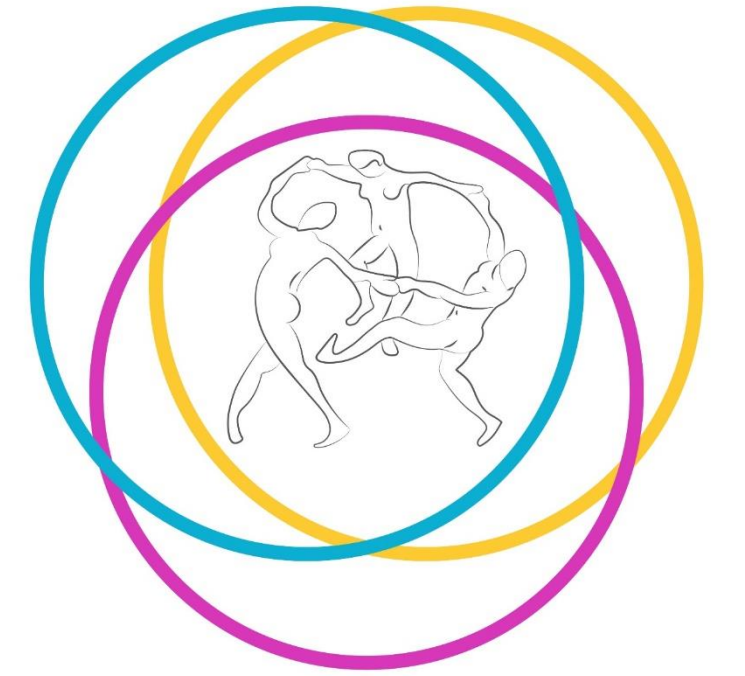




# Touch in & as medicine

Tailoring touch in a clinical context through novel digital touch tools



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Touch can *heal* and *foster trust* but how can we tailor it in a clinical context

Digital touch tools to probe individual differences in response salutary touch and social touch

## Background

- Touch facilitates **therapeutic synchrony** and strengthens the **therapeutic alliance**<sup>1</sup>
- Social touch can but does not always facilitate **perceived trustworthiness**
- **Individual differences** may include preferred modality for comfort<sup>2</sup>
- **Mechanisms** for “salutary touch” (touch as medicine) and social touch (touch *in* medicine) remain to be fully elucidated<sup>3</sup>

## Touch tools

Development of digital touch tools to probe and tailor touch in and as medicine



Touchability index



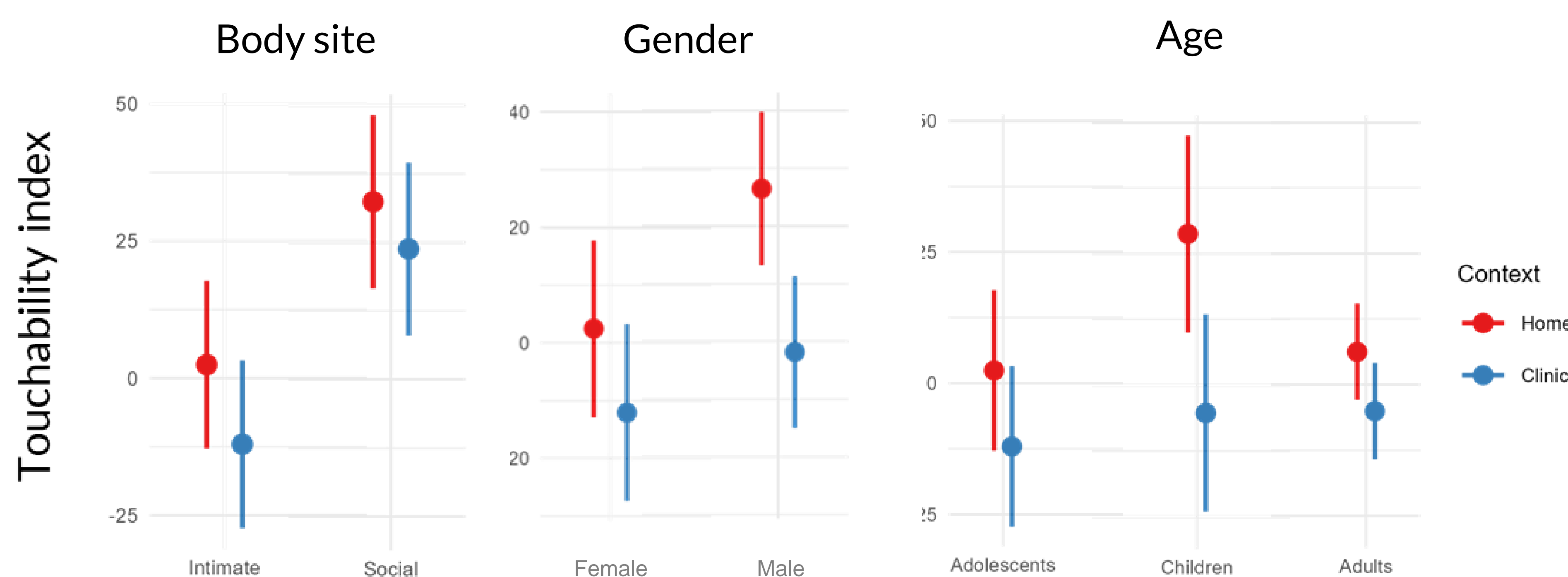
Immersive VR with multisensory feedback



## Research Questions and Results

What individual factors influence how we want to be touched in a clinical context?

How can we compare corrective and motivational touch in a virtual clinical context?



Valori et al., under review



Lüneberg et al., in preparation

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## References

- 1) McParlin, Z., Cerritelli, F., Friston, K. J., & Esteves, J. E. (2022). Therapeutic alliance as active inference: the role of therapeutic touch and synchrony. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 783694.
- 2) Valori, I., Jung, M. M., & Fairhurst, M. T. (2024). Social touch to build trust: A systematic review of technology-mediated and unmediated interactions. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 153, 108121.
- 3) McGlone, F., Uvnäs Moberg, K., Norholt, H., Eggart, M., & Müller-Oerlinghausen, B. (2024). Touch medicine: bridging the gap between recent insights from touch research and clinical medicine and its special significance for the treatment of affective disorders. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 15, 1390673.

## Conclusions and next steps

- Need to better distinguish between salutary touch and social touch
- How touch is perceived in a clinical context is subjective and as such how touch is used should be tailored.
- Potential to combine digital touch tools (e.g. immersive VR and different forms of haptic feedback) to probe specific responses to either salutary or social touch.