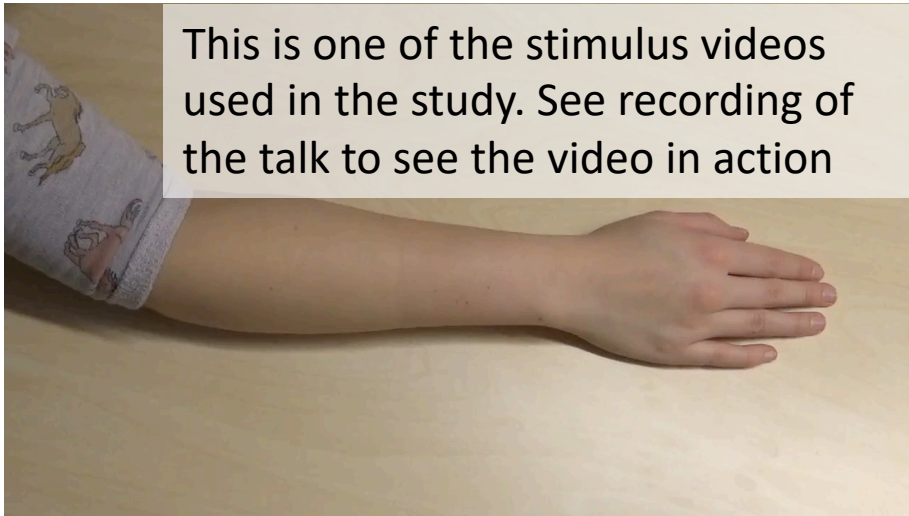
This is one of the stimulus videos used in the study. See recording of the talk to see the video in action



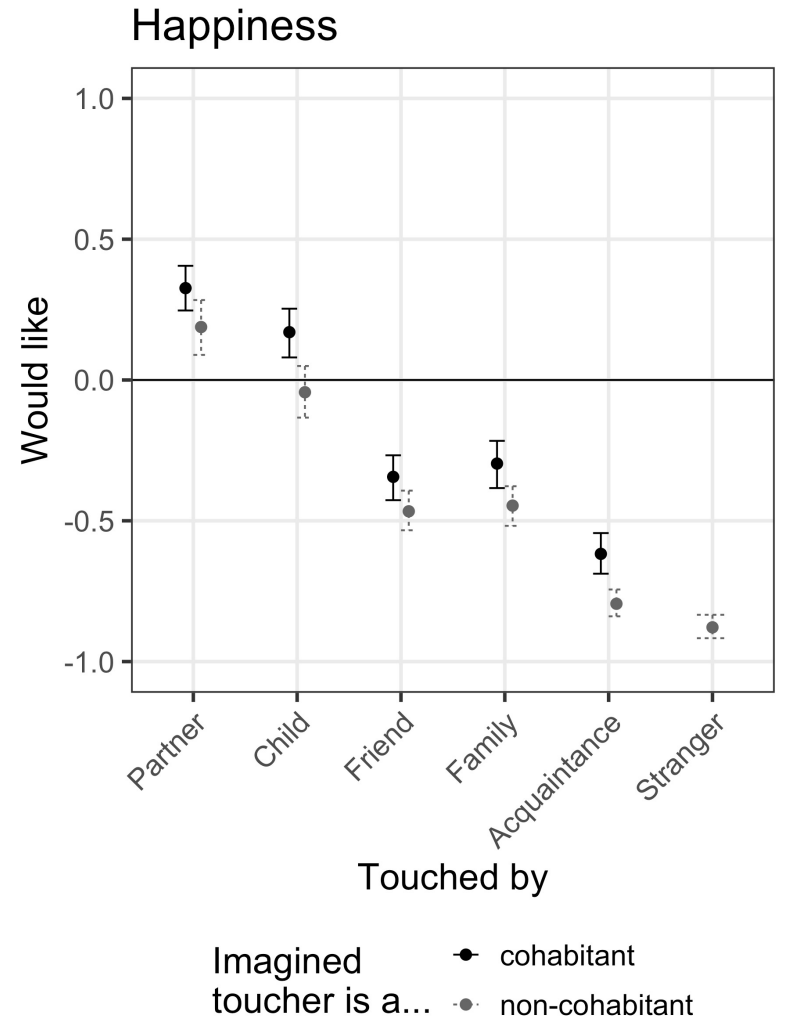
At the moment, how much would you like it if any of these people *who live with you / who do not live with you* touched you in this way?

