

Report: The use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in Norway, 2018

This survey was performed by Ipsos MMI in November 2018, ordered by NAFKAM (Norway's National Research Center in Complementary and Alternative Medicine).

Background. Previous studies have shown that a relatively high proportion of the adult population in the Western world uses alternative therapy. In Norway, several user surveys have been carried out over the recent years. We at NAFKAM have retrieved updated information through a new interview survey, which also provides information on the use of dietary supplements used in self-treatment.

Material and method. The survey was conducted by Ipsos MMI as a telephone interview with 1,000 people 15 years or older in week 48, 2018. NAFKAM prepared the questionnaire (see Appendix 1), and analyzed the results. For all percentages listed in this survey, the margin of error will be approximately $\pm 4\%$ for results based on all within each gender. It is therefore more important to look at trends than single figures. The cost changes have not been adjusted for changes in the consumer price index (CPI) 2016-2018.

Since 2007, NAFKAM has mapped the population's use of CAM therapies given by CAM practitioners outside the health care system, as well as provided by healthcare professionals within the official healthcare system. For this, we use a predefined list of the 9 most commonly used therapies from our previous survey, as well as an option for "Other CAM treatments". The answers in this category are corrected for "school medicine" treatments; which according to the Norwegian Act on Alternative Treatment of Illness, are not considered as CAM in Norway.

In addition, we monitor the Norwegian population's use of self-treatment with herbs/ herbal remedies and self-help techniques. On behalf of the Norwegian Directorate of Health, we also monitor the population's use of dietary supplements, although ordinary use of such is not considered as CAM.

Terms and treatment categories. This report uses the following terms:

- **"Health providers":** Non-authorized CAM practitioners, or authorized healthcare professionals.
- **"Have received CAM"** includes having received one or more therapies that in Norway are considered CAM - from a health provider; inside or outside the official Norwegian health care system.
- **"Have used herbs/ herbal remedies"** means the use of non-prescription plant-based drugs, without reference from a MD or CAM practitioner, as part of one's self-treatment.
- **"Have used self-help techniques"** means having used health strategies such as meditation, yoga, qi gong or tai chi as part of self-treatment. The term also includes having received instruction/ training from an instructor for using the technique.
- **"Have used CAM"** means having used one or more of the categories above.
- **"Have used supplements"** includes the use of dietary supplements, e.g. cod liver oil, minerals and vitamins as part of one's self-treatment, in accordance with the patient information leaflet.

At the time of the survey, the total population of Norway was 4.295.000 people +15 yrs; consisting of 2.140.000 women and 2.155.000 men.

Results

1. How many Norwegians receive CAM therapies from a health provider?

From the 2016 survey, we defined a list of the following CAM therapies that imply a health provider (non-authorized CAM practitioner or authorized healthcare professional), and asked about the usage of these therapies - inside or outside the official health care system, over the last 12 months: *Acupuncture, homeopathy, reflexology, healing, kinesiology, massage, naprapathy, osteopathy, cupping, and possibly other CAM therapies received:*

	Among all	Among the women	Among the men
Have received CAM therapy from a health provider in 2018	23%	29%	17%
Change, 2016-2018 (pp)	-1	0	-2

1. Which CAM therapies do Norwegians use?

	Received outside the healthcare system	Change, 2016-2018 (pp)	Received inside the healthcare system	Change, 2016-2018 (pp)
Massage	11,1%	-0,8	3,8%	+0,3
Acupuncture	2,9%	-0,7	2,1%	+0,4
Naprapathy	2,7%	+0,1	0,3%	+0,1
Healing	2,1%	+1	0,2%	+0,1
Reflexology	1,2%	-0,5	1,2%	+1
Osteopathy	1,2%	0	0,3%	0
Homeopathy	0,7%	-0,1	-	0
Kinesiology	0,3%	-0,3	-	0
Cupping	0,3%	-0,9	0,2%	0
Other	1,7%	-0,1	0,4%	-0,1

2. How much money do Norwegians use such CAM therapies?

	Average per user	Per woman who used	Per man who used
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	3078	3468	2531
Change, 2016-2018	+12%	+3%	+32%

