# Exploring the Benefits of Assistive Communication

## Introduction

In 2023 and 2024, the research firm Augur, in conjunction with Health Economist John Moshtaghi-Svensson, conducted a health economic study on the use of assistive communication solutions in Sweden. 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 read the full study with detailed methodology and findings, visit: <u>assistivecommunication.com/sweden-study</u>

# 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.

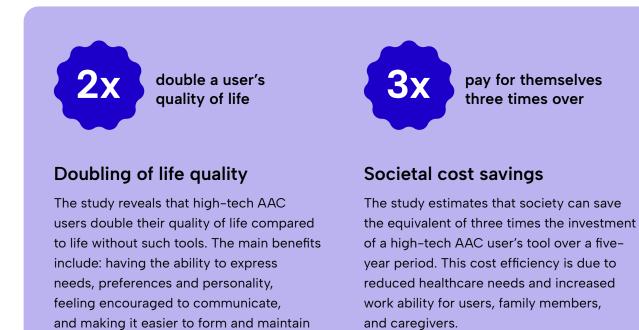
# Purpose

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:



## Detailed findings, broken down by participants overall

#### Main user benefits

social relationships.

- 86% feel they can express their own will, needs and preferences
- 72% feel encouraged to communicate
- 69% can communicate with people outside their immediate circle

#### Main caregiver benefits

- 88% report less guesswork in communication between caregiver and user
- 83% can better understand and meet user needs
- 65% state increased independence for both user and caregiver

# Detailed findings, broken down by condition

#### Main user/caregiver benefits - cerebral palsy

- 86% of users can learn/develop new skills
- 79% of users feel they can express their own will, needs and preferences
- 67% of caregivers feel less stress around their life situation

#### Main user/caregiver benefits - autism

- 89% of caregivers report less guesswork in communication
- 79% of users feel they can express their own will, needs and preferences
- 78% of caregivers can better understand and meet user needs
- 67% of parents feel they can get to know their autistic child on a deeper level

## Main user/caregiver benefits - ALS/MND

- 96% of users feel they:
  - can express their own will, needs and preferences
  - are better able to express their health needs
  - can go beyond expressing basic needs and reveal their true personality
  - are able to communicate via modern digital tools
- 88% of caregivers state increased independence for both user and caregiver
- 82% of users form better social bonds by communicating with people outside their immediate care circle

### **Overall societal benefits**

High-tech AAC can save Swedish society the equivalent of SEK 320,000, or three times the investment of a high-tech AAC user's tool, largely from:

- increased ability to work among caregivers
- reduced healthcare costs, particularly speech therapy
- decreased hospital and outpatient visits

## Challenges

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

- difficulty using high-tech AAC in all environments and need for extensive patience
- physically tiring for users and takes time
- dependence on caregivers for charging and maintenance
- educating others on the high-tech AAC tool's importance and functionality, creating extra caregiver responsibilities



To read the complete set of findings for high-tech AAC users and their network, download the full study at <u>assistivecommunication.com/sweden-study</u> or scan the QR code. This study was commissioned by Dynavox Group AB.