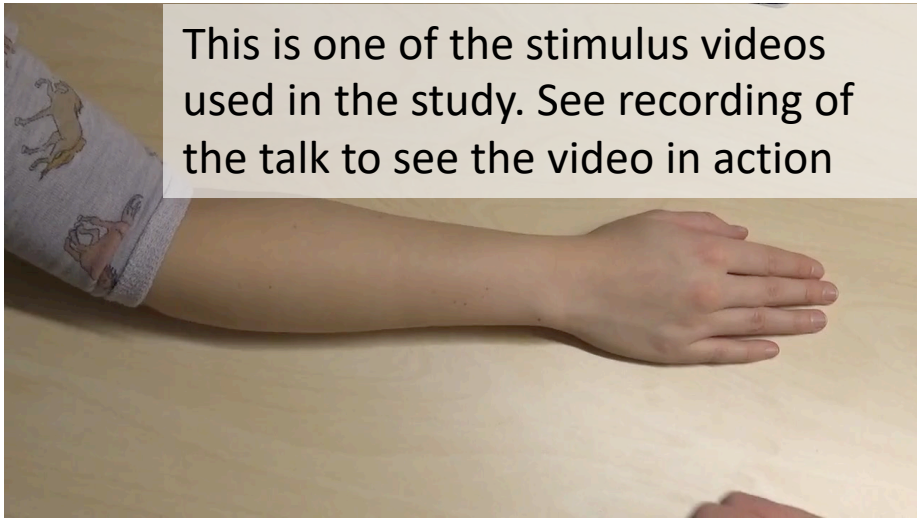


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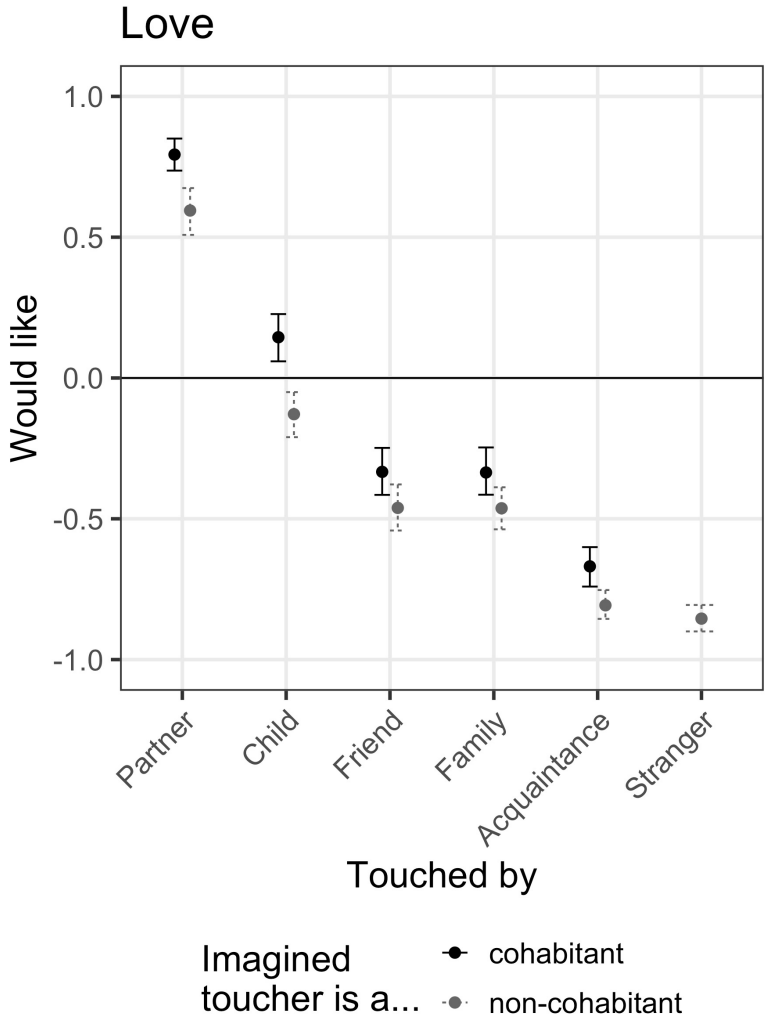


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