3. Norwegians' use of herbs/ herbal remedies (dietary supplements not included) as self-treatment:

	Among all	Among the women	Among the men
Have used herbs in 2018	10%	12%	8%
Change, 2016-2018 (pp)	-1	-2	0

	Average per user	Per woman who used	Per man who used
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	944	854	1051
Change, 2016-2018	-35%	-42%	-25%

4. Norwegians' use of self-help techniques as self-treatment:

	Among all	Among the women	Among the men
Have used self-help techniques in 2018	17%	24%	11%
Change, 2016-2018	+2	+1	+4

	Average per user	Per woman who used	Per man who used
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	1737	2239	793
Change, 2016-2018	+123%	+132%	+221%

5. Norwegians' total use of CAM (dietary supplements not included):

	Among all	Among the women	Among the men
Have received one or more CAM therapies from a health provider; and/ or used herbs; and/ or used self-help techniques in 2018	37%	47%	29%
Change, 2016-2018	+1	+1	+1

	Average per user	Per woman who used	Per man who used
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	5759	6561	4375
Change, 2016-2018	+16%	+13%	+23%

6. Projected onto the population - how much money do Norwegians spend on CAM (in NOK)?

<i>(Based on all respondents; both those who used and didn't use CAM)</i>	Per citizen (n = 4.295.000)	Per woman (n = 2.140.000)	Per man (n = 2.155.000)	Total for the population
CAM therapies from health providers	702	1013	440	3.014.162.000
Herbs/ herbal remedies	94	102	88	405.448.000
Self-help techniques	295	546	86	1.268.271.000
Total use of CAM (not dietary supplements)	1091	1661	614	4.687.881.000

Change, 2016-2018	Per citizen	Per woman	Per man	
CAM therapies from health providers	+4%	+2%	+22%	
Herbs/ herbal remedies	-39%	-50%	-18%	
Self-help techniques	+161%	+147%	+378%	
Total use of CAM (not supplements)	+16%	+17%	+26%	

7. Norwegians' use of dietary supplements

	Among all	Among the women	Among the men
Have used dietary supplements in 2018	69%	76%	63%
Change, 2016-2018 (pp)	+3	+4	+1

	Average per user	Per woman who used	Per man who used
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	998	977	1020
Change, 2016-2018	+7%	-6%	+24%

<i>(Based on all respondents; both those who used and didn't use CAM)</i>	Per citizen (n = 4.295.000)	Per woman (n = 2.140.000)	Per man	Total for the population
User's cost in 2018 (NOK)	689	745	642 kr	2.957.623.000
Change, 2016-2018	+12%	+1%	+26%	

8. Norwegians' self-evaluated health situation

	Among all (1000)		Blant kvinner (455)		Blant menn (545)	
	Who used CAM (374)	Who didn't use CAM (626)	Who used CAM (214)	Who didn't use CAM (241)	Who used CAM (160)	Who didn't use CAM (385)
Very good	32%	29%	32%	27%	33%	30%
Quite good	46%	53%	46%	52%	45%	54%
Neither good nor bad	14%	13%	12%	14%	18%	12%
Quite bad	6%	4%	9%	5%	3%	3%
Very bad	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

9. Does CAM make a difference to Norwegian CAM users' health situation?

- Respondents who had used one or more forms for CAM, were also asked if they perceived that their usage of CAM had lead to a worsening of their health situation: 2% of them answered Yes; 96% No, and 2% Don't know.
- We also asked the same group if they perceived that CAM had improved their health situation: 63% of them answered Yes; 32% No, and 5% Don't know.
- We also asked the same group if they had experienced any adverse effects from the CAM they had used: 5% of them answered Yes; 94% No, 1% Don't know.

Main trends from 2016-2018

This survey shows that the use of CAM in Norway remained at a high level in 2018:

37% had used one or more forms for CAM; once or several times.

This represents a small increase from 2016 (+1 pp). As before, more women (47%) than men (29%) reported using CAM. The "average user" of CAM was female, over 40 years of age, with higher education and high income, living in or near a city in Eastern Norway.

