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# Individual variability in touch attitudes and experiences

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## Abstract

Touch is integral to our everyday lives, but attitudes and experiences of touch vary considerably between individuals. The present study examined predictors of inter-individual variability in touch attitudes and experiences in a large ( $N = 7,332$ ) UK healthy adult sample. Predictors examined included personality traits, relationship attachment style (avoidance and anxiety), age and gender. Trait extraversion was the strongest predictor of attitudes towards day-to-day social touch (such as handshakes), where greater extraversion was associated with more positive attitudes. Attachment avoidance and anxiety most strongly predicted attitudes and experiences of intimate touch (such as kissing and caressing). Attachment anxiety was associated with more positive attitudes towards intimate touch, while attachment avoidance was linked to less positive attitudes, although avoidance and anxiety were both associated with less regular experiences of intimate touch. The results highlight the importance of context in understanding attitudes and experiences of touch, and the factors that predict them.

**Keywords:** Individual differences, attitudes, personality, extraversion, attachment

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