



Who's a Utilization-Focused Evaluator?:

Exploring Professional Evaluator Perceptions of the 17 Steps to UFE

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Why did we decide to do this?



1. We wanted to address a gap in the literature
2. We wanted to expand on a qualitative case study conducted last year examining...
 1. The importance and use of the steps,
 2. process of prioritizing the steps, and
 3. determinants of use.

UFE in 30 seconds!

- “Utilization-Focused Evaluation is evaluation done for and with **specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses**,” (Patton, 2008, p. 37).
- Support for UFE across professions for **increased stakeholder involvement** and **improved use of findings** (e.g.: Gujit 2014, p.2; King & Stevahn, 2013; Vassar et al., 2010)



Our questions:

1. How does a **larger sample of evaluators** rate the **importance** and **use** of each of the 17 steps?
2. What role does **pragmatism** play in the use of the 17 steps?
3. What are the most used components of the checklist **regardless of the approach an evaluator ascribes to?**



What did we use & how did we do it?

- Reworded Patton's checklist
- Survey method
- Quantitative Analysis
- Qualitative Analysis

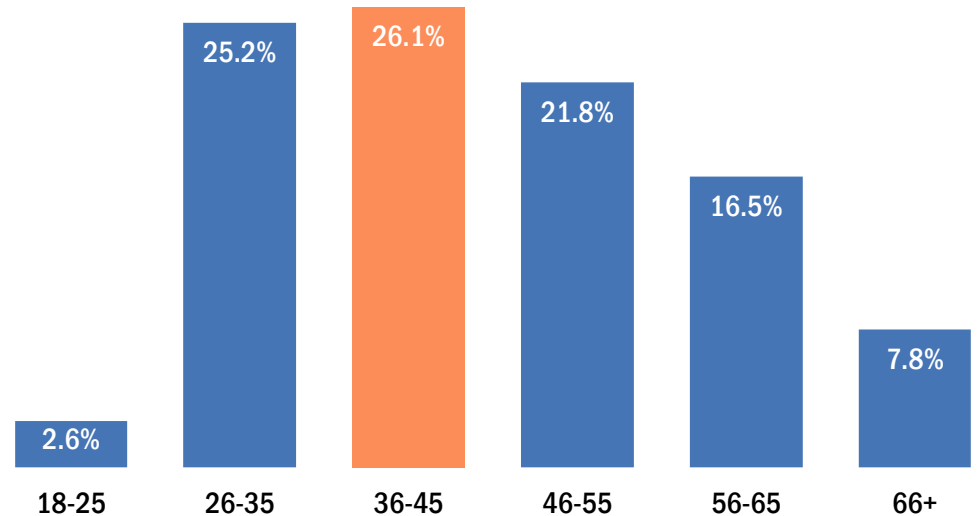


Who were our evaluators?

127 evaluators from AEA
(12.7% response rate)

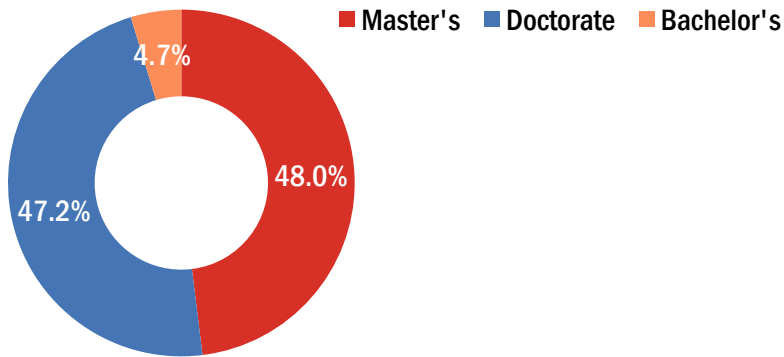
71.4% female, 24.6% male
(4.0% did not respond)

26.1% of participants were between **36-45 years old**.

