

#IstatNewsletter: how to increase audience and strengthen brand reputation

Michela Troia, Istat

Abstract

The newsletter is one of the best tools for building trust and brand: sending regular e-mail communications allows you to establish a relationship with your target audience and strengthen it over time. Provided, of course, that you are offering a useful service to your users: informing them about events and initiatives, communicating data and information, offering insights into topics of interest, etc.

It is a rather inexpensive form of communication, compared to other forms of promotion (flyers, posters, advertisements, etc.), but it requires commitment and editorial care.

Newsletters are therefore used to establish a relationship with users, because they increase brand awareness, but also ensure that the public is constantly informed.

In order to be effective, the newsletter must not only inform, but must also give the opportunity to deepen, bringing a real benefit to the end user. In newsletters, content is king: the main objective is therefore to provide quality, useful and interesting content for the recipients.

With this in mind, Istat launched the #IstatNewsletter in June 2022.

Designed as a practical communication tool, the #IstatNewsletter is sent by e-mail every Monday.

It collects all the previous week's updates on the institutional website and allows subscribers not to miss the latest information on data, events, publications, competitions, calls for tenders and many other updates.

Istat disseminates and publishes a lot of content (about 12 per week) on www.istat.it. The added value of the newsletter is to allow subscribers to receive an email with all the content published during the whole week collected in one organised list, which allows in-depth analysis, with links to the institutional website.

With the institutional newsletter, Istat therefore achieves the following objectives:

- *bring statistical information to a wider audience*
- *increase brand awareness*
- *build trust*
- *significantly increase traffic to the institutional site, thanks to the strong synergy created between the newsletter and the website.*

The proposed paper will illustrate the #IstatNewsletter project that in just 10 months has reached more than 15 thousand subscribers.

The strategy of the #IstatNewsletter (the target, the graphic and editorial choices and the acquisition of new users), all the management aspects (the privacy of subscribers) and its performance over time will be analysed and described.

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1. Introduction¹

The newsletter is one of the best tools to increase trust in a brand: sending regular e-mail communications allows you to establish a bond with your target audience and strengthen it over time. Provided, of course, that you offer a service with a variety of purposes: informing about events and initiatives, letting people know about new data and information, offering insights into topics of interest, etc. It is a rather inexpensive form of communication, compared to other forms of promotion (flyers, flyers, posters, commercials, etc.), but it requires commitment and editorial care.

Newsletters are therefore used to establish a relationship with users, because they not only allow contact to be maintained, but also ensure that the public is constantly informed. In order to be effective, the newsletter must not only inform, but must also give the opportunity to deepen, bringing a real benefit to the end user.

In newsletters, content is king: the main focus is therefore on providing quality content that is useful and interesting for the recipients. And it is precisely in giving the right value to content that the most challenging game is played.

So, summarising, the objectives to be achieved with an institutional newsletter are:

- Inform
- Involve
- Build loyalty
- Increase brand awareness

¹ Ariella Martino - Istat

Istat produces a large number of weekly contents (about 12), many of which are only echoed on the day of publication. As mentioned, some content is not announced in the following week's agenda, which is sent on Friday afternoon to the press office lists and simultaneously published on the website.

All this has led Istat to consider the launch of an institutional newsletter extremely useful, as it allows new audiences to be reached and existing ones to be retained; it also relaunches published content and gives the possibility of going deeper into the content thanks to the link to the dedicated page on the website.

2. The Istat newsletter²

The newsletter is one of the communication tools used to communicate and promote all the Institute's activities, which are carried out through the institutional website. In fact, Istat disseminates and publishes a lot of content on its website www.istat.it.

The added value of the newsletter is that it allows subscribers to receive an email with all the contents published by Istat during the whole week collected in a single list organised by categories, with links to the same contents on the institutional website for a possible deepening.

The specific objectives of Istat's institutional newsletter are the following

- to bring statistical information to a wider audience
- increase brand recognition and trust
- to significantly increase traffic on the institutional site, as the newsletter and the site would be strongly synergetic.

