



WHEN WILL WE EVER LEARN?

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH IMPACT EVALUATION

The Report of the Evaluation Gap Working Group

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May 25, 2006

www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/evalgap

“Every program for improving the lives of poor people in developing countries begins with an intuition about what will work. However, the hopes and good intentions of program implementers, coupled with the human tendency to seek only confirming evidence, leads to programs being initiated and even replicated without learning whether they actually work. In the arena of social change, the null hypothesis is more than an abstract statistical concept. It reflects the reality that many intuitively obvious theories do not in fact produce their intended outcomes. The Evaluation Working Group’s proposals offer the beginning of a remedy to this pervasive problem.

—Paul Brest, Former President
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation



Impact Evaluation: How Can
We Learn More? Better?
Conference July 17, 2013

Impact Evaluation?

Where have we been?

Where are we going?

William D. Savedoff, Senior Fellow



CGD-3ie Conference

Washington, DC

July 17, 2013



Overview

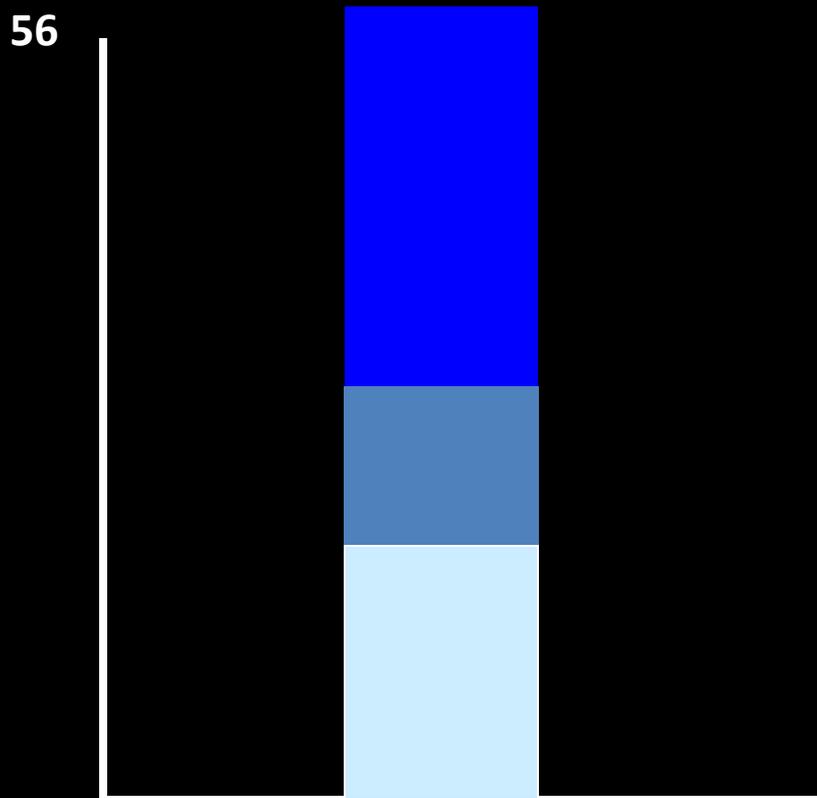
- Motivation
- What happened? (from one perspective)
- What followed?
- Where are we?
- Where are we going?

Motivation: Why did we ever talk
about an “Evaluation Gap?”

Everyone has their own story . . .

Results from *Millions Saved* (2002)

Experts nominated 56 public health interventions



Excluded

- 27 b/c impact could not be documented
- 12 b/c too early or small scale

Included

- 17 identified and documented

Evaluation Gap Working Group

On methods:

- Start with the question and choose the method which is most “appropriate, feasible and rigorous to answer it”

Recommendations:

- Strengthen existing initiatives and complementary forms of evaluation
- Create a new independent facility to promote more and better quality studies

Knowledge is a public good

How to generate collective action?