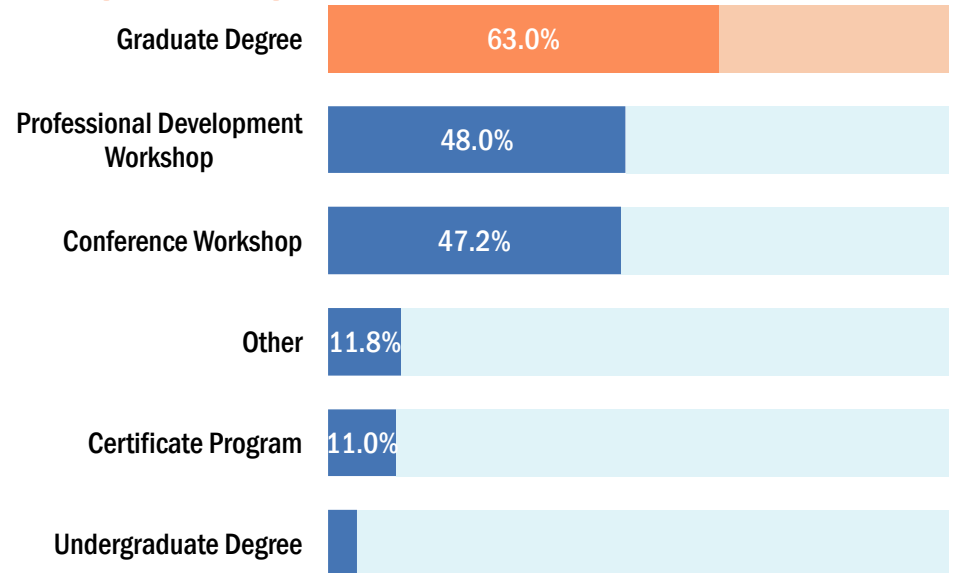


What's their education background?

The most common degree earned by participants was a **master's degree**.

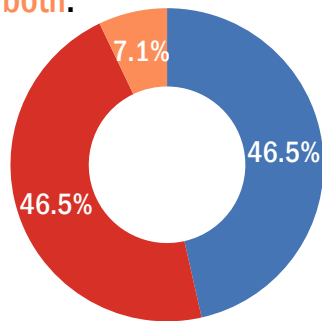


The most common method of training participants reporting receiving was an evaluation component within their **graduate degree**.

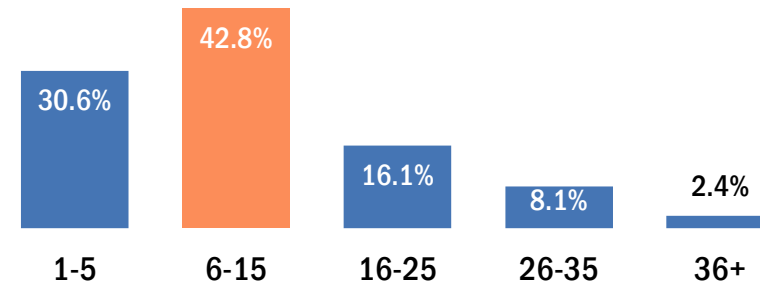


What's their professional background?

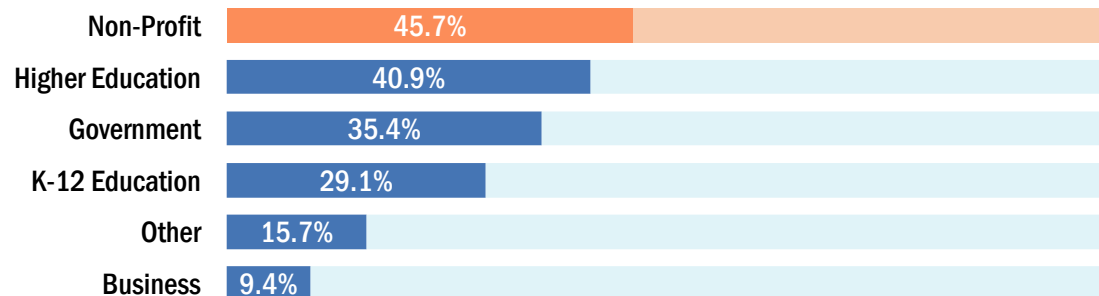
Participants were almost evenly split as **internal** or **external** evaluators but some identified as **both**.



42.8% reported having **6-15 years of evaluation experience**.



The majority of participants work in the **non-profit** sector of evaluation.



Which of the 17 steps do evaluators find important? (RQ1)

For every step, participants were asked **whether they agreed it was important** (1 = Strongly *Disagree* to 4 = Strongly *Agree*).