In addition, there is a web version of the newsletter to which weekly social media posts are addressed, which helps to make it viral and increase the number of subscribers, thus creating a virtuous circle.

As already mentioned, therefore, the newsletter would also act as a complementary tool to the weekly calendar published on Friday afternoon each week on <https://www.istat.it/en/information-and-services/journalists/press-releases-/press-calendar> sent to press office lists, enriching the information on content not announced in the calendar, which offers ex-ante information and obviously cannot link to content.

3. Target³

Before starting with the institutional newsletter, an analysis of the target audience was carried out.

Since it was decided to convey through the newsletter everything that is published on www.istat.it the target audience is consequently the same, i.e. potentially all users: those who are interested in statistical information out of curiosity or because they want to know about the country's data,

² Michela Troia - Istat

³ Michela Troia - Istat

professionals, public administrations, companies, researchers and data analysts, data journalists, the media and public decision-makers.

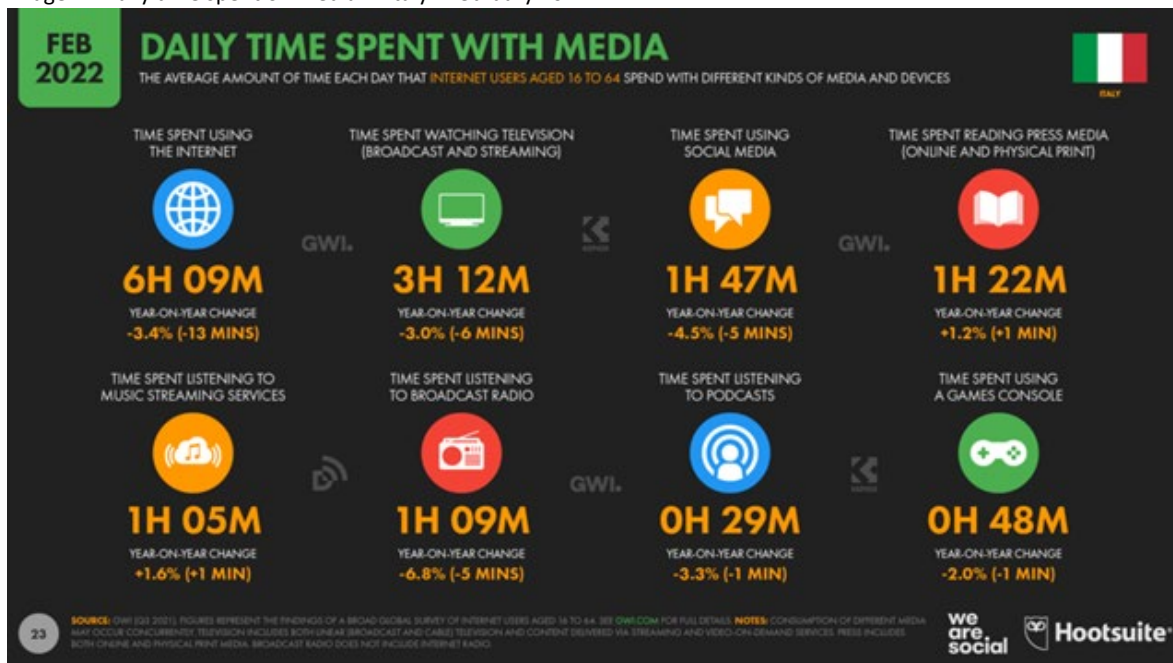
Moreover, even if the target audience coincides with that of the website, the newsletter allows, on the one hand, to reach a potential audience and, on the other hand, to retain that audience that does not frequent the website every week.

Compared to the institutional website, the newsletter is a 'push' communication tool that arrives directly in subscribers' mail and, compared to social channels, generally receives more attention.

Another great potential of the newsletter is to allow it to reach all those users who, for various reasons, do not use social media to get information. In fact, if we look at data from the period in which the opportunity to create a newsletter was analysed, 30.1% of 14-80 year olds used Facebook as a source of information; 3% of the population acquired information on Twitter (5% among the youngest) and 12.6% on YouTube: this means⁴ that the rest of the population does not regularly use these channels to access information. And even those who do use them generally inform themselves by combining several sources.