- *Split* impact evaluation process from program approval and implementation so it can be:
 - selective
 - concentrate financial & technical resources, and
 - be perceived as independent & credible
- *Link* impact evaluation process to program design so:
 - questions will be relevant
 - data collection will be appropriate
 - conclusions can be rigorous

Founding of 3ie 2009



Our vision

- Improving lives through impact evaluation

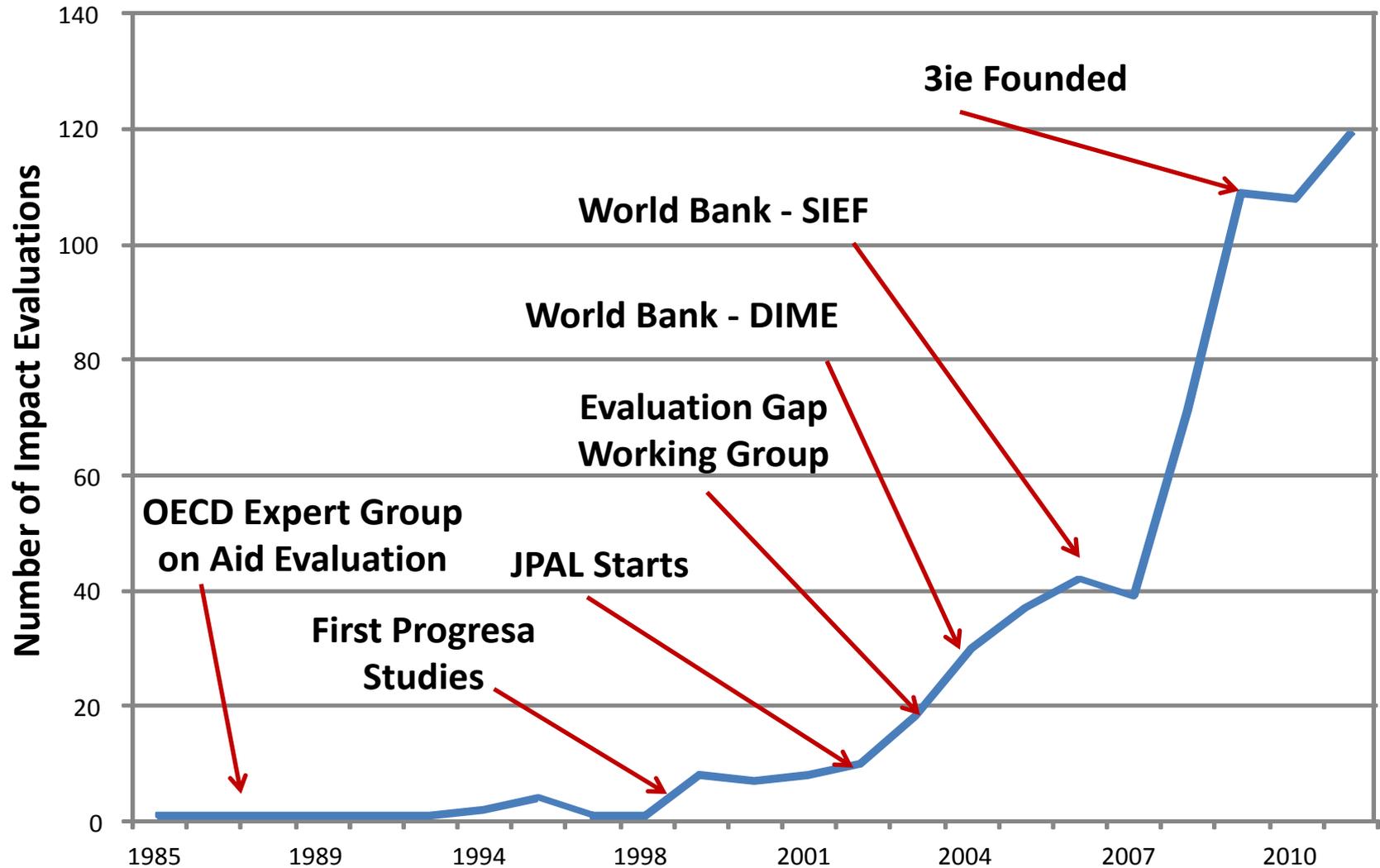
Our mission

- Increase development effectiveness through better use of evidence in developing countries

