

The 2012 ESF Leavers Survey, Wales

An evaluation on the effects of ESF-funded labour market interventions

The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has carried out annual surveys on the beneficiaries of ESF-funded Operational Programmes in Wales since 2009. The 2012 survey aimed to build on the experiences of the previous three years. As well as an extensive interview programme, the evaluation made use of pooled data from all four surveys (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). The purpose of this was to achieve a larger resource for carrying out evaluation through more powerful statistical analysis.

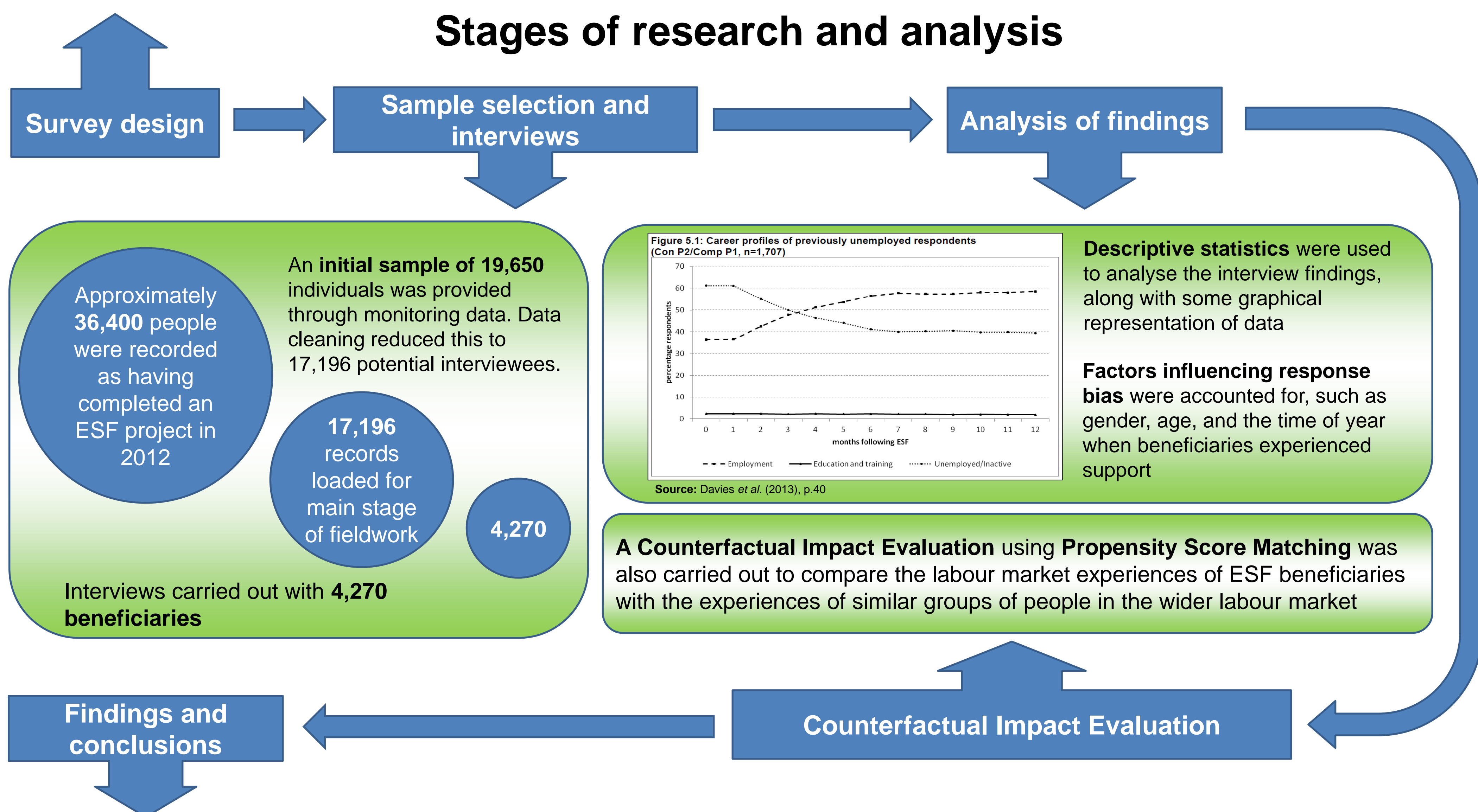
Rationale and survey methodology

- The broad objective of the ESF leavers survey is to better understand the characteristics and outcomes of the individual beneficiaries of the ESF-funded OPs.
- Specifically, the aim was to assist in assessing the effectiveness of **labour market interventions**.
- An **interview-based approach** was selected, to be carried out by phone
- Questions were largely the same as those in the 2011 survey, with only minor changes.
- **Areas of enquiry** covered:
 - Who are the participants?
 - Participating in an ESF project
 - ESF and the accumulation of skills
 - Supporting participation in the labour market
 - The effects of ESF on participation in employment
 - Supporting progression in employment

Wales ESF Operational Programmes 2007-2013

- **Two separate** ESF OPs were delivered in Wales in the 2007-13 period:
 - East Wales ESF Programme, under the Convergence objective
 - West Wales and the Valleys ESF, under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective
- Combined investment of just over **£1.4 billion**
- **Approximately 85%** of this amount was delivered through the West Wales ESF OP.
- Multiple interventions were funded, though all relate to investment in human capital.

Stages of research and analysis



FINDINGS

- 'The majority of participants who took part in ESF projects developed essential skills in organisation, communication, team working skills and problem solving skills. Most feel more confident in their own abilities.'*
- **Multiple findings** were made in each of the areas of enquiry.
- Eight **policy recommendations** were made to WEFO, including recommendations for further evaluative research and investigation.

The CIE method

- **The Counterfactual Impact Evaluation** indicated that participation in ESF-funded non-Redundancy Training projects is associated with an average increase in the rate of transition into employment of 8 percentage points, amongst those recently made redundant.
- It was also highlighted that the CIE method is complementary to the overall study, and results should be treated with caution.

*Davies *et al.* (2013), p. 3