

# **Impact Evaluation**

## **Workplace Employment Relations Survey**

and

## **European Social Survey**

### **Final report to the ESRC**

Hilary Drew, Anna King and Felix Ritchie

University of the West of England, Bristol

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## List of abbreviations used in the report

ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
BIS	Department of Business Innovation and Skills
BUIRA	British Universities Industrial Relations Association
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CIPD	The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
CO	Cabinet Office
CST	Core Scientific Team (ESS)
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ESS	European Social Survey
EURAGE	European Research Group on Attitudes to Age
GES	Government Economics Service
GOS	Government Office of Science
GSR	Government Social Research network
HO	Home Office
HR	Human resources
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMD	Labour Market Division (BIS)
Moj	Ministry of Justice
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NIESR	National Institute of Economic and Social Research
NPIA	National Police Improvement Agency
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office of National Statistics
SWB	Subjective wellbeing
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
UKDS	UK Data Service
UWE	University of the West of England
WERS	Work and Employment Relations Survey
WIAS	WERS Information and Advice Service
WPEG	Work Pensions and Labour Economics Study Group

## 1. Executive summary

### Study scope, purpose and methods

1. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) commissioned the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) to undertake an impact evaluation of the Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) and the European Social Survey (ESS) focusing on the extent to which research utilising WERS and ESS data has influenced policy and practice across the UK to date. Specifically, the research was designed to:

- Identify and study specific policy and practice impacts, and the potential for the same arising from WERS and ESS data
- Study the mechanisms through which WERS and ESS have achieved and could in the future achieve impact through the use of data by other organisations and individuals based in the UK.
- Identify the range of organisations and/or individuals who have made use of the WERS and ESS, and the ways in which the data have been used within the UK.
- Study the role of think tanks, and other intermediaries and knowledge brokers, as transmission routes through which WERS and ESS data may have influenced policy, through comparative activity, identify best practice and lessons for impact generation within research infrastructure investments.
- Critically reflect upon the methods used to assess and identify research infrastructure impact.

2. This executive summary provides a context to the research and summarises the findings of the study.

3. Appendix 1 of the main report contains several detailed case studies for WERS and ESS impacts. Examples of impact in the executive summary and in the report refer to these cases.

4. WERS is a dataset which provides a unique insight into UK workplaces and employment relations. It is co-sponsored by BIS, ACAS, UKCES, HSE, ESRC and NIESR. WERS aims to provide a nationally representative account of the state of employment relations and working life inside British workplaces from both management and employee perspectives. WERS provides a mapping of UK employment relations, available in a statistically reliable, and publicly available, dataset and monitors changes in employment practices over time.

5. ESS is an academically-driven social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is modular in design, with a fixed core and rotating modules approved by a European committee on scientific grounds rather than policy interest. The primary goal of ESS is to provide high-quality information which is comparable across countries and gathered in sufficient depth to allow multivariate analysis to be carried out. The ESS has received funding from the EU's Framework Programme 7, the European Science Foundation, and national funding councils in participating countries. The ESS has applied to become a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) in 2013.



6. A mixture of 'tracking forwards' and 'tracking backwards' approaches were adopted for this research. 'Tracking forwards' involves examining how the surveys are utilised, by researchers and intermediaries, and then how this usage results in different forms of impact on a variety of agents. 'Tracking backwards' starts by identifying the impact and then looking to identify the strength and relevance of the evidence base. The study team conducted a desk review of relevant literature and carried out face-to-face and telephone interviews with interested parties.

### Use and impact of WERS

7. There is a broad level of interest in and use of the WERS data from academic researchers (academic research, government commissioned research), central government departments (in-house analysis, policy research) and policy and research organisations and think tanks (government commissioned research and policy research). WERS provides significant background data, which directly feeds into policy. It also influences policy less directly through the process of the academic research use of WERS data and the policy impact of that research. The close links between academia and the Steering Group and key users such as the TUC and CBI has also led to policy impacts. Whilst recognising the academic use of WERS is widespread, this study has focused primarily on more direct non-academic impact. We have also focused mostly on the use of WERS 2004 as the first findings from WERS 2011 became available at the end of the study period.

8. Users value the strength and reliability of WERS as the authoritative source - *the gold standard* - of quantitative data on UK workplaces. In addition, the dissemination strategies for WERS, pivoting around NIESR, the WERS Information and Advisory Service (WIAS), ONS and the UK Data Archive, were established to be efficient in encouraging use of the data.

9. WERS plays a key role in the developing an information infrastructure within the area of employment and industrial relations and provides important details for analysis, briefing and policy making. In particular, WERS has highlighted new areas for analysis, including, the emerging topic of worker engagement. For example, WERS found improvement in the level of worker satisfaction between 2004 and 2011, despite the weak economic situation.

WERS users indicated to the Study Team several areas where WERS has been used

- by various organisations to inform government consultations on tribunal reform and dispute resolution
- by ACAS and BIS to examine data on union representations
- as background information for BIS' Impact Assessments regarding TUPE regulations.
- to provide evidence for the impact evaluation of minimum wage, equal opportunities and employee consultation legislation
- by the Sector Skills Development Agency for research on training and workplace survival and satisfaction levels
- by BIS to respond to government ministers' questions and as a central resource for parliamentary questions.
- by the HSE and BIS in a briefing to the Minister (2009) on the linkage between levels of employee engagement and worker involvement and consultation in health and safety
- by the HSE in order to add to the evidence base for the HSE's funding approval Board for interventions aiming to increase levels of consultation and involvement in health and safety at work.

- by ACAS as a framework for their staff survey; the wellbeing questions then fed back into WERS 2011
- by UKCES, CIPD, TUC and CBI who interpret WERS data and research to provide information and guidance for their customers or members; consequently WERS has a direct, if mediated, entry into many UK workplaces.

10. WERS is often used to supplement organisations' own research and data. In many cases where it provided regular and wide-ranging contextual information for the organisations, WERS was not cited directly in documents.

11. WERS methodology has influenced the development of other surveys. WERS has influenced surveys outside of the UK, including France, Norway, South Korea, Australia and China, which have followed a similar design and methodology.

### Use and impact of ESS

12. ESS is designed for use primarily by the academic community; hence non-academic engagement is more likely to arise from the academic community actively stimulating interest from government.

13. However ESS is used to provide both direct evidence and contextual evidence across a range of non-academic bodies. ESS data is cited in a number of government reports from a range of government departments including DWP, BIS and the Home Office.

14. Specifically, ESS has been used directly

- by ONS to develop its wellbeing programme
- by OECD to study social outcomes of learning.
- By think tanks including the New Economics Foundation (NEF), the Intergenerational Foundation and AgeUK; these have led to further outputs which have included government reports, for example on work and the family

15. Research generated by academics using ESS has been used to influence policy and practice in

- MoJ, HO and police services (procedural justice)
- DWP (ageing)
- CO and ONS (wellbeing)
- HO (migration)

16. ESS has helped inform the work of other surveys both in the UK and in Europe in terms of its methodology. These include Understanding Society, the European Values Survey and the International Social Survey Programme.

### Reflections on impact generation

17. The routes to impact for WERS and ESS reflect the design and organisational structures rather than any universal strategy.

18. For WERS, a Steering Group composed of academics and representatives from government departments provides a natural bridge between research and policy. The government departments

are generally funders as well as users of the data. This Steering Group has close links with other key users such as the TUC and CBI, enabling extremely effective information sharing. The existence of the WERS User Group strengthened links between academics and government. Finally, the analysts and policy-makers from the government departments involved are experienced in using research evidence and actively seek out academic research (including sponsoring PhDs); this is the 'research pull' model.

19. For ESS, there is not a set of direct policy links comparable to those of WERS; policy impact is not in the design goals of ESS. However, a consequence of the design processes for the rotating modules, in particular, is that these tend to be developed by researchers with an established research base and (for UK researchers) incentives to generate impact. Hence rotating module developers exploit pre-existing networks to leverage ESS studies into policy evidence. We identify this as the 'research push' approach.

20. The two surveys differ in their need for knowledge brokers (KBs). ESS is primarily designed for expert users of the microdata; in contrast, many WERS clients use aggregate statistics or commission bespoke analysis. For WERS, NIESR and BIS act as KBs for both academia and government, offering advice, carrying out analysis, and disseminating information. Organisations such as CIPD, TUC, CBI, ACAS, and UKCES carry out a secondary knowledge brokering role by turning complex statistical research into industry-relevant guides.

## Reflections on the study process

21. The major recommendation from this study was that the surveys under review were too different to benefit from a joint study; there were no economies of scale, the perceived 'comparative' aspect of the study had a negative impact on some respondents, and the amount of ground to be covered meant that there was little scope to follow promising lines of investigation outside the tender specification. The joint study did allow two strategies to be contrasted, but the view of the study team was that the negative aspects outweighed the benefits.

22. The study team also noted that the timing of the study was unfortunate. WERS usage peaks after release of a wave, and then declines. The impact study could only collect evidence on observed impact from data collected in 2004 and earlier; the imminent release (in early 2013) of WERS 2011 data generates expectations of impact, but these can only be speculative at the moment. For ESS, specific funding for user stakeholder communication activity is relatively recent and so until the first outputs from that process can be observed, the impact is harder to define. A later date would have benefited both studies.

## Recommendations

23. This report was commissioned by the ESRC and so the recommendations are directed towards them, although they also have relevance for the survey teams. The study team also received comments on matters such as survey design which were felt to be beyond the scope of the report, and so are not included.

24. For WERS, the study team recommends

- increased data access

- greater buy-in from businesses contributing to the survey
- an ESRC sponsored academic conference
- the inclusion of WERS information in government conferences
- increased use of and publicity for data linking
- a return to user support along the lines of the WIAS model

25. For ESS, the study team recommends

- redevelop the ESS website to target a wider (non-technical) audience
- greater ESRC engagement with CST/Cabinet Office dissemination strategy
- the inclusion of ESS information in government conferences
- supporting further Topline Results and ESS policy seminars
- the need for increased media reporting on ESS findings

26. On increasing impact generation from data resources the study team recommends

- the design-stage involvement of customers
- greater and earlier engagement with government researchers

37. For future impact studies the study team recommends

- avoiding impact evaluations of multiple surveys unless there is a clear overlap between the subjects
- implementing and designing impact studies with reference to the lifetime dissemination strategy of investments

## 2. Background to the Impact Study

### 2.1 WERS and ESS

In August 2012 the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) commissioned the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) to carry out an impact study of the Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) and the European Social Survey (ESS).

The overarching objective of WERS is to provide a nationally representative account of the state of employment relations and working life inside British workplaces from both management and employee perspectives. More specifically, WERS aims to provide a mapping of UK employment relations, which is available in a statistically reliable, and publicly available, dataset. The survey also aims to monitor changes in employment practices over time. WERS data is intended to inform policy development, and to stimulate and inform debate and practice. WERS has run in 1980, 1984, 1990, 1998, 2004, and 2011, and it is currently co-sponsored by BIS, ACAS, UKCES, ESRC and NIESR. First findings from the 2011 WERS are due to be published in February 2013.

The primary goal of ESS is to provide high-quality information which is comparable across countries and gathered in sufficient depth to allow multivariate analysis to be carried out. It is modular in design, with a central core and rotating module proposed by academics. Modules for inclusion in the survey are promoted competitively, and assessed by a scientific panel. The key criteria are that the module is scientifically robust, that it can usefully be applied to the countries in the survey, and that it addresses an issue of wide European interest. ESS was established in 2001; five rounds of the bi-annual survey have taken place and the sixth round ran in 2012. The ESS has received funding from the EU's Framework Programme 7, from the European Science Foundation, and from national funding councils in participating countries, including the ESRC. The UK has applied for ESS to have European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) status in 2013.

### 2.2 Evaluation aims and objectives

This study was designed to examine impact and potential impact of WERS and ESS on public policy and practice; specifically, to:

- Identify and study specific policy and practice impacts, and the potential for the same arising from WERS and ESS data
- Study the mechanisms through which WERS and ESS have achieved and could in the future achieve impact through the use of data by other organisations and individuals based in the UK.
- Identify the range of organisations and/or individuals who have made use of the WERS and ESS, and the ways in which the data have been used within the UK.
- Study the role of think tanks, and other intermediaries and knowledge brokers, as transmission routes through which WERS and ESS data may have influenced policy, through comparative activity, identify best practice and lessons for impact generation within research infrastructure investments.
- Critically reflect upon the methods used to assess and identify research infrastructure impact.

This impact study is part of the ESRC's Impact Evaluation Programme<sup>1</sup> which aims to

- Identify and analyse evidence of research impact on policy and practice
- Understand how impact is generated, and help the ESRC improve its performance in this area
- Develop impact evaluation methods.

This is the third in the programme focusing upon resource infrastructure, following on from the review of the Millennium Cohort Study and ESDS.

### 2.3 Approach

Impact studies can be grouped as 'tracking' forwards or backwards (Molas-Gallart and Puay Tang, 2007). 'Tracking forwards' means taking the research outputs and looking for impacts. 'Tracking backwards' starts by identifying the impact and then looking to identify the strength and relevance of the evidence base. The pre-project expectation was that tracking forwards would be the approach taken. However, the team's initial review identified a number of public products influenced by WERS, suggesting that tracking backwards could be more productive for some impacts.

Given the time constraints, a pragmatic mix of both approaches was used to achieve maximum coverage of impacts. A literature review identified potential research users and researchers. The processes through which the data was also used by intermediaries such as think tanks, consultancies, and knowledge brokers were tracked. After this, we identified direct and indirect influences on policy formation and the public arena.

As this is an impact study, and not an economic evaluation, the report did not gather information on cost-effectiveness; nor did it seek to identify areas where the impact was less than might be expected. The study was not expected to consider alternative data sources, although some comparison naturally arose from questions around the distinctiveness of the data sources.

#### *Note on taxonomy*

The Department for Business, Industry and Skills (BIS) has also been known as the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) during the period under review. For convenience, this report will refer to the department as 'BIS' unless there is a need to reference the older names. This reflects the relative stability of the WERS/labour markets function within the changing department.

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<sup>1</sup> See Armstrong F and Macadam M (2011) *The Impact Journey*. Presentation at University of York.  
<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/seminars/2012ESRC.pdf>

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Identifying impact

Nutley et al (2007<sup>2</sup>) defines impact as:

- Instrumental – influencing the development of policy, practice, or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour
- Conceptual – enhancing understanding, informing and reframing debates
- Capacity building – technical/personal skill development

Processes through which research influences policy and practice are intricate and multifaceted and, in this study, the interaction between conceptual and instrumental impacts is considered. Key factors as defined vital for impact generation include (ESRC, 2009<sup>3</sup>):

- Established relationships and networks with user communities
- Involving users at all stages of research
- Planned user-engagement and knowledge exchange strategies
- Infrastructure and management support
- Involvement of intermediaries and knowledge brokers as translators and network providers.

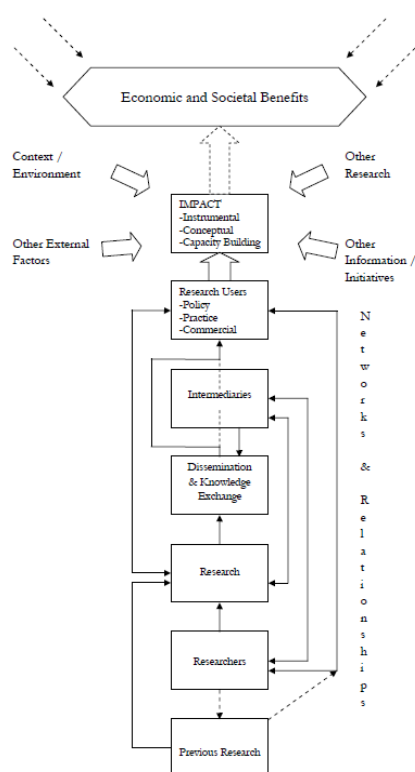
The relationship between evidence, emerging issues, strategy development and policy development is a complex one. The ESRC (2009) identifies the following processes through which impact happens:

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<sup>2</sup> Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davis, H. (2007) *Using Evidence. How Research can Inform Public Services*. Bristol: Policy Press in ESRC (2009) *Taking Stock. A Summary of ESRC's Work to Evaluate the Impact of Research on Policy and Practice*.

<sup>3</sup> ESRC (2009) *Taking Stock. A Summary of ESRC's Work to Evaluate the Impact of Research on Policy and Practice*.

## DRAFT MODEL: IMPACT FRAMEWORK



Prior to beginning the impact evaluation, the expectation of the study team was that ESS's academic focus would mean that the immediate impact was more likely to be conceptual, developing the arena for policy debate. In contrast, the strong government involvement in WERS design would suggest a higher level of instrumental impacts as policymakers were directly involved with and fund the data collection. In practice both studies showed evidence of both direct instrumental impact and broader contributions to conceptual developments.

### 3.2 Methodological Approach

The research was qualitative, and used a combination of interviews (face-to-face and telephone) and desk based research.

#### 3.2.1 Desk based research

The starting points for desk research were the bibliographies maintained by ESS<sup>4</sup> and WERS<sup>5</sup>. Titles were searched manually for references to government policies or strategies. The bibliographies were also checked for authorship or commissioning of articles by UK government departments.

Promising references in academic articles were followed up in Google Scholar, allowing a chain of links to be developed. However, Google Scholar focuses on academic research; as such, most

<sup>4</sup> [www.ess.nsd.uib.no/bibliography/complete.html](http://www.ess.nsd.uib.no/bibliography/complete.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.wers2004.info/pdf/bibjune2008.pdf](http://www.wers2004.info/pdf/bibjune2008.pdf)



references did not significantly advance our understanding of the likely impacts of the data sources (for example, of the 354 references found in Google Scholar to the WERS ‘first findings’, only two were from government departments). The primary value of the ‘citation trail’ was to identify groups of authors associated with the data, which was particularly successful for ESS.

For government publications, departmental websites were directly accessed. Non-governmental organisations were also checked, including CIPD, TUC, CBI, and NEF<sup>6</sup>. Finally, a general internet search was carried out for key publications and authors.

### 3.2.2 Interviews

‘Snowballing’ was expected to be used to identify interviewees; that is, initial interviews with the ESS and WERS project teams would identify further candidates for interviews, who would then identify others. In practice, this proved unnecessary. For ESS the list of names thrown up by the desk research matched the suggestions of the Core Scientific Team (CST), who therefore concentrated on context. For WERS, key institutions had already been identified, and the WERS management team suggested the most relevant individuals. The highly-networked nature of the non-academic WERS community (see below) meant that further snowballing generated the same names.

