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Department of Social Protection
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An Evaluation of the Back to Education Allowance

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11th European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference

1-3 October 2014

Outline

- Overview of Ireland's main activation programmes
- Various descriptive statistics on programme participants
- Conclusions from descriptive analysis
- Description of Department of Social Protection's 'Geary' datafile
- Evaluating the Back to Education Allowance: Illustration of conducting impact evaluations using counterfactual techniques
- Conclusions

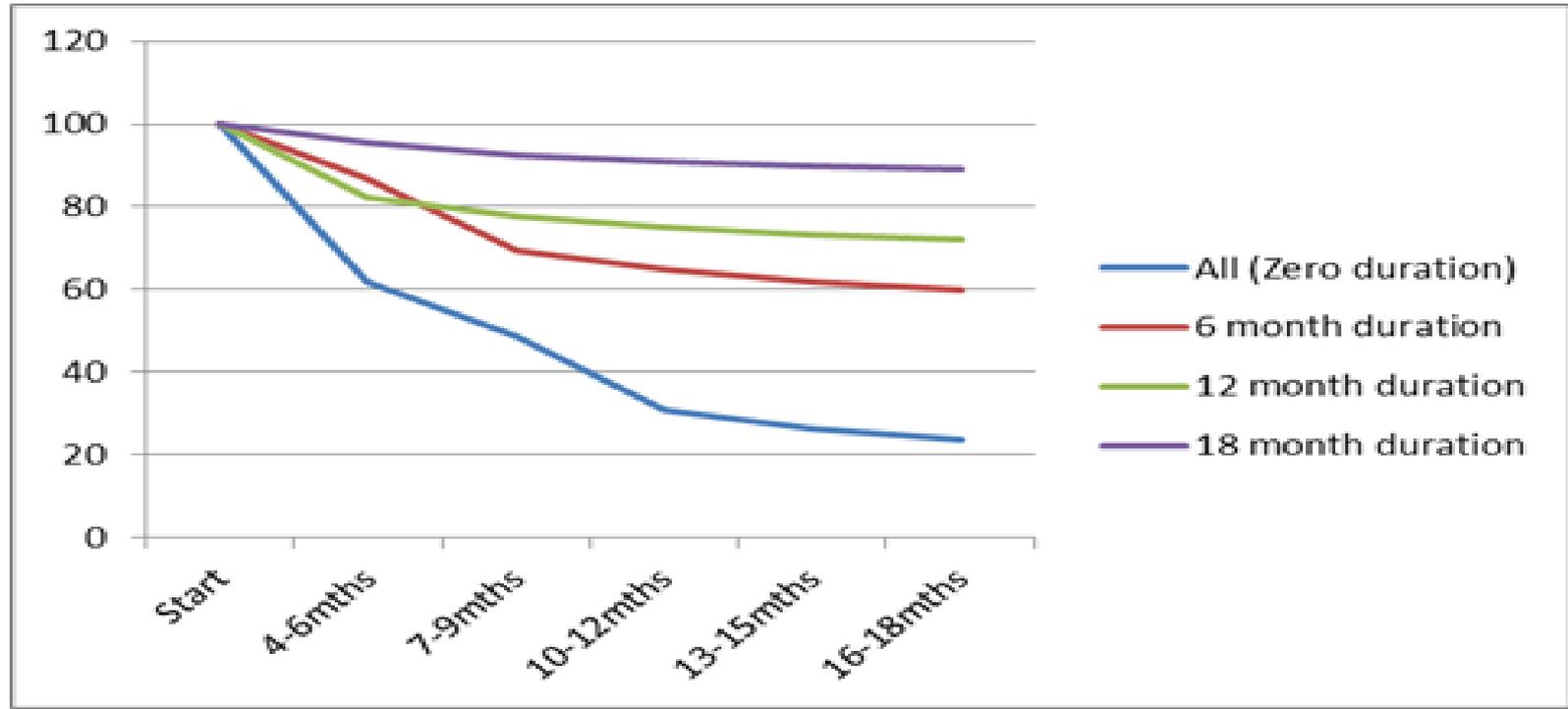
DSP activation schemes description

- Back to Work (BTW) – encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. An employee option was also available before May 2009
- Back to Education Allowance second level option (SLO) - supports participation in full time educational and personal development courses
- BTEA third level option (TLO) – same support for 3rd level courses
- FAS training – vocational training of mainly short duration provided by the National training authority (now with the Education and Training Boards)
- Community Employment (CE) – offers part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities to LTU and other disadvantaged groups to assist with return to work.
- Many new schemes in recent years (JobBridge, Momentum, TUS) – but long time series needed for evaluation