- Respondents indicated that they thought most of the steps were at least somewhat important for effective evaluation practice.
- The only step that was identified as being less important was step 12: *Provide hypothetical results/scenarios for primary stakeholders, in which the findings are positive, negative, and neutral, to prepare them for the actual findings and their use in the organization.*

How often do they use the 17 steps? (RQ1)

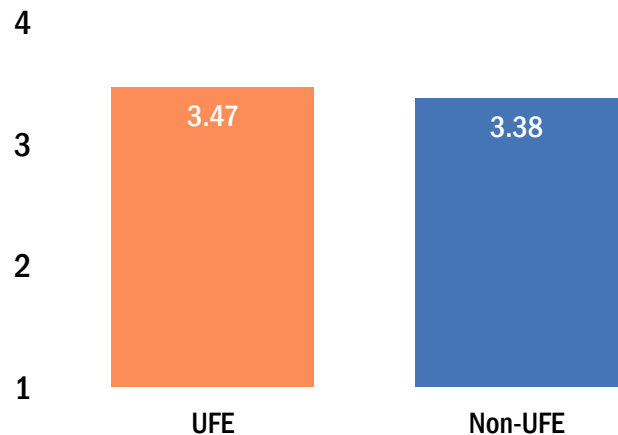
For every step, participants were asked **how often they used it** (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*).

- Respondents indicated that they use most of the steps at least sometimes in their evaluation practice.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, step 12 was identified as being a step that is rarely used in respondents evaluation practice.

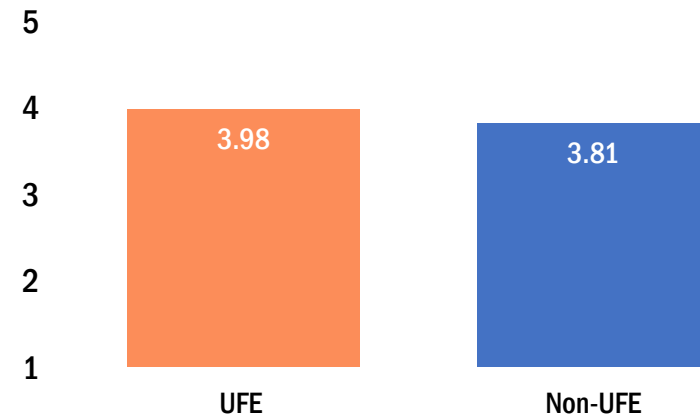
UFE versus Non-UFE Scores (RQ3)

A t-test revealed **no** significant difference.

On average, evaluators **employing the UFE approach** (versus those who do not) gave the 17 Step Checklist a **higher rating of importance**.

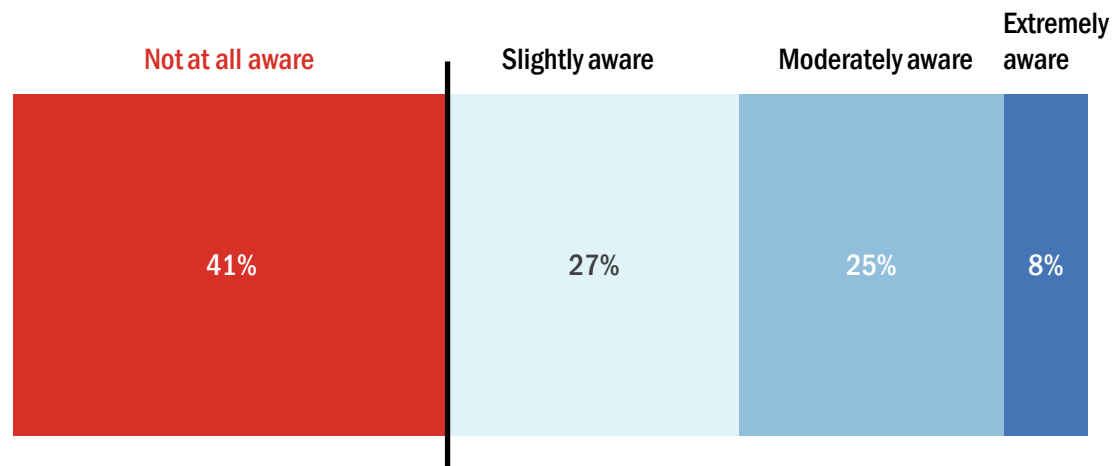


On average, evaluators **employing the UFE approach** use Patton's steps **more often** than those who do not.