Only a minority (2%) of the CAM users reported experiences with side effects or worsening of their health situation from their use of CAM. Converted into numbers in the population 15 years or older, this figure still represents over 80,000 individuals, which for us at NAFKAM indicates that patient safety still needs to be taken seriously also in this field of health related services in Norway.

The decline in the use of CAM that we saw in our surveys from 2012-14-16 seems to have leveled off. A closer look at what kinds of CAM were used in 2018 shows that:

23% of all respondents had received one or more CAM therapies from CAM providers and/ or authorized healthcare professionals; inside and/ or outside the official healthcare system.

- The use of CAM therapy given by a health provider decreased by 1% from 2016. In this group, there were almost twice as many women (29%) as men (17%). The most prominent age group here was 15-24 years.
- Respondents in this group each spent an average of NOK 3000 on such CAM. Distributed throughout the population, this amounted to just under NOK 700 per citizen, and a total of just over NOK 3 billion. This was an increase by 12% from 2016, and the increase was greatest among men.
- The five CAM therapies that Norwegians made the most use of in 2018 were (in descending order): massage, acupuncture, naprapathy, reiki healing and reflexology.
- The differences in usage between the ten predefined therapies were small, except for the proportion who had received massage from a masseur/ massage therapist. From previous studies, we know that the massage users' purpose mainly is improving health rather than well-being. We have no reason to believe that this changed in 2018.

10% used herb / herbal remedies as self-treatment.

- This was 1 pp less than in 2016. Slightly more women (12%) than men (8%) stated that they had used herbs/ herbal remedies.
- The user's costs for herbs decreased notably from 2016, with as much as 35% to an average of NOK 944 per user in 2018. Distributed onto the population, the cost of herbs in 2018 amounted to approximately NOK 95 per person, and a total of approximately NOK 405 million.

17% stated that they had used self-help techniques as self-treatment.

- This was 2 pp more than in 2016. 24% of the women reported having used such techniques, and 11% of the men.
- The costs for such treatment were more than doubled from 2016 (123%), to NOK 1700 per user in 2018. Distributed onto the population, self-help techniques accounted for approximately NOK 300 per citizen, and a total of slightly less than NOK 1.3 billion.

Dietary supplements:

- In the survey, a total of 69% reported that they had used supplements such as vitamins, minerals, fish oil. This was a small increase of 3 pp from 2016.
- The distribution of usage between the sexes was similar to our previous surveys: slightly more women (76%) than men (63%) used supplements, but the men spent more money than the women on such products.
- On average, this group spent almost NOK 1000 each on dietary supplements last year. This was a cost increase of 7%. Distributed onto the population, the cost of dietary supplements was approximately NOK 690 per person, and a total of just under NOK 3 billion.

Final comments

The Norwegian population's use of herbs / herbal remedies, self-help techniques and CAM therapies from health providers still constitute significant parts of its total consumption of health services. This may seem to contrast the fact that the respondents in the same survey considered their own health to be "reasonably good", regardless of whether they had used any of the health strategies we asked about or not.

One possible explanation for this could be a generally high health focus in society: Both physical and mental training, positive thinking, diet and lifestyle guidance are commercially recommended whether one wants to counteract a specific health problem, stay healthy or prevent illness, or want to improve one's performance / performance beyond normal state.

Thus, while the people's total use of CAM appears to have stabilized after several years of decline, the consumption at the population level increased by 16% from 2016, to just under NOK 1100 per inhabitant and NOK 4.7 billion in total in 2018. The cost increase appears to be greatest among the males using CAM. The increases also appear to be greater than the inflation and rise in prices. Currently, we have no facts explaining the reasons for this, but some possible factors may be that:

- The proportion who seek CAM therapy from a health provider several times during the year, may be higher in 2018 than in previous surveys. Some providers offer "package" solutions, and some market frequent use of CAM treatment as beneficial for maintaining good health and preventing new problems.
- The proportion using various forms of health products may have purchased more, different products in 2018 than in 2016. Also, new products may have arrived on the market, with higher prices.
- Users of herbs/ herbal remedies may also have started to buy this on the Internet from abroad, at lower prices than over-the-counter in Norway.
- The increase in the use of self-help techniques and expenses for this may also be attributed to an increased presence of coaches and instructors offering both training courses and single-appointments for learning such techniques. Such courses seem to be relevant in both job and leisure situations.
- It may be difficult to distinguish between what you consciously use for self-treatment or prevention of health problems; for maintaining good health in general, and for improving one's performance above normal level through targeted training and practise.

