



# **Future of Work - Reaching Youth**

As part of the Capabilities & Communication group  
HLG-MOS

# Index

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Why We Focus on Youth	3
1.2	Objectives	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Discovered Trends	5
2.2	Challenges & Recommendations	6
2.3	Future Exploration	7
<b>3.</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>9</b>

# 1. Introduction

NSI's are increasingly struggling with effectively targeting and reaching youth with current communication strategies. This field is of interest as NSIs have an official task to inform policymakers and citizens, which includes the youngest generation, to stimulate data use and statistical literacy. The challenges NSI currently face are multifold and further explained in section 1.1 of this chapter. Section 1.2 provides more information on the objectives and scope of the research executed to gain insights on the matter. This information is then used to see where NSIs do well and where there is room to grow so that they are able to move forward with regards to targeting youth.

The findings of this research are specified to the Reaching Youth sub-group, which is one of three subgroups of the Future of Work (FoW) taskforce team. The objectives and gathered insights contribute to the grander goals of the FoW as listed in the upcoming sections.

## 1.1 Why We Focus on Youth

Before diving into the research, its results and potential areas for future research, it's important to consider why we focus on youth and how we should target youth as NSIs. There are a variety of different factors that contribute to this topic.

As mentioned before, one of the main formal goals of an NSI is to inform citizens, stimulate data use and increase statistical literacy. As the young generation is our future generation, it is one of the cohorts that should receive specific care within a communication strategy of an NSI. Weaknesses and threads that are currently identified by NSIs are other reasons why the research in this paper is initiated. On the one hand youth primarily use non-traditional communication tools which are not well embedded at the NSI to communicate information with. While NSIs hardly have any influence on what media platforms youth use, it is within their power to become more prominent in tools that they utilize. On the other, external factors are at play which alter the way we should operate as statistical bureaus in the community.

The external factors that NSIs currently face are multifold and differ somewhat across regions and continents. However, the main issues and relations between these problems remain the same. One of these external influences is that the data landscape is changing which impacts how we collect data. The more diverse a community is, the different belief structures are on how the world works. As these thinking models of people change on what is true and false, the information needed to support these discussions also change. Thus, as diversity increases in the world, more questions arise that NSIs need to answer in constantly evolving political-, economic-, social- and environmental contexts. Additionally, the shift in how the world generates more data in recent years forces the NSI to utilize new methods and tools to extract, analyze and share data. The faster these changes happen, the faster the demand for data and its collection occur. Thus, NSIs need to become flexible to how they collect data and how they answer questions that may arise in the future. In this scenario, NSIs need youth as one of their key target groups who determine the future of society.

When looking at the youth cohort on its own, NSIs additionally see a low response rate compared to other groups or cohorts targeted. While one of the premises in this chapter presented was that

communication strategies don't align with non-traditional media sources, there are also unique opportunities that characterize the youth cohort which NSIs can leverage to their benefit. For example, with the increase of new media there are more means available to target youth than before. However, being overrun with messages and communication tools is not an uncommon phenomenon reported in the current age which NSIs should be aware of on how to deal with these challenges. Most importantly is the notion that the youth cohort becomes more homogenous within its group, even across regions or continents, as opposed to other groups in terms of communication style and information use due to the increase of globalization and the universal methods available to share information.

## 1.2 Objectives

The scope of this research is defined by taking the resources, time and the factors as explained in the previous chapter into account. The focus of this research completed during the project revolved around targeting youth. Youth are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years which is in line with the definition the United Nations used in preparation for the International Youth Year in 1985<sup>1</sup>.

To obtain insights on the objectives that were set out on how NSIs reach youth and interact with them, the following high-level objectives are of interest:

- Reaching youth in a general sense: This topic considers overall approaches and communication strategies utilized to engage with and target youth. It questions whether an NSI pays special attention to the youth cohort in their general communication strategy.
- Youth as a data user: Which looks into how the NSI stimulates data use and boosts statistical literacy among youth. This research topic is defined so that more information on what methods and events NSIs utilize within their current strategy. Additionally, measures on effectiveness and efficiency are regarded.
- Youth as a data source: The last topic focuses on strategies and conditions under which youth act as data suppliers. The research tries to gather insights on how NSIs target youth and what boundaries and legislation they consider during this process. It also considers what modes or channels the NSI uses, what validation criteria are used and if experiments to validate the previously mentioned points are conducted.

---

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly 36/28 of 1981 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/377/78/IMG/NR037778.pdf?OpenElement>

## 2. Findings

The findings presented in this chapter are the results of the analysis on the questionnaire set out by the FoW taskforce team, explained in more detail in chapter 3. Section 2.1 of this chapter focuses on what methods NSIs currently use to target youth and what trends we see across NSIs. Section 2.2 presents more detail on what challenges and gaps in the knowledgebase exists. The last section glances on future research objectives based on the results from section 2.1 and 2.2.

