The impact of SMF programmes on participants' early education outcomes

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Importance of evaluation

- The UK has relatively low levels of intergenerational income mobility and large inequalities in educational attainment

- Important to attempt to increase mobility and reduce socio-economic inequality

- What programmes are most effective at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils?

- Where is limited funding best allocated?

- Few charities undertake robust analysis to help determine this

- SMF and J.P. Morgan should be congratulated for their open approach, and other organisations should follow

- This will help to ensure that scarce resources are targeted most effectively and thus hopefully help narrow the attainment gap

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The SMF programmes

- Aspiring Professionals Programme (APP)

    – Delivered to Year 12 students with high academic attainment and lower socio-economic status

    – Mentoring

    – Internship

    – Skills development

    – Events and trips to universities

    – University application support

- J.P. Morgan Residential Programme

- Whitehall Social Mobility Internship Programme

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The SMF programmes

- Aspiring Professionals Programme (APP)

- J.P. Morgan Residential Programme

  - Delivered to Year 12 students with high academic attainment and lower socio-economic status, living outside London and with an interest in a career in finance and economics

  - Two week internship

  - Mentor from J.P. Morgan

- Whitehall Social Mobility Internship Programme

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The IFS evaluation

- Evaluate the impact of SMF programmes on education and employment outcomes of participants

- **Education outcomes:**

  – Higher Education (HE) participation

  – Amongst those who go to university:

    • Participation at "high-status" institution

    • Subject choice

    • Participation outside home region

    • Degree completion and classification

- **Early employment outcomes:**

  – Activity status: whether in work, further education, or unemployed

  – Whether working in a professional occupation

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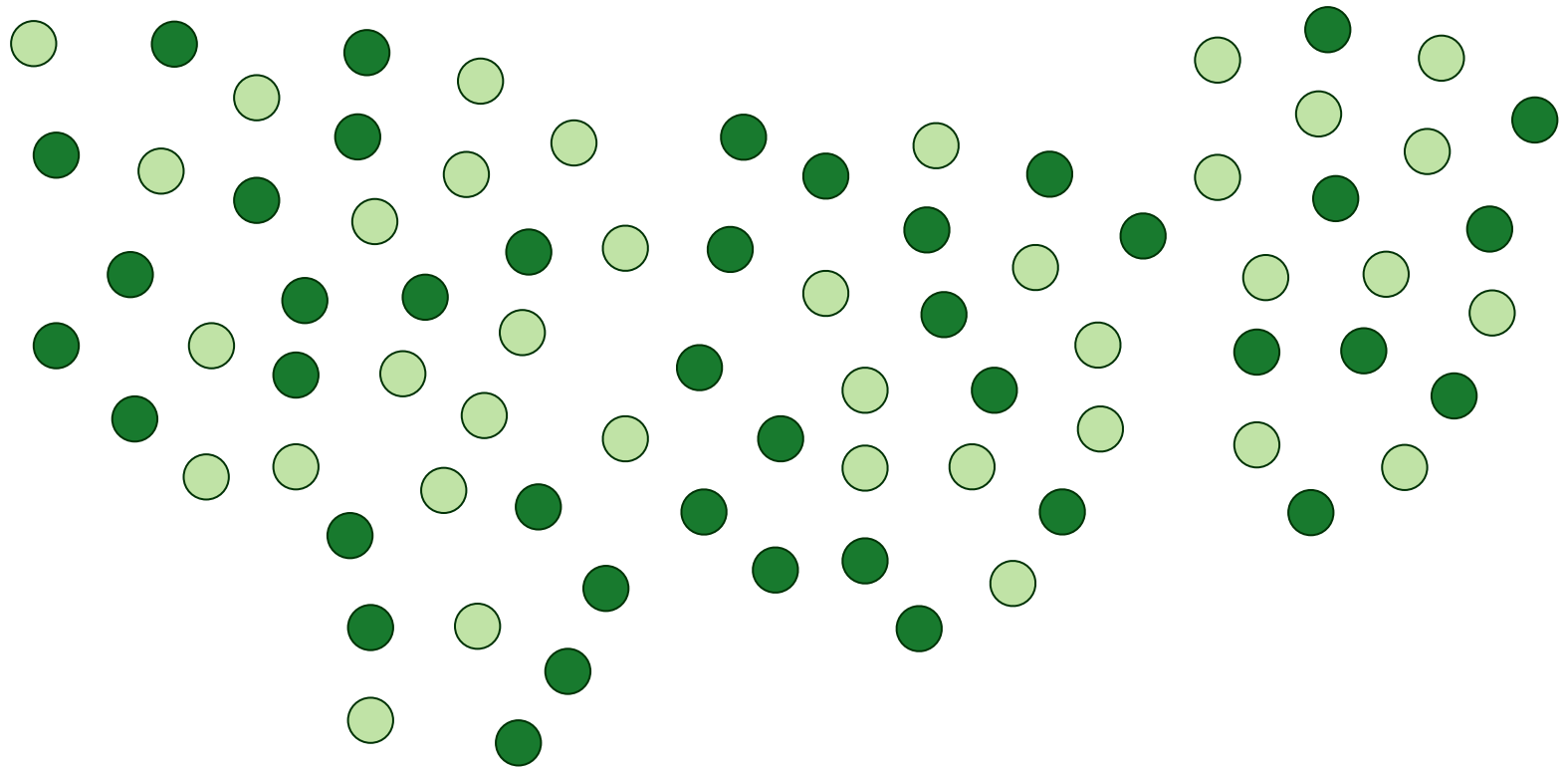
  - Whether working in a professional occupation