Coverage of scheme 'finishers'

Year	BTW	SLO	TLO	FAS	CE	Total
2005	5,519	1,451	1,091	6,467	1,741	16,269
2006	4,293	1,532	1,233	6,373	1,900	15,331
2007	3,021	1,856	1,173	6,339	1,958	14,347
2008	3,312	1,929	1,088	6,803	2,058	15,190
2009	3,091	2,626	1,247	11,999	2,058	21,021
2010	2,653	5,971	2,494	15,794	2,501	29,413
2011	4,538	6,978	3,859	13,280	2,924	31,579
Total	26,427	22,343	12,185	67,055	15,140	143,150

Survival rates for LR claims



Prior LR duration for 'starters'

Prior LR duration	BTW	SLO	TLO	FAS	CE
0-6 months	31.2%	45.7%	42.1%	55.8%	40.6%
6-12 months	18.0%	27.0%	19.9%	26.4%	22.3%
1-2 years	28.3%	18.3%	25.8%	12.3%	25.0%
2-5 years	19.1%	8.3%	11.5%	4.7%	9.5%
5+ years	3.4%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	2.5%
Average in months	17.5	10.3	11.9	8.6	14.1

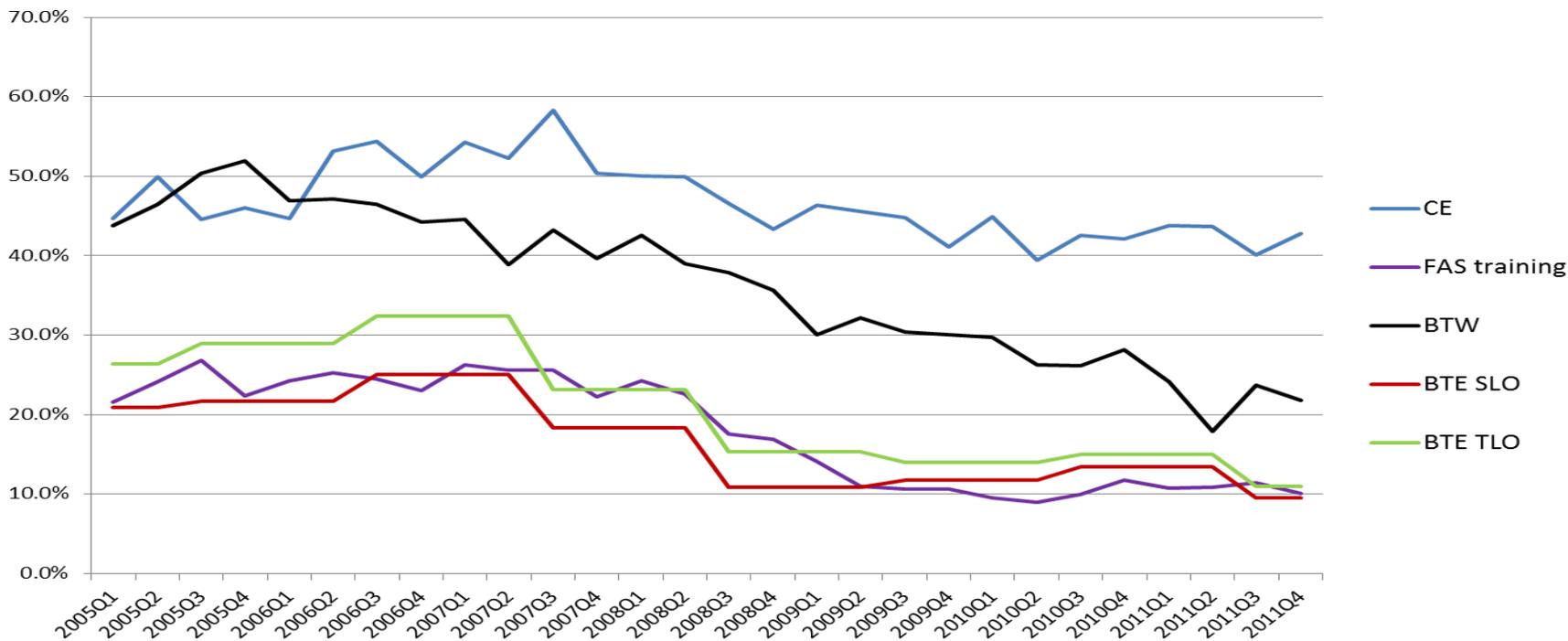
Duration on activation schemes

Duration on scheme	BTW	SLO	TLO	FAS	CE
0-6 months	15.2%	13.5%	8.9%	78.6%	12.7%
6-12 months	15.4%	65.0%	34.4%	19.1%	29.9%
1-2 years	23.4%	18.9%	25.1%	2.0%	23.8%
2+ years	46.0%	2.6%	31.6%	0.3%	33.6%
Average in months	21.9	9.9	17.0	4.2	19.1

