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Taking it as a complement: most alternative health consumers also visit the doctor

Over 1.8 million Australians pay for alternative health services in an average four weeks—but over half of them also see a doctor, research from Roy Morgan shows.

Whether it's acupuncture or cupping, reiki or shiatsu, hypnotherapy or aromatherapy, iridology, reflexology or kinesiology, almost 1 in 10 Australians 14+ (9.4%) paid for some type of alternative health service in the last four weeks, Roy Morgan Single Source data for the year to June 2015 shows.

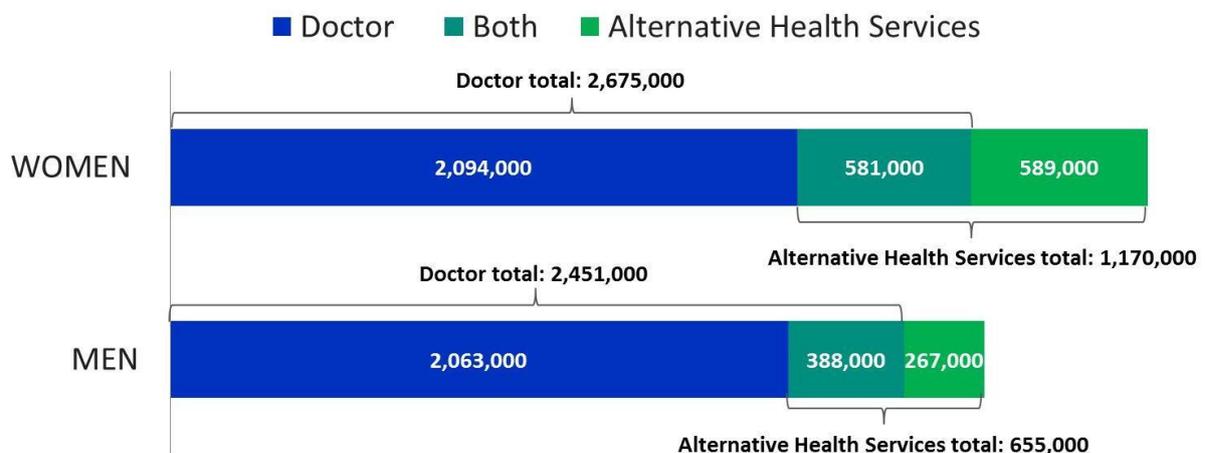
Government health departments and medical research organisations often now prefer to describe many of these services as 'complementary' rather than 'alternative'—an optional add-on to conventional medical treatment, not a replacement. And it seems Australians are inclined to agree.

Of the 1,825,000 Australians 14+ who paid for alternative health services in the last four weeks, 969,000 (53%) also paid for a doctor's visit during the same period. The overlap is especially prominent among men: of the 655,000 who paid for alternative health services in the last four weeks (7% of all men), 388,000 also paid for a doctor's visit (59%).

Women are more likely than men to pay for alternative health services in an average four weeks—however there is less overlap with doctor's visits: of the 1,170,000 women (12%) who paid for alternative health services, just under half (581,000) also paid for a doctor's visit.

Of course, the converse is the proportion of doctors' visitors who also consume alternative health services: 5,126,000 Australians (26%) pay for a doctor in an average four weeks—just under 1 in 5 of whom (the 969,000) also paid for alternative health services.

Number of people who paid for doctor and/or alternative health service in last four weeks



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia) July 2014 – June 2015, n = 51,371 Australians 14+

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Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“There is a clear correlation between going to the doctor and an alternative health practitioner, with someone who visits one around twice as likely to visit the other in the same period.

“The only way to know for sure this kind of combined, exclusive and total consumption is through Single Source methodology, where the same person is asked two or more—or, in our case, thousands—of questions.

“This core research principle is the same whether it’s to find out how many doctor’s visitors also pay for alternative health services, how many Coles shoppers also shop at Woolworths, how many viewers of a TV show also listen to breakfast radio and read a particular magazine, or who uses Facebook across their mobile phone and tablet and computer.

“Of course, this means we know how many and which types of people pay for alternative health services, shop at Coles, watch a TV show and use Facebook across multiple platforms.”

To learn more about Roy Morgan’s extensive health data, contact:

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Related Research

View our ready-to-download profiles of people who pay for [Alternative Health Services](#) or [Doctor’s Visits](#).

About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices throughout Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2