

5 Glossary

Climate change adaptation – The process of adapting to current and expected impacts of climate change.

Climate change mitigation – The process of limiting the negative impacts of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

Confounding – Research often seeks to ascertain the relationships between two variables, but this process can lead to misleading results if there is a missing variable that affects the results. This is known as the confounder or confounding variable. For example it is possible to show that IQ results are closely related to shoe size if you fail to consider age - children have smaller feet and score lower on IQ tests.

Controls, controlled – When there is a potential confounding variable (see above) research attempts to ascertain the actual relationship between two variables by ‘controlling’ for the confounding variable. In the example given above shoe size would only be compared with IQ results within the same age group, thus controlling for this confounder.

Ecosystem services – Ecosystem services are the functions of the natural environment, that directly or indirectly provide benefits for people.

Impact (economic) – Economic impact is the extent to which a proposed intervention increases the size of the traded economy, commonly measured using GDP or GVA. Careful consideration of whether the new economy activity is new or displaced is important. See Introduction to Economic Evidence for further explanation.

Theory of change – A theory of change (also known as a logic chain or causal model) demonstrates how an activity leads to a particular outcome (for instance, how planting a tree leads to human health improvements).

Value (economic) – Economic value refers to the full effect of a change on social welfare, regardless of whether this effect is felt through the market. So an increase in air pollution where you live constitutes a loss of economic value, even if this doesn’t affect the value of your house.

Value transfer – The process of inferring the size of an economic benefit or cost at the site under consideration from previous research at another site, paying careful attention to contextual changes. Sometimes called benefits transfer when only benefits are under consideration.

Willingness-to-pay – This is an economic technique used to value goods that are not traded in markets. Surveys are conducted in which people are asked how much they would be willing to pay to obtain the good.