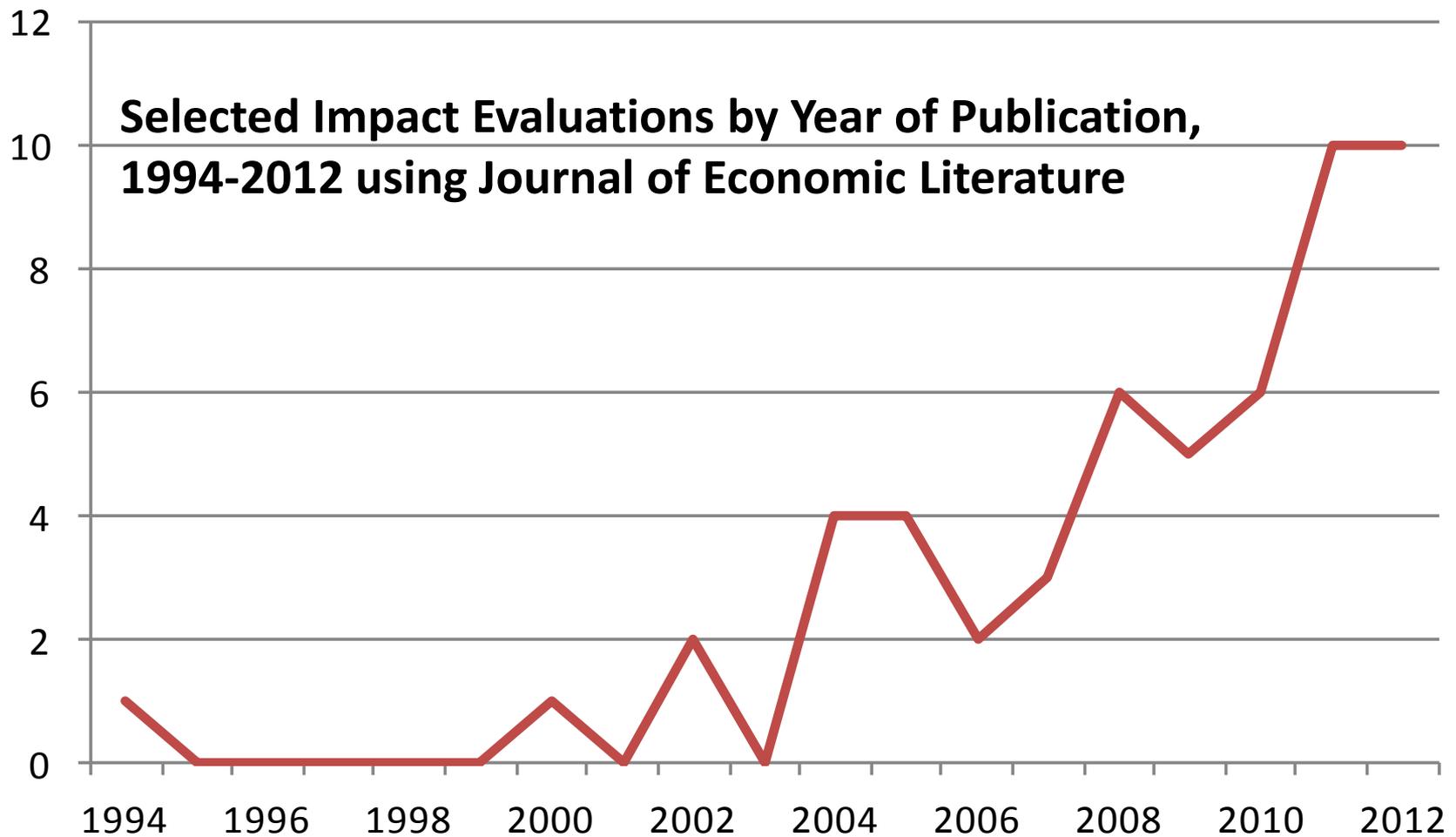
Our strategy

- We aim to
- Generate new evidence of what works
- Synthesise and disseminate this evidence
- Build a culture of evidence-based policy-making
- Develop capacity to produce and use impact evaluations