### 2.1 Discovered Trends

The discovered trends and methods NSI utilize to target youth, boost statistical literacy and increase information use are collected in the deliverable called *The Reaching Youth Repository*<sup>2</sup>. The repository depicts a table in which activities and methods are displayed, a description of the method, used approach, results and how another NSI could implement the method or activity in their own organization. Thus, the deliverable gives an overview of what tactics NSIs currently have in place and what wins are achieved by utilizing these methods to target youth specifically. A complete overview or more details on specific methods or activities can be seen on the Statswiki website of UNECE.

The main conclusions drawn from the analysis and *The Reaching Youth Repository* are that NSIs are already utilizing a lot of different methods and activities that boost statistical literacy. Methods to increase statistical literacy and information use were mentioned most often by respondents. Examples include training and lesson materials at schools, career fairs, statistics competitions (both national and international), open days and sharing infographics on media channels to name a few. However, while these were heavily reported, evidence in the survey indicating that youth are seen as a separate cohort within the communication strategy were underrepresented. This may indicate a mismatch in what NSIs set out to do and what they actually undergo to target youth. Ultimately, this could result in methods not being specified or effective enough as concrete goals or objectives are missing in the general communication strategy to align these methods with.

Another important insight uncovered in the research is that one NSI experienced, for the first time, that teachers and students were reaching out to the NSI with a request for more explanation on using statistics, background information and methodology. The NSI reports that this shift in communication direction is the effect of them promoting research projects at schools and using statistics in examination questions. The evidence leads to conclude that these efforts are answered with active response from the target audience where there first was a one-sided flow of information, from the NSI to schools.

Following the conclusion of the previous paragraph, NSIs should consider how they can leverage questions or opportunities to inform the youth cohort. Another implementation to achieve this phenomenon could be the manner in which NSIs ask for feedback from the cohort or stakeholders. For example, being open on why NSIs measure effectiveness on methods like lesson materials to both teachers and students could increase their awareness to why NSIs aid policymakers, citizens and students with statistical literacy and data use. As this understanding increases, the rationale to why NSIs collect data grows and may translate over to other relations

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/MCOOFE/Repository+Reaching+Youth>

youth might have or gain. For instance, their inclination to respond to surveys, questionnaires or other data collection tools in which they are targeted as data suppliers by the NSI.

## 2.2 Challenges & Recommendations

This section gives an overview of the findings and challenges derived from the analysis on the questionnaire introduced by the FoW taskforce team. Some of these insights prove to be future research areas as they indicate gaps in our current domain of knowledge, both from the responding NSIs viewpoint as the analysis itself.

While there are a lot of useful approaches, activities and guidelines already in place or utilized by the NSIs (see *The Reaching Youth Repository* for more). The key points below focus on gaps within our current knowledge or areas in which growth is achievable and desirable in comparison to the current state of NSIs as found in the analysis on the questionnaire. Additionally, suggestions and recommendations are done as a basis for future research. Lastly, the points below are not mapped to the three objectives as seen in section 1.2 as most have a relation to more than one.

- While many NSIs use a variety of modes to target youth, there is often not much research or validation criteria on what modes work best for what goal. Concrete information on what mode is most effective for data collection (qualitative or quantitative) from youth including conditions subsidiary to the goal of the research are most often missing. Some information is available on this topic in the European Social Survey (ESS) on the development of several mode combinations.
- Social media is a means often cited by NSIs as a communication tool to reach and communicate with youth. While certain templates or communication approaches are generally in place, a custom social media strategy or key performance indicators to be measured are missing or at the least a gray area. Through the readily available analytics functionality on many social media platforms, there is easily accessible potential to be claimed in this field. Even more so, when more elaborate metrics or KPIs are defined to measure objectives for a custom social media strategy or campaigns.
- Similarly to first point of this section, measuring data or information used by youth is an underrepresented topic compared to the amount of times that programs, activities or methods are cited to boost statistical literacy, both domestic and international. Most NSIs respond with both a wide variety of implementations on the latter, while benchmarks on the validation criteria are often missing. Anecdotal evidence of the group suggests that one explanation for this gap is that developing these criteria can become costly very quickly as experiments, focus group or prototypes are needed and validated to draw conclusions on the matter.
- The analysis proved that market research specifically targeted at youth was often neglected, unanswered for in the questions or not one of the focus points for market research. In some of the responses there was mention of third party or other consulted research on the youth cohort either on reaching youth as a data source, boosting statistical literacy or communication strategies in general. Because of this, there is a need to do research on these topics specifically from the point of view of the NSI. Additionally, further useful insights might be extracted from previously conducted market research done on other difficult to reach cohorts that may share similar characteristics as the youth cohort.
- Another takeaway, in relation to the previous point, is on the potential to do further research on the possible distinction within the youth cohort as a whole. While there was

some evidence present in the questionnaire that some respondents executed different approaches based on age and educational level, there was no further information on what results these distinctions accumulated. Hence, exploration within the youth cohort might be valuable when issuing market research on youth.

