



# OUR APPROACH CLEARLY DISTINGUISHES EVIDENCE FROM FACTS AND DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY WARRANT CAUSAL INFERENCES

From [Better Evaluation](#).

Causal mapping distinguishes carefully between evidence for a causal link and the causal link itself. It does not provide any specific way to make causal inferences from one to the other. Causal mapping can help the evaluator to identify, code, simplify and synthesise the evidence for causal connections, but the evaluative step to make a judgement about whether one thing in fact causally influences another is left to the evaluator.

## But, Causal Mappers are like Janus

From (Powell et al. 2024)

..., like Janus, the causal mapper looks in two directions at once: sometimes interpreting maps as perceptions of causation but also often wanting to make the leap to inferences about actual causation. As Laukkanen and Wang (2016: 3) point out, while conceptually poles apart, in practice, the two functions can be hard to distinguish, particularly without sufficient explanation about source information and how this has been analysed. Historically, many causal mappers have been happy with this dual focus and moving from one to the other.

As evaluators, we try to be more rigorous about this distinction. We see the job of the causal mapper as being primarily to collect and accurately visualise evidence from different sources, often leaving it to others (or to themselves wearing a different hat) to draw conclusions about what doing so reveals about the real world. This second interpretative step goes beyond causal mapping per se (Copestake, 2021; Copestake et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2023).

Relevant page:

[The elephant in the room — causal inference](#) ▶

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## References

Powell, Copestake, & Remnant (2024). *Causal Mapping for Evaluators*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13563890231196601>.