Impact Evaluations by Year, 1985-2011

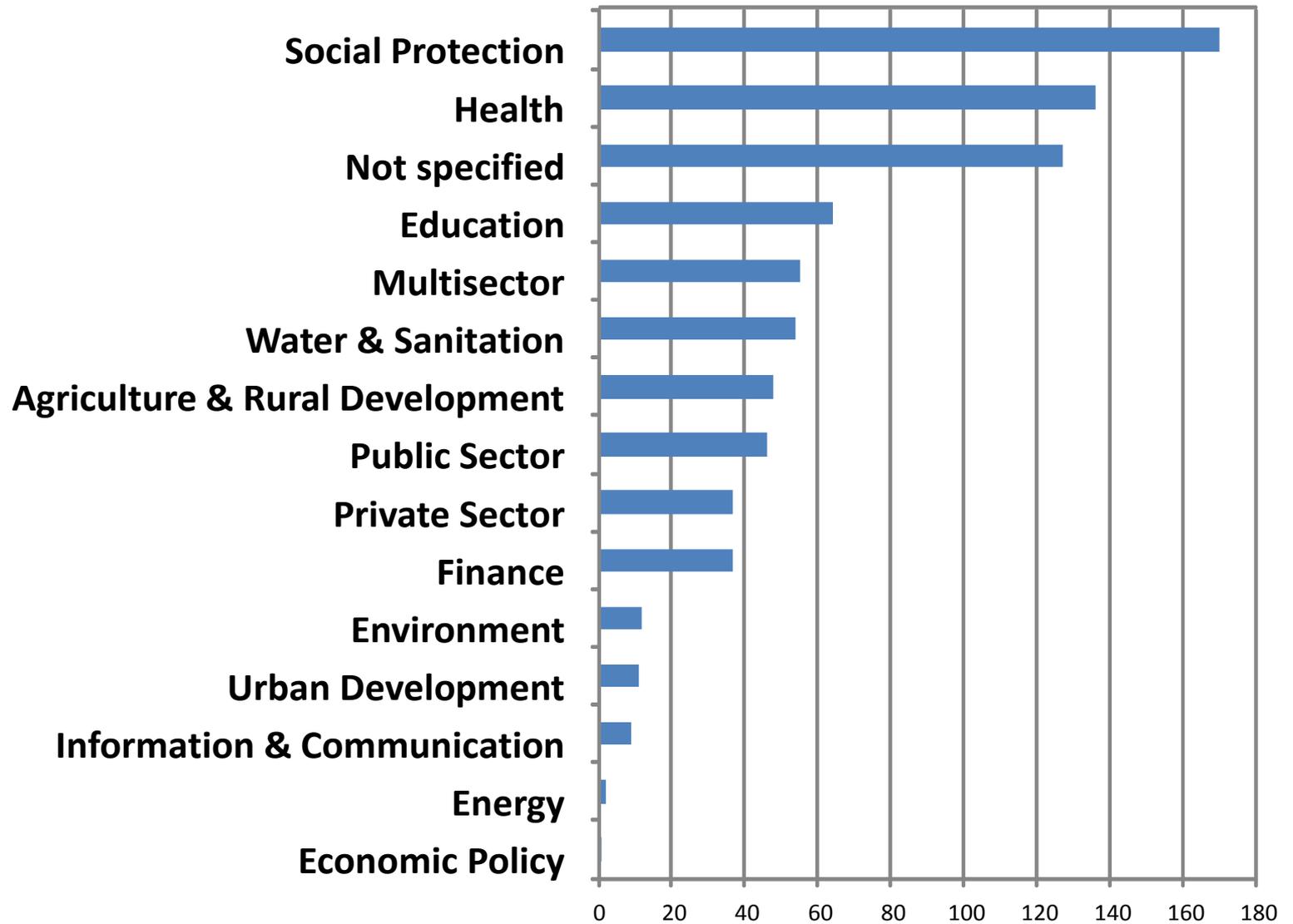


Source: 3ie Database of Impact Evaluations



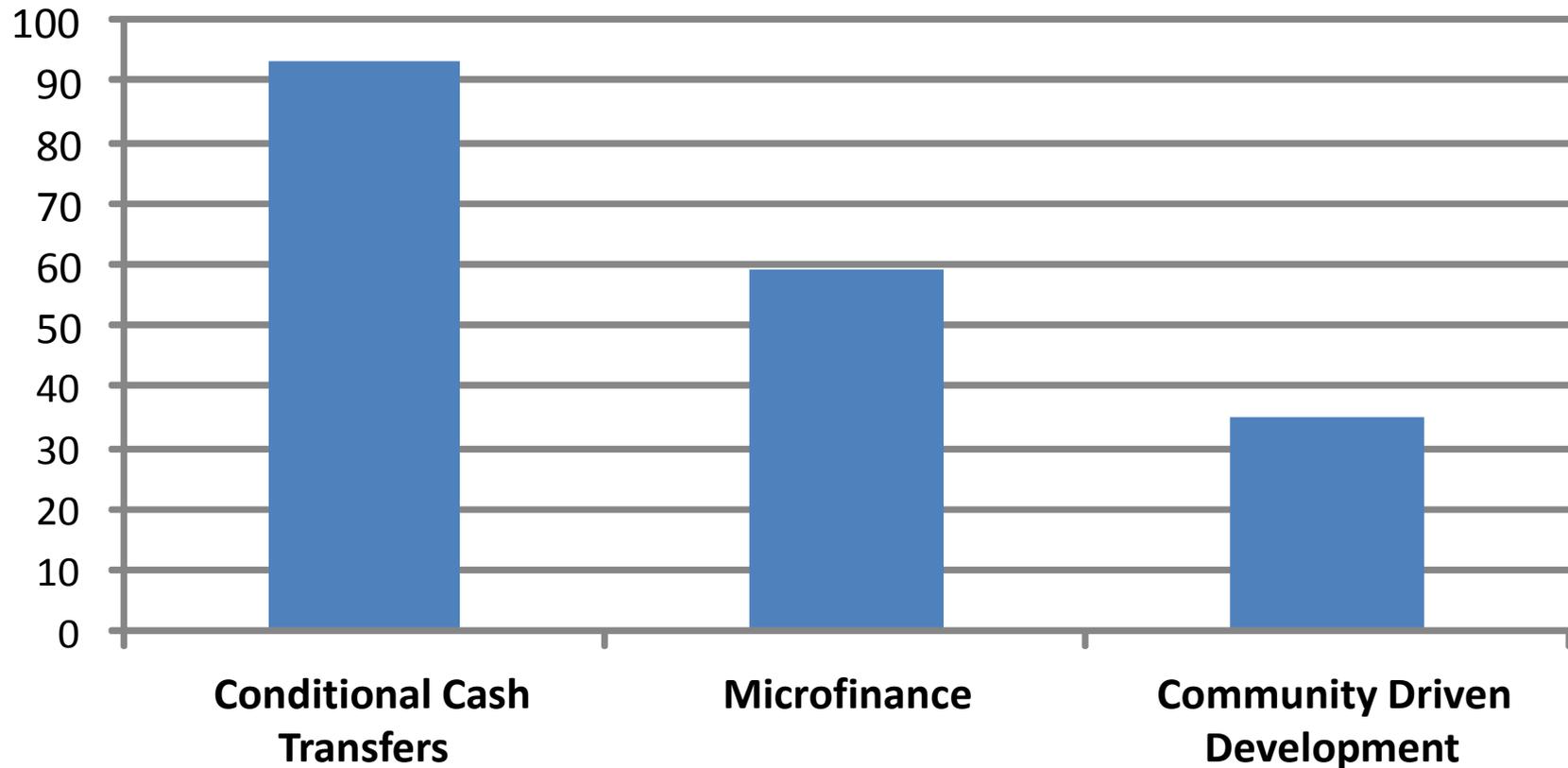
Source: Tally from search in Journal of Economic Literature using terms “impact evaluation” and “development” – 55 out of 198 tentatively identified as original impact evaluations relevant to development policy questions. Only illustrative for use as a cross-check on previous slide.