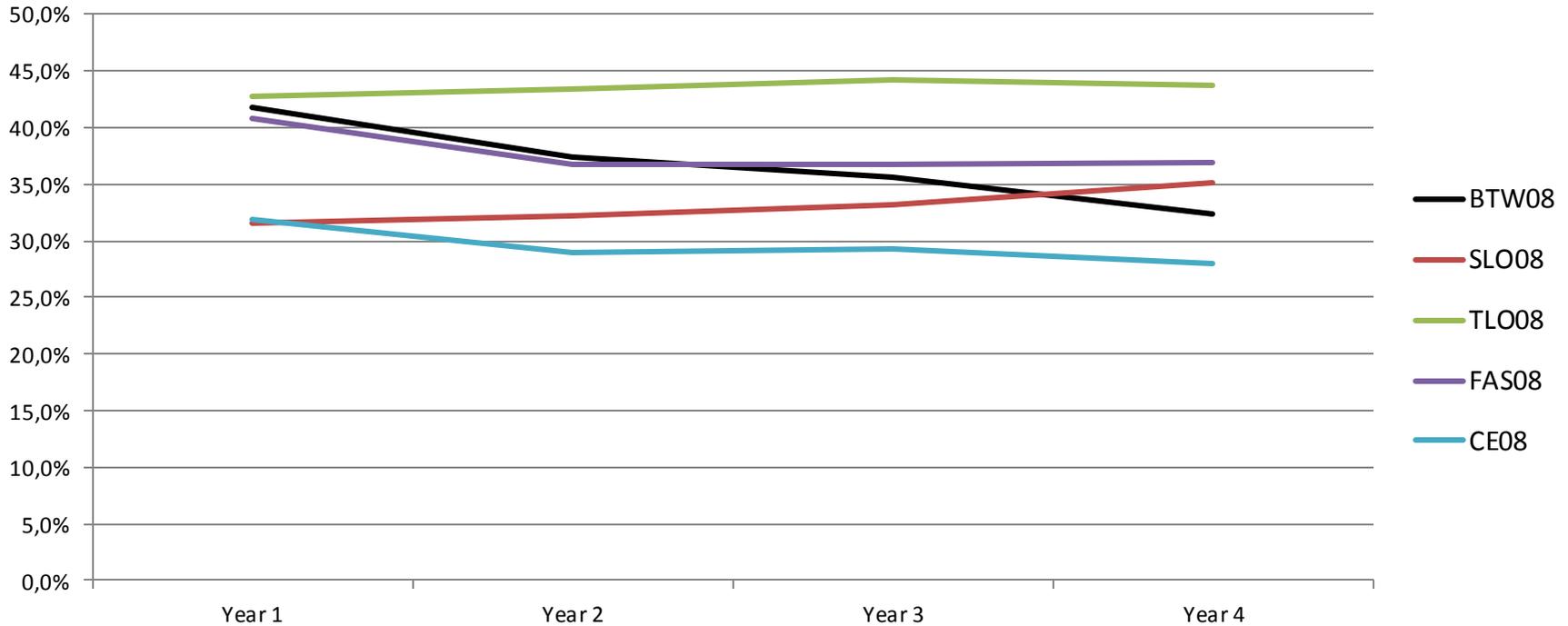
Ages of scheme finishers

Age on completion	BTW	SLO	TLO	FAS	CE
Under 25	2.2%	33.1%	13.1%	37.3%	1.7%
25-34	29.4%	33.9%	51.8%	25.9%	22.4%