Italians, in particular, spend more than six hours on the Internet, part of which is spent reading e-mail. The main purpose of 73.6% of Internet users is to inform themselves (see figure 2).

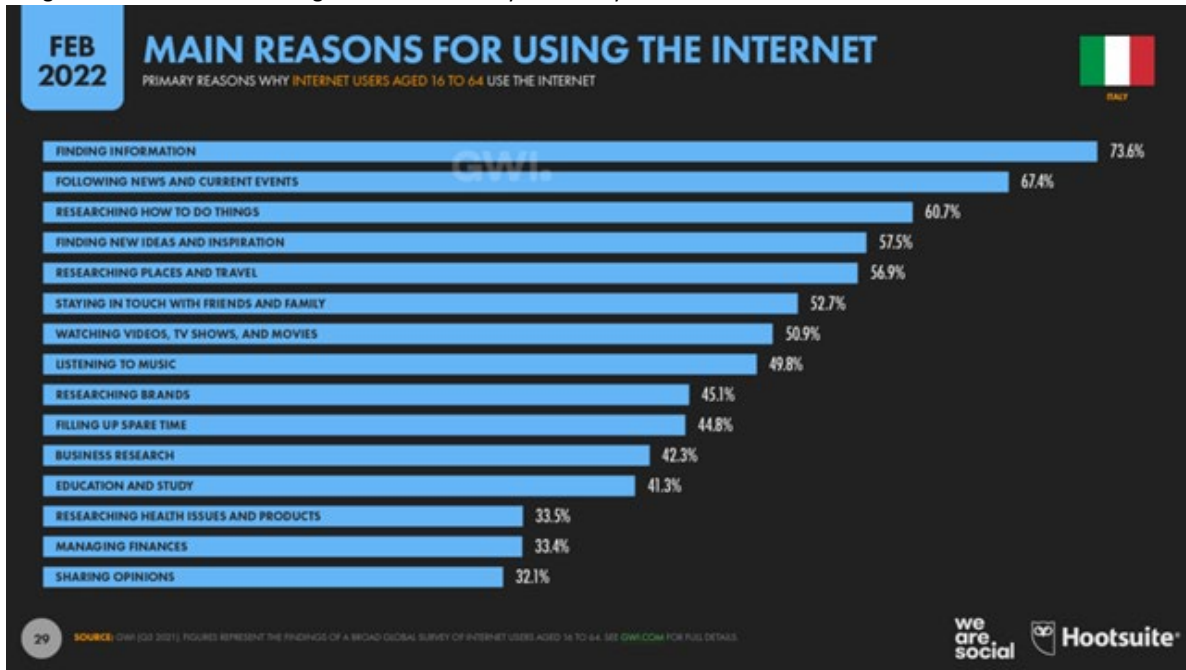
Image 1 - Daily time spent on media in Italy - February 2022



Source: We are social-Hootsuite

⁴ cfr. Rapporto Osservatorio permanente Censis-Ital Communications sulle Agenzie di comunicazione in Italia, Dicembre 2021

Image 2 - Main reasons for using the Internet in Italy - February 2022



Source: We are social-Hootsuite

In addition to a version sent by email, the newsletter has a web version of the weekly social media postings, which are useful to viralize it and increase the number of subscribers receiving it.

The newsletter also represents a complementary communication tool to the weekly agenda published on Friday afternoon each week at <https://www.istat.it/en/information-and-services/journalists/press-releases-/press-calendar> and sent to the media by the press office, in fact compared to the agenda there are content that have not been announced, moreover the newsletter links directly to the insights, something that obviously the agenda cannot do since it is sent ex-ante with respect to dissemination.

4. Naming⁵

The title of an institutional newsletter must be strongly connoted as a corporate product.

For this reason, the name chosen was #IstatNewsletter. An easily memorized and absolutely recognizable name that immediately explains what the product is and who is sending it.

This choice has the only limitation of not being very original, but we preferred to prioritize identifiability.