The interviews were supplemented by a questionnaire sent to the interviewee in advance (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire was intended to focus the interview, rather than providing a source of information in its own right. The interviews did not have a fixed set of questions, but followed the same broad structure:

- Relationship to the study in question (role, period)
- Observations from that role on the relationship between study design, use and management
- Own use of the study (direct or third party), if any
- Observed policy impacts and routes to those impacts
- Specific publications/activities linked to impact
- Other useful publications/activities
- Reflections on the impact study
- Useful further contacts

Interviewees were asked to reflect on their own experiences and, if possible, identify key documents. For WERS, government users noted that the data was widely and informally used in a range of contexts, and so interviewees were asked to provide examples of the processes and informal contexts (for example, ministerial briefing notes, strategy papers, parliamentary questions).

The *a priori* expectation was that interviews would be recorded. In practice, this proved difficult in the interview environments. Instead, the research team undertook multiple note-taking to ensure accurate records of conversations.

The team contacted members of the WERS Steering Committee, and staff managing the WERS Information and Advice Service within NIESR. The initial meeting with the WERS team indicated potential interviewees amongst academics, think tank staff, government departments and quangos. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to contact many academic users of WERS because the

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<sup>6</sup> CIPD=Chartered Institute of Personnel Development; TUC=Trades Union Congress; CBI=Confederation of British Industry; NEF=New Economics foundation

study team felt it was imperative to focus on the more direct links between WERS and policy. Nevertheless, three academic interviewees were included, all of whom were closely engaged with both the Steering Committee and the academic community.

In view of the size of the non-academic WERS research community, it was decided to focus on senior managers who would be able to provide an overview of the strategic value of WERS to their organisation as a whole (rather than researchers whose value would be discussing the comparative merits of specific datasets). ‘Tracking backwards’ was mostly followed: and non-academic research users were asked to identify how they made use of academic research outputs.

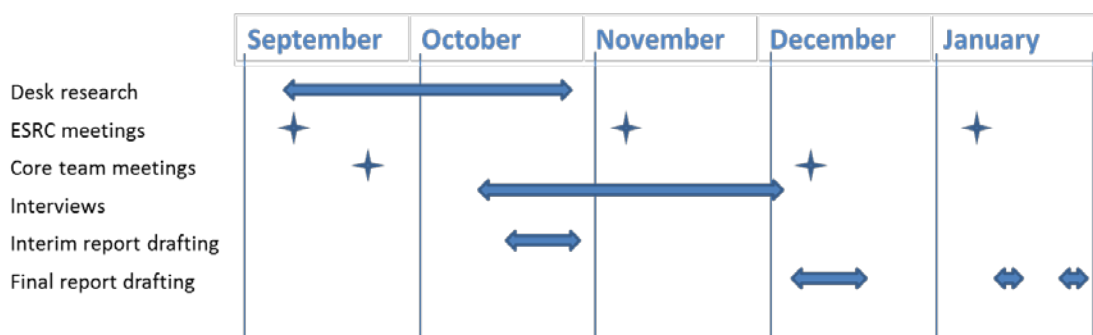
In relation to ESS, the team contacted and set up interviews with the ESS National Co-ordinator, members of the ESS Scientific Advisory Board and staff responsible for ESS outreach, as well as a number of key academics who have worked with ESS data. A member of the research team also attended the ESS Policy Seminar in London on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012. With the exception of ONS and Cabinet Office, impacts were identified by ‘tracking forwards’. Perceptions of impact were therefore driven by the researchers and so corroborating evidence was sought in the form of documented changes in research user’s behaviour.

A total of 32 people were interviewed as part of this impact study; a full list of interviewees is detailed in Appendix 4. All target interviews (bar one owing to illness) were achieved.

### 3.3 Timing

The contract timing allowed for thirteen weeks (17th Sept – 13th Dec) from the beginning of desk research until the delivery of the draft final report to ESRC for comments; a further five weeks were allowed for comments and feedback on the draft final report. At the start of the study, the research team met with the ESRC on 18th September to discuss the programme and impacts, and held initial meetings with the WERS/ESS management teams the following week. Individual interviews ran from mid October until the end of November. Roughly half the interviews were face-to-face, usually in London. From early November the interviews were increasingly via telephone. The diagram below illustrates project timing:

**Timeline 2012-13**



## 4. Commentary on WERS impact

Our research has highlighted that there is a broad level of interest in and use of the WERS data. This includes academic researchers, central government departments, policy and research institutes and think tanks. As noted in the methodology, this study focused on non-academic impact and used the ‘tracking backwards’ approach. This was to do with constraints of time and the intention to focus on the most direct links between WERS and government policy. WERS usage amongst non-academics has an institutional basis. Case Study 1 (ACAS) in Appendix 1 considers in detail how one organisation uses WERS.

The ‘first findings’ of the 2011 wave were published after the data had been collected and this report had been drafted. . Hence, although the study looked primarily at past usage, the study team also asked users to consider the likely impact of the imminent release.

### 4.1 Usage of WERS in the non-academic domain

#### 4.1.1 Actual usage

The main government users of the WERS data are also the co-sponsors, past and present: BIS, ACAS, HSE, and UKCES. Of these the first two are the major users.

BIS makes extensive use of the data for a variety of purposes, including policy analysis, policy development, labour market studies, ministerial briefings, answering parliamentary questions, and regulatory impact assessment. Although the 2004 WERS data is recognised as being increasingly out of date in some areas, for some questions it remains the only feasible source of information until the 2011 findings are available. The Labour Markets Division (BIS-LMD), where much WERS expertise is concentrated, acts as a source of WERS-related information for other parts of the organisation<sup>7</sup>. Examples of use supplied by BIS include:

- studying workplaces likely to be affected by the incoming National Minimum Wage
- reviewing the distribution of equal opportunity practice at the time of new legislation
- evaluating the impact of the 2007 Information on and Consultation of Employees regulation
- providing evidence (since 2004) on work-life balance at the workplace

ACAS similarly makes extensive use of WERS in its day-to-day activities (see case study 1). WERS is seen primarily as a ‘mapping tool’, providing context for operational activity. For example, ACAS used WERS to generate regional analyses of employee engagement suitable for ACAS offices around the country to use in discussion with local businesses (see case study 2).

Data from WERS has also fed into BERR and Acas’ examinations of the changing nature of employee representation; for example, the growth of non-union representatives related to TUPE. A recent example of the use of WERS is in providing background information on BIS’ Impact Assessments for the TUPE regulations.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that, since this data collection for this report was completed, the 2011 First Findings have been published, and BIS and other users now have access to the data for research.

HSE and UKCES are more specialised users. They exploit WERS for specific information needs in relation to particular projects. For these users, WERS is often used to provide the background for their analyses of their own data sources.

In addition to its government co-sponsors, DWP, Government Equalities Office, HM Treasury and the office of the Minister for Health have used WERS data.

Outside government, both the TUC and CBI have used WERS directly to build evidence for consultations, information sheets for members, and practice guidance. CIPD sees itself more as an indirect user, with academic studies being a primary source of information.

#### 4.1.2 Potential usage

Government usage of the 2004 and previous WERS has abated significantly pending the first findings from WERS 2011, which will be the first wave to cover a recession since 1990. The widespread expectation is that WERS 2011 will provide new data on how the most recent recession has impacted on workplaces and employment relations, particularly those workplaces that have survived from 2004 to 2011.

WERS 2011 will also provide information about improving human resource practices, as it can be used to examine what types of HR practices help improve productivity, reduce absenteeism, improve employee job satisfaction and raise employee commitment. It is thought that WERS 2011 will provide more insight in these areas as it will allow data to be contrasted with WERS 2004, when many of the relevant questions were asked for the first time.

As a specific example, UKCES will be studying productivity and performance once the WERS 2011 becomes available. They are also considering the potential for linking WERS with their own data sets. UKCES intend to work with ACAS on further secondary analysis of WERS. UKCES are also interested in mapping training through the recession.

HSE staff interviewed suggested that the potential in WERS changes over time. For example,

*“We’re [now] interested in the issue of precarious workers from a health and safety point of view, and will look at WERS for those sort of specific questions. We’ll be looking at what the levels of employee engagement are”.*

Irrespective of the upcoming findings, interviews highlighted areas which might reflect potential usage. Several WERS users felt that more use could be made of WERS data if it was linked with other data sets on, for example, skills development in the workplace. It was noticeable that few government users outside BIS were aware that the microdata from WERS2004 had already been linked to external datasets, or that the 2011 data would be linked.

Finally, users expressed concern about shrinking research budgets and the implications for WERS. One government user noted:

*“We might be increasingly reliant on WERS in future as we won’t have our own in-house survey data’.*

## 4.2 Usage of WERS in the academic domain

### 4.2.1 Actual usage

An overview of research outputs that have utilised WERS data is included as Appendix 2. A diverse range of subject matter is covered such as

- Employment relations
- Employee engagement
- Job quality
- Flexible working
- Gender pay gap
- Job satisfaction
- Training
- Collective bargaining
- Equality and diversity
- Job autonomy
- Investors in People

Disciplines include economics, business and management, HR and personnel . Researchers have made extensive use of the WERS microdata lodged at the UK Data Archive and the ONS Virtual Microdata Laboratory, in the latter particularly since WERS2004 was linked to ONS datasets. The study team observed that a popular link was the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, allowing users to study the relationship between remuneration and non-pay benefits<sup>8</sup>.

### 4.2.2 Potential usage

The academic users of WERS that were interviewed did not, on the whole, identify major new areas of WERS usage. This may be because those interviewed were already active users and supporters of others, and so did not identify insurmountable barriers to use. Academics did identify wellbeing and health as potential growth areas for analysis. For example, research into work-life balance now has a number of potential interested customers in BIS, HSE or CO, allowing academics to meet both research and impact targets. No direct evidence of this was uncovered, but this may simply reflect the study's limited opportunity to interview academics.

## 4.3 Routes to impact

For WERS, the roles of intermediaries and knowledge brokers were relatively important. These intermediaries were of two types.

The first type could be described as 'research intermediaries', helping users with statistical needs to make effective use of WERS. NIESR and BIS-LMD are the two most prominent organisations in the knowledge broker role of research intermediaries. A key indicator of their influence is the publication on WERS 2004 co-written by all the sponsors - *Inside the workplace* (Kersley et al, 2006). This is the most widely cited publication on WERS 2004.

In addition, they acted as intermediaries supporting other research users. NIESR contributed to primary analysis on WERS and produced reports for other users, for instance, reports to BIS on skills.

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<sup>8</sup> Direct observation by study team member 2006-2011

BIS' role was more limited in supporting other users, since their focus was on supporting government. However, BIS sponsored PhDs using WERS to increase awareness and uptake of the survey.

The second group of knowledge brokers could be described as 'non-specialist intermediaries'. This group includes CBI, CIPD and ACAS. These took findings from WERS and translated them into meaningful information for non-specialist organisations. In particular, they produced materials for in-company use, especially for HR managers and/or union reps. In these cases, WERS is not necessarily identified as the source of the information. Case Study 1 demonstrates knowledge-brokering for non-specialist users.

A central role was played by the WERS Information and Advice Service (WIAS). This was funded by the ESRC between 2006 and 2008 in order to encourage the exchange of ideas, problems and solutions between users of the WERS 2004 data. WIAS ran an e-mail discussion list open to users and also organised six-monthly user group meetings, which also included presentations from invited speakers on methods of analysis or WERS 2004 based research. Although funding for this stopped in 2008, the website remained an important source of information for users (albeit not updated); and the WIAS (ex-)staff were frequently referenced by WERS users as ongoing, if unpaid, advisers.

#### 4.4 Impacts

WERS impacts can be broadly defined as: mapping; analysis; practice guidance; and design influence. Non-academic users tended to draw on the *Inside the Workplace* text as the main source of data from WERS; and there was a unanimous tendency amongst non-academic funders to make as much use of WERS data as they could:

*"We tend to be greedy with WERS and get as much out of it [as we can]"*

##### 4.4.1 Mapping

Most non-academic users, and some academics, referred to the importance of WERS as a 'mapping' tool; that is, providing contextual information not available elsewhere by the use of relatively simple descriptive statistics and published tables:

*"There are very few surveys undertaken at the face to face employer level any more. WERS is nationally representative of workplaces in Britain".*

Government departments and organisations defined WERS as essential for identifying changes in employment relations over time, a 'benchmark survey' providing the basis for a host of other analyses using more specific data. The quality of the dataset (in particular, the reliability and validity of WERS) was mentioned by all users; the data was perceived as "authoritative and credible".

WERS users emphasised that its consistency was a key strength of the survey. The continuity of the dataset had practical value for all users:

*"WERS has been enormously influential in terms of British social science, especially in looking at changes over time. The continuity of WERS is also important".*

Overall, WERS data was established as providing a context for policy in various fields. However, users were keen to stress that this context was only part of the story in understanding the economy:

*“WERS shines a light on the world rather than evaluating it. It’s absolutely critical to providing a context from which to evaluate policy”.*

*“Within BIS WERS tends to be a state of the nation benchmark survey rather than an evaluation’.*

A “comprehensive and representative” dataset, WERS was described as the Government’s primary source of data on union representation in the workplace over the longer term.

BIS and ACAS both identified WERS as a primary source for contextual information. For BIS, this meant WERS was part of the toolkit available to the analysts to respond to external queries, and to provide background to their own analyses. For ACAS, published tables (eg *Inside the Workplace*) and commissioned analyses provided the background to consultations and policy changes; see Case Study 1.

HSE stated that they have used, and will continue to use WERS data as an essential adjunct :

*“[WERS is] an addition to our toolkit”*

For example, between 2007 and 2009, they ran their own survey on workplace characteristics and co-analysed with WERS. HSE is also drawing on WERS in order to develop their position on particular issues for example, health and safety concerns generated by a rise in ‘precarious’ workers. As WERS gives data about small workplaces, this makes it one of the few sources for studying workplaces where precarious workers might be. Again, WERS is used as a mapping tool to augment internal studies.

Non-government interviewees also emphasised the importance of WERS as contextual evidence, particularly in consultations. The perceived independence of WERS meant that it could be used by all sides. For example , a consultation on ACAS’ Code of Practice saw WERS used to provide the context for multiple views on the same issue (government, CBI, TUC). ACAS and BERR (BIS’ predecessor department) used WERS to analyse activities of union representatives. This led to a revised Code of Practice with the CBI and TUC signing up to a joint statement of support.

When WERS was used to provide contextual information, it often was not cited directly in documents. For example, WERS was described as providing a context for the CBI report *Thinking positive: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment Relationship*:

*“it gave us a framework from which to base the rest of our work. It was a highly evidenced piece of work”.*

WERS is not explicitly referenced in the above report but interviews with users indicated that it provided the context for the report.

The CBI saw WERS as useful background information. For example, WERS findings were cited in the report *Jobs for the Future* and

*“It helped to frame our thinking about what our priorities were on that”*

The usefulness was limited to specific topics, for example, the CBI noted that WERS had little to contribute on employment law reform.

The TUC also produces a wide range of reports, literature and guidance for union negotiators, all of which have some impact on the British workforce and how UK employees experience union representation, and some of which are based on WERS findings. For example, WERS 2004 is cited directly in the 2010 *Road to Recovery*, which was aimed at the government and workers, in order to put forward the argument that unions can play a productive role in raising workplace efficiency.

WERS data is an important source for the TUC, both regionally and nationally and all TUC departments have drawn on WERS for both contextual information, as well as a direct resource for data on union representation. The TUC commissions its own research, but WERS strengthens this independent data in TUC publications because of its reliability, validity and independence.

The CIPD conducts its own data collection, but the sample usually comprises CIPD members. This means that the HR professionals who act as respondents are more likely to be employed by a particular type of organisation. Since, the CIPD sample may not be representative of UK workplaces, WERS is used extensively by the CIPD to map changes within people management-relevant topics and add validity to empirical data collected by the CIPD. The CIPD viewed WERS as the “gold standard” of quantitative data on British workplaces, and found the plethora of information on small firms especially helpful.

#### **4.4.2 Analysis**

Compared to mapping, a relatively small number of non-academic users directly analysed the WERS data. Nevertheless, this generated a number of outputs uniquely attributable to WERS.

BIS-LMD, makes extensive use of the WERS data in day-to-day business. Although BIS has access to a wide variety of data sources, WERS remains one of the “key” data sources, simply because there is no alternative source of data of comparable quality on topics of relevance. BIS noted that increasing use has been made of the Labour Force Survey as an alternative as WERS 2004 has become more outdated; but the expectation is that WERS 2011 will be analysed in great detail.

Within BIS, WERS is used as a generic resource. Past and present BIS staff cited WERS as used in all areas of activity of LMD and related division, from short-term (such as briefing notes) to long-term strategy pieces. However, this ubiquity made tracking down specific uses difficult. For example, several respondents within and outside BIS claimed that WERS was used in Regulatory Impact Assessments, but specific references in the formal documents were not found. This may reflect unfamiliarity with the documents by the study team, or it may reflect WERS’ role as providing context rather than a direct analytical contribution. As a second example, a report co-written by BIS and the HSE containing WERS data did not enter the public domain, but was used by the Minister for Health.

WERS was also used to respond to requests for information and parliamentary questions:



*“We provide advice to ministers based on evidence from the WERS 2004 source book, which provides background and contextual data. For example, for media reports on disputes, ministers ask us whether this is representative of the workplace at the moment’.*

*“WERS is a very useful instrument. We used it all the time in policy briefings and parliamentary questions. It would’ve been very difficult to answer some of the questions without WERS as a source’.*

Although ACAS identified WERS primarily as a mapping tool, they have exploited it analytically as well. For example, analysis of the WERS data carried out by BIS led to revisions to ACAS’ Codes of Practice on union representation and grievance procedures (see Case Study 1).

UKCES used WERS data specifically in two of their reports commissioned by the Sector Skills Agency Development Agency on training and workplace survival, and training and workplace satisfaction (Collier et al, 2007, Sloane et al, 2007).