If we sum up the costs spent on CAM and supplements as an expression of self-treatment outside the health care system, they looked like this in 2018:

	Per citizen (n = 4.295.000)	Per woman (n = 2.140.000)	Per man (n = 2.155.000)	Total for the population
CAM therapies from health providers	702	1013	440	3.014.162.000
Herbs/ herbal remedies	94	102	88	405.448.000
Self-help techniques	295	546	86	1.268.271.000
Dietary supplements	689	745	642	2.957.623.000
TOTAL	1780	2406	1256	7.645.504.000

Tromsø, June 25, 2019

Vinjar Fønnebø

Ola Lillenes

Appendix: The questions from NAFKAMs Survey in Norway 2018

(For all percentages listed in this study, the margin of error will be approximately $\pm 4\%$ for results based on all within each gender. It is therefore more important to look at trends than single numbers.)

1. First, a question about CAM treatment received outside the health care system: Have you received any of the following CAM therapies from health providers over the past 12 months?

- Acupuncture
- Homeopathy
- Reflexology
- Reiki Healing
- Kinesiology
- Massage
- Naprapathy
- Osteopathy
- Cupping

2. Have you received any other CAM therapies outside the health care system than those we have mentioned?

3. During the last 12 months, how many times have you consulted health providers outside the health care system for...?

- Acupuncture
- Homeopathy
- Reflexology
- Reiki Healing
- Kinesiology
- Massage
- Naprapathy
- Osteopathy
- Cupping

4. Next, some questions about CAM treatment received inside the healthcare system by authorized healthcare professionals; such as an MD/ GP, nurse, physiotherapist, midwife and more. Have you received any of the following CAM therapies from such healthcare professionals inside the healthcare system over the past 12 months?

- Acupuncture
- Homeopathy
- Reflexology
- Reiki Healing
- Kinesiology
- Massage
- Naprapathy
- Osteopathy
- Cupping

5. Have you received any other CAM therapies inside the health care system than those we have mentioned?

6. During the last 12 months, how many times have you consulted authorized healthcare professionals for?

- Acupuncture
- Homeopathy
- Reflexology
- Reiki Healing
- Kinesiology
- Massage

- Naprapathy
- Osteopathy
- Cupping

7. Can you estimate your overall cost of CAM treatment from different health providers; outside and/ or inside the health care system, over the past 12 months?

8. During the last 12 months, have you used dietary supplements such as cod liver oil, vitamins / minerals and the like as part of self-treatment or to strengthen your health? By self-treatment, we mean treatment that you yourself have initiated without recommendation from an MD/ GP or CAM practitioner.

9. Can you estimate your overall cost of dietary supplements as part of self-treatment or to strengthen your health over the past 12 months?

10. Have you used herbs/ herbal remedies or natural remedies as part of self-treatment during the last 12 months? By self-treatment, we mean treatment that you yourself have initiated without recommendation from an MD/ GP or CAM practitioner.

11. Can you estimate your total cost of herbs/ herbal remedies or natural remedies as part of self-treatment over the past 12 months?

12. In the past 12 months, have you used self-help techniques, such as meditation, yoga, qi gong or tai chi as part of self-treatment? By self-treatment, we mean treatment that you yourself have initiated without recommendation from an MD/ GP or CAM practitioner.

13. Can you estimate your total cost of self-help techniques as part of self-treatment over the past 12 months?

14. In the last 12 months, have you experienced that CAM treatment has led to a deterioration of your health situation?

- Yes No I don't know

15. In the last 12 months, have you experienced that CAM treatment has led to an improvement in your health situation?

- Yes No I don't know

16. In the last 12 months, have you experienced any adverse effects of the CAM treatment you have used?

- Yes No I don't know

17. How would you roughly rate your own health situation?

- Very good Quite good Neither good nor bad Quite bad Very bad