⁵ Giuseppe Ventre - Istat

5. The choice of content and how to organise it⁶

As mentioned several times, the content corresponds to everything published on www.istat.it, the articles are divided by sections, and in each section they are put in descending order with respect to the date of dissemination.

The sections of #istatNewsletter are, in the order in which they appear:

1. News
2. Events
3. Publications
4. Hearings and contributions to Parliament
5. Press releases
6. Infographics
7. Data tables
8. Microdata
9. Updates of Information Systems and Databases
10. Experimental Statistics
11. Classifications
12. Articles and interviews
13. Data at hand. Statistics for all
14. Transparent administration.

We decided to start with news and then events. The events are published two weeks before the event, in order to solicit registrations; after the event they are republished, if ex post material has been added.

This is followed by publications, contributions that Istat prepares ad hoc for Parliament and press releases.

After this content, which in addition to data also has an analysis, we move on to infographics, which are purely communication content.

Then we move on to the contents more related to data and after that to those referring to metadata with classifications.

This is followed by the posts in the section dedicated to whomever, either adult or very young, would like to become familiar with official statistics and Istat data.

⁶ Giuseppe Ventre - Istat

Last but not least are the administrative contents.

Obviously, sections that do not have content in the reference week for that week are not included.

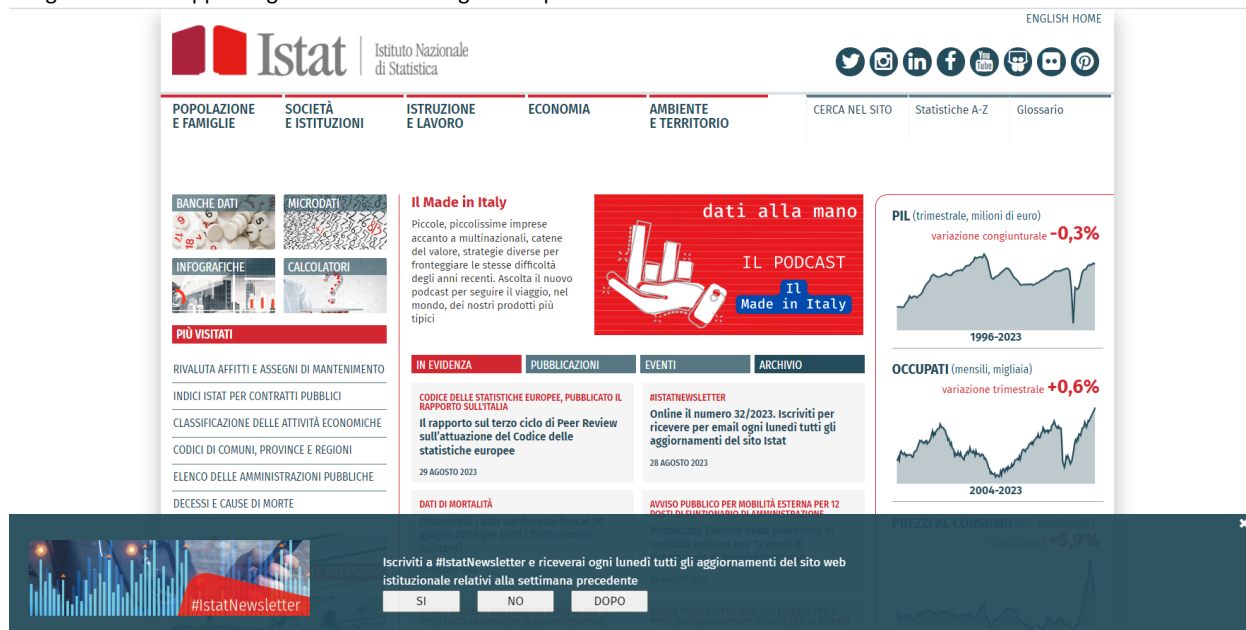
6. How to acquire subscribers⁷

A launch strategy was planned for subscriber acquisition in conjunction with the launch of the first issue through several actions:

- a news item on the institutional website
- a subscription page on the website <https://www.garanteprivacy.it/home/stampa-comunicazione/newsletter> accessible from the footer of the home page
- a banner on the site offering newsletter subscription, with the following message "Sign up for #IstatNewsletter and receive every Monday all the updates on the institutional site for the previous week. Yes, no or later" (image 3)
- a social campaign on LinkedIn and Twitter
- a news on the Istat Intranet
- a banner in the home page of the "Portale del Sistan" <https://www.sistan.it/>.