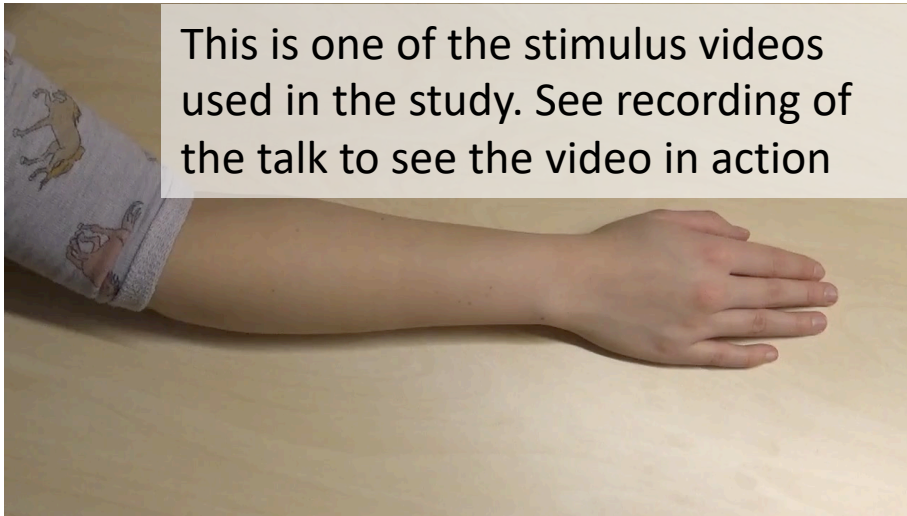




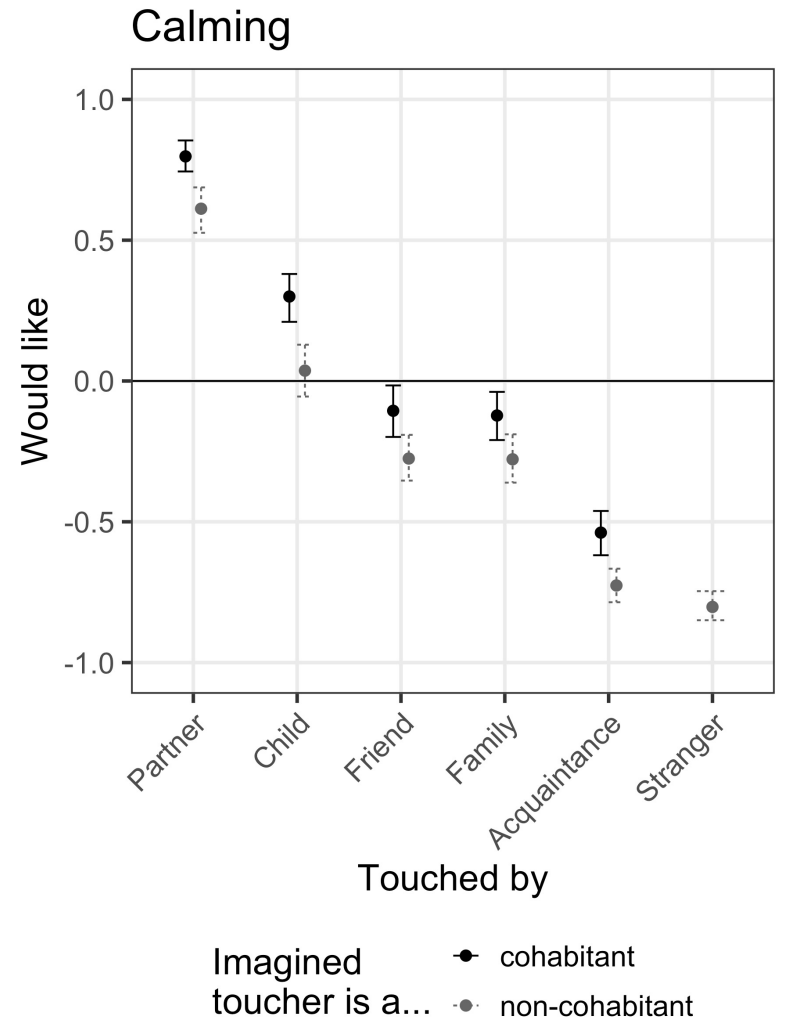
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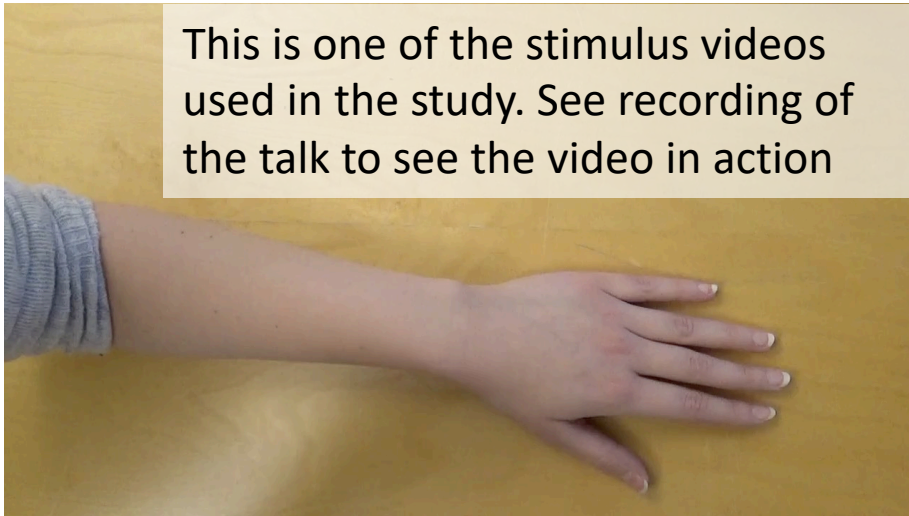