HSE have used WERS to complement other data sources, including for example, the Labour Force Survey. They have also used WERS in conjunction with their own survey data. HSE worked with BIS on employee engagement and improving worker consultation, which was a policy initiative derived from one of HSE’s surveys. As noted above, this was written up as a briefing note to the Minister of Health.

#### **4.4.3 Practice guidance**

ACAS developed a diagnostic tool for organisations to measure employee engagement. Based on WERS data, the tool has been used by some 3,400 companies (see Case Study 1). ACAS will use the British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA) to commission further research in this area.

For CIPD, WERS has provided the catalyst for articles published in People Management magazine<sup>9</sup>. WERS offers a picture of drivers of change which the CIPD then weave into a narrative for their members. People Management magazine has a wider readership, and so WERS 2011 data potentially will have a direct, if mediated, entry into UK workplaces.

The UKCES Sector Skills Insight Reports, described in 4.4.2, were circulated to companies to provide information on training as well as using UKCES’ own survey data. WERS was used to provide the context for detail from UKCES’ own data. An interviewee commented on the significance of WERS data in relation to this:

*“WERS was the only dataset we could’ve used. It’s quite difficult to get information on the impact of training on establishments. The panel evidence was the most useful”.*

The results of the reports were disseminated to large organisations with HR functions. UKCES provided packs of slides aimed at local enterprise organisations.

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<sup>9</sup> This is the monthly magazine published by the CIPD for HR professionals. The CIPD estimates the readership of People Management magazine to be over 132,000.

#### 4.4.4 Design influence

WERS has influenced the development of other surveys outside of the UK (France, Norway, South Korea, Australia and China). Several interviewees also emphasised the value of the co-sponsorship model present in WERS.

ACAS used the WERS SEQ as a framework for their staff survey. ACAS gave NIESR a commission to develop wellbeing-at-work questions, from which ACAS developed their own survey. This was then fed back in to the WERS 2011 research team which then had a secondary practice use within WERS.

### 4.5 Determinants of impact

#### 4.5.1 Networks

Outside of academia, the WERS user community appears strongly networked. The WERS Steering Group provides a natural set of connections in the network, but other bodies seemed to be able to integrate themselves. Evidence of this is provided by the ease with which organisations such as the TUC, CBI, and CIPD referenced and were referenced by Steering Group members. These connections seem to be reinforced by formal and informal contacts.

This has meant that there is a well-defined group of contacts allowing interested parties from government, academia and business to find a relevant 'local' contact. The longevity of WERS and the stability of the non-government user community has contributed to this sense of 'we know who to talk to'.

However, it is not clear whether there is such a strong network effect within academia. Whilst the NIESR team is widely recognised and BIS' engagement with academic research is relatively high, it is not clear what networking exists in academic, particularly since the WERS user group meetings stopped. However, this may be due to the small number of academics interviewed.

#### 4.5.2 Policy/practice awareness

The policy awareness of WERS is extremely high, as co-funders are directly engaged in policy development and delivery. This has not meant that WERS is exclusively focused on policy: the presence of academics on the Steering Group provides a counterbalance to government interests. Moreover, the extended data collection period and the periodic nature of WERS limits the options for focusing on short-term policy interests. Both government and academic interviewees from the Steering Group stressed the long-term nature of WERS.

#### 4.5.3 Co-production

The steering committee are involved at the outset and throughout the process of WERS, as developers and end-users. The collaboration of academic and non-academic users requires a balance between serving the interests of both parties, as highlighted by the comment:

*"WERS must stay policy relevant but keep its core function of showing the big picture".*

#### 4.5.4 User engagement

Academic users tend to segment around their use of and engagement with WERS. It was suggested that a considerable number of academics are driven by their individual dissemination strategies and,

therefore, do not seek to influence policy through their work. However, research outputs by academics on issues including employee representation (e.g. by Andy Charlwood and Mike Terry), job quality (e.g. by Andy Charlwood or Francis Green), work-life balance (Stephen Wood), equality (Melanie Jones) and so on have been cited by BIS as an influential body of evidence.

A number of respondents argued that, frequently, academics are unaware of how and where their work has been cited and, thus, might be oblivious that policymaking institutions have drawn on their work. The academic community was described by one academic as “disparate”, meaning that it is difficult to track doctoral researchers who might be using WERS.

WERS user groups were well-attended, but participants tended to have previous experience of working with the micro data and were taking part to understand how fellow academics were using WERS, as well as to obtain ideas for their own research. Hence, these workshops attracted a typical kind of academic WERS user who was already aware of what the dataset could offer.

It was suggested by academic interviewees that the WERS data offered a particularly rich source of data for industrial relations users, but academics researching in this area were in decline. Nevertheless, the field of Human Resource Management continued to generate significant credible outputs rooted in the WERS dataset, that were being published in high ranking academic journals.

#### 4.5.5 Accessibility

Some users commented that a significant barrier to using WERS is related to the perceived complexities of working with microdata. Users of the microdata added that they had difficulties linking different WERS data sets across the years. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that some potential users might be deterred by perceptions that WERS is complicated to use, WIAS was judged as having provided excellent support for non-specialists. Moreover, many users tended to head for the *Inside the Workplace* text in the first – and last – case (although some commented that online tables for WERS 2004 could have been helpful).

#### 4.5.6 Research team credibility

WERS academic rigour is important to its users. This rigour is rooted in the fact that the research team is comprised of academics who have been closely linked with WERS for a lengthy period, not only as developers, but also as users. The WERS academic team has had long term involvement with WERS in terms of design, research analysis and dissemination. The NIESR staff, particularly, is recognised for their role on the WERS research teams and were highlighted by both academic and non-academic WERS users as being key persons in the development and dissemination of WERS.

#### 4.5.7 Infrastructure and management

When receiving input from academic and policy-making communities, the Steering Group chair interacts with sponsors and prioritises activities, to create a balance between retaining key issues and reflecting change. Policy makers seek a high degree of continuity within the study, in order to map change, whereas academics are keen to explore new areas:

*“There are two agendas [and] the focus goes on overlapping”*

*“There was a compromise that focused on what people thought was important”*

The extent to which there were differences between the academic and government components of the steering group was disputed. Some argued that there were significant differences of opinion; others (mostly on the Steering Group) explained that these were overstated.

#### **4.5.8 Intermediaries and knowledge brokers**

Within NIESR – an independent economic research institute – key academics in the field of employment relations conduct detailed analysis of WERS and publish data aimed at both academic and non-academic audiences. The aim of NIESR is to act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities. A good example of this is *Inside the workplace* (Kersley et al, 2006), the report on WERS 2004 co-written by BIS, NIESR and ACAS. This is the most widely cited publication on WERS post 2004. In this way NIESR has had a key role as a knowledge broker in disseminating WERS data both to academics, ACAS, and to government departments.

BIS, a major co-sponsor of WERS, works closely with ACAS on researching and disseminating WERS findings. BIS use WERS within their Labour Market Division; they stated that they would firstly have used the WERS 2004 source book, then would have examined original data after that. BIS have used WERS alongside their own business surveys.

### **4.6 Reflections on impact study methods**

#### **4.6.1 Tracking backwards versus forwards**

As established in section 2.3, the ‘tracking backwards’ approach was the most appropriate for this study. Given the time constraints of the study, it was felt that the identification of academic users for ‘tracking forwards’ would be a relatively high-cost, low return activity. Therefore, a more pragmatic approach was to contact policy makers at the outset and to ask them for examples of impact. From these examples, we were able to trace the process back to how original WERS data had been incorporated.

Nevertheless, some elements of a ‘tracking forward’ approach can be found in the study. This is especially the case in mapping the process of WERS through to the policymaker and then to the end-user, by returning to the literature after engaging with policy documents.

Hence, one weakness inherent in the study is that some key academic users may have gone undetected; evidence of links between their work and policy change may then have been overlooked. Given the engagement of the main WERS network with academics, this is most likely to have occurred in areas where WERS is being used to provide auxiliary information. For example, a popular use of WERS amongst academics was to link the data to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. This allowed additional workplace characteristics to be added to analyses of earnings. As the main interest is in earnings rather than workplace relations, these users are less likely to be part of the WERS User Group and interact with the Steering Group in the same way as those interested in workplace management.

#### **4.6.2 Pervasiveness versus specificity**

For some organisations, use was widespread and so it was difficult to allocate impact. For example, answering Parliamentary Questions was repeatedly identified as a key use in BIS but the nature of PQs meant that there was negligible recognition of specific examples. Statements such as ‘we use it

all the time' were relatively common, but the benchmark for 'all the time' was not determined. On the other hand, it is not clear whether a measure such as 'once a week', 'twice a week' would have generated useful results because this depended on the interviewee being cognisant of all uses. It was felt better to leave the statement as one reflecting the perceived pervasiveness of the data.

#### 4.6.3 Seniority versus practice

Outside academia, this study focused on those with seniority who could describe the organisational relationship with WERS. Initially this was done for practical reasons: going straight to those who could talk about strategy and context. However, given that WERS is very much an 'institutional' resource (organisations either see WERS as an important tool and build it into their research strategies, or do not use it), the focus on senior staff also reflects this structure.

Going to staff more directly engaged with the data would have given a different picture. For example, this could have shown how WERS was used in conjunction with, and compared to, other datasets; or it might have highlighted applications of which senior managers were unaware. As comparison with further datasets was explicitly excluded from the terms of the study and as managers were able to provide detailed examples of the range of uses, this was not perceived as major omission given the resources available.

In addition, issues with staff turnover militated against talking to less senior staff. Given the need to consider impacts over several years, the need for institutional memory was high. Junior researchers tend to change jobs frequently. In contrast, amongst senior managers, only one person with experience over the whole WERS2004 cycle could not be contacted.

#### 4.6.3 Common knowledge

The widespread use of *Inside the workplace* makes attributing specific impacts to WERS more difficult. A Google search for the exact long title generates 19,000 references; and the publication of the book was followed by a number of summary articles, creating second-round effects. The book is so frequently cited that attributing impact becomes a matter of guesswork beyond an immediate group.

## 5. Evaluation of WERS impact

### 5.1 Effectiveness of dissemination strategies

Dissemination strategies are quite effective. These are mainly through NIESR, WIAS, ONS and the UK Data Archive Service.

At the centre of the dissemination of WERS is NIESR, in its role of bridging academic and policy-making communities. NIESR has been extremely successful in disseminating WERS through *Inside the Workplace* (2006) which they wrote jointly with the other sponsors of WERS. This publication along with the first findings of the 2004 WERS, also entitled *Inside the Workplace* (2005) are the most widely used resources for WERS data.

WIAS was repeatedly praised by academic and non-academic users for its role in encouraging use of the survey data from WERS 2004. As well as widening access to the data, WIAS offered support will be available both to new users and to those already familiar with the WERS series. The user-group meeting organised by WIAS offered important opportunities for WERS users to share ideas and receive feedback on their work.

Researchers have additionally been able to access WERS micro data through the UK Data Archive and the ONS Virtual Microdata Laboratory. For ONS users, the linking of WERS2004 to ONS datasets has been reported as useful.

Furthermore, it is possible to comment on the dissemination routes of research based on WERS for both academic and policy-making communities.

The WERS user community network, which has evolved amongst non-academic users, has led to a number of collaborative reports which have been disseminated jointly through bodies such as BIS (and its predecessors), CBI and ACAS. These publications, which have drawn data from WERS, have fed directly into policy change.

Furthermore, reports produced by BIS, ACAS and the TUC have fed into the practitioner literature, as well as have been used within organisations, influencing UK workplaces at ground-level. The TUC's 2010 *Road to Recovery*, for example, was widely disseminated to union reps, union members and organisations, but also to students, academic and other users through the TUC website.

Due to its status as a comprehensive and statistically reliable data set, WERS generates a large amount of academic outputs. These are published in a range of academic journals, including highly ranked publications, such as the British Journal of Industrial Relations (BJIR) and the European Journal of Industrial Relations. The BJIR has also organised academic conferences, which have also created further avenues for dissemination. However, it was difficult to draw clear links between academic outputs and impacts other than those already identified through the main WERS network.

### 5.2 Distinctive value of WERS

WERS' perceived value lies in the methodological rigour of the data. Aside from the reliability of the statistical dataset, users value the independence of the data. Users, such as the CIPD and the TUC, for example, collect their own data. But in order to add validity and strengthen their data, they used

WERS to provide contextual and comparative information. Most importantly, both TUC and CBI stressed the independence of WERS as a major consideration; both were keen to show that, although they may present a particular perspective, they use an ‘unbiased’ data source for their evidence.

The consistency of survey questions between 1980 and 2004 has produced comparable data, which is important for tracking changes in the UK workplace. Nevertheless, the survey has been flexible enough to respond to change, particularly as employment relationships have shifted to become more individualised, employee engagement has become more of a focus, and a decline has occurred in traditional industrial relations.

WERS offers insights into British organisations that other surveys do not offer, therefore; many users commented that this is the only survey which gives them the level and range of detail they require. WERS offers a valuable opportunity to examine workplace relations from the perspective of three key actors – the employer, the employee representative and the employee. However, very few users commented on the employee representative questionnaire.

### 5.3 Limitations on impact

The length of time between surveys is seen as problematic as the relevance and currency of the data starts to decrease after five years. The impact of recession on UK organisations, and later a change in government, meant that the usefulness of WERS 2004 data was affected from 2008 onwards. At the time of their interview, BIS interviewees noted, for example, that the timeliness of Labour Force Survey outweighed the quality and relevance of WERS data, although this would reverse as soon as the WERS 2011 data was available.

For WERS 2004, there was also a delay between the publication of the ‘first findings’, the first major overview of the data (for 2004, *Inside the Workplace*), and the eventual appearance of the dataset. This time lag not only affects the freshness of the data, but discourages immediate use. For WERS 2011, however, the first findings were available in January 2013 and the data will be available from February 2013.

WERS micro data use has been limited to academics and to the research team at BIS. This is related to the perceived complexity of the dataset. Some non-specialist users report that they do not have the expertise to engage with the micro data. In terms of linked data, this was used far less than other ONS linked data; partly this is due to the small overlap in samples. It is noticeable that much the most important use of linked data in the ONS Virtual Microdata Laboratory has been to add workplace characteristics to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, to improve the understanding of earnings, rather than to study the workplace.

The incremental decline in response rates has been flagged up as potentially affecting the usage of WERS. In response to this, the 2011 survey has been modified and shortened which may impact on the amount and depth of the resulting data. Nevertheless, the response rate still seems to be decreasing (data is not available for 2011 yet), which might have implications for the reliability and validity of the data.

Some users have commented that WERS is outdated in its focus on trade unions, as these have become much less important in the British industrial landscape than when the survey was first

designed in the 1980s; this has been reflected in a decline in 'industrial relations' as an academic field of study. Consequently, WERS needs to reflect more contemporary issues, such as high performance work systems. Furthermore, ACAS identifies that, in order to meet the future needs of the user community, WERS need to represent all facets of the labour market. For example, the survey does not collect data from agency workers who are a significant feature of labour markets, and are likely to increase.

Finally, due to the need to balance the interests of the academic and non-academic user groups, WERS is not directly linked to policy issues, nor is it designed purely with the policy-making users in mind. Thus, to a certain extent, WERS cannot offer non-academic users (and funders) all the data they need.

#### **5.4 Issues arising from study**

This evaluation of WERS has concentrated on the 'inner network' formed from the WERS Steering Group, a small number of relevant academics, and interested parties such as CBI, TUC, CIPD and ESRC. This was necessitated by the short time frame for the study.

However, it is not entirely clear that a longer study period would have provided much more in the way of evidence of impact. The missing link is other academic users, but most of the non-academics interviewed also took a great deal of interest in the work of the academic community. Hence, it is likely that 'tracking forwards' from academic users would have ended up in much the same place.

Had this been an economic evaluation, an assessment of the usage of WERS and the value to those users would have been essential. As an impact evaluation, this study demonstrates what is important, rather than what is not. If this study were to feed into an economic evaluation, then it should be noted that the study is likely to underestimate both usage both impact and usage; we feel that the underestimation of the former is smaller.



## 6. Commentary on ESS impact

This section considers how ESS is used; the next examines the impact that ESS has had. For ESS, direct use of the data occurs almost exclusively in the academic sector; non-academic users experience ESS through research and advice provided to academics, have access to ESS data via its website, the Findings Booklet and the Topline Results series. The government plays no direct role in the general direction of the survey or in specific questions; however, governments can play an indirect role in that teams developing modules on the survey can be sponsored by governments, quangos or international organisations.

Knowledge transmission for ESS data takes place primarily through the ESS website, where the data is publicly available, and through the ESS Core Scientific Team (CST), based at City University London, one of seven CST members. The ESS National Co-ordinator is based at NatCen and is responsible for disseminating ESS findings amongst academics and government departments as appropriate. It should be noted that the CST has responsibility for pan-European dissemination, not only in the UK.

### 6.1 Usage of ESS in the non-academic domain

#### 6.1.1 Actual data usage

ESS data tends to provide contextual evidence for government publications. ESS data is cited in reports from a range of central government departments including

- BIS
- Cabinet Office – ‘Big Society’ Strategy and Analysis Team
- DEFRA
- DWP
- Government Office for Science
- Home Office
- Ministry for Justice
- Office for National Statistics – wellbeing team

Other non-academic users of ESS data have included Age UK (see case study 2) and the Metropolitan Police and other police agencies (see case study 3).

Almost all of this is through academic intermediaries, although ONS has used the data directly and CO is planning to do so.

#### 6.1.2 Potential usage

One government interviewee emphasised how ESS is an important source of contextual data in the areas of wellbeing, justice, immigration and governance. It was thought that this data could potentially provide valuable evidence in influencing policy. In relation to wellbeing for example, it was felt important to link ESS data with wellbeing data from other surveys. The potential to use ESS microdata was also explored:

*“Within ESS there are a number of interesting bits – I want analysts to look at issues on justice, immigration, constitutional material, and governance. The analysis will then influence policy. It’s also about linking analysts with policy leads. You need to look at it*

*through a wellbeing lens. Each dataset adds value in various policy areas. It's not just the ESS data. No one survey is enough in these areas".*

An academic interviewee stated that ESS data will be used in the future to examine attitudinal change over time on migration issues, contributing to debates on perceptions of threat, and how this may impact on concepts of multiculturalism:

*"I hope we'll produce a resource that will be widely used. This will then reflect further attitudinal change over a period of ten years. We hope that there'll be some potential impact on for example, concerns about Muslim migration, and culture clash issues. We'll be looking at this. It's about what could be seen as a symbolic threat rather than an economic threat, and how this links in with the multiculturalism debate. We could be contributing in a rigorous way to debates on multiculturalism when we get this ESS data."*

## 6.2 Usage of ESS in the academic domain

### 6.2.1 Actual usage

ESS was designed by, and for, academics; 88.3% of data downloads from the ESS website are to academics (ESS-DACE, 2011).