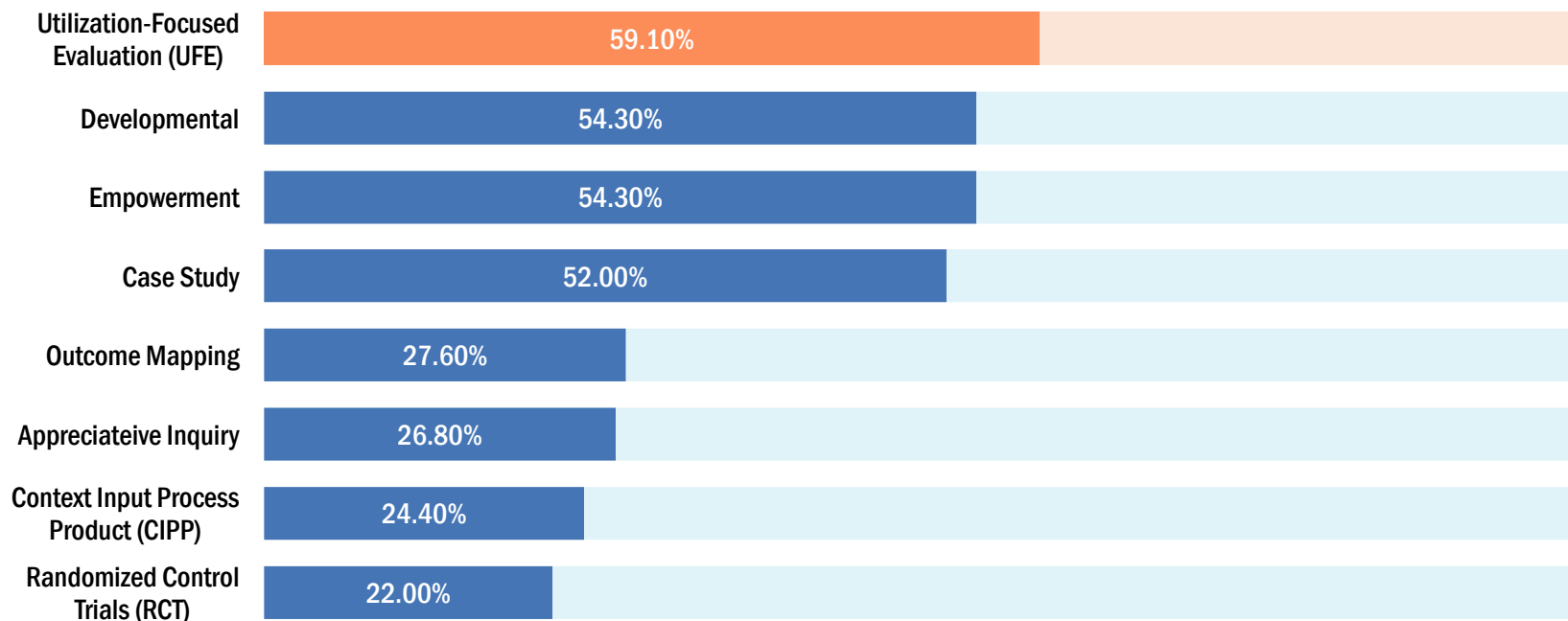
Did participants know these were Patton's 17 steps?

To what extent were you aware that these steps were the steps of UFE while you were rating them?



What approaches do they use?

The majority of participants indicated that they implement a **Utilization-Focused approach** in their evaluation projects.



What else did participants say about approaches? (RQs 2 & 3)

- Of the respondents that selected "other" on this survey item, 18% indicated that their approach to evaluation is **non-specific participatory** evaluation.
- The remaining respondents provided a variety of other approach descriptions, such as:
 - *"I am not bound by any strategy"*
 - *"I do all forms of program and policy analysis..."*

What else did participants say about approaches? (RQs 2 & 3)

Respondents were asked to explain their approach to evaluation.

They indicated that their evaluation approach is largely influenced by underlying priorities for the evaluation/evaluator:

- Participatory (20%)
- Pragmatism (16%)
- Use (13%)
- Organizational/Programmatic Development (11%)
- Multiple Approaches (10%)
- Varies by Project (9%)
- Do not Ascribe (6%)
- Evaluation/Social Science Theory (4%)
- Other (11%)

What else did participants say about approaches? (RQs 2 & 3)

Respondents that selected more than one approach were asked to explain their reasons for doing so.

- What we found was that evaluation approaches vary based on a couple of factors:
 - Context of the evaluation
 - Client needs and goals

To summarize:

This *larger* group of evaluators...

- Cited similar levels of importance and use of the steps and
- Provided similar determinants of use as case study participants.

Regardless of the approaches used, the majority of Patton's Steps occur at least sometimes and are viewed as important.

Finally, the **approaches used heavily depend on the context** of the evaluation and goals of the client (pragmatism?).

What potential limitations did we identify?

- Although a number of approaches were used more than 50% of the time by participants, UFE was the most prominent.
- Participants self-selected the approach(es) they apply and self-report use and importance.

Possible implications for our field:

- A reminder that we are all still completing evaluation and that the approaches are maybe not as distinct as we like to make them out in textbooks and classes.
- Given the complexity of evaluation projects, multiple approaches may be necessary to satisfy the needs of a project.

Questions? Interest in collaboration? Contact us!



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