Impact Evaluations by Sector, 1985-2013



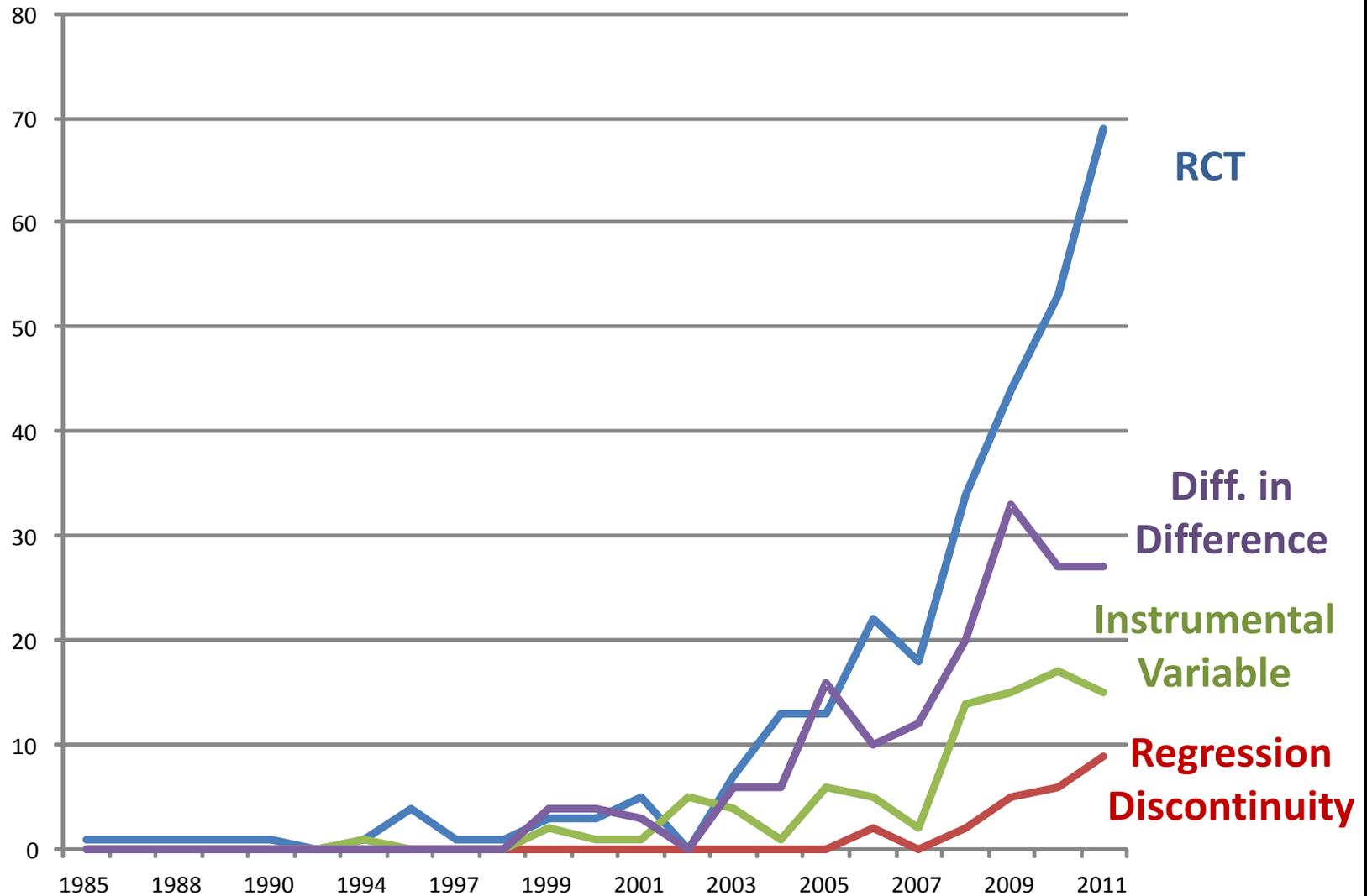
Source: 3ie Database of Impact Evaluations

Impact Evaluations, Social Development Subsectors, 1985-2013



Source: 3ie Database of Impact Evaluations

Impact Evaluations by Methodology, 1985-2013



Source: 3ie Database of Impact Evaluations

Where should we be going?

- **More is better**
 - The Question comes first. Then choose appropriate, feasible, rigorous methods
 - Micro studies won't answer every question but there are plenty of questions for them to answer
- **Fitting evidence together** – more systematic reviews; and more thinking & synthesis
- **Public goods** – clustering, replication, triangulation, standards, pre-registration, funding, networking, linking, teaching ...?

Extra Slides

IE's by Evaluation Method, 1985-2013