An overview of research outputs that have utilised ESS data is included as Appendix 3. A diverse range of subject matter is covered. Discussions with the ESS CST suggested that much UK research outputs can be categorised into the following broad areas:

- ageing
- immigration
- work and family
- citizenship
- trust and legitimacy in criminal justice systems
- wellbeing

Other UK academic work has studied political behaviour and participation (specifically, in respect of ethnic minorities) the rise of protest movement in this context, and the particular rise in far-right political parties. One academic commented on the academic impact of ESS:

*"This has certainly helped move on the scientific debate".*

Case Studies 2, 3, and 4 in Appendix 1 look at ageing, trust in justice and wellbeing in more detail.

### 6.2.2 Potential usage

Academics tended to suggest areas of new research, rather than identify ways to increase usage in existing research. For example, it was suggested that ESS data could provide a cross-national source of data on gender equality or environmental issues. Overall, academics interviewed felt that the policy relevance of ESS came secondary to its academic impact. It was suggested that there was a tension between keeping the same questions within ESS and changing them.

Some academics commented that to increase usage there was a need for effective policy dissemination of ESS findings in appropriate media channels:

*“The policy relevance and potential policy impact of ESS could be pushed more – and the need to get a wider audience to interpret ESS data, similar to what happens in the US, where there’s more media reporting of survey data”.*

*“Despite the best efforts of academics trying to disseminate policy evidence, this isn’t as good as it could be”.*

### 6.3 Routes to impact

ESS was not set up with explicit funding for dissemination and outreach: funds were provided only for data collection and basic dissemination through the website. However, since 2009 the CST has secured funding to support dissemination activities. The most tangible results are:

- publishing a Topline Results Series **at both** European and country-specific levels
- publishing an ESS findings booklet targeted at the policy and public communities

holding a series of four Policy Seminars 2012-14 targeting policy makers at EU level. The first EU level seminar took place on 21 May 2012 and the first UK seminar (on Trust in Justice module) was on 29th October 2012 and was attended by one of the study team.

In March 2011 as part of the Festival of Social Science ESS CST/City University London organized a seminar and information session on ESS data aimed specifically at the general public themed *“What do the British think about... ageism, political institutions and welfare?”*

In addition, the CST is engaging directly with government, particularly Cabinet Office, DWP and the DTI, to determine productive areas of analysis to explore. There has been some interest in ESS at an EU level and amongst other participating countries but for this study, we have concentrated on UK interest.

Finally, NatCen have a role to play in providing information about the data and proselytizing its use across government. Again, this is largely unfunded, and the impact of this activity is not clear.

However, this relates to the ESS overall. For the rotating modules, the routes to impact are direct and effective. This is because the modules are developed by those who already have a solid research base and good contacts for their outputs. This is discussed below.

### 6.4 Impacts

There is a significant difference in impact between the core questions and the specialist modules.

#### 6.4.1 Core questions

There was some evidence of policy relevant ESS outputs. As such many of the findings are likely to have implications for future policy formation in various fields. The European dimension has been particularly appealing as it allows researchers to differentiate national ‘cultural’ factors from deeper ‘psychological’ factors:

*“You need the comparative data to study the theory in order to look at what are the drivers, and to ask what has happened in the UK that hasn’t happened in Germany.”*

*For me the ESS was the obvious direction to take my research on work and the family. Before that my work was UK based. ESS allowed a wider comparative sweep... You're pushing ESS to its limit looking at life course [because of small numbers]. The work/family conflict work wasn't done before ESS was available."*

The specific nature of the questions also attracts researchers. Academics have used ESS data to study political behaviour and participation in relation to ethnic minorities; and the rise of protest movements in this context. Academics interviewed by the research team felt that research using ESS data in this field had contributed to reframing questions of attitude:

*"It's had enormous scientific impact – on, for example, theories of threat ... this has been used a great deal by academics. That's probably been the single most important thing that links with policy debates as well as informing academic debates."*

As an example, one academic interviewed by the research team was doing work for the Government Office for Science on the future of identity, and the potential rise of far right political parties. The GOS commissioned academics to do carry out a review, subsequently circulated amongst government departments including Cabinet Office:

*"ESS provides GOS with a serious scientific base on the future of identity which is to be published in January 2013. The Home Office, CLG and Cabinet Office will then take issues related to our report forward'.*

This process, of government using academics as research intermediaries rather than directly interrogating the data, seems to be the standard model. Interviews with ESS users revealed that the only current exception appears to be ONS, which used ESS in an "analytical" context to contrast with their analysis from their own data.

Being a multi-country survey, the ESS has attracted some interest from international organisations. The OECD used ESS data alongside the European Value Survey in research on social outcomes of learning (Campbell, 2006). In a new development, Eurostat is looking into the ESS for Quality of Life indicators for European-wide comparisons. The ESS will not be a direct source of wellbeing indicators, but used to "flesh out" the context and to "provide detail" on areas including personal relationships, local area and trust in institutions. NEF, with Eurostat, has identified a set of well-being indicators to disseminate on Eurostat's website. Several of the potential indicators were taken from the ESS core or Round 3 well-being module. Part of the process involved looking at the statistical relationships between potential well-being indicators and life satisfaction. This is expected to involve both inter-country mapping and micro-level data analysis.

#### **6.4.2 Specialist modules**

The modules tended to have a direct and notable impact, because the module proposal was typically the result of a data need identified by researchers in the relevant area with strong policy connections. Note that the analysis of the modules will also normally involved the analysis of the core data as well, to provide the necessary contextual information.

Three of the modules (Ageing, Wellbeing, and Trust in Justice) are considered in detail as Case Studies 2-4 in Appendix 1, but to give some examples:

- Studies of wellbeing have influenced, and been strongly influenced by, the ESS module on wellbeing. ONS' measures of subjective wellbeing were developed following on from discussions with NEF about the latter's (ESS-based) results. Huppert's et al (2011) operational definition of "flourishing" is based on ESS data.
- Evidence on procedural justice, which the ESS module Trust in Justice was intended to provide, has been circulated within the Ministry of Justice and led to the commissioning of follow-up studies and seminars.
- The same programme of work (and ESS module) have directly affected operational strategies of the Metropolitan Police, with 'legitimacy' targets being added to senior officers' objectives; the researchers have also been invited to present their findings to a range of other police organisations.
- The module on ageing has been used to "re-frame the debate" on attitudes to ageing; amongst other outcomes, DWP asked the ageing research team to help design follow-up questions to go on ONS' omnibus survey.

One government interviewee identified the most significant impact of ESS on policy as those of the 'Trust in Justice' and 'Ageing' findings. This comment relates to the interest shown by specific government departments in outputs of ESS. Policy orientated academics have produced reports on ESS data for the Ministry of Justice (on Trust in Justice findings) and for DWP (on Attitudes towards Ageing findings) – see case studies 2 and 3.

In most cases, module designs do not make reference to specific policies, and the first hurdle a module proposal must clear is one of international value and technical credibility. However, there is an awareness amongst the scientific community that direct policy relevance is a useful additional benefit for a module being considered:

*"The policy potential of an ESS module is not irrelevant; that certainly does enter the debate. Everybody is aware that ongoing funding of ESS depends on ESS' value. The policy relevance of a suggested module is certainly a strengthening factor in selection of a module. There's no steering of policy issues EU wide. The comparability and relevance of modules are a careful decider."*

### 6.4.3 Capacity-building

Although several universities use ESS data as a resource for teaching, it is not clear that ESS has contributed to capacity-building outside academia; non-academic contact is largely limited to research reports and presentations.

Interviewees stated that ESS has helped informed the work of other surveys both in the UK and in Europe in terms of its methodology (sampling procedures, cross-national cognitive testing methodology, translation protocols). These include Understanding Society, the European Values Survey and the International Social Survey Programme. One academic commented on this:

*"The ESS plays a role in setting high standards for survey research cross-nationally that is being spearheaded in different countries'.*

## 6.5 Determinants of impact

### 6.5.1 Networks

It is not clear that research and dissemination networks exist for the ESS, in general. For rotating modules, there are well-defined teams of researchers, but these are a notable exception; and the modules do seem to be developed in isolation. Examples of networks that have developed from module developers include Ageing – Kent, Trust in Justice – existing networks, and Wellbeing – NEF's networks.

### 6.5.2 Policy/practice awareness

Policy relevance is explicitly not considered as one of the ESS goals – but it is considered by the Scientific Committee when reviewing bids for modules (as long as the modules meet basic scientific criteria).

Module development does seem very policy-aware, and developers make extensive use of their contacts to disseminate findings. This is because the process of developing a module requires the involvement of a group with considerable extant experience in the field.

This issue was discussed with the ESS CST, who were surprised at the study team's impression of strong policy relevance in much of the ESS research. However, it was pointed out that the study strategy of only interviewing research groups in the UK may have led to biased perceptions. Interviews with the ESS CST have indicated that the policy impacts noted within the UK as a result of using ESS data may be atypical for Europe as a whole.

### 6.5.3 User engagement

Again, this is very high for modules, but less so for core data as, until recently, the ESS production teams at NatCen and City University had little or no funding for user engagement other than making the data available. Although the ESS produced a Communication and Impact Strategy in June 2011, the new user engagement strategy is currently at the early stages of implementation.

### 6.5.4 Accessibility

Access to ESS data on-line was emphasised as a strength in terms of potentially enabling it to impact on policy. The data is easy to download; hence its popularity as a teaching tool. ESS data can also be analysed on-line without downloading it. As ESS is designed for pan-European accessibility, it is necessary that metadata is accessible to a range of readers.

These goals do seem to have been met, although the ESS website is relatively Spartan and designed to provide information to committed researchers rather than entice prospective users. For example, no statistics from the survey or the Topline Findings are available except by finding and downloading the relevant document. Hence the casual browser would have little idea of the contents of the survey without looking into the question set. This is in direct contrast to Topline Findings series which are designed to make accessible interesting reading. Publications are available for download on the home page, not requiring browsing.

### 6.5.6 Research team credibility

For modules, this is necessary for the module to be developed and accepted by the Scientific Committee.

For the ESS core, credibility is (apart from individuals' research interests) primarily statistical ie the ability to design, develop and maintain a rigorous international survey to very high standards:

*"It's a world leader with respect to cross-national survey projects. ESS is in a league of its own in terms of scientific rigour, quality and its methodological aspects."*

This credibility is cited by researchers as important when representing their results to research users. In particular, ESS is often contrasted – favourably - with other European surveys.

### 6.5.7 Infrastructure and management

There is a separation of roles between NatCen and the Core Scientific Team, but there is also some overlap. NatCen, which is responsible for the UK data collection, also has a role in promoting ESS amongst potential users in government. This potentially is duplicating some of the outreach activity the CST team is now doing. Prior to 2009 the CST and City University team had no funded role in UK for dissemination of the ESS. More recently the ESRC has funded the London CST team for some UK specific dissemination activities. These are discussed with NatCen at joint Troika meetings and there is some collaboration between the teams.

Although communication between the teams seems good, there was an impression that NatCen may be somewhat isolated. For example, NatCen's contacts seem to be more with departments as targets, whereas the general impression is that the main impact is through specific individuals in departments. This was not followed up at the time as it was only later identified as a potential overlap.

### 6.5.8 Intermediaries and knowledge brokers

As noted above, knowledge transmission for ESS data takes places primarily through the ESS website and through the ESS CST. Other dissemination routes have been through Cabinet Office (strategy staff) approaching the ESS team at City University directly on particular topics included in ESS (see Case Study 3). The role of intermediaries and knowledge brokers in relation to ESS has partly been ad hoc, driven by particular specialisms and closely associated with the rotating modules; for example, NEF were engaged with and advising a number of parties on wellbeing (case study 3).

## 6.6 Reflections on impact study methods

The study was simplified by the presence of the rotating modules. These provided well-identified networks and impacts (although, as noted above, the data in rotating modules is analysed in conjunction with 'core' data which provides the context). Outside of the modules impact was less easy to identify and in the limited time frame of the study may have caused difficulties. However, it should be noted that the list of potential names identified by the study team from the initial desk research conformed fairly closely to the primary contacts suggested by the CST.

One particularly useful discussion was with a member of the Scientific Advisory Board. This provided a number of insights, at a stage removed from CST and NatCen, into study design, use of ESS and the

scope of analysis. This interview also highlighted the way that the European policy concerns did play a part in the development of the ESS, albeit in a secondary role.



## 7. Evaluation of ESS impact

### 7.1 Effectiveness of dissemination strategies

Until 2009 ESS did not have a formal dissemination strategy; the ESS produced an initial brief for this activity in early 2009; reporting in 2010. The ESS Communication and Impact Strategy was produced in June 2011. . The, ESS also has a national co-ordinator based at the NatCen for Social Research whose remit is to promote the ESS data to government departments. NatCen’s website signposts to the ESS website.

Since 2009, a key aim of ESS has been to improve the visibility and outreach of data on social change amongst academics and policy makers, and the wider public. ESS has been funded to promote outreach activities beyond the academic community in order to increase the reach of the survey. One ESS report (2011) states that,

*“The ESS will work to ensure the immediate dissemination of its results to public and policy communities in order to bridge the academic –public gap”.*

This has involved producing ‘Top Line Summary’ results, publishing ‘ESS Findings’ booklets targeted at policy and public communities, and running policy seminars.

The aim of this is to “contribute to policy makers’ understanding of the scientific importance of the ESS to European scientific knowledge base” (*Report for ESS Infrastructure Preparatory Phase Project.... (Deliverable 9) – outreach to academic, public and policy communities*). ESS managers pointed out the need to embed outreach within their dissemination strategy. It was reported to the research team by CO staff that there has been further interest in ESS generated amongst government staff who attended the policy seminar ESS ran in October 2012 on its Trust in Justice findings.

ESS ran a (second) international conference on research findings in Cyprus (November 2012), entitled “Cross-National Evidence from European Social Survey: Exploring Public Attitudes, Informing Public Policy in Europe”. However, although the EU sent a message of acknowledgement and support, attendance was almost entirely academic. This reflects the general focus of dissemination on the academic community.

Finally, ESS now has its own Twitter account.

As much of this activity has happened in the last few months, it is perhaps too early to consider how effective these dissemination strategies have been.

For the rotating modules, the story is slightly different. Of the three modules considered in detail (see Case Studies 2-4), there is a common development thread. An academic team with a clear idea of both the scientific and policy value of their work identified the ESS as an effective vehicle to build an evidence base; once the module was accepted and the data collected, the pre-existing research infrastructure of the developers came into play, so that results were disseminated quickly and effectively to their target audience through, mostly, existing networks. In this context, the targeted modules appear to have been extremely successful in terms of getting their research results onto

the desks of policymakers. ; all of the modules studied have demonstrated examples of changing practice as a result of the ESS research (uniquely or in conjunction with other research).

## 7.2 Distinctive value of the ESS

The strengths of ESS that interviewees identified were its scientific rigour, the quality of its methodology, and the extent to which country and regional-level contextual data can be captured. What both academics and non-academics highlighted was that ESS enables cross-national comparisons over time to a degree not available in other European surveys:

*“The complementarity within ESS between countries is exemplary. Other surveys don’t have the same methodological programme. ESS is representative; the questionnaire content has equivalence of meaning e.g. the language used in the different country surveys (how this is translated cross-nationally)”.*

*“It (ESS) has been the most valuable and high quality source, and it enables us to look at trends over time. It’s key scientific impact is absolutely unassailable, amongst eminent scholars in the UK and all over the world”.*

*“ESS’s strength lies in its ability to map over place and time. It moves beyond the ISSP and Eurobarometer surveys”.*

However, the unique selling point of the ESS is the ability to compare subjective data from multiple countries. Data from, for example, the British Social Attitudes Survey (from which ESS, in part, derives) suffers from a major limitation: it cannot identify whether attitudes identified are due to innate psychological responses, or are the result of the cultural environment of the UK. The ESS is unusually able to address this question with very high quality data. Hence it is now possible to determine whether attitudes to the police, for example, are determined by culture or reflect universal individual responses to treatment. This ability to distinguish between two otherwise unidentified hypotheses is crucial for evidence-based policymaking.

## 7.3 Limitations on impact

At its outset ESS did not have a remit to examine policy issues across Europe. It was set up to provide robust scientific cross-national data on social attitudes and its aim is to measure changes in public attitudes and behaviour patterns over time cross-nationally. This means that important policy issues may not be addressable by ESS. Although individual ESS modules have contributed significantly to both academic debates and policy questions, these have been relatively self-contained.

This problem is not unique to ESS but is common to all general-purpose data collections; and overall academics interviewed felt that the policy relevance of ESS came secondary to its scientific impact.

More important is the restriction imposed by the cross-national nature of the study. To allow internationally comparable questions, sometimes the questions are limited. For example, the Trust in Justice module developers used a question on crime which was felt to give accurate yes/no answers across all countries but at a cost of uncertainty in the specific crime being described. These problems arise precisely because ESS cannot exploit country-specific cultural markers. Whilst the ESS has made some innovations to reduce the problem (for example, ensuring that concepts are

translatable, rather than the specific wording of questions), it has to be recognised that the source of problem is also the source of ESS' value.

#### 7.4 Issues arising from study

ESS is a European survey and its focus is not on collecting policy orientated data, or data focused on UK policy issues; but this impact study is concerned with the UK impact of ESS. The snowball sampling method that the study team used was based on identifying key UK academics who have worked on ESS data. These were initially identified by the ESS CST at the start of the impact study. These tended to be academics who, from the outset, had a policy focus, partly because confusion the study team and the ESRC over the meaning of 'impact' led to a concentration on instrumental impacts.

This therefore may not represent the full range of academic use or output. Due to the timescale of the impact study it was not possible to interview a wider range of academics involved in ESS design and research areas resulting from ESS (for example, those working on modules on citizenship, education, religion and training). As for WERS, it should be noted that this study therefore is likely to underestimate both impact and use; unlike WERS, it is not immediately clear whether one of those is more underestimated.

