

‘NIVEA Human Touch Barometer Volume II – Touch in times of the pandemic’ – published October 2020

Executive Summary

NIVEA’s ‘Human Touch Barometer Volume II – Human touch in times of the pandemic’ is the second report on this topic, published simultaneously with the first report ‘The Status of Human Touch’. Whereas the fieldwork for the first report was conducted between October 2018 and March 2019, this study was launched in the middle of the global Corona pandemic and is based on the survey of 11,706 people in nine countries between April and June (non-European countries) resp. August (European countries) 2020. In the United Kingdom, 739 people were interviewed between June and August 2020.

The study looked at the state of human touch in times of the virus, at the development of touch and its barriers, at loneliness and its connection with human touch, as well as the desires of people for the time after the pandemic.

NIVEA decided to invest in this additional companion piece of research to provide a comprehensive view of the state of human touch today and a basis for a societal debate and intervention.

The three big findings are on a global as well as country level:

- The barriers of human touch have increased for two thirds of the respondents in the UK. As a result, touch has decreased even in the closest circles (family, close friends) and less surprisingly also in outer circles (colleagues, neighbors, acquaintances). This lack of human touch makes people feel lonelier.
- Feelings of loneliness have increased during the pandemic for certain groups of people: One out of five British people strongly agreed that he/she feels often lonely. Half has never felt that lonely before.
- People living alone, single parents and 16-35 years old are most affected.

The findings of this report clearly show that the importance of touch in people’s lives and the desire for it are universal and have not decreased, while the barriers have increased considerably. Human touch is more at risk than ever before, with certain groups being more affected than others.

Key findings from ‘Human Touch Barometer Volume II – Touch in times of the pandemic’ include:

COVID-19 has underscored the importance of human touch in our society, yet made it more difficult to experience the touch that we need.

- 77 percent of people surveyed in the UK said that isolation has made them realize how important physical touch is for health.
[global: 75%, Brazil (87%) and Italy (85%) highest; UK (77%), South Africa (76%), US, Australia, France (all 74%) and Germany (72%) in the midfield; South Korea lowest (60%)]
- Two thirds of the British said that the barriers to touch have increased compared to a year ago.
[global: 67%; most in Italy (76%), Brazil and South Africa (both 75%); UK (67%), US, Australia (both 66%) and France (65%) on average, followed by Germany (61%); least again in South Korea (53%)].
Around 60 percent would like to receive more hugs from others.
[global: 61%; esp. in Brazil (78%), but also in Italy (71%); least in South Korea (36%); other countries on global level: UK (63%), Australia (62%), South Africa (61%), Germany and US (both 60%) as well as France (59%)]

- Three out of four people in the UK state that they now avoid touch rituals like handshakes, kissing or short hugs.
[global: 81%; again, most in Brazil (92%), but many also in South Africa (88%) and Italy (87%); other countries follow: France (81%), Australia and UK (both 78%), Germany (77%), US (75%) and South Korea (73%)]
- Every third British person said that the current level of human touch within their inner circles (family and close friends) is too low.
[global: 33%; with highest shares in Germany (38%) and South Africa (36%), closely followed by South Korea and UK (both 34%), Australia (33%), Italy (32%), France (30%), US and Brazil (both 29%)]
- Inner circle touch has decreased for about 40 percent
[global: 38%; but most in Italy (44%) as well as South Africa, South Korea and UK (all 41%); France (39%) and Australia (36%) on global level; Germany (34%), Brazil (33%) and US (28%) at least slightly below],
while outer circle touch (acquaintances, neighbors, colleagues) has decreased for 35 percent in the UK.
A decline is especially evident in countries such as Italy (51%), South Korea (49%) and South Africa (46%), where lockdown measures were strictly enforced. It is also a reflection of the touch-friendliness in the respective culture before the pandemic.
[global: 40%; lowest decline in the US (30%); but low also in Germany and Australia (both 33%) and UK (35%); Brazil (40%) and France (41%) in the midfield]

Loneliness and touch are strongly linked, and some groups are more vulnerable than others.

