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## DISRUPTOR

By Patrick Nelson, Network World  
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### About

Thought-provoking commentary on technologies that are changing the way mankind does things.

## OPINION

# We touch our phones 2,617 times a day, says study

Feeling a peculiar pull towards your phone? You're not alone. An obsession to touch phones is rampant.

We're obsessed with our phones, a new study has found. The heaviest smartphone users click, tap or swipe on their phone 5,427 times a day, according to researcher Dscout.

That's the top 10 percent of phone users, so one would expect it to be excessive. However, the rest of us still touch the addictive things 2,617 times a day on average. No small number.

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The research firm, which specializes in consumer reactions to products, recruited 94 Android device users and installed special software on their smartphones. The tool tracked each user's "interaction" over five days, all day, [the company says in a blog post on its website](#).

“And by every interaction, we mean every tap, type, swipe and click. We’re calling them touches,” it explains.

Averaging out the numbers, the aforementioned figures mean the heaviest users are touching their devices a couple of million times in one year, Dscout says.

The company has been looking into whether interactions with smartphones have become onerous.

“Each tap and swipe feels small and harmless. Just a tiny fraction of our brain power and physical effort,” but to what extent are the interactions not good, it wonders.

## **Lots of little sessions**

Well, the good news, probably, is that users aren’t glued to the slivers of glass and plastic all the time. The firm discovered that long-period usage of phones was quite unusual. Netflix and reading contributed to most phone time in longer sessions. But “in general, people prefer lots of little sessions with breaks in between.”

In fact, daily, the average user only used the devices for a total of 145 minutes. Heavier users: 225 daily minutes.

Picking up the phone, as opposed to simply touching it, also wasn’t as addiction-prone. “The average user engaged in 76 separate phone sessions a day. Heavy users averaged 132 sessions a day,” the researcher found.

The respondents did leave the gadgets alone much of the time at night. They abandoned heavy use of the devices when it became time to go to bed—for the most part.

However, many still liked a touch or two in the midnight hours. In fact 87 percent “of participants checked their phones, and brought them out of a sleep state, at least once between midnight and 5 a.m.” over the five-day sample period.

Dscout explains that many phones can be used as a clock without unlocking, and it didn't track activity within unlocked touches, just the initial touch of the locked device. So, the 2,617 daily touches "is actually a low-ball figure," it says. Maybe people did more touching while locked, it says.

Probably the most interesting thing in all this was that the people surveyed completely underestimated their phone touching. While they were initially shocked by the numbers, 41 percent said "it probably won't change the way I use my phone."

And an obstinate 5 percent said they'd try to use the device more when told their number of touches during the test week.

However, all this touching may just be a blip in history. Dscout suggests voice commands could ultimately supplant touching.

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*Patrick Nelson was editor and publisher of the music industry trade publication Producer Report and has written for a number of technology blogs. Nelson wrote the cult-classic novel Sprawlism.*

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