However, the CST list reflected almost exactly the findings of the study team's desk research. This is because the primary method of ESS research dissemination is the research article. Hence (and unlike WERS), tracking forwards from research outputs was an efficient way of identifying impacts. Moreover, this would suggest that major impacts have been covered, given the consistency between the CST list and the independent desk research findings.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusions

This study described and evaluated the WERS and ESS surveys independently. We now turn to consider, jointly, differences and similarities between the datasets, in order to draw out lessons which one survey could learn from the other, in order to widen the scope for impact. Although the surveys are very different and not comparable in any useful sense, it is still instructive to consider whether any general lessons can be learned.

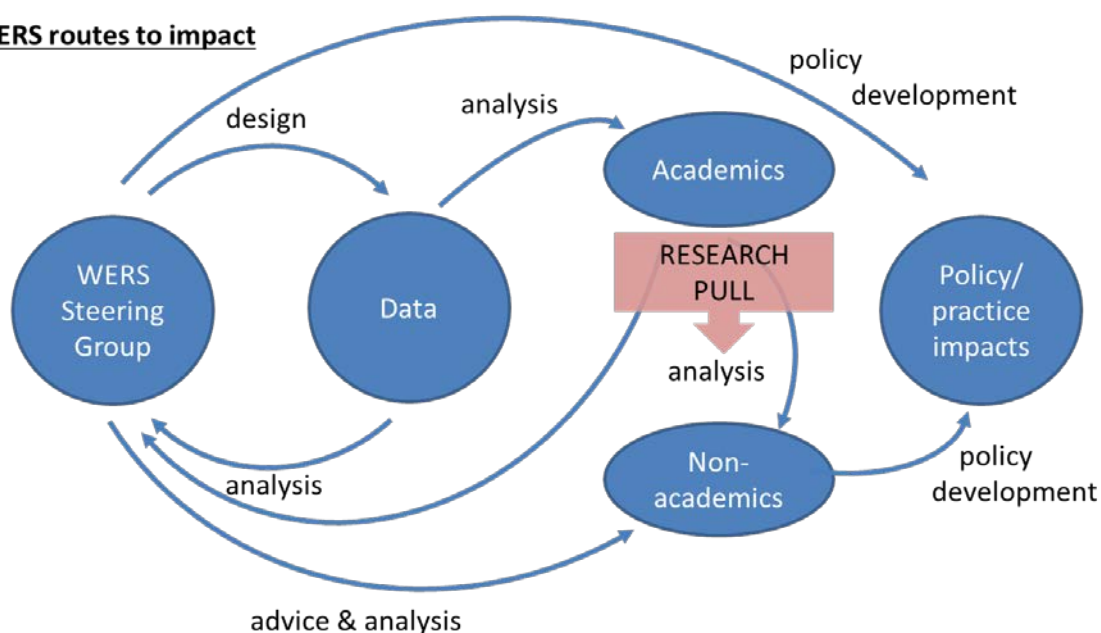
### 8.1 Design and content

WERS is developed, coordinated and conducted by both academic and non-academic bodies; hence it bridges both communities of users. The Steering Committee is drawn from representatives of the sponsoring bodies BIS, ACAS, HSE, ESRC and UKCES. The development of specific question areas is the responsibility of teams of academic experts, who ensure the academic rigour of the survey, as well as academic researchers and lawyers advising on employment relations legislation; and policy officials within BIS. The main non-academic users of the WERS data are BIS and ACAS, who are co-sponsors.

Similarly to WERS, ESS has been designed by academics and is accepted as having a strong methodology and producing statistically viable data. Unlike WERS, however, there is no formal design input from policy-makers; ESS is a European survey and was not designed to collect data in relation to UK policy issues exclusively. Instead, core questions and rotating module developers come solely from the academic community. Consequently, the ESS is lacking in direct links with policy institutions. This is true to date. However, the transition to an ERIC means that the ESS will be controlled in future by research ministries.

It has been argued that scholarly outputs based on WERS data may not reach policymakers or, indeed, influence policy, but this report found that overall, the non-academic users did have the resources and knowledge to exploit findings from the academic community. In other words, there was a 'pull' for research from a knowledgeable policy community:

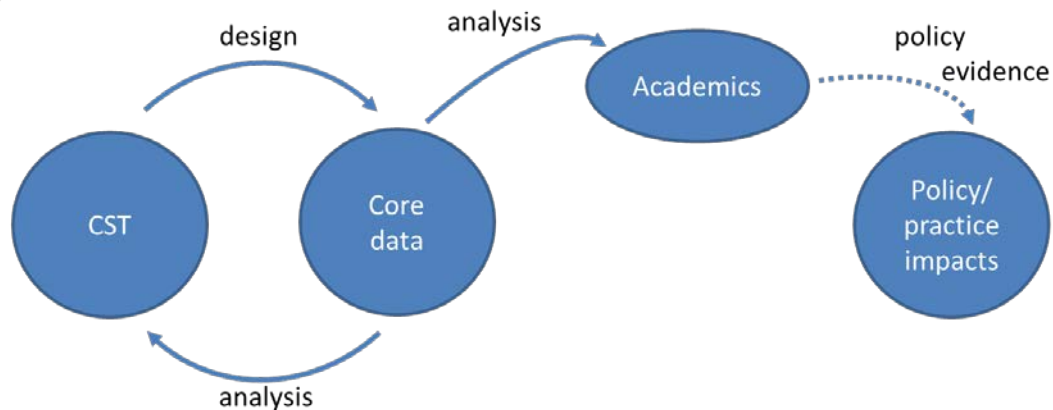
#### WERS routes to impact



In contrast, the impact of the ESS studies appears to be from the (overwhelmingly academic) ESS user community ‘pushing’ their results; for example, the Kent University team working with AgeUK and DWP on ESS attitudes towards ageing findings. However, while this works for the rotating modules, for the core data collection there is less of direct link between academics and policy makers:

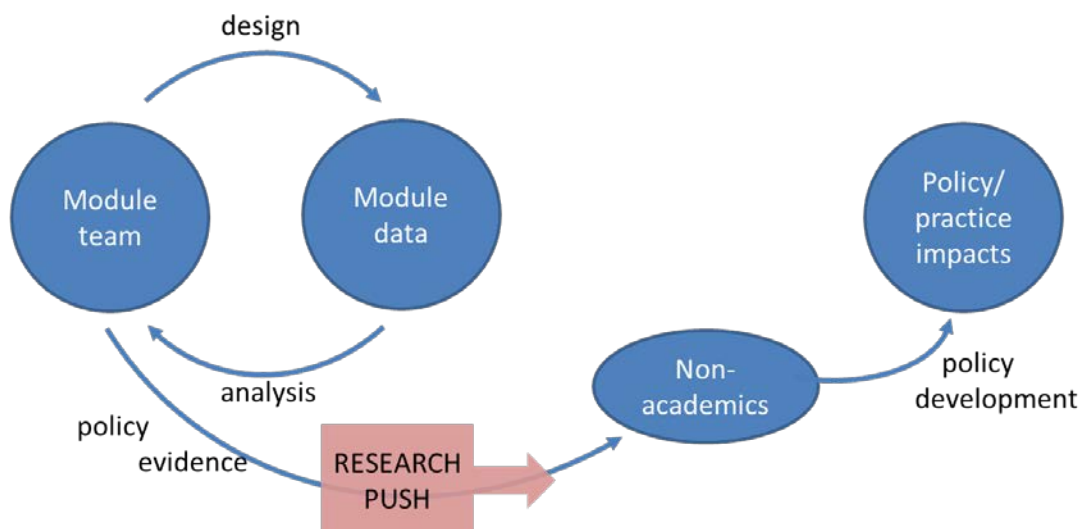
**ESS routes to impact**

**(1) Core**



**ESS routes to impact**

**(2) Modules**



Although there are a small number of academics are involved in identifying and developing topics, WERS is designed to support the policy community. However, the need to plan for the long run means that WERS is not as oriented to addressing current policy questions as the representation of the Steering Committee members might suggest; new topics areas proposed by academics are often rejected because WERS focuses on continuity and mapping change. As a result, the design of WERS is treated as ‘given’ by the research community,

In contrast, academics working with ESS data propose and then develop specific modules, which give them an opportunity to select topics which interest them. The major criterion is scientific rigour and value, not policy relevance; and yet this study has shown that the need to produce a credible case

for the modules means that module developers have been well-connected with the policy environment, at least for UK-led projects.

In short, the survey designs and management practices do have an effect on the way the two surveys connect with research users; but this is not as simple as “WERS is policy-oriented, ESS is not”.

Key lessons to be learned from these strategies, therefore, would be that the timeliness and accessibility of the data are important; it needs to be quickly accessible and users require support. In order to improve impact possibilities, good links with government departments are vital. This is built into WERS through the co-sponsorship model, but for the ESS, government participation could be widened. This is already occurring to some extent, through links with the Cabinet Office, and certain modules, especially well-being could pave the way for more interest from policy-makers.

## 8.2 Dissemination strategies and the role of knowledge brokers

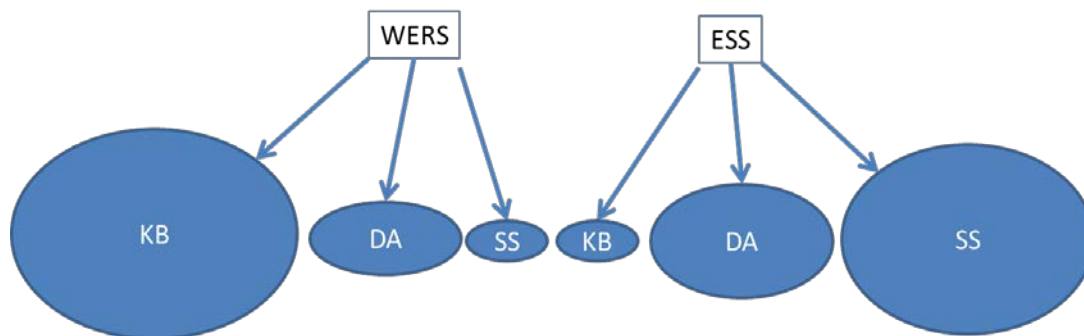
Dissemination strategies for both WERS and ESS are effective, but they differ as a consequence of the organisation of the two surveys. WERS lends itself to the Steering Committee members becoming knowledge brokers (KBs), but the coherence of the overall dataset means that there is little room for subject specialists. In ESS, the development of rotating modules encourages specialisation and direct engagement between researchers and researcher users; hence the KB role is largely absent.

For WERS, KBs are the key to effective dissemination. Data archives and the associated information have a role to play, but academic subject specialists (for example in employee engagement) have less impact. WERS makes efficient use of KBs and intermediaries. NIESR supported micro data users of WERS 2004 through WIAS and BIS supports government users of the data. Additionally, NIESR, BIS and ACAS are involved in the production of the widely cited WERS sourcebook, *Inside the Workplace*. Finally, organisations, including the TUC CBI, CIPD and ACAS all produce non-specialist information for members or clients using WERS. Having said this, WERS users have to wait a considerable length of time between surveys, which means that the information loses currency. When data is finally available, there are further delays between the emergence of the first findings, the publication of the sourcebook and access to the micro data. Non-specialist users have expressed concerns that WIAS has been abandoned for WERS 2011. Finally, users of the micro data are perhaps not supported as well as could be.

For ESS the situation is reversed. Academic subject specialists (including specialist think tanks) have been driving dissemination in their areas very effectively; for example, NEF in the area of wellbeing. ESS data is readily available through the ESS website and through the ESS Core Scientific Team, at City University, who additionally offer support to users. A national coordinator for the ESS is based at the National Centre for Social Research, in order to oversee quality and to publicise availability. The result is a dataset which is easily available and even suitable for teaching. On the other hand, knowledge of ESS amongst the non-academic community is limited to very specific topics. The data

archive (that is, the ESS hubs at City and NatCen<sup>10</sup>) and the data hub at NSD in Norway have a role in guiding users to carry out their own analysis; but there is relatively little room for KBs.

The diagram below suggests the difference in approaches of the two surveys.



*KB: general knowledge broker; DA data archive; SS: subject specialist*

In summary the role of KBs is determined by the user types. WERS has a large body of non-technical users who want analytical statistics to feed into their work, and so the KBs are essential (although note that WERS also has an academic community of microdata users). ESS on the other hand is designed by and for microdata users who are expected to make the necessary investment in learning to use the data directly; apart from the provision of metadata, the KB is largely redundant in this scenario. This does however suggest that one way to increase the impact of ESS is to support knowledge broking targeted at non-technical policy departments. The case of WIAS provides evidence of the large and persistent effect that an effective KB can have.

What both surveys may want to consider reviewing is the role of the data archive. To some extent, the new dissemination strategy at ESS may fill this role, by increasing the awareness of the websites. For WERS, WIAS used to play the role of the data archive and the continuing popularity of the site some four years after funding ceased is evidence of the impact it has had on users.

### 8.3 Reflections on the study process

Reflection on the study process itself suggests a number of problems to be addressed.

The major issue was the dissimilarity between the two surveys: WERS and ESS have as little in common with each other as the Millennium Cohort Study, the model for this evaluation. As a result, there were no economies of scale in study design or management; on the contrary, the study team had to maintain different strategies for the two surveys. In addition, the fact that both surveys were being reviewed led a number of respondents to conclude that one or other survey was being unfairly compared, and react accordingly. While the study team were able to correct these impressions, this was an additional complication.

Evaluating two surveys also limited the depth of study. Focusing on one study would have allowed the study to be driven more by findings rather than by the (necessarily) tightly specified tender. For

<sup>10</sup> Technically the ESS/NatCen hubs are not data archives; this is held at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>, but otherwise they perform the main archive functions of providing users with information about usage, availability, metadata, and further sources of help and support.

example, more academics would have been interviewed for WERS, and more government departments for ESS.

However, having two such different studies did allow us to compare the effectiveness of data gathering strategies. Desk research was particularly effective at identifying impact for ESS, as individual academic publication was the primary route of dissemination. For WERS, the 'inside knowledge' of who to talk to was essential, as WERS' impact is institutional rather than individual. A future impact study might therefore consider whether the impact is likely to be individual or institutional before developing the resource plan and deciding whether to go down the tracking forwards or backwards route.

In terms of practicalities, it was expected that telephone interviewing would be less effective than face-to-face interviews; this was not the case, and the telephone interviews were much more efficient and easier to organise. However, the telephone interviews were held in the latter stages of the project, by which time the study team had developed their interviewing procedures; it might be that telephone interviews at the beginning would have been more difficult.

With one exception, interviewees were co-operative, helpful and informative. No-one refused an interview, interviewees were accommodating on time, and participants responded positively to requests for further information. However, the pre-interview questionnaire was ineffective. Many were not filled in; if completed, they were less useful in focusing the interview than hoped. The main value was, we suspect, to give interviewers information about the study.

One problem with the 'tracking forward' approach was that it meant the end users were often the last to be approached about impact. While this allowed questions to be targeted, in the case of the ESS more corroborating information from customers would have improved the study. For example, the study team did not manage to interview Age UK or the Ministry of Justice in time. Although evidence was collected on substantive aspects (reports, presentations, research commissions etc) to back up the academics' perspectives, a view from the end user might have qualified this evidence positively or negatively.

Finally, the timing of the study is inauspicious. WERS 2004 is quite out of date, and most users are now focused on the 2011 results, which are due for imminent release. Meanwhile ESS is just embarking on a dissemination programme; outputs have been produced but it is difficult at this time to evaluate the impact of these. Whilst the ESRC has reasons for running the study now, both surveys would probably have benefited from delaying the study by six months or so.



## 9. Recommendations

The recommendations below relate only to increasing the impact of the two surveys. Whilst some users made suggestions about how the surveys themselves could be improved, this was felt to be outside the scope of the report.

### 9.1 Recommendations for WERS

#### Increased data access

The overall impact of WERS could be increased if access to data was widened. WERS is currently only accessed by academic or policy-maker audiences. It is recommended that a non-expert could provide a user guide to WERS accessible on-line including, for example, FAQs in order to highlight potential usage of WERS and suggested user groups.

#### Greater buy-in from businesses

This impact study has indicated that organisations might be more interested in participating in the WERS if they were targeted more effectively. It is suggested that, for example, a sector specific report could be offered to companies and organisations so that they could benchmark, and forward the information to relevant departments.

#### ESRC sponsored academic conference

The BJIR have organised conferences showcasing WERS outputs (1998 and 2004). One of the issues that has emerged in this study is that academic users may not produce policy-related outputs. It is suggested that if the ESRC were to be closely involved in the organisation of an academic conference, they might have a greater possibility to direct research outputs towards a more policy-oriented focus. An alternative would be to sponsor a session at the Work Pensions and Labour Economics Study Group (WPEG) Annual Conference, the biggest gathering of labour economists in the UK.

#### Inclusion of WERS information in government conferences

It is recommended that the policy impact of WERS could be increased by making a presentation or poster display at relevant government conferences. The most obvious candidate is the annual joint Government Economics Service/Government Social Research Service conference. The Government Statistical Service meetings are also a possibility, although the audience is less relevant than the GES/GSR group.

#### Data linking

This study found that relatively few non-academic users were aware of the feasibility of linking WERS data with other data sets, although many have “linked” (i.e. used in the same piece of analysis) at aggregate levels. This study recommends that those organisations that have used WERS jointly with other surveys could highlight how WERS can be linked with other data sets. This would demonstrate good practice in this area and potentially increase usage of WERS with a larger user group.

## User support

Many users praised WIAS for its excellent support, especially those who could not access the micro data independently. This study therefore recommends that subsequent WERS surveys post 2011 return to offering a similar service. This inevitably has resource implications, and resources would need to be identified.

## 9.2 Recommendations for ESS

### Redevelop website to target a wider audience

In order to increase the potential impact of ESS it is recommended that its website is redeveloped particularly in view of disseminating findings to a wider audience. A first step could be a website which specifically offers headline findings similar to ESS' report (2008) *Exploring public attitudes, informing public policy: selected findings from the first three rounds*<sup>11</sup>.

### ESRC engage with Cabinet Office

The CST and CO have been working together jointly to develop the policy seminars and widen use of the data, using wellbeing as a useful common thread. It is recommended that the ESRC also consider engaging with Cabinet Office to leverage this existing connection.

