

## CLEAR 101: An Introduction to CLEAR Questions and Answers

**QUESTION:** What type of studies can get a high rating in CLEAR?

**ANSWER:** Impact studies are the only types of studies that receive causal evidence ratings in CLEAR, because these are the only types of designs that permit assessing a cause-and-effect relationship between an intervention and outcomes for participants. Well-implemented randomized controlled trials with low attrition and well-implemented interrupted time series designs are the only designs eligible for a high rating as of October 2022<sup>1</sup>.

**QUESTION:** Where in the 3 categories of study type (causal, implementation, or descriptive) would you include exploratory studies?

**ANSWER:** The answer to this question depends on the type of exploratory study. For a descriptive exploratory study that is quantitative and does not look at cause and effect, it is reviewed under the [CLEAR descriptive guidelines](#). If the study is a formative study that is more qualitative in nature, it may fall under the [CLEAR implementation guidelines](#). For an exploratory study that is causal in nature, the study would be reviewed under the [CLEAR causal evidence guidelines](#).

**QUESTION:** You indicate that CLEAR can be used to determine how much evidence is out there in particular topics, but how can users be confident that CLEAR includes all of the evidence in particular areas? What process does CLEAR use to update its archives of qualifying evidence?

**ANSWER:** CLEAR conducts periodic evidence updates to keep the clearinghouse current. CLEAR's website is updated with new study summaries and synthesis reports across labor topics on an ongoing basis, as evidence reviews are completed. Evidence reviews that are driven by a labor topic are updated periodically, with the date last updated in the status notes of any evidence review. Additionally, beginning in 2021, CLEAR began its [systematic annual search and review \(SASR\)](#), which systematically finds the most up-to-date literature on topics of interest to CLEAR audiences within a certain date range, regardless evidence base size, and across all topics of interest to CLEAR users. Eligible studies will appear in the topic area lists, in CLEAR's [searchable database](#), and by year on the website.

**QUESTION:** How is CLEAR's systematic review different from a literature review?

**ANSWER:** First, both are valuable in their own way and appropriate to use at different times. DOL-funded studies often conduct literature reviews as part of their knowledge development. They can be completed relatively quickly (in a matter of weeks or months). They often have a wide scope, and are intended to learn about where the existing body of knowledge is generally at and how new studies fit in. Findings are usually presented qualitatively, like in a brief or a

---

<sup>1</sup> Causal evidence guidelines are continually being updated and new designs added. Because ratings could change as new methods change, please check the most recent causal evidence guidelines for the latest information about which designs can receive a high rating.

report. Many of these can be found on [CEO's completed reports webpage](#). Systematic evidence reviews, like the ones that CLEAR conducts, are driven by well-defined research questions and a protocol that aims to find all of the highest quality, most credible evidence that meets those criteria. Evidence reviews then systematically assess the quality of eligible studies, and results are shared in transparent, unbiased, and reproducible ways. Because of their thoroughness, systematic evidence reviews are large undertakings, typically taking from about nine months to two years to complete.

**QUESTION:** What is the main source of the 1,300 and counting studies that CLEAR evaluated? For example, is it published research from academia, Federal agencies, or nonprofit think tank publications?

**ANSWER:** CLEAR's systematic evidence reviews include studies from multiple sources to include academia, Federal reports from multiple agencies (not limited to the Department of Labor), grey literature, and dissertations, for example. The sources vary by the evidence review as well. Each of our evidence reviews have protocols that are published on the CLEAR website, that provide details on how the literature search is conducted to include the keywords. The CLEAR team uses multiple databases that include custom Google algorithms to capture a wide range of literature. If you have a study that might be eligible for CLEAR, [contact us](#) for more information.

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between high, moderate, and low causal evidence for the same kind of study? And where would you classify a quasi-experimental design?

**ANSWER:** Impact studies are the only studies that receive a causal evidence rating and the ability to make causal claims varies based on the causal research design used. The ratings describe the strength of the methods used and how well the study was carried out. They indicate how confident you can be that the study's findings reflect the true impact of the intervention studied, rather than something else. Higher causal evidence ratings provide greater confidence that the observed outcomes are due to the intervention being studied. As of October 2022<sup>2</sup>, only well-implemented randomized controlled trials and interrupted time series designs can receive a high causal evidence rating.

CLEAR reviews different types of quasi-experimental designs. Matched comparison group designs, for example, are evaluated under CLEAR's regression standards. The highest possible causal evidence rating for a quasi-experimental design is moderate, meaning that we cannot be confident that only the intervention leads to the observed outcomes.

More information about CLEAR's causal evidence ratings and the criteria for the types of study designs can be found in the [CLEAR causal evidence guidelines](#).

---

<sup>2</sup> Causal evidence guidelines are continually being updated and new designs added. Because ratings could change as new methods change, please check the most recent causal evidence guidelines for the latest information about which designs can receive a high rating.

**QUESTION:** How can we find ways the workforce system can support participants?

**ANSWER:** CLEAR’s [Search for Studies](#) page allows users to search by filter or by keyword to narrow the results. It is possible to conduct a search using more than one keyword. Consider different aspects relevant to the topic of interest when selecting keywords. For example, keywords can be related to the population of interest (e.g., workers with disabilities) or specific program outcomes of interest (e.g., employment, earnings). Keywords can also be synonyms or other related terms (e.g., Hispanic, Latino, Latinx). In addition, it is possible to restrict or narrow the search by the years of publication and to use the “Refine By” filtering options. The search tool has [Quick Help](#) and [Glossary](#) links which provide more information and tips for using the search tool. CLEAR also includes rapid review syntheses on new and trending research areas of interest. For instance, users can find rapid reviews on remote opportunities. Users can also [contact CLEAR](#) with specific search questions.