We are also considering a number of actions to further increase membership, which are described in the "Next Steps" paragraph.

Image 3 - Banner appearing on the site offering subscription to the newsletter



The image shows a screenshot of the Istat website home page. At the top, there is the Istat logo and navigation menu. Below the menu, there are several content blocks including "Il Made in Italy", "dati alla mano", "PIL (trimestrale, milioni di euro)", and "OCCUPATI (mensili, migliaia)". At the bottom of the page, there is a dark blue banner for the #IstatNewsletter. The banner contains the text: "Iscriviti a #IstatNewsletter e riceverai ogni lunedì tutti gli aggiornamenti del sito web istituzionale relativi alla settimana precedente". Below the text are three buttons: "SI", "NO", and "DOPO".

⁷ Michela Troia - Istat

7. Sending the newsletter: choice of time and day⁸

In order to achieve a high e-mail read rate, it is important to identify the best time to send the Istat Newsletter, i.e. the time and day that can guarantee the best Click Through Rate.

Istat's experience in managing its database of contacts for sending communications and invitations to institutional conferences and seminars has shown that most users use their work e-mail address to register for events. So we analysed people's behaviour with respect to work email. We know that people generally spend the early hours of the morning checking their inbox, prioritising important e-mails and then working on more urgent tasks. By mid-morning, presumably between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, people have already read and filed the important communications and are freer and more willing to read other content and especially to click and explore the links of interest proposed in the email.

Another factor taken into consideration when choosing the day of sending was the fact that #IstatNewsletter offers a summary of all the updates published on www.istat.it in the week preceding the week of sending, thus offering users the freshest possible information.

In light of these considerations, the day chosen for sending the newsletter was Monday morning.

Tenendo conto delle precedenti considerazioni, possiamo affermare che il momento migliore per l'invio della Newsletter Istat è il lunedì between 10 a.m. and 12 noon.

8. Choise of layout⁹

Regarding the graphic layout of the Newsletter, among all the layouts proposed (see image 4), the simplest and driest format was chosen (the last one in image 4), without icons, boxes and coloured sticks, to remind the user of a browsing experience similar to the one he would have when visiting the 'Document Archive' (<https://www.istat.it/en/archive>) page of the Istat website.

Fundamental, therefore, is a strong reference to the Istat visual identity, with the logo immediately inserted in the header for immediate recognisability, together with the data relating to the periodicity of the issue presented in a clear and linear manner.

As for the main body of the newsletter, a layout was prepared that:

- took into account the brand colours: red, a strongly attentional colour, was used in the header to guide the user to the information block of interest
- had a simplified and uncluttered layout for quick access to the information
- made use of a single-column design already naturally predisposed for responsive (many access emails with smartphones)
- was structured in modular blocks for timely technical composition and fast user experience
- had large texts and very clear typography to ensure fast reading.

⁸ Cristina Pezzati - Istat

⁹ Sofia Barletta - Istat

Image 4 – Five hypothesis of layout





ANNO 2022
23

ISTAT NEWSLETTER
Tutti gli aggiornamenti dal sito istat.it
dal 31 gennaio al 4 febbraio

Pubblicazioni



POSTI VACANTI – STIME PRELIMINARI

L'Istat rende disponibili il tasso di posti vacanti destagionalizzato per il totale delle imprese con dipendenti

Periodo di riferimento: Quarto trimestre 2021

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Comunicati stampa



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Informativa sulla privacy

Sul sito Istat è disponibile l'[informativa sul trattamento dei dati personali](#).
In qualsiasi momento l'interessato potrà gestire le sue preferenze o rimuovere l'iscrizione dalla mailing list cliccando sugli appositi link che si trovano in calce a questa email.