### Government researchers event

In order to increase the impact of ESS on government policy it should be recommended that key people within government departments, and the voluntary sector should be targeted. In relation to this, those responsible for ESS outreach should network with relevant government departments in order to further promote ESS usage and ensure its findings are sustainable. It is recommended ESRC consider the value of a presentation or poster display at relevant government conferences, particularly the annual joint Government Economics Service/Government Social Research Service conference.

### Further Topline policy series and seminars

The more recent move of the ESS to try and engage the policy community by producing their Topline Results series (UK and European focused) and policy seminars has been received positively by the ESS user community. It is recommended that these outputs continue to be supported. ESRC may also want to discuss with CST whether the number of and attendance at policy seminars can be increased.

### Need for increased media reporting on ESS findings

ESS findings on a wide number of engaging issues on European attitudes are relatively amenable to being reported in the media. It is recommended that key findings are communicated to a variety of different media channels in order to increase their UK policy impact. Several academics involved in

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<sup>11</sup> We understand that a website redesign, combining the two existing sites, is planned for 2013 which will have a 'policy area'.

ESS design and research have previous experience of getting media coverage of their research; this should be built upon. This could help contribute to current debates on for example, wellbeing, citizenship, ageing, attitudes towards justice and policing, and immigration. It is suggested that the ESS website could contribute to this in terms of containing accessible summaries of key findings.

### **9.3 Recommendations for impact generation**

#### **Design-stage involvement of customers**

The lessons from both WERS and ESS are that impact is maximised where the likely recipients of research outputs are involved with the survey designers before data collection. In the case of WERS, the structure of the Steering Group means that the survey design reflects the general interest of research users. In the case of ESS, the rotating modules have been designed specifically to address research questions with a known audience. In contrast, it appears that the ESS core questions have generated impacts (e.g. on work-life balance) but much less than the modules.

#### **Engage government researchers**

Both studies demonstrate that government use of academic research is, with honourable exceptions, relatively passive. This is partly because government researchers work under a different set of constraints and do not necessarily have the time or skills to develop what is, initially, a speculative skill in data analysis. Hence the recommendations for both surveys to make presentations at government conferences, concentrating on the possibilities from research.

### **9.4 Recommendations for impact studies**

#### **Avoid comparing dissimilar surveys**

Whilst there were some benefits from considering very dissimilar studies, overall the study team felt that the assessment of two such dissimilar surveys had a negative effect on the study outcome. It would seem more productive to focus on one survey, or a group of surveys where there are clear similarities and economies of scale.

#### **Check timing**

Where there is flexibility over the timing of an impact evaluation, a pre-ITT review of the investment lifecycle, particularly data collection and dissemination events, might suggest an optimal study time.

## Appendix 1: Case studies

## Case study 1 (WERS): ACAS

### CS1.1 Background

ACAS is a non-departmental public body charged with supplying information, advice and conciliation services on all areas of employment relations. It does this through a network of regional offices, as well as providing a central store of information on its website.

It also develops Codes of Practice for employers. Both the Codes of Practice and the advice and information services use WERS as part of their evidence toolkit. ACAS noted that WERS is a central data resource, albeit one of a set.

In this section, four mini case studies are outlined, in which WERS provided contextual information for ACAS. As the cases indicate, WERS data was instrumental in supplying the information which led to a change in policy and/or practice.

### CS1.2 Case studies

#### CS1.2.1 Trade union representation: How WERS contributed to the updating of the ACAS Code of practice

##### Introduction

Under the Trade Unions and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, Union representatives have a statutory right to paid time off to carry out trade union duties. Yet, despite the fact that most union representatives do receive paid time off, this is often insufficient to carry out all of their duties; consequently, many union reps use significant amounts of their own time<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, certain groups, including public sector employers have raised questions regarding whether trade union facility time is a costly burden to employers, without any benefits to businesses.

##### Use of WERS

During the consultation process, preceding the revision of the ACAS Code of Practice on Facility Time for Union Reps, BERR (now BIS) conducted a review of the facilities and facility time available to work place representatives (this included non-union reps). Drawing on WERS data, this review found that the average amount of time taken by senior union representatives was just over 10 hours per week. BERR's research eventually established that union representatives have a positive impact on the UK economy.

##### Outcome

Following on from this, the TUC and the CBI issued a joint statement on the positive role of workplace union representatives – 'Reps in Action: How workplaces can gain from modern union representation'. The statement reinforced the important role played by union reps. Finally, a

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<sup>12</sup> In a survey carried out by the TUC in 2005, 16 per cent of union reps said that less than quarter of the time they spent on union duties was paid for by their employer.

revision of the ACAS Code of Practice on Time Off for Trade Union Duties and Activities occurred in January 2010, following extensive consultation with unions, the TUC and employers.

### **Impact of change to the ACAS code of practice**

In this example, data from WERS provided a context for further research on the role and impact of union reps, linking WERS directly to an instrumental change. The revision of code of practice has had the effect of enabling union reps to have more time off to undertake their union responsibilities

In addition to this immediate impact, there are likely to be longer-term effects for the UK economy, since the existence of union reps has been positively linked to strong economic performance (Boreham, 2001).

### **CS1.2.2 Employee engagement assessment tools: How WERS provided a context for the development of a diagnostic tool**

#### **Introduction**

Research has repeatedly demonstrated the links between the way people are managed, employee attitudes and business performance; employers are, thus, keen to attract and retain engaged employees because they deliver improved business performance (CIPD, 2012).

#### **Use of WERS**

ACAS commissioned research to gather information about organisational commitment and engagement. The WERS 2004 dataset provided contextual information about employee satisfaction and commitment for various occupational levels. Using regression analysis, further data was generated about trust in management, involvement in decision-making and job challenge.

#### **Outcome**

Following the research, ACAS launched a free interactive diagnostic tool allowing employers to assess the quality of their employment relations policies and practices in 2010. The ACAS Model Workplace (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2806>) is a diagnostic tool for employers. Since its launch, more than 3,400 organisations, in a variety of sectors, have registered to use the tool and nearly 23,000 individual modules have been completed (ACAS, 2012<sup>13</sup>).

### **Impact of development of diagnostic tool**

In this second case, WERS provided robust data that gave reliable information about how satisfied British workers were with their workplace. This led to the development of a practical tool to potentially help organisations to maximise employee engagement. This tool enables organisations to measure and analyse engagement which, as the introduction to the second case underlines, has a significant impact on organisational performance.

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<sup>13</sup> ACAS Annual Report & Accounts 2011/12

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1213/hc04/0409/0409.pdf>

### CS1.2.3 Employee Feedback Survey: How WERS methodology fed into a tool to manage employee well-being.

#### Introduction

Research indicates that work impacts on our health and wellbeing through factors including job design access to flexible working, employee voice and work relationships (Wilton, 2011). Moreover, healthy and well motivated employees can have positive impacts on the productivity and effectiveness of organisations (ACAS, 2012). The ACAS Employee Feedback Survey allows organisations to collect data about how engaged the workforce is and measures wellbeing and perspectives on inclusion.

#### Use of WERS

The ACAS Employee Feedback survey is comprised of questions sourced from other established surveys<sup>14</sup>, including WERS. WERS was selected because of its quality and reliability:

*“WERS is the most representative and comprehensive [survey]”.*

The WERS SEQ provided a framework for the employee feedback survey. In addition, NIESR were commissioned by ACAS to develop a question bank for the wellbeing at work questions.

#### Outcome

After the survey was implemented, the question bank developed for the Employee Feedback Survey by NIESR was revisited. The wellbeing questions were fed back in to the 2011 WERS research, which meant that WERS data was given a secondary practical use.

#### Impact of survey and secondary use of wellbeing questions

In this third case study of WERS impact, the WERS SEQ provided a framework for the ACAS employee feedback survey. The creation of this survey was important for ACAS because the survey is a key tool for the organisation to measure wellbeing and to pinpoint any areas which need to be addressed in order to maintain wellbeing.

In addition, NIESR were commissioned by ACAS to develop a question bank for the wellbeing at work questions, which was later included in WERS 2011. Through their extant use in the Employee Feedback Survey, the questions developed by NIESR were piloted before their inclusion in WERS 2011. This pre-testing meant that more robust WERS questions could be developed.

### CS1.2.4 Discipline and Grievance: How WERS mapped and identified change

#### Introduction

In 2004, new statutory grievance and disciplinary procedures were issued, together with a new Code of Practice from ACAS. The procedures set out a 3-step procedure for use during employment, and a modified two-step procedure for when the employee was no longer employed.

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<sup>14</sup> Labour Force Survey, **Workplace Employment Relations Survey, European Social Survey**, European Working Conditions Survey, British Household Panel Survey, British Social Attitudes Survey.

The 2004 procedures did not fulfil their intended objective of encouraging early dispute resolution; instead, under the new regulations, the dispute process was often unnecessarily complicated and formalised when matters could have been resolved informally and/or by other means.

## Use of WERS

ACAS and the DTI (now BIS) needed to examine the context of employment grievance and resolution within the UK, in order to understand the background to why the new measures were failing. Similarly, the DTI needed to make recommendations for a revision to the procedures.

WERS provided much of the required information on workplace grievance and resolution and was quoted directly and extensively in the DTI report (Gibbons, 2007<sup>15</sup>).

## Outcome

In 2009, following recommendations from the Gibbons report, the 3-step procedure was abandoned. In its place, ACAS introduced a new code of practice, which will govern all dispute proceedings, in order to allow employers more flexibility in trying to resolve disputes earlier and less formally if necessary.

During the planning stages of WERS 2011, ACAS was keen to see the inclusion of questions on discipline and grievance. WERS “reflect[s] the policy world”, therefore, ACAS felt that it was important to be able to map changes in grievance solution since the introduction of new regulations since 2004.

*“There was a need to evaluate the effect of this [grievance and discipline procedures] through WERS post 2004”.*

## Impact of new code of practice

Finally, in the fourth case, WERS played two key roles. First, it acted as a mapping tool; second, it formed the basis for observations on employee grievance in the UK that led to a change in practice that will impact directly on all workplaces in Britain. All British workplaces have a formal procedure in place to manage dispute. However, employers and employees prefer the first step to be done informally because the problem can often be sorted out more quickly and efficiently than if it has to go through formal channels. Hence, the changes to the new statutory grievance and disciplinary procedures mean that organisations can save time by solving some problems themselves – and this change has been taken up by all British workplaces.

Finally, in this last example, the use of WERS threw light on an area – discipline and grievance – that ACAS established would continue to be of importance to monitor in the future. Based on this case, therefore, discipline and grievance was included as significant areas in WERS 2011.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file38516.pdf>



### **CS1.2.5 Commentary**

These four ACAS case studies provide detail on the impact of WERS on policy and practice change. In all four cases, data drawn from WERS either fed into further research by ACAS or provided key information which enabled the organisation to respond to problems that organisations might be having (for example, ensuring employee engagement) or to bring about a change in a code of practice (dispute resolution). The wider implications of these changes, as the cases highlight, will be seen within British organisations.

## **CS1.3 Evaluation**

### **CS1.3.1 Distinctive value of WERS**

What interviewees highlighted was that WERS is comprehensive, representative and independent. This made it the only source for some of the analysis that ACAS wished to carry out, although WERS was unable to answer all questions and was used in conjunction with other data sets.

The independence of the dataset was an important factor in persuading different parties that the data analysis was fair and objective.

### **CS1.3.2 Determinants of impact**

ACAS worked closely with BIS (the knowledge broker) to ensure the data analysis was sound and appropriate. They also worked with the TUC and CBI to ensure that the policy proposals addressed industry concerns. In other words, the 'inner network' of the closely interested non-academic parties was effectively exploited to ensure that the work was feasible, done and had buy-in from a range of stakeholders.

ACAS had identified the likely client base for the practice guides and revised Codes of Practice. For the union representation work, they involved TUC and CBI and encouraged them to support the findings. This made it relatively straightforward to disseminate their findings or direct users toward the new web tools. In this case, it was the 'outer network' of ACAS clients and TUC and CBI members that was effective in knowledge exchange with the user community.

### **CS1.3.3 Limitations of impact**

The major data limitation related to the time frame for the surveys. ACAS were aware that producing results based on a 2004 dataset might leave them open to criticism, particularly in the light of changes in the labour market and employment regulations.

ACAS also did not directly analyse the microdata but worked with BIS to get the evidence they needed. Whilst this strengthened the network, it did mean that ACAS was limited in its ability to explore the data. One reason given for this was limited analytical resources at ACAS the perception that WERS was a 'difficult' dataset to use.

## Case study 2 (ESS): Trust in Justice

### CS2.1 Background

#### CS2.1.1 Policy and research context

Increasing trust in institutions, organisational justice and the legitimacy of law enforcement operations in the public consciousness are seen by a number of bodies as an important way to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policing. The argument is that willing delegation of authority to the police allows more efficient and effective policing, but that willingness depends upon the perceived trustworthiness of the police. Concepts developed in the US, for example, are now being explored in Europe. The UK is a European leader in the field, and work in this area has stimulated interest from the Ministry of Justice and several police bodies.

#### CS2.1.2 Data collection context

The ESS Trust in Justice module developed out of a previous research project, 'Euro-Justis', supported under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for social research, coordinated by ICPR, Birkbeck and including staff at the LSE. Euro-Justis involved the development of a suite of questions on trust in justice, which were piloted in three countries. On the basis of this earlier work, a sub-group of the Euro-Justis consortium, led by LSE, bid successfully for space in the fifth ESS, to mount a module on this topic. (The ESS central coordinating team accepts bids from academics for two rotating modules in each sweep of the survey.) The fifth sweep, including the module on trust in justice, went into the field in late 2010; an initial dataset became available in late 2011, and a near-complete dataset became available in Spring 2012.

The module was designed explicitly to 'test a theory', according to the detailed proposal for the module submitted to the ESS central coordinating team; that is, it was intended to provide sufficient data to test whether there was empirical evidence to support claims made by Procedural Justice Theory about the relationships between public trust in justice, perceived legitimacy, public cooperation with justice and compliance with the law.

### CS2.2 Activity

#### CS2.2.1 Use of data

Most of the initial data analysis of the ESS Trust in Justice module has been carried out by the team that designed the module, including researchers at LSE, Birkbeck and Oxford. This has extended a pre-existing programme of work on justice, legitimacy and institutions, which is partly funded by a further European Commission project, again funded by the Seventh Framework Programme. The ESS data was used by the team to investigate hypotheses developed by the group.

Findings have been published in several academic outlets and have been widely disseminated to government officials and staff working in non-departmental public bodies. These include: the Home Office; the Ministry of Justice; the Cabinet Office; the National Policing Improvement Agency (now the College of Policing), the National Audit Office; the Independent Police Complaints Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and several police forces, most notably the Metropolitan Police Service. The Ministry of Justice has recently asked the LSE/Birkbeck/Oxford team to include analysis of the ESS in a commissioned study of trust in justice that drew largely on the Crime Survey

for England and Wales (Hough et al, 2013 in press). The National Audit Office has commented in one of its reports very positively on the work of the team, focussing on the efficiency arguments being made for the new style of policing).

The module development team published results on 'Trust in Justice' (Jackson et al, 2011) and 'Policing by consent' (Jackson et al, 2012) in a new series called *Topline findings from the ESS*. They have also published work in the British Journal of Criminology (Jackson et al, 2012), and in the European Handbook of Criminology (Hough et al., 2013 in press). Results have been presented at international criminological conferences in England, Spain and Japan.

### **CS2.2.2 Transmission mechanisms**

The Trust in Justice module developers were active researchers in this area and were in a position to exploit a broad network of contacts within government and the police service. These direct connections were the primary transmission mechanism for promoting findings from the ESS within policy arenas. Major contacts included staff in the Ministry of Justice, the Inspectorate of Constabulary, the National Policing Improvement Agency and the Metropolitan Police, whose senior researcher had held an academic position and contributed to the academic publications in this area. Members of the team also acted as advisors, both formally and informally, to government researchers and ONS statisticians in relation to crime surveys.

Dissemination to policy officials occurred at public conferences, conferences designed to promote interchange between academia and government and invited seminars (eg two at MoJ, one at the Cabinet Office) and in a large number of private briefings. Outside of these direct contacts, some of which had been nurtured over several years, the researchers have published academic articles and contributed to edited volumes.

### **CS2.2.3 Research user engagement**

The ESS module on Trust in Justice was designed with some specific input from specific research users such as senior researchers at the MoJ and the Metropolitan Police, who sat on an advisory board of the Euro-Justis project. Since then, engagement with government and senior criminal justice managers has developed further.

In October 2012 the Cabinet Office and the CST jointly organised a policy seminar given by an academic team based at the LSE and Birkbeck to various government departments including CO, HO, MoJ, and ONS. The aim of the seminar was explicitly to raise the profile of the legitimacy work, albeit in the context of wellbeing, amongst government departments which might not have engaged with this research previously. MoJ, although already an 'engaged' department, was invited as a key research user. Although the meeting minutes and actions are still awaited, the study team was informally notified that a number of actions were expected to be followed up; at the time of writing (January 2013), these are still being developed.

## **CS2.3 Impact**

The ESS module provided additional evidence which allowed the arguments of procedural justice to be evaluated (see para CS2.1). One developer explicitly noted that the point of the module was

*"to test a theory".*

This was made explicit to the ESS CST when the academic research team approached them about module development.

The explicit contribution from the ESS was the European dimension. The theoretical development of the procedural justice narrative began in the US and transferred to the UK; there was therefore a concern that findings from US and UK-based studies could reflect an Anglo-Saxon cultural bias rather than a genuine psychological or psychosocial 'truth'. The cross-European data allowed national cultural biases to be addressed, but the results supported their other research. As a result, the researchers could argue that their findings had wider significance rather than being an artefact of a particular time and space.

The procedural justice work has had a direct impact on the Metropolitan Police, with measures of legitimacy being included in senior officers' objectives. Borough Commanders were asked to account for performance in indicators of public confidence, as measured by the Met Public Attitudes Survey. Borough commanders have a 'public confidence' target, upon which part of their performance related pay depends. The Met also sets this as one of its overall performance targets; the Met also use a 'confidence model' that the Trust in Justice research team helped them develop, where they track four 'drivers' of confidence: perceptions of - or trust in - effectiveness, fairness, community engagement and disorder. The LSE/Birkbeck research team's work on procedural justice did feed directly into this, which was partly based on ESS findings.