- Across countries, regions and continents, different (although slightly similar) conditions and legislation were admitted in regards to contacting youth for obtaining data either through surveys, questionnaires or other communication means. Responding NSIs were aware of their countries legislation and issued barriers for contacting younger generations. However, effective measures to deal with in this environment were often not mentioned or left blank. A set of guidelines on effective ways to communicate might be beneficial as this group is a hard-to-reach group because of the age range, its resulting barriers and lower response rate compared to other groups.
- Finally, there are often many differences across generations. Due to globalization and social media (and other non-traditional communication methods used by youth) we see that within younger generations differences are no longer that significant even across countries or continents. Therefore, the focus of developing universal satisfaction surveys, statistical literacy methods, market research or other protocols might prove to be beneficial and cost efficient for participating NSIs regardless of their geographic location and cultural differences to an extent.

There are two last points that should be mentioned here separately as they have some degree of additive load to all the previous points made in this section:

- Many NSIs do report various experimentation on validation criteria or potential measures to assess effectiveness, but the be-all and end-all conclusion has not yet been determined. As stated in the previous points, the cost of these experiments rises quickly meaning that some bare level of insight is often settled for during these experiments.
- The second point is intertwined with the previous point and revolves around the premise that questions if youth determine the characteristic of the cohort that defines this problem or if the problem lies with a greater range of target groups that are hard to reach. This point is an interesting topic to consider as it might prove valuable in the upcoming research for youth and the relation to other cohorts with similar attributes.

## 2.3 Future Exploration

Taking the insights from this chapter into account, a variety of avenues to explore for future research emerge. The most important identified by this research from the viewpoint of the Reaching Youth group are listed below:

- The first point, which has a relation to all the consecutive bulletins, is that more effort should be given to research and collaboration in an international context. While budget and management is often more controlled in a national context, there is much to gain from doing research across regions. Not only can resources be split between partaking NSIs, but insights and unique findings are achievable due to cross cultural and geographical collaborations. All consecutive points could thus be executed in a national and an international context.
- Finding market research unique to the topic of reaching youth remains unique when looking at it from the perspective of NSIs. Therefore, a more holistic approach could be

achieved when issuing research from this perspective. Designated research areas could be on one or more points from section 2 of this chapter. One acknowledged suggestion of the FoW taskforce team is to develop a maturity model where various recommendations and ideas are proposed on how the NSI can cope with technological, generational and social shifts. Different approaches are explained and suggested based on the level of maturity of the NSI with regards to future of work and how to reach youth. Future of work in this sense refers to how the NSI sets out its strategy and objectives and in what manner these are influenced by the upcoming evolution of employees, business, workplace.

- When reviewing the topic of youth as a data user and increasing statistical literacy, the key future areas to research revolve around how NSIs can combine methods and activities they already utilize to gain greater results. Not only should this suggestion look into what methods and activities work well together (where an example was given in the last paragraph of section 2.1) but additionally on how NSIs are able to measure effectiveness. Combining these two, the research could suggest to NSIs what methods they should utilize based on their communication strategy, resources, time constraints or other factors effecting how youth is targeted. For example, an NSI could opt to approach youth via multiple different channels or they could focus on one particular style of communication with only a couple of methods.
- One last suggestion considers validation criteria, but in this case from the view of targeting youth as a data source. In the questionnaire, the section on validation criteria regarding what modes, channels and in what sequence they are most effective are often left blank. While a few NSIs report some experimentation or validation where tests were executed, definite or holistic conclusions were unaccomplished due to high requests of resources needed to fund such experiments. Creating guidelines or templates on how experiments on this topic could benefit NSIs or international research groups in search for effective measures could be a well worth effort for future research.



### 3. Approach

This chapter provides more information on the approach undertaken during the research to obtain the insights as explained in this report.

The research presented in this paper is part of a bigger research area which the FoW taskforce team FoW tackles. The organization of the team determined the boundaries of the research together with its subgroup Reaching Youth. The members of these groups consist of representatives from associated NSIs to the HLG-MOS. One of the efforts produced by the team was to initiate a request for contact and information via a questionnaire to target NSIs and other national institutes. This questionnaire contained, among others, questions regarding objectives the team set out to accomplish. One of the sections contained in the survey was dedicated to the Reaching Youth's group objectives divided over the three objectives it set out to accomplish, as seen in section 1.2 of this report. The data generated by the questionnaire was analyzed to obtain insights and discover trends which were additionally used as input for discussion.

How the objectives and tasks were determined to allow this research to be a success was managed by monthly and bi-weekly sessions. The attending members varied from subgroup chairs, subgroup members or meetings with the taskforce team as a whole to align goals and information.

More information on the FoW taskforce team, the groups and other organizational factors regarding the HLG-MOS are available on the Statswiki website of UNECE<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/hlgbas>