



Twenty-three per cent of the Swiss adult population are using complementary medicine

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Aim of the study

This study investigated the use among the Swiss adult population and the regional dissemination in Switzerland of various methods of complementary medicine (CM). It focused on CM methods that required visiting a physician or therapist and excluded e.g. over-the-counter drugs.

Data and Methods

Data of the Swiss Health Survey 2007 were obtained from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office [1]. This survey is performed every 5 years in a sample and is representative of the Swiss resident population from the age of 15 on. It consists of a telephone interview followed by a written questionnaire (2007: 18'760 and 14'432 respondents, respectively) and includes questions about people's state of health, general living conditions, lifestyle, health insurance and usage of health services.

Users and non-users of CM were compared using logistic regression models.

Results

23.0 % of the Swiss adult population (women: 30.5 %, men: 15.2 %) used CM during the 12 months before the survey [2]. Homeopathy (6.4 %), osteopathy (5.4 %) and acupuncture (4.9 %) were the most popular methods (Fig. 1).

The average number of treatments within 12 months for these three methods was 3.1 ± 3.6 , 3.5 ± 3.3 and 6.6 ± 5.8 , respectively. For treatments with homeopathy and acupuncture, medical practitioners were more commonly consulted than non-medical practitioners, for treatments with osteopathy no difference was found.

By means of logistic regression, CM users and non-users were compared. There were significant differences in the use of CM between genders, age groups, levels of education and areas of living. Women, people aged 25 to 64 years, and people with higher levels of education used CM more commonly than men, people below 25 or above 64 years of age, or those with poorer education (Fig. 2). Lake Geneva region and central Switzerland had a higher proportion of CM users than the other regions (Fig. 3).

Discussion

- Almost one fourth of the Swiss adult population had used CM within 12 months before the survey.
- User profiles were comparable to those in other countries.
- Despite a generally lower self-perceived health status, elderly people were less likely to use CM.

Fig. 1

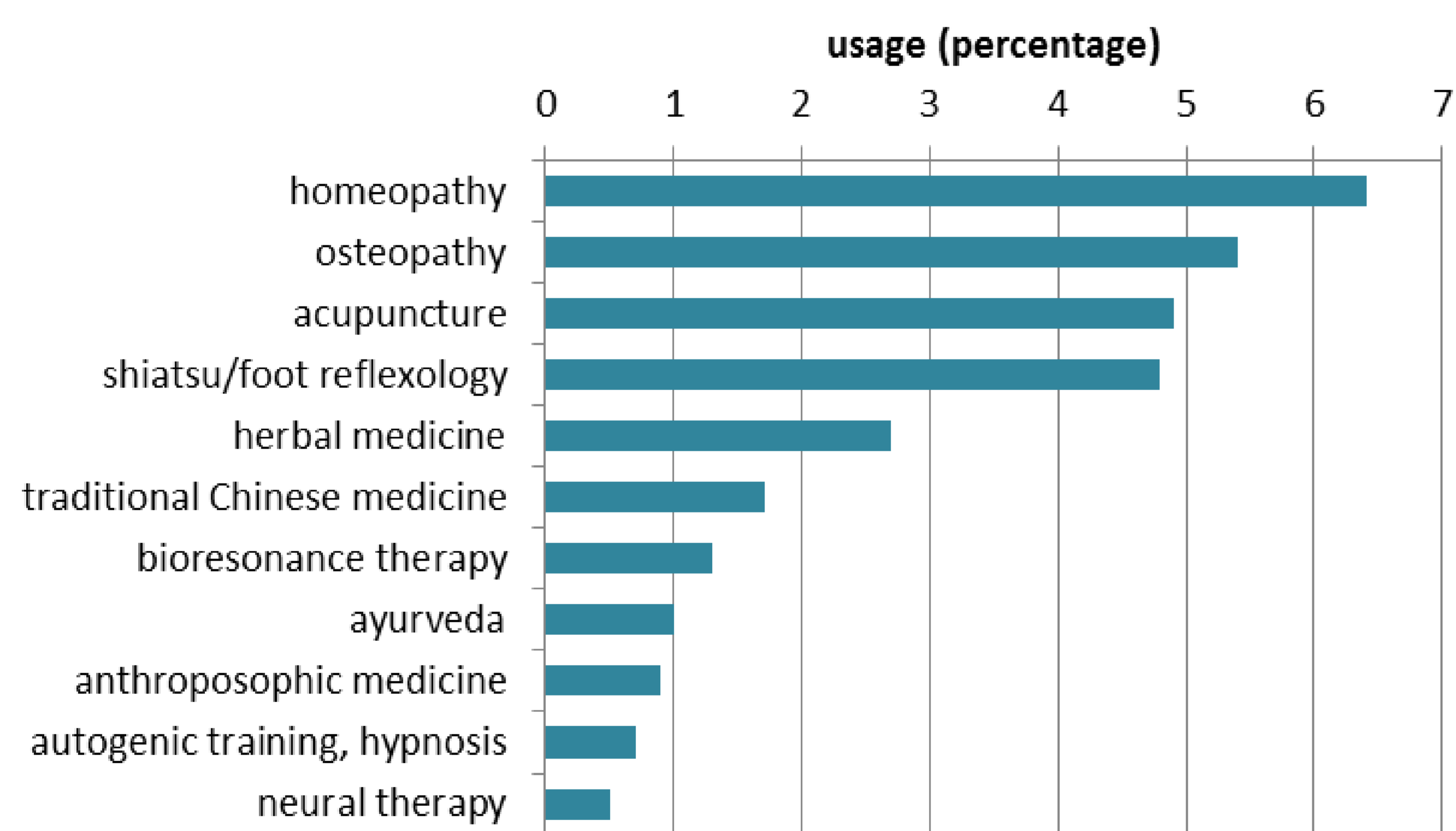


Fig. 1: Usage of various methods of CM in the last 12 months before the survey (percentage of the adult population).