35-44	34.7%	19.1%	21.3%	17.5%	27.9%
45-54	24.3%	10.2%	10.2%	13.3%	27.4%
55+	9.5%	3.6%	3.5%	6.0%	20.6%
Average age	40.7	31.7	33.3	32.4	45.3

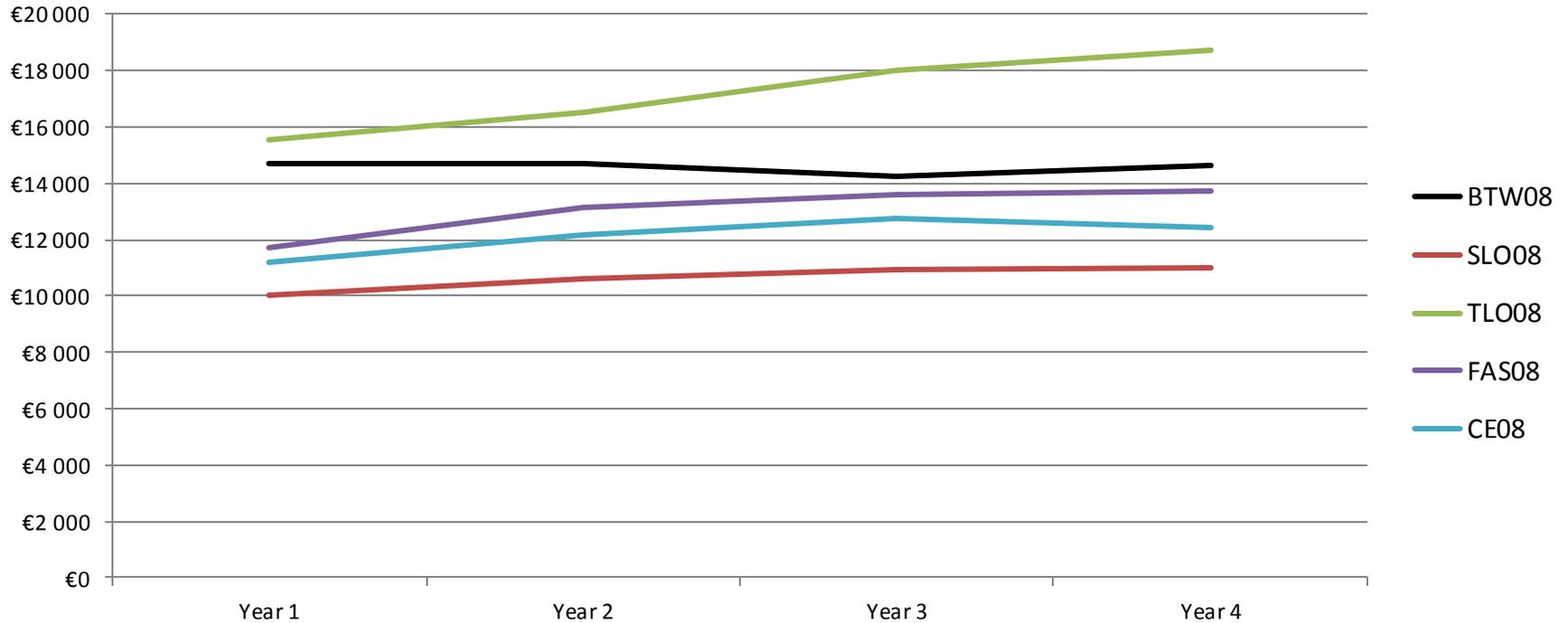
Next episode 'employment'



