

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:

assistivecommunication.com/sweden-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:



**double a user's
quality of life**

Doubling of life quality

The study reveals that high-tech AAC users double their quality of life compared to life without such tools. The main benefits include: having the ability to express needs, preferences and personality, feeling encouraged to communicate, and making it easier to form and maintain social relationships.



**pay for themselves
three times over**

Societal cost savings

The study estimates that society can save the equivalent of three times the investment of a high-tech AAC user's tool over a five-year period. 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

- 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 assistivecommunication.com/sweden-study or scan the QR code. This study was commissioned by Dynavox Group AB.