

Evidence in Policy

Political Science

What evidence can settle, and what it cannot.

Evidence can inform

- Whether an intervention worked before
- The likely size of the effect
- The cost per unit of outcome
- Who benefits and who does not
- Unintended consequences observed

Evidence cannot settle

- Which objectives matter most
- How to trade equity against efficiency
- Acceptable levels of risk
- Whose preferences should count
- Value judgements about fairness

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Calling a value choice an evidence question hides the judgement rather than removing it.

Educational reference. Policy-based evidence — selecting studies to justify a decision already taken — is the recurring failure mode.