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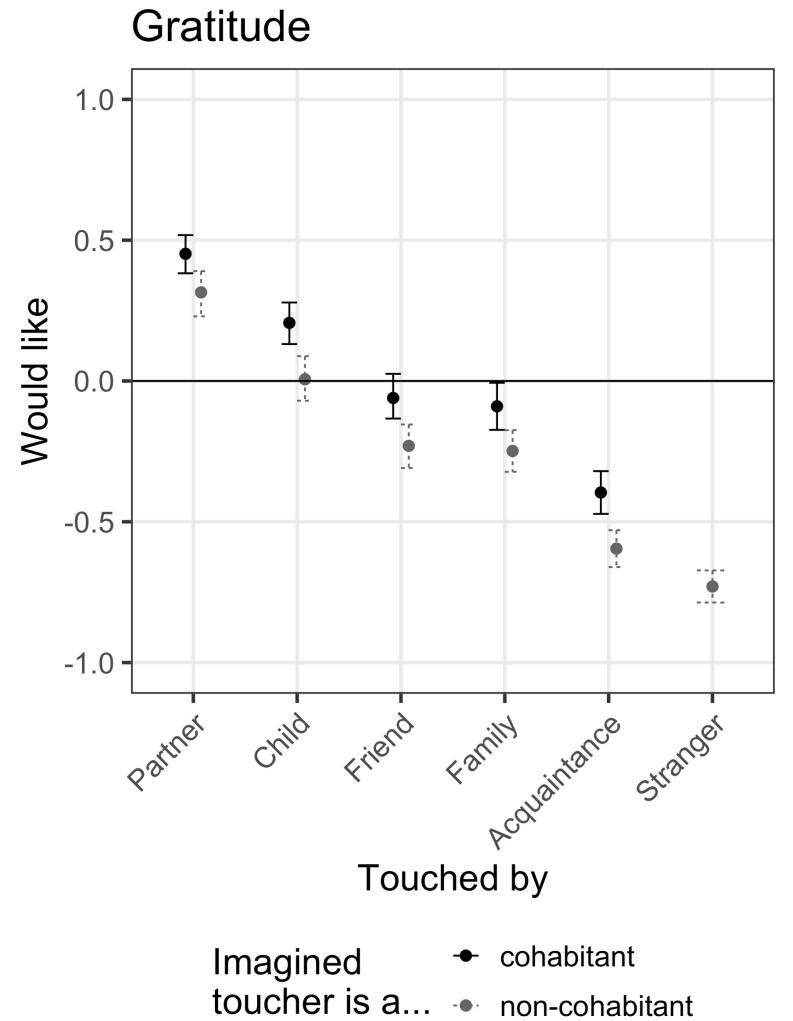
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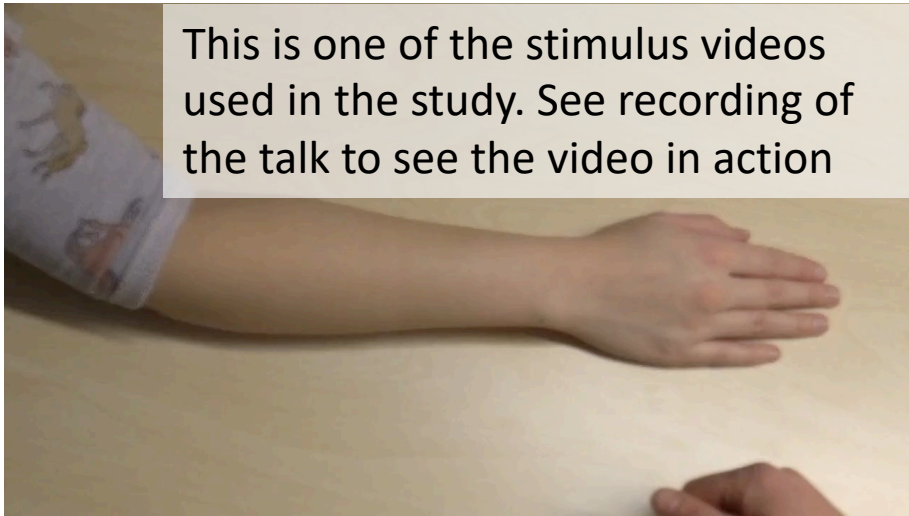