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Gold-standard evaluation

- Use group of potential participants (e.g. successful applicants)

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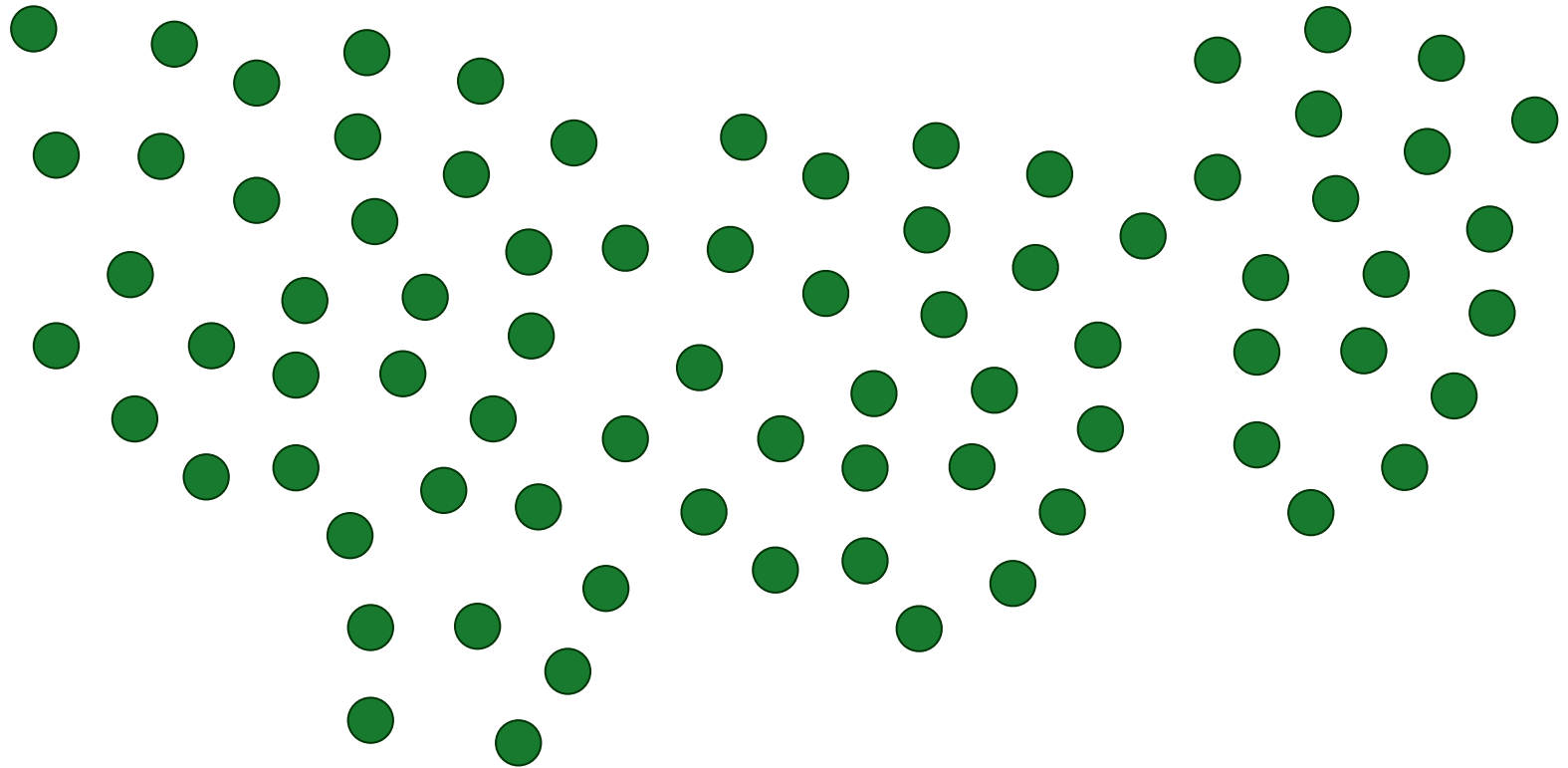
Gold-standard evaluation

