

# 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
  2. 1993-1997: Statistics of the Week – journalists
  3. 1997: Daily on [ssb.no](http://ssb.no)
  4. 2000: web-magazine
    - ◆ historical stories
    - ◆ This is how we live
    - ◆ Census exhibition on [ssb.no](http://ssb.no), 1801-1900-2001
    - ◆ CD for the census babies
  5. 2003: Main subject pages on [ssb.no](http://ssb.no)
    - ◆ give priority to important statistics
- ❖ People feel smart, not stupid, after having read our statistics

