

Large diversity in little Norway

The word 'diversity' pops up continually in public and social debates when issues such as immigration and immigrants are discussed. Based on the interest that society shows in immigrants and integration, it seems that issues related to diversity have become everyday topics of conversation in Norway.

Diversity is also an appropriate word to describe all the reasons why people cross the Norwegian border: love, family, work, conflict, war, poverty, adoption, education - to name but a few. In a globalised world, the opportunity and need to move to a new country are both becoming more and more prevalent. With 5.3 million inhabitants, Norway is a small country on a global scale, but we have one of the fastest growing populations in Europe.

Diversity is an appropriate word to describe the composition of the Norwegian population. As of 1 January 2019, Norway was home to persons who, through their own, their parents or their grandparents' country of birth had a background from a total of 221 countries and autonomous regions.

Is it possible to measure diversity?

How does diversity manifest itself in the population statistics? Is it possible to measure it in any way? Statistics Norway publishes annual statistics on immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. There is a great demand for these statistics. Immigration policy is a key area of the political parties' policies, as well as State governance and public debate in general. The statistics on immigrants are also of great importance in research, particularly within demographics and other social sciences.

However, immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents are just two of thirty small and large categories that Statistics Norway can place the entire Norwegian population in based on information about their own, their parents and their grandparents' country of birth. Thus, it is possible to "measure" the foreign element of a person's background over three generations. Statistics Norway has, nevertheless, chosen to include just two of these thirty combinations in the ordinary immigration statistics, and this choice will be explained further in the text. The other 28 codes have rarely been applied in statistics and analyses, and are often assembled under the heading "rest of the population."

How do we categorise?

A statistical method is used to group the entire Norwegian population according to their own, their parents and their grandparents' country of birth. All residents of Norway are assigned a code number consisting of three digits, indicating the country of birth for the three generations.

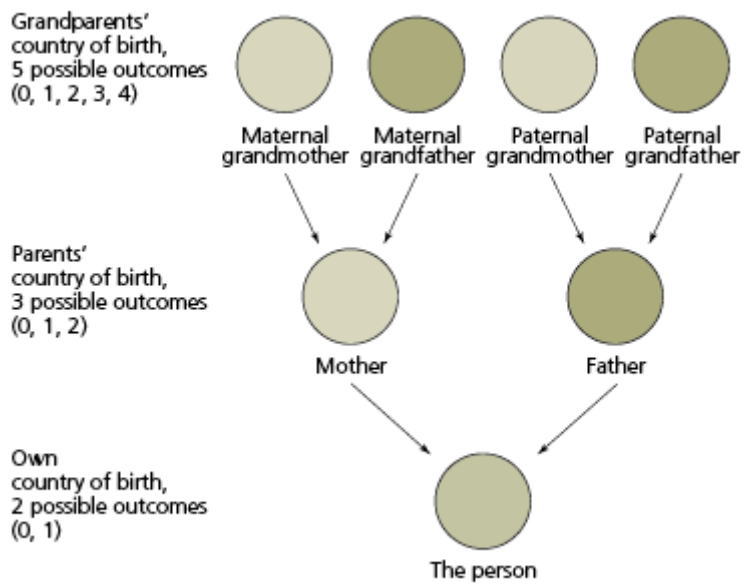
The first digit indicates a person's own country of birth. This is 0 where the person is born in Norway and 1 if they were born abroad.

The second digit indicates their parents' country of birth, and is 0, 1 or 2 depending how many of the parents were born abroad: 0 for both parents born in Norway, 1 for one parent born abroad and 2 for both parents born abroad.

The third digit is 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4, and indicates the number of foreign-born grandparents.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this gives $2 \times 3 \times 5 = 30$ different combinations. These are our basic codes.

Figure 1. Different combinations of basic codes, country of birth



Source: Population statistics, Statistics Norway.

These codes are fundamental to constructing immigrant-related variables, and serve this purpose well, but are otherwise rarely used as a direct basis for publishing statistics. In this article we aim to give a description of the Norwegian population in a more nuanced way as we think it will give a useful insight into the size of the groups, as well as the composition of the different groups.

The presentation will show a statistical method that is used to group the entire Norwegian population according to their own, their parents and their grandparents' country of birth. We will show how the Norwegian population looks based on information on country of birth for three generations. Who are the immigrants in our statistics? We have selected four groups for further presentation because they have some special features we want to describe: the population without immigrant background, Immigrants, Norwegian-born children of immigrants, half-Norwegian and born in Norway and the so-called "third generation".