

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

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## **Political Commitment to Evidence- Based Youth Policy**

The commitment to evidence-based policymaking is high. Draft resolutions, bills and white papers presented to Parliament are often based on reports, plans, or Official Norwegian Reports (NOUs). All reports and plans are generally produced by appointed individuals or committees. For example, NOU reports are produced by committees and working groups constituted by the Government or a ministry to report on different aspects of society. The purpose of the NOU reports is to present and discuss the evidence base and possible choices of action or strategies for the development and implementation of public measures.

[Instructions for Official Studies and Reports](#) [Utredingsinstruksen] aimed at ministries and the underlying activities of the state administration was first established by Royal Decree on February 18, 2000 and revised in 2005 and 2016. The purpose of the instructions is to provide a sound basis for decisions on state measures by identifying economic, administrative, and other significant consequences of reforms and measures. The underlying agencies of the state administration also conduct knowledge production as the basis of professional advice to the ministries and may commission research and development projects. Research and development activities vary from sector to sector and according to annual funding allocations.

The [Research Council](#) is an administrative body with special authorizations under the Ministry of Education and Research. It distributes funding for research and serves as the chief advisory body for research policy issues. It has responsibility for strategic planning for the research institute sector in which the provision of basic funding is the most important instrument. Basic funding is divided into two parts consisting of a basic allocation and strategic institute initiatives. To qualify for basic funding, research institutes must conduct research of interest to Norwegian trade and industry, government administration or society at large. All ministries may allocate funding for strategic institute initiatives in selected areas. At present, only the environmental institutes, the primary industry institutes, and the foreign policy institutes are receiving funding under this part of the scheme.

The Ministry of Children and Families' [Research Strategy for 2016 – 2020](#) is aimed at expanding and increasing the quality and availability of the evidence base for policy making in the area of children, youth and families, including through participation in programmes administered by the Research Council. The strategy also seeks to increase research-based evaluations of major grant schemes, reforms, and services.

## Cooperation between policymaking and research

Many research institutes carry out research sought by the authorities. For some institutes, a core activity is providing the knowledge and evidence base for policy development. Research may be ordered, either as mandated administrative tasks, through assignments directly to the institutes, or indirectly through programmes administered by the [Research Council of Norway](#). Regional research institutes often provide commissioned research on youth related topics. They have a two-part role in the Norwegian research and development system. They are a part of national social science institutes and participate in the same competition arenas as these. In addition, the regional institutes also have a role as regional research and development actors. The most important characteristic of the regional institutes is that they have a social science structure, that they maintain a "regional function" and that they are spread throughout the country.

[The Center for Welfare and Labor Research](#) (SVA) at Oslo Metropolitan College (OsloMet) consists of four research institutes that conduct commissioned research on working life, consumption, city and regions, adolescence and aging, as well as the services and organization of the welfare society. The four institutes are: the Work Research Institute (AFI), Norwegian Social Research (NOVA), the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), and the Consumption Research Norway (SIFO). The [NOVA](#) youth research section conducts multi-disciplinary empirical research based on local and regional qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as national representative surveys. Main research topics are youth culture and leisure activities, school adjustment, transitions from school to employment, alcohol and drug use, social problems, intergenerational relations and issues concerning ethnicity and multi-cultural society.

Top level authorities commission research on relevant policy themes regularly and sometimes fund projects commissioned by committees constituted by the government to report on different aspects of society. Some recent examples are:

- Two research projects were commissioned by a committee ([#UngIDag-utvalget](#)) constituted by the Government reporting on equality challenges for children and young people in everyday life. The committee [presented an Official Norwegian Report](#) to the Minister of Culture in 2019. The research projects that informed the report investigated [gendered patterns in youths' leisure activities](#) and [leisure activities for children and youth in a gender equality perspective](#). The research was funded by the Ministry of Children and Families and conducted by Norwegian Social Research (NOVA).