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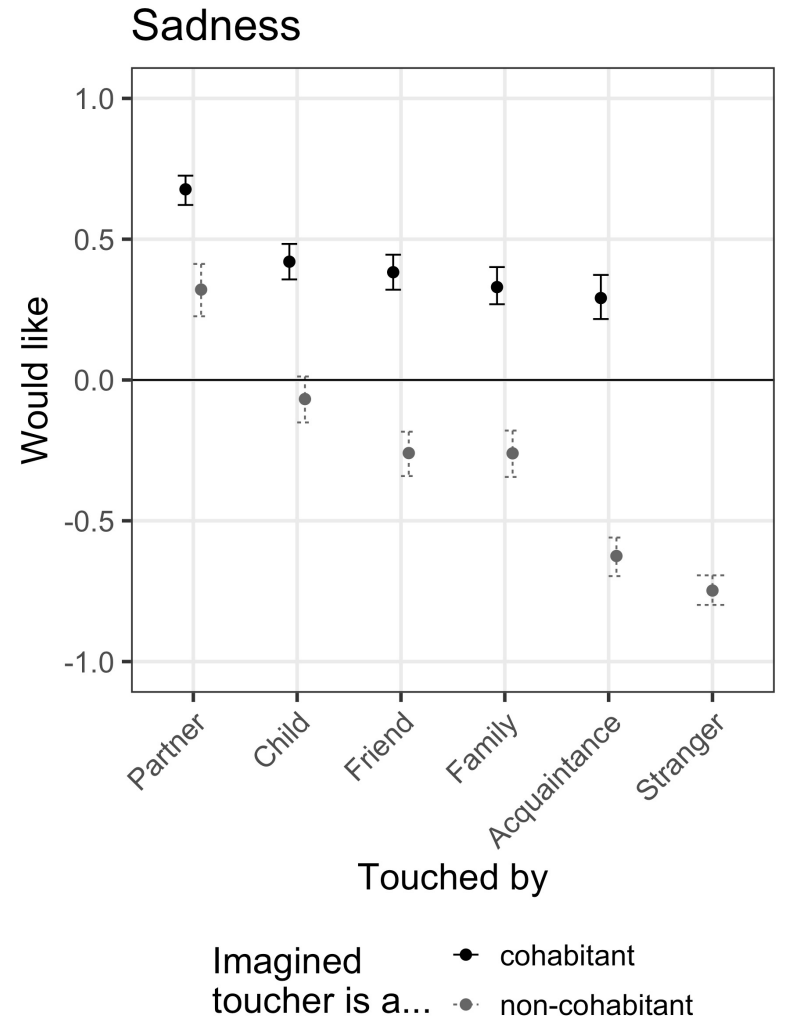
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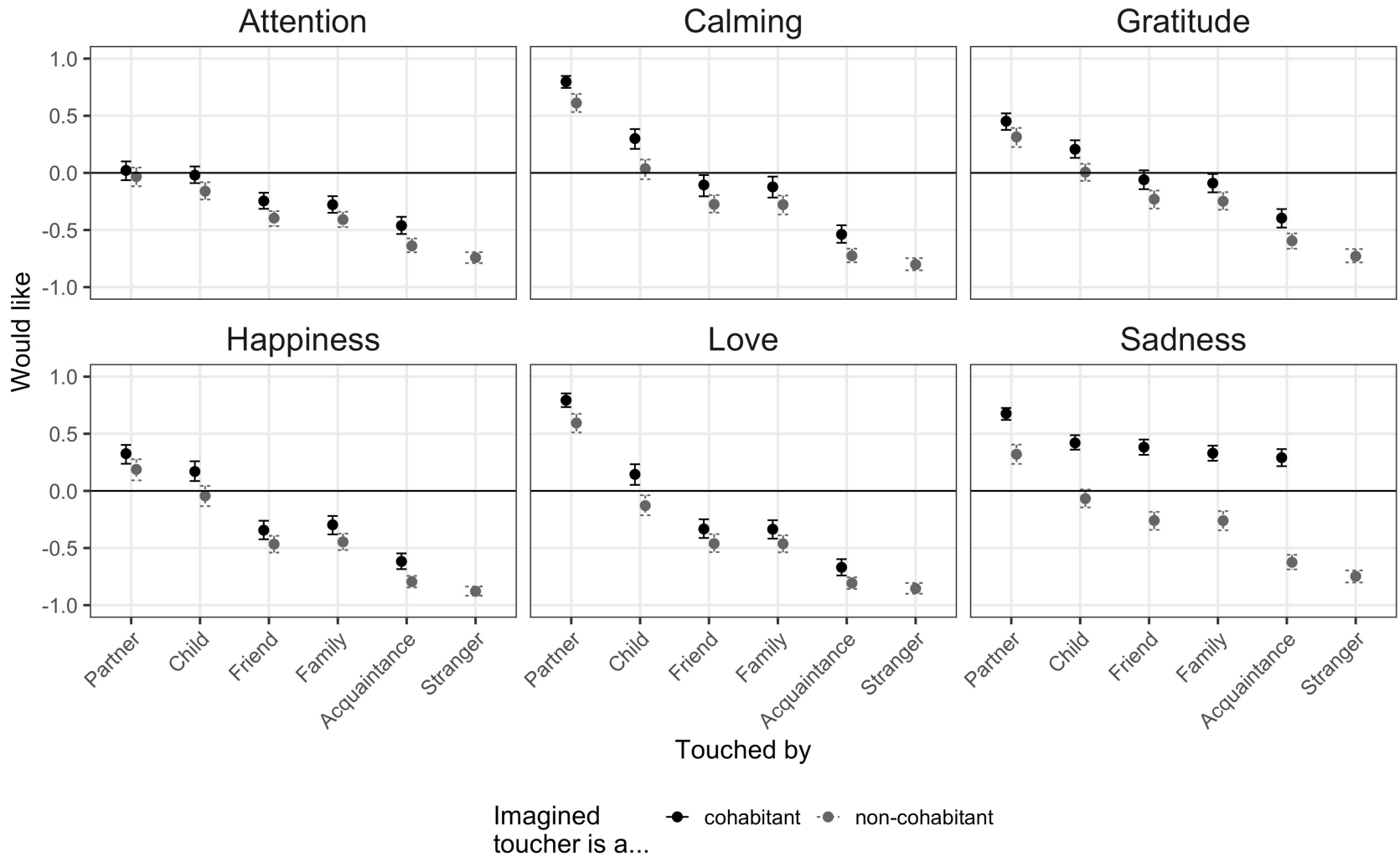