[Gestisci le tue preferenze](#) | [Cancella iscrizione](#)

Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
Via Cesare Balbo 16, Roma - 00184



1 | 2022 NEWSLETTER

Tutti gli aggiornamenti dal sito istat.it dal 31 gennaio al 4 febbraio 2022

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Periodo di riferimento: Quarto trimestre 2021



1 | 2022 #IstatNewsletter

Tutti gli aggiornamenti dal sito Istat | 20-24 giugno 2022

Notizie

Noi Italia edizione 2022

Online la pubblicazione web che offre una selezione di oltre 100 indicatori statistici sulla realtà ambientale, economica e sociale dell'Italia

Data di pubblicazione: 21 giugno 2022

Contest: Campioni del bene comune. La tua storia al servizio del Paese
Prorogata al 3 luglio la scadenza per partecipare al contest indetto in occasione del Censimento permanente delle Istituzioni non profit

Data di pubblicazione: 23 giugno 2022

Call for papers - 2022 UNECE expert meeting on statistical data collection

La scadenza per l'invio delle proposte è fissata per il 30 giugno

Data di pubblicazione: 23 giugno 2022

Eventi

Rapporto annuale 2022

L'8 luglio il presidente dell'Istat Gian Carlo Blangiardo illustra il "Rapporto annuale 2022 - La situazione del Paese"

Data evento: 8 luglio 2022

Al via il rilascio dei primi dati del 7° Censimento generale dell'Agricoltura
Il 28 giugno 2022 alle 10.00 si tiene l'evento in cui Istat racconta come sta cambiando il settore agricolo alla luce dei primi dati del Censimento dell'Agricoltura

Data evento: 28 giugno 2022

Istat al Forum PA 2022

Dal 14 al 17 giugno 2022 l'Istat ha partecipato alla manifestazione dedicata all'innovazione nella PA, guarda le registrazioni degli eventi e consulta le slide

Data evento: 14-17 giugno 2022

Comunicati stampa

Fiducia dei consumatori e delle imprese

A giugno indice del clima di fiducia consumatori da 102,7 a 98,3; fiducia imprese da 111,0 a 113,6

Periodo di riferimento: giugno 2022

Data di pubblicazione: 24 giugno 2022

Commercio estero extra UE

A maggio 2022 importazioni -0,8%, esportazioni +4,7% su mese, saldo commerciale -637 milioni

Periodo di riferimento: maggio 2022

Data di pubblicazione: 24 giugno 2022

I centenari in Italia

Al 1° gennaio 2021 si contano in Italia 17.177 persone residenti di 100 anni e oltre. L'83% sono donne

Periodo di riferimento: 1 gennaio 2021

Data di pubblicazione: 23 giugno 2022

9. Management at full speed¹⁰

In order to create the newsletter product and make it sustainable, i.e., achievable every week, an internal task force was established within Istat administration, specifically within the communication department, with the following objectives:

1. Conceptualize an institutional newsletter.
2. Develop a strategy to increase newsletter subscribers.
3. Draft a procedure for newsletter production.
4. Ensure the drafting and sending of the newsletter.

The first three objectives were achieved in the months immediately following the formation of the group, while the last objective is ongoing.

The task force is comprised of a coordinator serving as the Editor-in-Chief, a Digital Newsletter Production Manager, a Content Manager, a Layout and Graphic Design Manager, and four editors.

¹⁰ Giorgia Proietti Pannunzi - Istat

First, the topics and their order within the newsletter were established. The first topic that appears is related to news, specifically all the general updates published on the Istat website during the week. These are actual news items, not press releases containing statistical information, which sometimes appear on the website's homepage but often remain on secondary pages and are, therefore, more "hidden." These news items can be intended for professionals or researchers, but they can also include more general news.

For this reason, the work of the editor is also somewhat "journalistic" because it involves finding news items that may be of interest to our audience and including them in the newsletter.