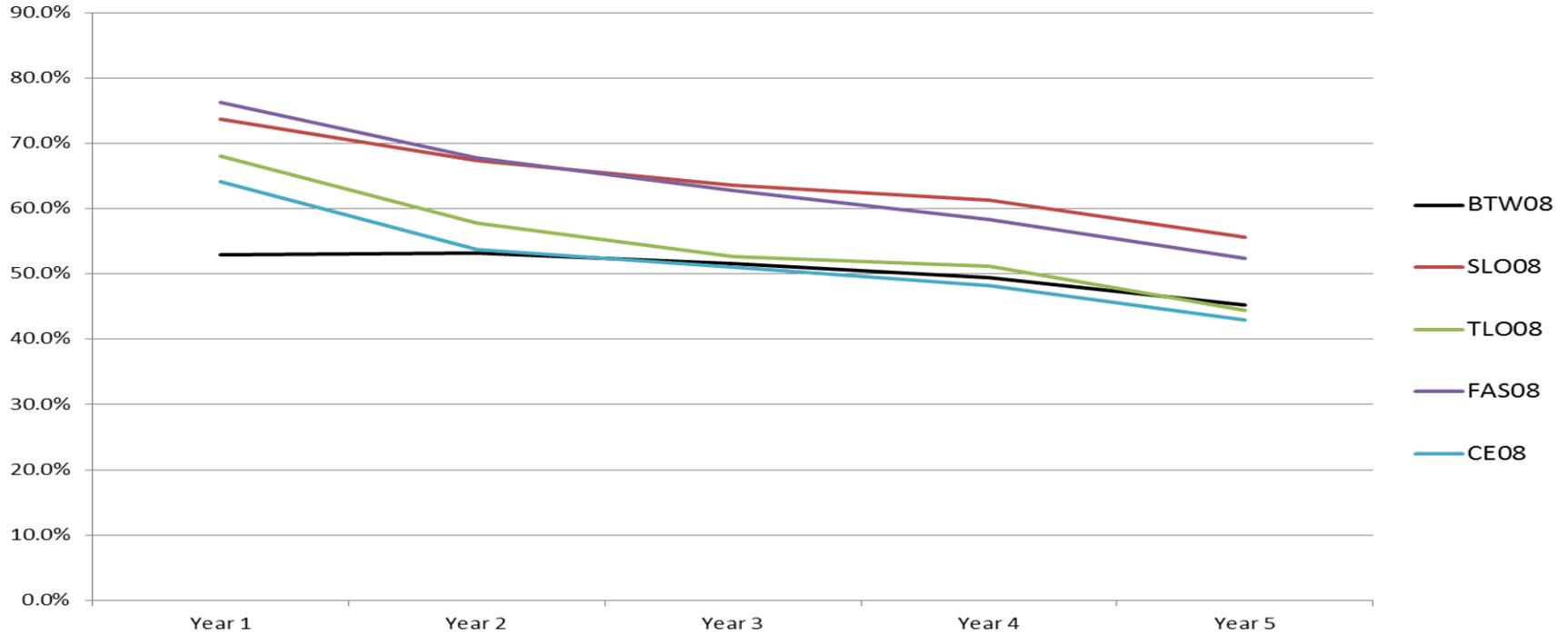
Employment activity – 2008 finishers



Annual Incomes – 2008 finishers



Live Register claims – 2008 finishers



Conclusions from Descriptive Analysis

- Preliminary Results which are ‘indicative’ and need further consideration and development
- Live Register ‘survival rates’ appear better than for the general LR post participation
- Without controls, TLO is the best performer
- However TLO is a long duration intervention with mainly young participants
- Background factors need to be ‘controlled’
- Econometric evaluation of schemes needed.....ESRI were recently commissioned to do this for the BTEA (SLO/TLO)

Description of Department's 'Geary' Datafile

- Longitudinal jobseekers database
- Covers anyone who has made a jobseekers or one-parent family payment since 2004
- Episodic structure – 6 million jobseeker/OPFP episodes (incl BTEA/Jobbridge etc), 18 million jobs and 1 million FAS interventions
- PPS number and Revenue employer number are on all records for linking each way
- Live data – run each weekend