Fig. 2

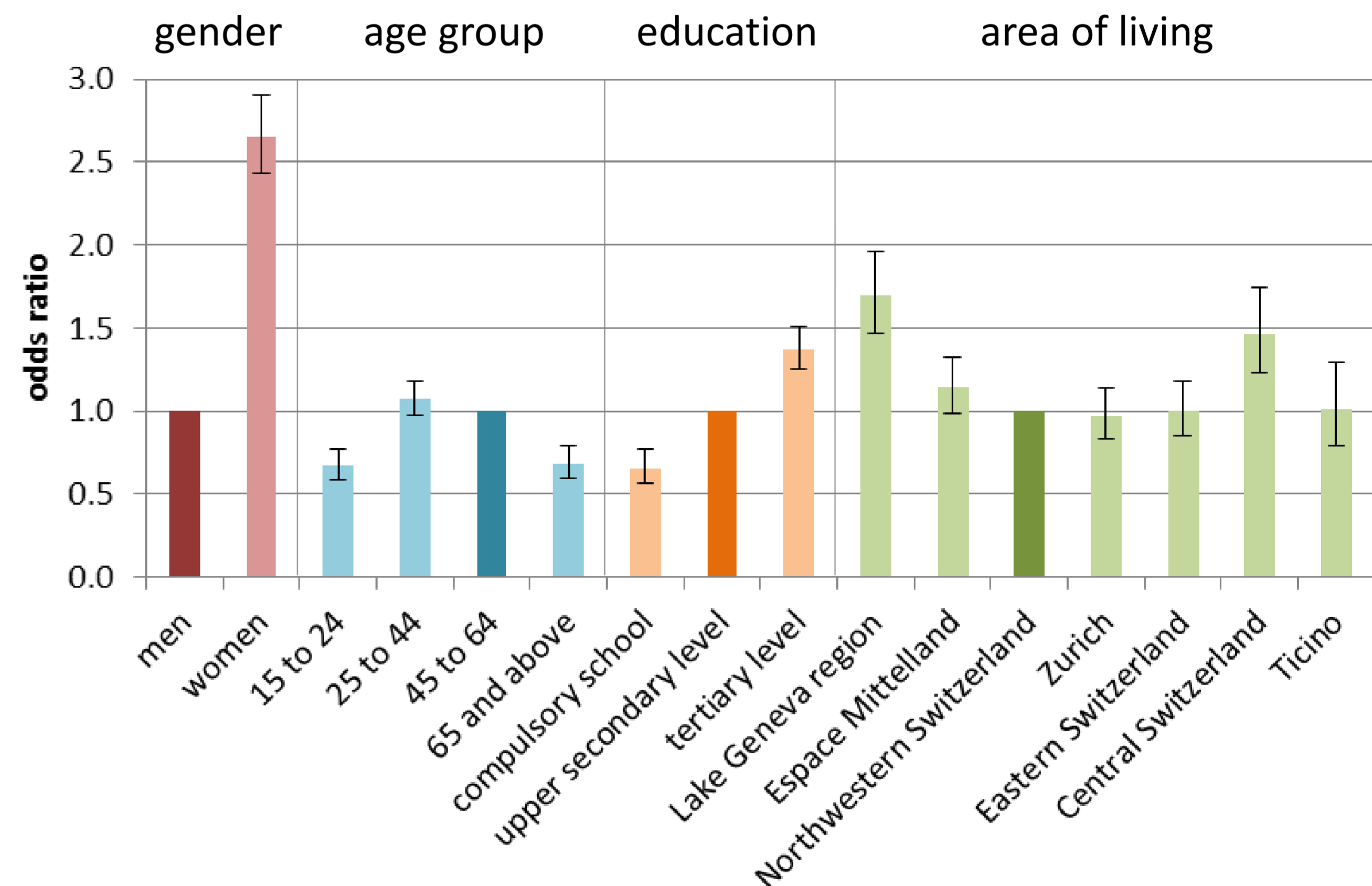


Fig. 2: Logistic regression model comparing users to non-users of CM. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals are shown; darker bars represent reference categories.

Fig. 3



Fig. 3: Usage of CM across Swiss regions (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics level 2). The percentage of users is illustrated.

References

- [1] Swiss Health Survey: http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/infothek/erhebungen__quellen/blank/blank/ess/01.html
- [2] Klein SD, Frei-Erb M, Wolf U. Usage of complementary medicine across Switzerland. Results of the Swiss Health Survey 2007. Swiss Med Wkly 2012;142:w13666.