One academic commented that:

*"Our work has shaped Metropolitan police strategy".*

The researchers also referred to senior police officers in other organisations citing procedural justice arguments (for example, Sir Hugh Ord on Radio Four's *Today* programme) as evidence for the growing acceptance of procedural justice concepts. The view of researchers is that the ESS has strengthened the evidence base.

The research has also been taken up in Radio 4 programmes including Andrew Marr's "Start the Week" and a three-part serial on policing by Mark Easton. (The research team gave interviews for both.)

The perception of the researchers who worked on the Trust in Justice module is that the procedural justice model is broadly accepted in the MoJ. It has had less impact on other government departments; hence the October 2012 policy seminar.

The MoJ were asked to comment on the Trust in Justice work and noted (via email, abridged)

*[The Hough et al report] synthesises and adds to the evidence base on public perceptions of the CJS and will be useful as a resource for MoJ... This report uses more complex secondary data analysis to explore the links between perceptions of sentencing and confidence in the CJS, and some of the other drivers and outcomes of confidence... We are currently in the process of finalising it for publication therefore it isn't really possible to say much about wider impact at this stage. However we held a presentation of the interim findings back in October 2012 and this was attended by a number of analytical and policy colleagues who fed back that they found it useful. The findings have also been used to feed into current policy*

*development in the area of Criminal Justice Reform. Work is ongoing to ensure agencies across the CJS are all working to achieve a set of agreed high level shared outcomes. One of these shared outcomes is to increase public confidence – build confidence and improve perceptions of, and participation in, the system for the public and victims and witnesses. The Hough et al report was used as part of a review of the evidence on what drives public confidence and how well we are currently performing against this outcome.”*

Academics interviewed emphasised the impact ESS has also had internationally with research currently being conducted in Japan and South Africa on trust in the police and the legal system. One academic who has been involved in a comparative survey in the US and Japan commented:

*“ESS has created a lot of interest amongst other researchers outside the UK’.*

## **CS2.4 Evaluation**

### **CS2.4.1 Distinctive value**

The main source of value of the ESS would appear to be the European dimension. There are several British datasets which have been used to analyse procedural justice. However, as noted above, there is a concern that results might reflect a cultural impact which presents different policy choices compared to results based on psychological relationships. The relative lack of interest across Europe would support the ‘cultural difference’ hypothesis. However the ESS data largely supported the ‘psychological’ perspective: that certain human behaviours and responses are innate. This validates analysis from UK-based datasets which have other advantages (sample size, geographical detail, repeated surveys).

### **CS2.4.2 Determinants of impact**

Key determinants of impact were the pre-existing networks that the module developers (subsequently, analysts) used to communicate their findings to research users. These have been extensively exploited and added to. There is not much evidence to date that other researchers unconnected to the developer group have taken up the module in significant numbers, at least in the UK.

The interactions between researchers and users can thus be summarised as follows: a group of researchers with a growing influence on public policy development identified the ESS as a suitable vehicle to enhance the evidence base; having designed the data collection and acquired the data, they were able to quickly and effectively exploit their networks to disseminate findings. In other words, the ESS had a notable impact because it was a high-quality research tool effectively leveraged by a research group, rather than arising from the context-free-collection of data.

### **CS2.4.3 Limitations on impact**

The questions asked by the ESS were necessarily limited because of the need to ensure international comparability in language and context; a particular problem in subjective data collection. This meant the data did not allow for some of the nuances in UK-only datasets. The data was also only available for the whole UK, limiting the possibility of analysis related to geography. Hence the ESS data cannot always answer questions of UK interest at sufficient depth. Use of the ESS for very UK-specific analysis negates most of the advantages of the ESS.

The study team explored whether calibration of ESS results to UK data had been carried out (for example, the relationship between the rotating-module questions, repeated core questions, and comparable answers from UK data sources). This had not been carried out, so currently the impact is limited to the single module.

The researchers differed on the ease of publishing results; it was argued that in some subjects (such as psychology), publication was harder; and that this might be due to perceptions of the ESS as a 'light' survey'. This was disputed by others publishing in other disciplines.

## CS2.5 Key publications

Hough, M., Bradford, B., Jackson, J. and Roberts, J V. (2013 in press) *Attitudes to Sentencing and Trust in Justice: Exploring Trends from the Crime Survey for England and Wales*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Hough, M., Jackson, J. and Bradford, B. (2013 in press) 'Trust in justice and the legitimacy of legal authorities: topline findings from a European comparative study' in Body-Gendrot, S., Hough, M., Levy, R. Kerezsi, K. and Snacken, S. (2013, in press) **European Handbook of Criminology** (edited volume). London: Routledge.

Hough, M. (2012) 'Researching trust in the police and trust in justice: A UK perspective', **Policing and Society**, **22**, 3, 332-345.

Hough, M., Bradford, B., Jackson, J. and Roberts, J. V. (2012 in press) **Attitudes to Crime and Trust in Justice: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales**. London: Ministry of Justice

Jackson, J., Hough, M., Bradford, B., Pooler, T., Hohl, K. and Kuha, J. (2011) **Trust in Justice: topline results from Round 5 of the European Social Survey. ESS Topline Results Series Issue 1**. London: City University.

Jackson, J., Hough, M., Bradford, B., Hohl, K. and Kuha, J. (2012) **Policing by consent: UK evidence on legitimate power and influence. ESS Country Specific Topline Results Series Issue 1**. London: City University.

Hough, M., Jackson, J. and Bradford, B. (2011) 'Why the police must secure public trust', article in **Guardian**, 12 December.

National Audit Office. (2012). *Comparing International Criminal Justice Systems*. Briefing for the House of Commons Justice Committee.

## Case study 3 (ESS): Age Attitudes and Experience of Ageism

### CS3.1 Background

#### CS3.1.1 Policy and research context

Academics based at the University of Kent, the Lisbon University Institute, and Paris V, designed the ESS Age Attitudes and Experience of Ageism module in 2006. Between 2003 -2005 the Kent group was commissioned by the Department of Transport, Women and Equality Unit (a forerunner of the EHRC) to conduct a national survey on attitudes towards equality and prejudice in the UK. Age Concern England also commissioned this group of academics to conduct a survey that extended the section on ageism, resulting in its first national survey, published in a report called 'How Ageist is Britain' (2005). Age Concern England (now Age UK) followed this with a further national survey in 2006. Subsequently, the Department for Work and Pensions supported additional analyses and data collection, as well as several policy reports based on this work. In addition EHRC became interested in pursuing the connection between prejudice and its policy focus on good relations.

#### CS3.1.2 Data collection context

Due to the success of the early national survey work (detailed above) this academic team proposed the ESS Age Attitudes and Experience of Ageism module.

Round 4 of the ESS provided comparative evidence of attitudes towards ageing. Following a call for bids from ESS in 2006, the research team put together a bid along with colleagues at several European universities. With further sponsorship from Age UK and the European Commission, the module was pilot tested in the UK and Bulgaria, They piloted the data and after extensive testing, this gave them a further point in their Age UK time series, which now included data from 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008

### CS3.2 Activity

#### CS3.2.1 Use of data

In 2009 the team approached DWP to see whether they would be interested in analysis of the attitudes towards ageing data and changing prejudices over time. DWP commissioned the team to produce reports using the ESS ageing data, working in collaboration with a senior researcher at DWP.

Academics interviewed highlighted that, following the change in government in 2010, the DWP reduced the capacity of the relevant research division, and key research officers moved to other parts of DWP. Despite the team being involved in consultation with government on data analysis related to the impact on pensions, after 2010 funding for external research in this area was discontinued.

Following on from their work with ESS, in 2010 the research team founded EURAGE, a European academic research group on ageing ([www.eurage.com](http://www.eurage.com)). This has led to a wide number of outputs including publications, seminars and presentations within the UK and Europe.

Between 2010-11 the DWP decided to add a module on ageing to the ONS omnibus survey. They commissioned a multi-level analysis report on ESS data in relation to the validation of items to be used, and commissioned further research by the team to develop and test items for use in the ONS.

### CS3.2.2 The transmission mechanism

Academics who were involved in the module design had previous relationships with government departments through prior research work and established relationships and networks with user communities such as Age Concern and EHRC. These networks were the channels for further work requests from these user communities after ESS data came out; for example the 2011 Age UK report.

There was a strong element of iteration amongst the academics and research users. Hannah Swift (University of Kent) produced a timeline to illustrate the complex relationship between parties, activities, and outcomes: (see diagram below).

### CS3.2.2 Research user engagement

End users of the ESS research on attitudes towards ageing include Age UK, DWP, Home Office and ONS. The academic team involved in analysing ESS data had established relationships with Age Concern England prior to designing the ESS module and the EHRC (Equalities and Human Rights Commission).

### CS3.3 Impact

Academics revealed that ESS ageing module findings helped inform academic debate and provide contextual data in contributing to conceptual impact. This in turn has impacted on policy in the ageing field within the UK through work with government departments and lobbying organisations such as Age UK. Academic impact on a European level has been achieved through work the research team have conducted through the establishment of EURAGE, which is an international project investigating attitudes to age across Europe involving a number of academics from across Europe.

Research on ageing based on ESS data has also had a conceptual impact in the public sphere. The Kent academic team have worked closely with Age UK and stated that their ESS research led to a shift in perspective in Age UK's thinking around older age:

*"We were able to give them a conceptual framework to enable them to shift their emphasis towards older people. Our research has fed in to their thinking about age stereotypes. We've helped them move ahead in their overall orientation".*

ESS data provided the evidence for the above change in organisational thinking. One of the academics commented on this:

*"We drew on the European context to draw on people's experiences of ageism. ESS cross-country data provided a useful way to reveal the social and personal implications of policy differences. It's the fact that the European data are comparative that is key".*

Age UK have also used the Kent research team's ESS data analysis and publications in their press releases of key findings.



Academics involved in developing the ESS Attitudes and Experience of Ageism module felt that a key policy impact has been in their work with Age UK.

Academics interviewed commented on the policy and academic impact that their work using ESS data has made both nationally and internationally:

*“We feel we’ve made an impact in terms of our policy related work by highlighting some quite basic findings using relatively simple analysis of the data. These attracted a lot of media attention and were covered in both national and international news media, including radio and TV. We have used more complex approaches and analyses to develop theoretical ideas through academic journals.. A lot of our impact has been through meeting relevant people at conferences, seminars, workshops, and policy briefings and through our European partners in EURAGE”.*

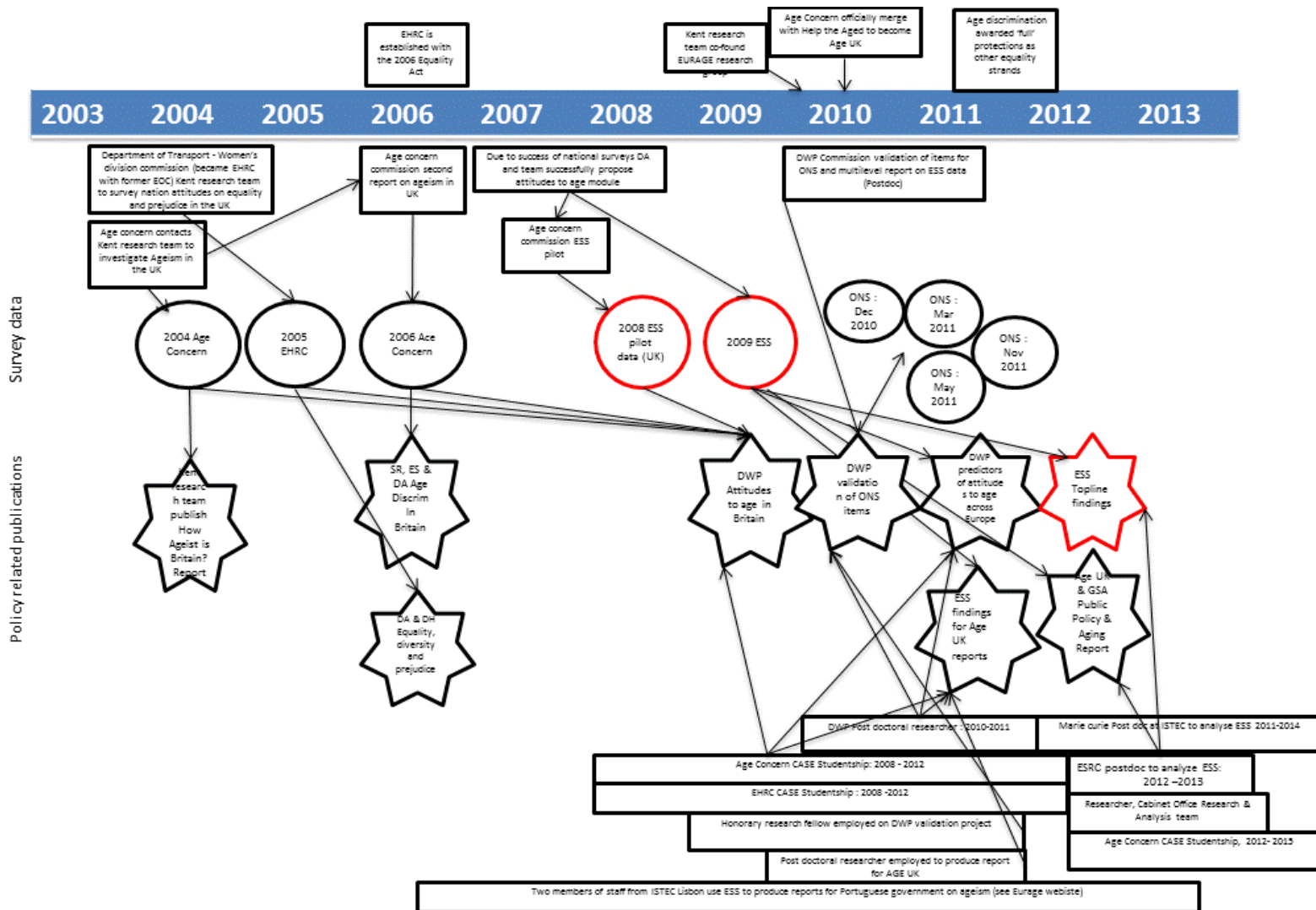
During 2009-2011 DWP commissioned the Kent research team to validate and extend items (questions) from the ESS ageing module for use by ONS; it also commissioned a multilevel analysis to identify and quantify country differences in the ESS data.

### **CS3.3.1 Additional dissemination strategy**

As well as multiple conference presentations across Europe, the Kent University research team prepared an EU briefing report and gave a one day seminar for commissioners and others in Brussels in 2011, a report for the Gerontological Society of America’s Public Policy and Aging Report in November 2012, and a Topline Findings booklet for ESS on their Age Attitudes and Experience of Ageism findings, published in December 2012. They are presenting the findings to an ESS policy seminar in January 2013.

### **CS3.3.2 Potential on-going impact**

The academic team interviewed as part of this study stated that in future they would like to look at attitudes towards younger people within ESS, including stereotypes about younger and older people, and how this affects behaviour. ESS will provide the contextual data in relation to this and the team are hoping to use other survey data to provide further evidence.



Source: Hannah Swift, University of Kent

## CS3.4 Key publications

### *DWP*

Abrams, D., Eilola, T., & Swift, H. (2009). Attitudes to age in Britain 2004-8. Department for Work and Pensions report 599, October. (148pp). ISBN 978 1 84712 635 1  
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep599.pdf>

Abrams, D., Eilola, T., & Swift, H (2009). Appendices to DWP research report no 599. Department for Work and Pensions, October. (216pp). [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep599\\_appendices.pdf](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep599_appendices.pdf)

Bratt, C., & Abrams, D. (2010) DWP Progress Report: Item Analysis from the ESS 2008 Age Module. (32pp) January 28th.

Vauclair, M., Abrams, D. & Bratt, C. (2010) Working Paper No 90. Measuring attitudes to age – Reliability and validity of the indicators (66pp). Department for Work and Pensions.  
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/WP90.pdf> August 26th. ISBN 978 1 84712 889 8

Abrams, D., Vauclair, M., Swift, H. (2011). Predictors of attitudes to age across Europe Department for Work and Pensions, UK. Research Report No 735 (98pp),  
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2011-2012/rrep735.pdf>

Swiery, D., & Willitts, M. (2012). Attitudes to age in Britain 2010/11. DWP In-House Research No 7, Department for Work and Pensions, ISBN 978-1-84947-929-5,  
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/ih2011-2012/ihr7.pdf>. Note - the report reported findings from ONS Survey designed by Abrams et al, and members of Eurage also guided the report.

### *Home Office, Cabinet Office, EHRC*

Abrams, D., & Houston, D.M. (2006) A Profile of Prejudice in Britain: Report of the National Survey. The Equalities Review. Cabinet Office. (116 pages). ISBN: 978-1-902671-46-8  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807034701/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/upload/assets/www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk/kentequality.pdf>

Home Office: Changing Attitudes to Equality. Key Findings. (source ESS 2002-2010)  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/research/changing-attitudes?view=Binary>

Abrams, D. (2010). Processes of prejudice: Theory, evidence and intervention. Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Research Report 56 (118 pp). London, EHRC. ISBN 978 1 84206 270 8.  
[http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/56\\_processes\\_of\\_prejudice.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/56_processes_of_prejudice.pdf)

### *Age UK*

How Ageist is Britain? (2005). Age Concern England Report to the Commission on Equality and Human Rights. London: Age Concern England, 184\_0705 CEHR (20 pages).

[http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/how\\_ageist\\_is\\_britain\\_pro.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/how_ageist_is_britain_pro.pdf?dtrk=true)

Sopp, L., & Abrams, D. (2005). Building critical insight and benchmarks on age discrimination and prejudice: A multi-partnership case study. (30 pages). Shortlisted for the Market Research Society Public Policy/ Social Research Effectiveness Award.

Ray, S., Sharp, E., & Abrams, D. (2006). Age discrimination: A benchmark of public attitudes. London: Age Concern England (75 pages). [http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/ageism%20%20%20a%20benchmark%20of%20public%20ageist%20attitudes\\_pro.pdf](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/ageism%20%20%20a%20benchmark%20of%20public%20ageist%20attitudes_pro.pdf)

Age Concern England (2008). Ageism in Britain 2006: An Age Concern research briefing. Policy Unit – Age Concern England. Age Concern Reports 55\_0508 Ageism in Britain 2006 Report/1000. May 2008. (12 pages).