- 54 percent of the British respondents experience feelings of loneliness.
[global: 46%; most lonely people can be found in UK (54%) and South Africa (51%), closely followed by Australia (49%), Italy (48%) and the US (47%); lower shares in Brazil (43%), South Korea (41%), Germany (39%) and France (37%)]
19 percent even strongly agreed, that loneliness is a regular companion.
[global: 16%; countries in descending order: South Africa (20%), UK (19%), US (18%), Australia and Brazil (both 17%), Italy (15%), Germany (14%), France (12%) and South Korea (11%)]
- A bit more than half of the people in the UK said that the isolation has made them feel lonelier than ever before in their lives.
[global: 49%; Brazil (60%) in lead, followed by South Africa (54%), Italy and UK (both 53%) as well as US (52%); Australia (48%) on global, average; Germany (45%), France (43%) and South Korea (34%) represent the lower end]
- 92 percent agreed that a lack of touch can make us feel lonely.
[global: 87%; particularly true for Italy (94%), but most other countries follow close by: UK (92%), France (91%), Brazil (90%), Germany (89%), US and Australia (both 88%), as well as South Africa (86%) – only in South Korea, opinion is less shared (66%)]
- About 80 percent of those respondents in the UK who indicated that they often feel lonely would like to receive more hugs from others
[global: 81%; highest request in Brazil (90%), Germany (87%) and Italy (86%); around average: Australia (83%), US and UK (both 82%), South Africa (81%) and France (79%); least desire in South Korea (59%)],
compared to 41 percent of those who said that they do not feel lonely.
[global: 45%; clearly most in Brazil (69%) and Italy (58%); only few in South Korea (19%); other countries close to global level: France (46%), Germany (43%), Australia and South Africa (42%) as well as US and UK (both 41%)]
- Singles and single parents are having a hard time. For four out of five people who live alone in the UK, physical touch is not a daily occurrence in their lives.
[global: 76%; especially visible in South Africa (86%), Australia and UK (both 84%) as well as

France (83%), US (78%) and Germany (74%) in the midfield, less applicable to Italy (68%), Brazil (61%) and South Korea (53%)]

Human touch in our post-pandemic future will focus on quality over quantity.

- Nearly two out of five British people expect inner circle (family, close friends) touch to increase after the crisis
[global: 34%; most in Brazil (49%) as well as in South Africa (42%) and followed by Italy and the US (38%) as well as UK (37%); Australia once more on global average (32%); Germany (28%), France (26%) and esp. South Korea (12%) below],
while a quarter expects a decline of outer circle touch in the long run as a result of the pandemic.
[global: 32%; decline expected by most in South Korea (57%) and South Africa (46%); least in Germany (22%), UK and Australia (both 25%), Italy and the US (both 26%); France (31%) and Brazil (30%) on global level]
- Two out of three people surveyed in the UK want to make up for the current lack of human touch after the crisis.
[global: 59%; highest shares in Italy and Brazil (both 71%) as well as UK (65%), US and South Africa (both 59%), Australia (58%), France (56%) and Germany (55%) rank in the midfield; South Korea (38%) clearly behind]
- People who live in highly social countries that were hit hard by the pandemic, namely Brazil and Italy, have a strong longing to make up for lost time. 77 percent of Brazilians and 72 percent of Italians said that isolation has made them crave physical contact more than ever before.
[global: 58%; further countries: UK (61%), South Africa and France (both 59%), US (58%), Germany (55%) and Australia (54%); South Korea once more far of (31%)]

About the NIVEA brand

NIVEA has a long legacy of innovation in skincare dating back to the launch of NIVEA Crème by Beiersdorf in 1911. The Power of Human Touch initiative also supports the Beiersdorf corporate purpose, which is to 'Care Beyond Skin'.

Research Methodology:

Volume II was conducted by mindline, an independent research institute, as an online survey of 11,706 people in the following 9 countries: Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, South Africa, South Korea, the UK, and the US. Survey respondents were between 16 – 69 years of age, and were a representative sample based on gender, age, region, and occupational status. The study was conducted between April and June 2020 (non-European countries) resp. August 2020 (European countries).