The other sections cover the daily press releases that the Institute publishes on economic, social, environmental data, etc., as well as publications, events, hearings by the president or top management. One section pertains to our data tables, another to microdata, and another to database updates. There is a section designed for a non-specialist audience called "Data at Hand: Statistics for Everyone!" Finally, but not less important, there is a section dedicated to transparent administration, containing news about transparency, as well as tender notices and competitions. Please refer to §5 for the complete list of contents in the newsletter.

The editor's task is to identify news related to each area and place them in the corresponding section. Additionally, the editor must check or adjust the title compared to what is published on the website, include the period to which the data refers, and the publication date. An essential and precise task is to insert the link that leads the user to the section of the website where that news is located.

Notizie

Indice dei prezzi per le rivalutazioni monetarie

Aggiornati gli indici dei prezzi per adeguare affitti, assegni dovuti al coniuge separato, TFR. Aggiornati i file con i coefficienti per tradurre i valori monetari dal 1861 in valori del 2022

Periodo di riferimento: Luglio 2023

Data di pubblicazione: 10 agosto 2023

Sometimes it may be necessary to remove the reference period from the title as it can be redundant or to make the subtitle more informative. This is, in fact, an editing task aimed at highlighting the news.

The editing process, once the actual writing is completed, which takes place directly within the platform used for sending (MailUp), involves sending a test version to the editor-in-chief and the content manager, who verify the accuracy of the titles, links, and the completeness of the information inserted.

Once formal approval is obtained, the digital platform manager is informed, and they proceed with the final sending of the newsletter.

Once the newsletter is sent, the news about the release of the new issue is published on the institutional website. Simultaneously, a post is made on Istat's social media channels: a brief descriptive text accompanied by a graphic card that is consistent and coordinated with the newsletter's layout.

The chosen social media channel to amplify the newsletter content every week is LinkedIn, although in the initial product promotion phase, other social media channels, especially Twitter and Instagram, were also used, with the news being conveyed through stories.

The content destined for social networks is also distributed through an app called Amplify to our ambassadors: a network of internal (colleagues) and external individuals who amplify the content shared by Istat.

Typically, the newsletter product is prepared by the editorial team during the final days of the week to have a draft ready by Friday afternoon. The subsequent stages of review and validation take place in the early hours of Monday morning, and the sending is typically finalized around 12.00 PM on the same day.

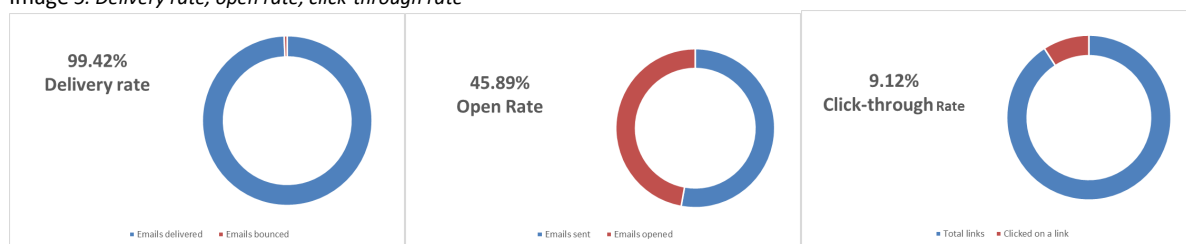
10. Performance¹¹

Looking at the period from January to August 2023, in which 33 issues were sent out, it appears that all performance indicators (KPIs) of #IstatNewsletter are excellent.

In detail, the KPIs considered are:

- **Delivery rate:** indicates the ability of an email to reach recipients without being deleted from webmail, filtered or sent to spam
- **Open Rate:** the percentage of recipients who open the newsletter. This metric helps gauge the effectiveness of your subject line and the level of interest amongst your subscribers
- **Click-through Rate (CTR):** the percentage of recipients who click on any link within the newsletter. CTR indicates the relevance and value of your content to subscribers.

Image 5. Delivery rate, open rate, click-through rate



As shown in image 5, the Istat Newsletter had a very good performance with 99.42% email delivery (email addresses are provided by the users themselves by filling out a registration form and consequently are mostly exact addresses); more than 45% Newsletter openings and 9.12% clicks for a total of 126,041 openings.

