Statistical storytelling

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Storytelling

- Popular
- Good stories
  - Catch our attention
  - Easy to remember
- Invoke anger, surprise or happiness
- Stories relate to peoples’ self
- The storyteller will win the information competition
Our situation

- It is our responsibility that the public, the man in the street know the main statistical results about society.
- Traditional statistical information:
  - Tables
  - Graphs
  - Text
    - metadata
    - verbal version of the tables
- Good enough for the experts, but not for an average reader

Can statistics make good stories?

- Objective, neutral facts
- Table, graph, text – complete each other
  - not repeating each other
  - Table: exact details
  - Graph: main tendencies
  - Text: The causes and the effects
- Historical statistics
  - rise and fall, ways of living and ways of dying
"To put people on our lap and tell them what the world is like"
- Relate our statistics to their everyday life
- Use per capita
- For long distances, compare with known places
- Explain the background and consequences
- Identification
  - not personal cases
  - fiction persons: a typical representative

Storytelling in Statistics Norway

1. 1992: Table publications
3. 1997: Daily on ssb.no
4. 2000: web-magazine
   - historical stories
   - This is how we live
   - Census exhibition on ssb.no, 1801-1900-2001
   - CD for the census babies
5. 2003: Main subject pages on ssb.no
   - give priority to important statistics
- People feel smart, not stupid, after having read our statistics