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Evaluating the Back to Education Allowance: Conducting Impact Evaluations of Public Policies using Counterfactual Analysis Techniques

Overview of the BTEA Programme

- Second chance education opportunities scheme
- Two BTEA options: Second-level (SLO) (includes PLCs) and Third-level (TLO) (includes both undergraduate and postgraduate courses)
- Full-time course (but participants can work part-time)
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Qualifying benefit payment (e.g., jobseeker's, one parent family, etc.)
 - Duration of this payment (3 /9 months)
 - Age (21/24 but some limited exceptions)
 - Commencing first year of a course that will lead to a QQI accreditation
 - Received acceptance onto a qualifying course
 - Progressing in educational qualifications
- Weekly payment (rate varies according to when course commenced and a person's means)

BTEA Evaluation Objectives

1. Impact of participating in an SLO or TLO BTEA programme on keeping individuals off of the Live Register (i.e., out of unemployment) on completion of their course
2. Impact of participating in an SLO or TLO BTEA programme on helping participants to transition to the labour market on completion of their course
3. Impact of participating in an SLO or TLO BTEA programme on helping participants to pursue another education, training or employment placement programme

Methodology I: Counterfactual Analysis

- Want to know what would happen to unemployed individuals had the BTEA programme not been in place (i.e., unemployed person did not participate in a BTEA option) → want to measure the counterfactual
- Various methods used for estimating the counterfactual, but they all generally rely on measuring the difference in outcomes between people participating in the programme (the treatment group) and those eligible for participation but did not (the control group)

Methodology II: BTEA

- Focussed on individuals in receipt of a jobseeker's payment who commenced an SLO or TLO BTEA programme in September / October 2008 (treatment groups)
- Control group consists of individuals in receipt of a jobseeker's payment who had similar unemployment durations to the treatment groups BUT who continued to be unemployed in September/October 2008

Methodology III: BTEA

- Separate evaluations conducted for SLO and TLO BTEA options:
 1. Overall participation in SLO/TLO programme
 2. Level of completion (< 1 year, 1 year, etc.)
- Evaluated in terms of Live Register status in June 2012 and June 2014
 - Time points selected to ensure analysis not affected by lock-in effects/dynamics bias
- Employed Propensity Score Matching (PSM) techniques , which is standard in impact evaluations of public policies

Data

- Provided to the ESRI by the DSP from its *Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset* (JLD) i.e., Geary datafile
- JLD created through the amalgamation of four administrative data sources
- Contains information on gender, age, marital status, nationality, geographic location, spousal earnings, family type, children dependency allowance, previous occupation, benefit type, employment and unemployment histories, training schemes, etc.
- Education information does not exist for all individuals in the JLD:
 - Used previous occupation to proxy education in order to match our treatment and control groups
 - Excluded managers, professionals and associate professionals (on the basis that such individuals are likely to have a third-level qualification)

Sample

- Original Sample consisted of 222,290 claimants, which was reduced to 190,354 when focussed on jobseeker claimants
 - Control Group = 186,422, TLO Group = 1,518 and SLO Group = 2,414
- Further exclusions:
 1. Control group individuals exposed to SLO/TLO during evaluation period
 2. Treatment group individuals that received other types of training during evaluation period
 3. Control group individuals that participated in a Community Employment or Back to Work programme post September 2008 (lock-in issue)
 4. Top three occupation individuals (managers, professionals and associate professionals) excluded
 5. Some other minor exclusions e.g., cases with missing age information, etc.
- Final Sample = 136,588 (Control Group = 134,289, TLO = 661 and SLO = 1,638)

Conclusions

- Evaluation of the SLO and TLO BTEA programmes nearing completion
- How effective are the other activation schemes - Community Employment, Back-to-Work, Momentum, JobBridge, etc?
- Potential now exists to evaluate these programmes using the Department's *Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset* i.e., Geary datafile
- Important steps in this process:
 1. Counter-factual analysis: existence of a control group to compare programme participants' performance against
 2. Importance of sample construction to address issues that could bias results (e.g., lock-in effects and dynamics bias)
 3. Methodology used is important to address problems that exist when conducting evaluations (e.g. sample selection bias and unobserved heterogeneity), which, again, would bias results.



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Thank You