The figure relating to users who subscribed to the Istat Newsletter is particularly significant: as Figure 5 shows, the number of users subscribed to the service has grown steadily over time, rising from 9,900 users to 17,910, marking an increase of 80.9%.

¹¹ Cristina Pezzati - Istat

Image 6: Number subscribers

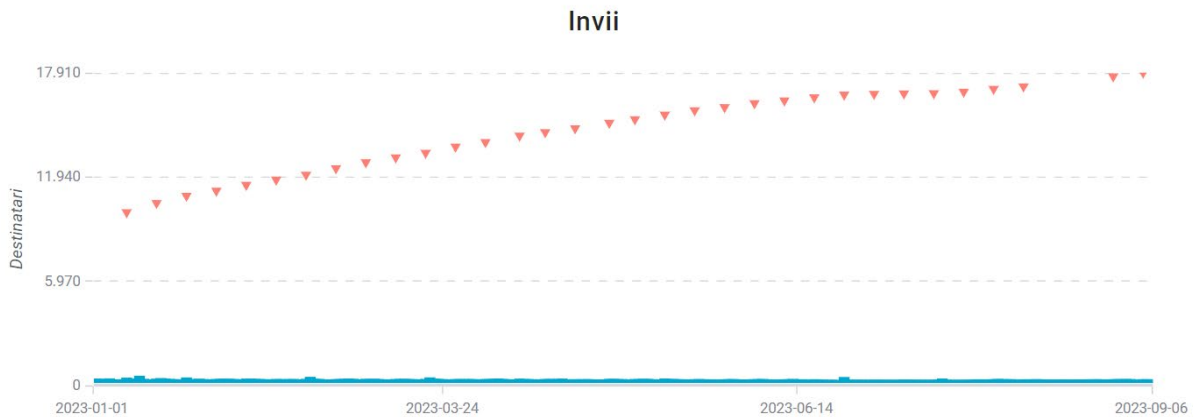
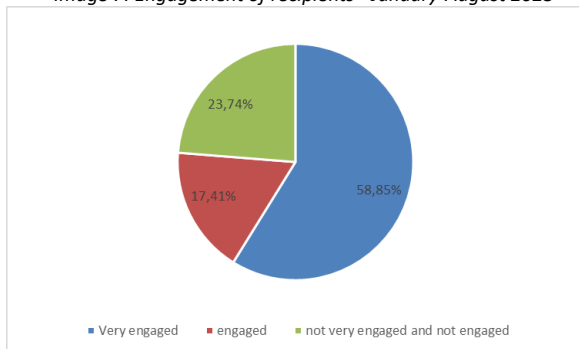


Image 7 shows the degree of involvement of the recipients: 52.82% of those receiving #IstatNewsletter are Very Active and 18.67% are Active. In total therefore 71, 49% of users show interest through the openings, clicks and shares. The percentage of those who unsubscribe is very low and is 0.14%.

Image 7: Engagement of recipients - January-August 2023



11. Next steps¹²

Moving on to the next steps, first of all we decided to renew the layout of #IstatNewsletter in June 2024, when the newsletter will be two years old.

Furthermore, although the subscriber growth trend is very good, we are planning several initiatives to promote our newsletter, here are the ones identified at the moment:

- include an invitation to subscribe in the weekly mailing of the Sistan agenda (around 4,200 subscribers)
- banners in the event registration form
- a post on the contact centre home page

¹² Ariella Martino - Istat

- inclusion of an invitation to subscribe in the weekly mailing of the agenda by the press office every Friday afternoon to all its mailing lists.
- new content for social media posts: in particular, we have devised a 'carousel' format consisting of about 6 slides presenting the week's main news items. The final slide contains the call to action "click here to subscribe to the #IstatNewsletter" with the link to our newsletter. In the light of our experience, this format works very well on LinkedIn and Instagram. Further customised content will be designed for Facebook and Twitter (X). These posts will also be made available to Istat's ambassadors from whom we ask for support to amplify certain news.