

Anosmia Awareness Day Reminds Us to Cherish Our Sense of Smell, but New Survey Shows Smell is Still Undervalued

Some would give up ability to smell before cell phones or social media

MILLBROOK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, February 23, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- If you had to choose one sense to lose, which would it be? That's the question researchers from Monell Chemical Senses Center, Brown University, and HCD Research in association with [The World Taste and Smell Association](#) asked people in 22 countries. Overwhelmingly, people would give up their sense of smell, more than any other sense.

The research team—consisting of Jonas Yde Junge, Rachel Herz, Martha Bajec, Michelle Niedzela, and Valentina Parma—conducted a survey in six

languages across 22 countries with 1,105 participants designed to quantify perceptions about the sense of smell. Some 64% of participants were willing to give up their sense of smell over all other three senses. Taste came in dramatically behind, at 22%, with hearing at 7% and vision at 6%. Each sense was also compared to commodities and activities. More than 10% of the respondents said they would give up their sense of smell before social media.

But anosmia, the loss of the ability to smell, can have a negative impact on people's lives, including social isolation, depression and low self-esteem. "Until it happens to you, it's hard to understand how profoundly smell loss affects every area of your life," says Stephanie Feuer, Director of the World Taste and Smell Association, who has been suffering from smell loss since 2017. "You miss the smell of morning coffee, the taste of a favorite meal, and you lose your ability to detect gas leaks or smell smoke. For new parents, the joy of a newborn is tempered by not being able to smell their sweet scent."

The study comes as a [continuation of initial research](#) conducted by Herz and Bajec, which placed





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the senses alongside nine commodities spanning the material, personal, physical, and digital realms, including a phone, dream vacation, and \$10,000. 407 respondents participated, and the results showed that 25% would trade in their sense of smell for their phone and almost 50% of women would prioritize their hair over their smelling abilities.

Anosmia gained a new spotlight as a Covid symptom, with 15 million people worldwide expected to suffer from long

term smell or taste loss. Yet, there has only been a small increase in those who positively value the impact of scent on their life. “People do not have much awareness of their sense of smell. Interestingly, we see in our data an 4% rise in people stating that smell is important to them, suggesting that the COVID pandemic has had an effect on understanding that smell has a bit more value, although it’s a minor effect,” says Valentina Parma, Assistant Director of the Monell Chemical Senses Center. “The message we want to communicate is that we should start paying more attention to this sense and its connections to health and well-being.”

Re-engaging with our sense of smell need not be complicated. From taking a few seconds to smell your morning cup of coffee to lighting a candle at home, there are many simple and low-cost opportunities for engaging with our olfactory system. For those suffering from anosmia, organizations such as STANA AbScent, and Fifth Sense offer information, support, and more extensive smell training options.

“Smell is our most ancient sense. It is fundamental to who we are,” Feuer says. “That’s worth remembering not just on Anosmia Awareness Day, but every day.”

From enhancing taste to reducing stress and flooding our minds with beautiful memories of times past, scent has a plethora of benefits to offer. The more we acknowledge, and strengthen it, the greater the boost, so beginning to appreciate it is the perfect place to start.

The World Taste and Smell Association, a global, non-profit association, was founded to elevate awareness of the importance of our senses of taste and smell, and to support innovators, creators, scientists, and people experiencing taste and/or smell dysfunctions. Find out more at <https://www.tasteandsmell.world>

Anosmia Awareness Day is Monday, February 27.

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