- The Ministry of Children and Families is funding a research project conducted at Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) on [parenting in ethnic and religious minority contexts in Norway](#). The background for the project is a concern about public family and childhood services and institutions being premised on majority families' norms and values. There is also concern on the part of public authorities relating to gender equality and lack of autonomy for children and young people in some minority families. The aim of the project is to develop research-based knowledge about different forms of parenthood that co-exist in Norway, based on parents' own perspectives. This knowledge can contribute to developing public services that are adapted to different families' needs.
- The Ministry of Children and Families has funded a research project on [the consequences of growing up in low-income families](#). The project reviewed existing research on the consequences of growing up in low-income families in Norway. The project focused on the timing and duration of exposure to low-income as well as family-relations, health, neighbourhood, housing, social participation, education, and transition to work.
- The Norwegian Directorate of Health funded a project about [adolescents attending municipal youth clubs](#). By using material from the national [Ungdata-survey](#) the project combined information on social background, gender, age and immigrant background with adolescents' self-reported health, well-being, behaviour problems, drug abuse, engagement in recreational activities and social support. The purpose of the study was to investigate municipalities' potential to actively use youth clubs to promote adolescents' health and well-being.

## National statistics and available data sources

[Statistics Norway](#) is the national statistical institute of Norway and the main producer of official statistics. The institute is responsible for collecting, producing, and communicating statistics related to the economy, population and society at national, regional and local levels. The Institute reports to the Ministry of Finance and is subject to the provisions of [the Statistics Act](#) . However, the institute is a professionally autonomous organisation. It provides statistics relevant to the [child and youth sector](#) in the areas of demographics, families, health, crime, leisure, education, labour market, income and child welfare services.

[Ungdata](#) is a cross-national data collection scheme, designed to conduct youth surveys at the municipal level in Norway. Ungdata is financed through the national budget, Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) is responsible for the national coordination of the project, while the regional Drug and Alcohol Competence Centers [KoRus] are responsible for conducting the municipal surveys. A [national report](#) is published every year on selected topics.

Ungdata covers various aspects of young people's lives such as relationship with parents and friends, leisure activities, health issues, local environment, well-being, and school issues. The surveys also include questions about tobacco and drug use, and participation in various forms

of antisocial behaviour such as violence and bullying. The data is often used in municipal planning and developmental work related to public health and preventive measures aimed at young people.

Underlying agencies to the ministries also present statistics and analysis on relevant topics related to youth:

- [The Directorate of Education and Training](#) is responsible for all national statistics concerning kindergarten, primary and secondary education. The directorate provides data about basic education through an online portal <https://skoleporten.udir.no/>. The purpose of the portal is for schools and municipalities to have easy access to relevant and reliable information to conduct local quality assessment work. The portal contains data in the areas of learning outcomes, learning environment, implementation in upper secondary education, resources, and school facts. Users of the portal can create their own reports and export data to spreadsheets.
- The [Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs \(Bufdir\)](#) provides [statistics and analysis](#) on welfare and living conditions for children and youth, the child welfare services, disability, ethnicity and religion, gender equality and LHBTIQ.
- Norway has many good quality health registries. Data from these are collected, along with information from Statistics Norway and Norwegian health studies, into the online [the municipal statistics bank](#) and the [Norhealth statistics bank](#). Every year, the [Norwegian Institute of Public Health](#) releases public health profiles for municipalities and counties. Profiles are published between January and March. The public health profiles for municipalities and counties are used actively by the municipalities. The reports are also popular with the media who use them to compare the health of the local population with the rest of Norway. The data includes indicators relevant for the youth sector in the areas of population, childhood and living conditions, environment, injuries and accidents, health-related behaviours, and health conditions.

## **Budgetary Allocations Supporting Research in the Youth Field**

There is no specific budget allocation for research in the youth field.

Research and development as well as monitoring and evaluation of policy reforms are part of the ministerial budgets. The Ministry of Children and Families' budget was strengthened in 2020 to increase research on the effects of preventative measures and services for children, young people, and families. In 2020 the Ministry of Children and Families transferred approx. NOK 29 million to the [Research Council](#) to support research in the following areas:

- the effects of measures and services for children, young people, and families through the family protection offices
- effects of preventive work and various services and measures aimed at children, young people, and families
- research programme on welfare, working life and migration
- research programme on health, care, and welfare services