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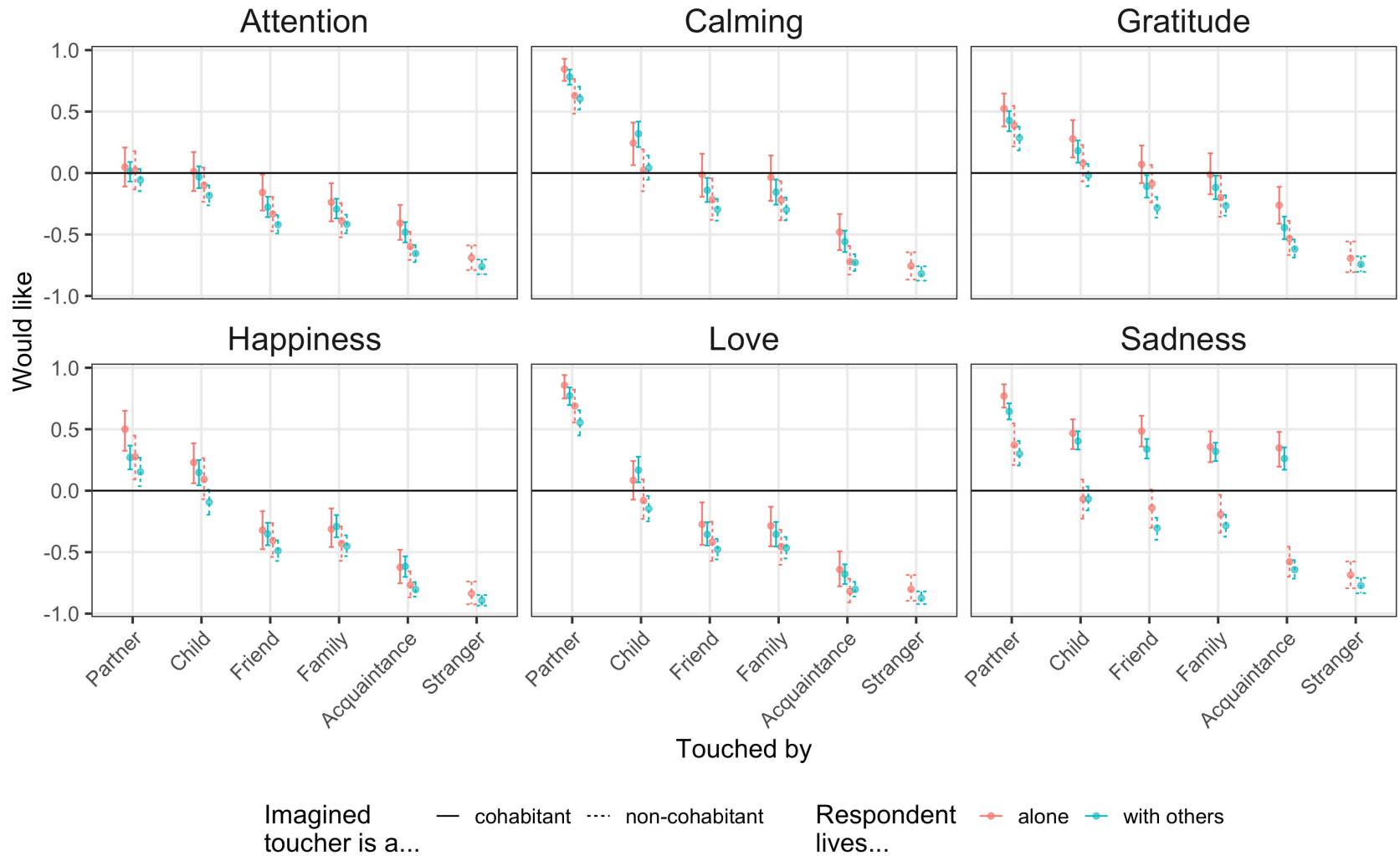
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Response to touch videos, by "message" being communicated.



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

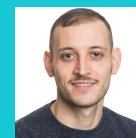
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