

Exploring the Benefits of Assistive Communication

Introduction

In 2024 and 2025, the research firm Augur, in conjunction with University of Hamburg Health Economist Prof. Dr. Tom Stargardt, conducted an independent health economic study on the use of assistive communication solutions in Germany. The study, titled “Exploring the Benefits of Assistive Communication”, was commissioned by Dynavox Group AB. The following is a high-level overview of this study and its key findings.

To download and read the full study with detailed methodology and findings, visit:

assistivecommunication.com/germany-study

Overview

This independent research was conducted to evaluate the benefits of high-tech AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) for a variety of AAC users, caregivers, and society. It combines a qualitative study (interviews), a quantitative study (online survey), and a health economic model (including a survey and open-source data) focused on a variety of AAC users, their caregivers, and society. The research covers all user groups, with a special focus on cerebral palsy (CP), autism, and ALS/MND.

Purpose

The study aimed to explore the value of assistive communication for users with disabilities, people in their network, and society. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. How and to what extent can high-tech AAC tools improve the lives of users?
2. How do these tools affect the lives of users' networks, including family and caregivers?
3. Does the use of assistive communication generate health economic benefits?

Overall key findings

The study shows that assistive communication is an investment with measurable returns and clear economic benefits to society. It also shows that investments in high-tech assistive communication solutions for people with disabilities:



nearly double a user's quality of life

Doubling of life quality

The study reveals that high-tech AAC users nearly double their quality of life compared to life without such tools. The main benefits include: having the ability to express one's own desires and preferences, feeling encouraged to communicate, and being able to go beyond expressing basic needs.



pay for themselves close to one and half times over

Societal cost savings

The study estimates that society can save the equivalent of 1.4 times the investment from an average high-tech AAC user's tool over a five-year period (and much more for some specific user groups). This cost efficiency is due to reduced healthcare needs and increased work ability for users, family members, and caregivers.

Detailed findings, broken down by participants overall

Main user benefits

- 78% feel they can express their own desires and preferences
- 70% feel encouraged to communicate
- 66% feel they can go beyond expressing basic needs

Main caregiver benefits

- 78% can understand and meet the user's needs
- 72% feel that the user is less dependent on them as an interpreter
- 68% express less guesswork in communication, fewer misunderstandings

Detailed findings, broken down by condition

Main user/caregiver benefits – cerebral palsy

- 75% of users feel they can express their own desires and preferences
- 71% of caregivers feel that the user is less dependent on them as an interpreter
- 70% of users feel encouraged to communicate
- 68% of caregivers can understand and meet the user's needs
- 66% of users can learn new things and develop new skills
- 61% of caregivers express less guesswork in communication, fewer misunderstandings

Main user/caregiver benefits – autism

- 76% of users feel they can express their own desires and preferences
- 68% of users feel encouraged to communicate
- 64% of users can learn new things and develop new skills
- 64% of caregivers can understand and meet the user's needs
- 64% of caregivers express less guesswork in communication, fewer misunderstandings
- 55% of caregivers say the user becomes less dependent on them

Main user/caregiver benefits – ALS/MND

- 100% of users are better able to express health needs and issues
- 100% of caregivers feel that the user is less dependent on them as an interpreter
- 96% of users can express desires and preferences
- 90% of caregivers
 - express less guesswork in communication, fewer misunderstandings
 - can understand and meet the user's needs
 - feel less stress
- 83% of users feel that they can express more than basic needs

Overall societal benefits

High-tech AAC can save German society the equivalent of €11 300, or close to one and a half times the investment of a high-tech AAC user's tool, largely from:

- increased ability to work for caregivers
- decreased healthcare utilization by users
- decreased sick leave by users

Challenges

Most users and caregivers report some challenges using high-tech AAC, the most prominent being:

- difficulty using it in all environments
- dependence on others for usage
- lack of patience from others while communicating



To read the complete set of findings for high-tech AAC users and their network, download the full study at assistivecommunication.com/germany-study or scan the QR code.

This study was commissioned by Dynavox Group AB.