

The Role & Challenges for Official Statistics in Policy Evaluation

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Economists catching terrorists

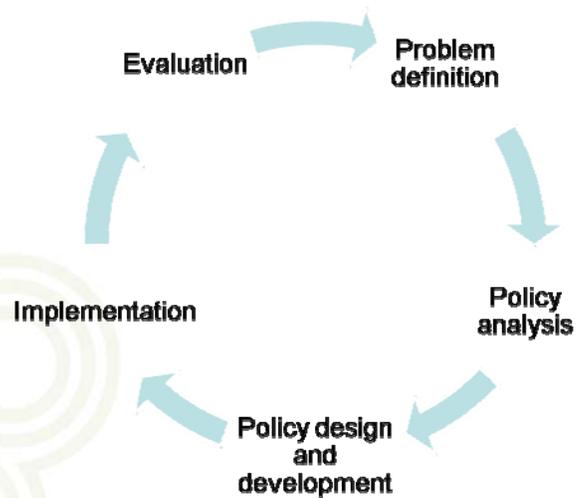
“I’d like to put together a set of tools that let us catch terrorists”, Levitt said. “I don’t necessarily know yet how to go about it. But *given the right data*, I have little doubt that I could figure out the answer.”

Numbers don't lie

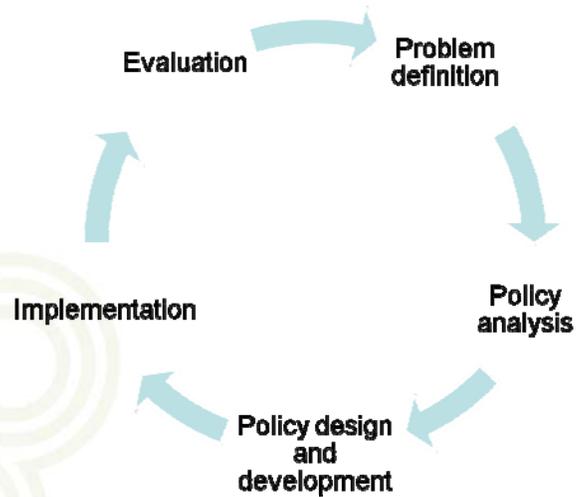
“...teachers and criminals and real estate agents may lie, and politicians, and even CIA analysts. *But numbers don't.*”

The New York Times Magazine, August 3, 2003

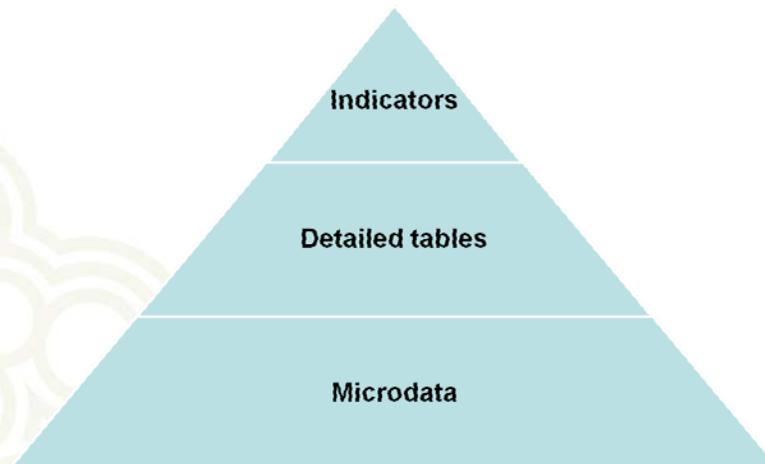
Policy Development Process



Policy Development Process



An integrated statistical information system: Delineated by level of detail



Benefits of microdata

Allows new statistics that:

- give detailed view of the economy, society, or environment
- answer complex or specific questions
- analyse marginal effects rather than average effects
- provide for control/treatment comparisons
- facilitate statistical analysis that the NSO does not have the capacity or the mandate to carry out.

Additional benefits

National statistical office can:

- reduce respondent load and maximise use of administrative data
- give better value for money through greater use of data
- further assess the quality of the data
- offer better public understanding of the importance of official statistics.

Why is microdata difficult for NSOs?

- NSO purpose & powers
- maintaining respondents' trust
- data quality
- ability to support complicated analyses
- cost

Evaluating policy using Statistics New Zealand data

- Immigration policy and settlement services
- Household saving
- Life and death
- Employment and earnings outcomes
- Business performance and assistance

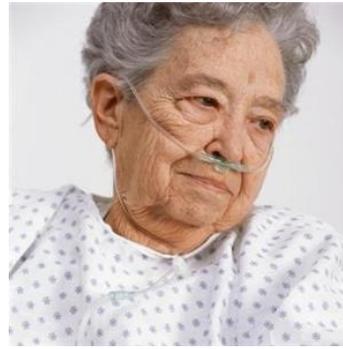
Immigration



Household savings



Life and death



Employment and earnings



Challenges for data on employment and earnings



Business performance

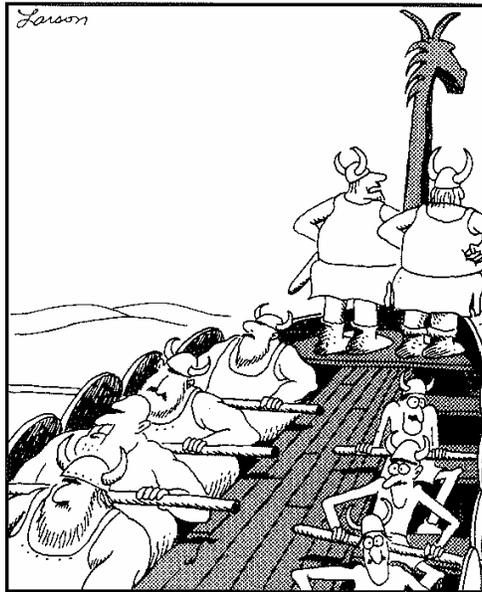


Strengths of official statistics

- Fundamental Principles
 - independence, objectivity, transparency, equal access, confidentiality...
- Metadata
- Time series
- Breadth of coverage
- Multi-dimensional
- Accuracy

Lessons for evaluation practice

- Institutional arrangements
- Evaluation design
- Publication processes



"I've got it, too, Omar ... a strange feeling like we've just been going in circles."

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Working together...



More tension on the Lewis and Clark expedition

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