[http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/55\\_0508\\_ageism\\_in\\_britain\\_2006\\_2008\\_pro.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/equality-and-human-rights/55_0508_ageism_in_britain_2006_2008_pro.pdf?dtrk=true)

Abrams, D., Russell, P.S, Vauclair, M., Swift, H. (2011). Ageism in Europe: Findings from the European Social Survey. London: AgeUK. ISBN 978-09568731-0-1. (125pp). <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/id10704%20ageism%20across%20europe%20report%20interactive.pdf?dtrk=true>

Age UK (2011). A snapshot of Ageism in the UK and across Europe. London: March (16pp). [http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/research/snapshot\\_of\\_ageism\\_in\\_europe.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/research/snapshot_of_ageism_in_europe.pdf?dtrk=true)

AgeUK (2011). Grey Matters – A Survey of Ageism across Europe: EU Briefing and Policy Recommendations. London: AgeUK, June (25pp). [http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/ageism\\_across\\_europe\\_report.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/ageism_across_europe_report.pdf?dtrk=true)

#### *Other Publications*

Abrams, D., & Swift, H.J. (2012). Ageism doesn't work. Public Policy and Aging Report, 22 (3), 3-8. Washington DC: National Academy on an Aging Society, Gerontological Society of America. ISSN 1055-3037

Abrams, D. & Swift, H.J. (2012). Experiences and Expressions of Ageism: Topline Results (UK) from Round 4 of the European Social Survey, ESS Country Specific Topline Results (2). London: Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, ISBN 978-0-9555043-2-7

Abrams, D. and Swift, H. (2012) 'Experiences of Sexism: Findings from the European Social Survey'. University of Kent. [www.eurage.com/files/Sexism\\_in\\_the\\_ESS\\_EURAGE\\_ResearchReport\\_1\(1\).pdf](http://www.eurage.com/files/Sexism_in_the_ESS_EURAGE_ResearchReport_1(1).pdf)

Stuckelberger, A., Abrams, D. & Chastonay, P. (2012). Age discrimination as a source of exclusion in Europe: The need for a human rights plan for older persons. In N. Keating and T. Scharf (Eds). Exclusion/inclusion in later life: Global issues in social exclusion. (pp. 125-144). London: The Policy Press.

## Case study 4 (ESS): Wellbeing

### CS4.1 Background

#### CS4.1.1 Policy and research context

There has been increasing policy and research interest in the field of wellbeing. Academics across a number of disciplines have been working in this area for a considerable time but more recently government has taken interest in this area and called for questions to be asked of the public on their subjective wellbeing. As a result the ONS developed questions on wellbeing -in relation to this NEF was one of the organisations that was invited to form an advisory group to the ONS. NEF had used ESS data to develop their National Accounts of Wellbeing (2009) and ONS included subjective wellbeing questions in their annual population survey (2011), partly based on NEF's National Accounts of Wellbeing.

#### CS4.1.2 Data collection context

Academics and non-academics working for the New Economics Foundation were part of a wider consortium of researchers from various European institutions who specialise in wellbeing research that developed the ESS Wellbeing module in 2005. Think tank staff (NEF) were brought in to develop the module bid in order to make it more policy relevant. NEF had previously worked on wellbeing research.

### CS4.2 Activity

#### CS4.2.1 Use of data

Initial data analysis was carried out by key academics in the wellbeing field who had been involved in the ESS module design. Academics who have written widely on wellbeing have used ESS data to provide both contextual and central evidence in for example, areas such as developing a definition of flourishing (Huppert et al, 2011), and in developing indicators for measuring subjective wellbeing.

#### CS4.2.2 The transmission mechanism

Knowledge transmission on the ESS wellbeing data has occurred mainly through the think tank NEF, who have used the data to construct their National Accounts of Wellbeing (2009) and this impact study has revealed that more recently Cabinet Office approached the ESS Core Scientific Team about specific wellbeing questions in relation to work they were doing linking with other survey data on wellbeing. NEF's National Accounts of Wellbeing (2009) was both a report and a data-interactive website.

#### CS4.2.3 Research user engagement

Key academics in the wellbeing field who have designed the wellbeing module have continued to analyse ESS data and have academic outputs on wellbeing, as has the think tank that was also involved in module design. This has resulted in key publications in wellbeing both academic and policy orientated publications.

## CS4.3 Impact

Academics who have written widely on wellbeing have used ESS data to provide both contextual and central evidence in for example, areas such as developing a definition of flourishing, and in developing indicators for measuring subjective wellbeing.

### CS4.3.1 Policy impact

ESS data on wellbeing was used to construct NEF's National Accounts of Wellbeing (2009) which has been one of several key documents that has influenced development of subjective wellbeing indicators for the ONS, and in turn for government in developing work in this area. (Other important strands of work in wellbeing also included work done by The Stiglitz Commission). The importance of ESS data developing NEF's National Accounts of Wellbeing in this regard is illustrated by the following comment:

*"We used ESS data to make our story. I can't emphasise enough how important ESS has been to our whole work'.*

*"ESS which led the NEF National Accounts of Wellbeing gave us credibility in the whole world. ESS is absolutely one of the core pillars of what we've done. It's given us gravitas and status in the policy realm with what we've done".*

A senior researcher working for NEF who the research team interviewed is also currently providing the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing.

In addition NEF has used the National Accounts of Well-being Framework (2009) with a number of their consultancy clients as part of measuring outcomes and hence is influencing thinking broadly across the third sector.

Subsequent to the process detailed above, ESS data has provided contextual evidence to government in relation to developing their wellbeing agenda. Cabinet Office Big Society Strategy and Analysis Team have been analysing wellbeing data from ESS in conjunction with wellbeing data from other surveys (crime survey data and that of community life surveys). This is illustrated by the following comment:

*"We're trying to link the wellbeing data with existing data from other surveys for example, crime surveys and community life surveys – linked to other policy areas. That's why we looked at questions included in ESS and got in touch with the City University team".*

### CS4.3.2 Public impact

NEF, along with other key academics in the wellbeing field, have worked closely with ONS in developing their subjective wellbeing questions included in the ONS Annual Population Survey (2011). NEF have worked closely with ESS data in developing their National Accounts of Wellbeing (2009). NEF were also represented on the ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Advisory Forum and the Technical Advisory Group..

NEF have been working on a project for Eurostat to inform the decisions made by their Expert Group on quality of life indicators; this used ESS data extensively.

### CS4.3.3 Case study: the role of intermediaries

In relation to examining the impact of the ESS, it is important to look at the role of particular intermediaries in acting as translators of data, and their role in providing networks to disseminate the research findings.

Within Cabinet Office there has been much recent interest in ideas and research around wellbeing, which partly arises from previous work by NEF (National Accounts of Wellbeing, 2009) and the development of subjective wellbeing indicators by ONS in their Annual Population Survey (2011). ESS has directly and indirectly fed in to both of these. Cabinet Office have also been working with NEF on their wellbeing research.

The research team met with and interviewed Cabinet Office staff whose specific remit is to raise awareness of the policy relevance of the wellbeing agenda, along with scope for analysis, across all government departments. Researchers that work within the Big Society Strategy and Analysis team have worked on (and continue to work on) ESS data, along with survey data on wellbeing derived from other surveys (by ONS such as LFS and Understanding Society).

This has led to staff in the Strategy and Analysis team in Cabinet Office working with staff responsible for dissemination of ESS within the ESS central team, and has led to their further involvement in helping establish the ESS policy seminars, the first of which took place in October 2012 on the ESS Trust in Justice findings.

*“We’re trying to encourage the analytic resources of government to work on this. I’m working with analysts across each government department to do some short, sharp bits of analysis on wellbeing – for example, looking at linking wellbeing and air quality (DEFRA’.*

It should be highlighted that Cabinet Office staff that the research team interviewed felt that they had developed relatively strong links with academics in several UK universities working in different disciplines in wellbeing research and felt that it was important to link academic research with wellbeing policy development.

Cabinet office staff the research team interviewed want to do further analysis on the ESS more widely, not solely on the wellbeing data, and were interested in making links with policy development in this regard. What was highlighted however, was the need to contextualise ESS data with that of other relevant surveys. This is illustrated by the following comment:

*“Within ESS there are a number of interesting bits – I want analysts to look at issues on justice, immigration, constitutional material, and governance. The analysis will then influence policy. It’s also about linking analysts with policy leads. You need to look at it through a wellbeing lens. Each dataset adds value in various policy areas. It’s not just the ESS data. No one survey is enough in these areas”.*

In relation to doing further wellbeing research, Cabinet Office said that they want to look at what are the drivers of wellbeing in relation to governance within each European country.

Staff in cabinet office responsible for strategy and analysis felt that there was a need to increase the level of dissemination around the policy relevance of the ESS data and its impact. The following comment illustrates this:

*“I’d like to formalise it a bit more and run one of these policy seminars monthly and bring academics and policy people around the table in order to think afresh about these policy areas’.*

It was felt that there was further need to engage with relevant government departments in order to increase the policy impact of ESS.

#### **CS4.3.4 Additional dissemination strategy**

The OECD and the European Social Survey are organising a seminar in January 2013 on ‘Economic Crisis, the Quality of Work and Well-Being – The European Experience in the Great Recession’. The seminar will present findings from the European Social Survey. The meeting will gather some of the most prominent researchers working on the relationship between the quality of work and quality of life. A UK seminar at the CO is also planned for April 2013.

#### **CS4.3.5 Potential on going impact**

In relation to potential use of ESS, Cabinet Office stated that they want to look at what are the drivers of wellbeing in relation to governance within each European country. The strategy and analysis team has mapped data on wellbeing from a range of different surveys for example, LFS and Understanding Society as well as ESS. A government strategy analyst (EM – check) commented that they would like to see wellbeing questions being asked in policy evaluations before and after each evaluation.

The above highlights the potential of linking ESS data on a policy issues with other relevant survey data for example, the Labour Force Survey or Understanding Society in developing government policy.

### **CS4.4 Evaluation**

#### **CS4.4.1 Distinctive value from the dataset**

What interviewees valued about the ESS dataset was the opportunity to analyse the dataset cross-nationally. It is this cross-national aspect of the data that academics felt was potentially important to policy makers. This is illustrated by the following comments:

*“Its (ESS) importance lies in its ability to test things out cross-nationally, that’s important for policy makers”.*

*“ESS dataset has multi dimensionality and is deep and textured, and the fact that it’s cross-national data is key.”*

The aspects of ESS that interviewees emphasised included its unique modules, its cross-national perspective and cross-cultural aspects in comparison with other surveys.

#### **CS4.4.2 Determinants of impact**

Key determinants of impact were the pre-existing networks that the ESS module developers (subsequently, analysts) used to communicate their findings to research users. These have been extensively exploited and added to. Other researchers unconnected to the developer group have taken up the module due to increasing policy interest in wellbeing within the UK government (ONS



and Cabinet Office). ESS data on wellbeing has thus been used by government researchers in Cabinet Office as contextual evidence on wellbeing in relation to other survey data. It has also indirectly contributed to the development of survey questions on subjective wellbeing developed by ONS, through NEF's work with ONS.

#### CS4.4.3 Limitations on impact

In the case of wellbeing, the limitations on impact are not obvious. This is a developing area where all the participants have been exploring ideas. There has been a great deal of two-way interaction between NEF, ONS and the ESS team in terms of developing and interpreting appropriate questions for the government surveys; these reflect development issues rather than real differences, although the decision of ONS to develop its own questions of subjective wellbeing is the result of a specific methodological view.

#### CS4.5 Key publications

Abdallah,S., Mahony,S., Marks,N., Michaelson,J., Seaford, C., Stoll, L. and Thompson, S. (2011). Measuring our Progress. The power of wellbeing. New Economics Foundation.

Donovan,N., Halpern, D. and Sargeant, R.(2002). Life satisfaction: the state of knowledge. Implications for government. Government Strategy Unit.

Harvey, L. (2011). Beyond Active-Stasis: Reflections on Philosophy, Education and 'Life Satisfaction' in the United Kingdom Journal Title: Discourse. Volume: 10. Number: 2. Pgs 215-223.  
<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/view.html/PrsDiscourseArticles/227>

Huppert, F.A. & So, T.T.C (2011) 'Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Wellbeing' Social Indicators Research, DOI 10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7.

Huppert, F.A., Marks, N., Clark,A., Siegrist, J., Stutzer,A., Vittersø J. and Wahrendorf M. (2009) Measuring Well-being Across Europe: Description of the ESS Well-being Module and Preliminary Findings. Social Indicators Research Volume 91, Number 3. 301-315.

Macallister, F.(2005). Wellbeing Concepts and Challenges. Discussion paper. for the Sustainable Development Research Network. Sponsored by DEFRA.

Michaelson,J., Abdallah,S., Steuer, N., Thompson, S. and Marks,N., (2009) National Accounts of Wellbeing: bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet. New Economics Foundation

Newton, J. (2007). Wellbeing Research: Synthesis Report. ESRC Research Group at the University of Bath on an ESRC Placement Fellowship with Defra.

This paper was referenced in:

Tinkler, L. and Hicks, S. (2011). Measuring Subjective Wellbeing. Office of National Statistics.

## APPENDIX 2. Bibliography

This section summarises research and other publications produced using the data. Note that not all academic publications have been included. For ESS, academic publications found on the ESS bibliography or cited by government departments have been included. As WERS is widely used by academic micro data researchers to provide extra variables for other studies, only papers primarily using WERS and with a clear link to decision-making processes in government are included.

### Background reports

ESRC. (2011). Branching Out. New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee.

ESRC. (2009). Taking Stock. A summary of ESRC's work to evaluate the impact of research on policy and practice.

Johnson, S. and Anthill, M. (2011). Final Report. Impact evaluation of the Millennium Cohort Study. ESRC

Johnson, S. (2012). Research Report. Impact of Social Science on Policy: Sure Start Case Study. Hull. ESRC.

## European Social Survey

### ESS reports

ESS (2012) Scientific Case and Technical Description.

ESS (2011) ESS – DACE. European Social Survey. Data for a changing Europe. ESS Communication and impact strategy.

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## APPENDIX 3. Pre-interview questionnaire

### Questionnaire scope and purpose

- The WERS/ESS Impact Study team are arranging interviews with those commissioning and carrying out research on these data sets.
- This questionnaire is designed to acquire basic information from interested parties prior to interviewing them; this allows the interview to be more focused on matters of interest.
- To keep the questionnaire short and precise, most answers just require boxes to be ticked.
- Answers will be followed up in the interviews
- When considering the use of jargon or acronyms, respondents can assume that the interview team are familiar with the UK data landscape.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Name:

1.2 Organisation:

1.3 How have you used WERS/ESS? (tick any that apply)

		WERS	ESS
Research	Conducted own research		
	Commissioned external research		
	Used external research not specifically commissioned		
	Not aware of research using this data		
Policy impact	Used to formulate your own organisation's policy		
	Used to promote specific policies in other organisations		
	Used for general campaigns		

1.4 Do you fund WERS/ESS? (tick any that apply)

	WERS	ESS
Funding directly through grant		
Funding indirectly through staff contributions in kind		
Other		

### 2. Research using the data

2.1 If conducted own research, why was this dataset used? (tick any that apply)

	WERS	ESS
Had all data needed		
Only one with relevant data		
Best quality data		
Familiarity		
Availability		
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

2.2 If commissioning external research, who decided to use this data? (tick any that apply)

	WERS	ESS
We did – specified in contract		
We did – suggested to researchers		
Researchers suggested it		
Chosen as a result of literature/data review		
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

2.3 If using non-commissioned research, what were important sources? (tick any that apply)

	WERS	ESS
Government reports		
Academic articles		
Articles in the general press/media		
Chosen as a result of literature/data review		
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

2.4 If using non-commissioned research, how was the relevant research discovered? (tick any that apply)

	WERS	ESS
Searching for use of the data source		
Searching for the topic		
Searching through bibliographies of researchers		
Use of the WERS/ESS central bibliographies		
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

2.5 What alternative datasets are considered and/or used for your research needs? (list any that apply – see examples; acronyms can be used)

	WERS	ESS
Complementary data sources	eg ABI linked via IDBR refs ASHE linked via IDBR refs	
Substitute data sources	eg ASHE LFS	eg BHPS
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

### 3. Policy impacts

3.1 If your organisation is responsible for developing policy, strategy or campaigns, what role has the data played in creating the evidence base?

	WERS	ESS
Central evidence (ie case severely weakened without it)		
Useful supporting or triangulating evidence		
Background or context evidence		
No real part in developing policy		

### 4. Other comments

4.1 Please enter any additional comments that might be useful to direct the interview

<i>Comments:</i>
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## APPENDIX 4. Organisations involved in the impact study.

### WERS

Organisation	Role
ACAS	Steering Committee member, WERS 2011 Peer review panel member, WERS2011
BIS	Deputy Director, Labour Market Analysis Head of Policy, Trade Unions and Collective Rights Director of Analysis in Workplace Planning (Former Director of Employment Market Analysis)
NIESR	Steering Committee member, WERS 2004, 2011; WERS user; WIAS Steering Committee member, WERS 2004, 2011; WERS user; WIAS
HSE	WERS user, Analytical Services WERS user, Policy Team
UKCES	WERS user, Statistics Team
TUC	Steering Committee member WERS 2011
CBI	Head, Organisation and Services Department
CIPD	Head of Employment and Employee Relations Advisor, Employee Relations
Cardiff University	WERS Steering Committee member 2004
Institute of Education	WERS Steering Committee member 2004
University of Leicester	WERS user
University of Warwick, Institute of Employment Research	ESRC Strategic Data Advisor

### ESS

Organisation	Role
Cabinet Office	Wellbeing and Civil Society. Policy Analysis and Insights Team
National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)	ESS UK National Co-ordinator
Office for National Statistics	Assistant Deputy Director, Measuring National Well-being Programme
New Economics Foundation	NEF Fellow; module designer; ESS user Senior Researcher; ESS user
ESS/City University	CST member CST member ESS Research manager and CST member
LSE	ESS user
Birkbeck, University of London	ESS user
Nuffield College, Oxford	ESS user; module designer
Cambridge University	Academic ESS CST and SAB member ESS user
Kent University	ESS user ESS user