- Randomly assign potential participants to two groups

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Gold-standard evaluation

Programme group

Receive programme
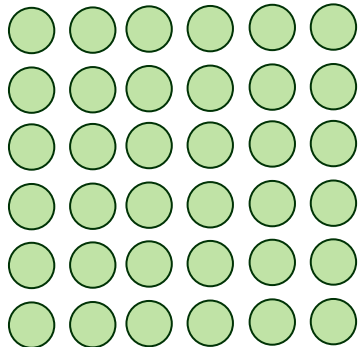
Comparison group

Counterfactual for programme group

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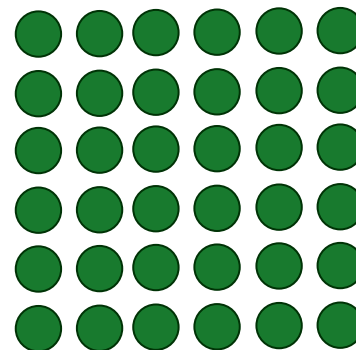Fiscal Studies
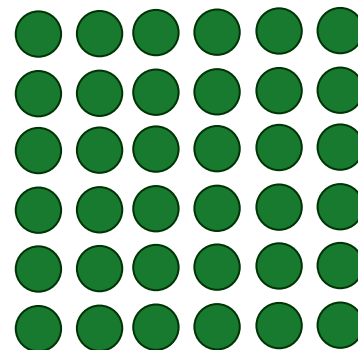
Gold-standard evaluation

Programme group
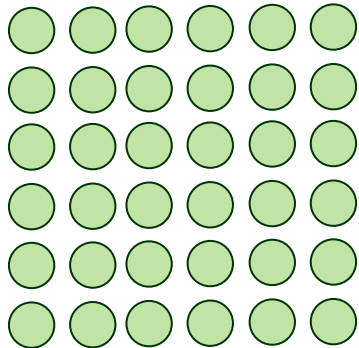
60% attend Russell Group institutions
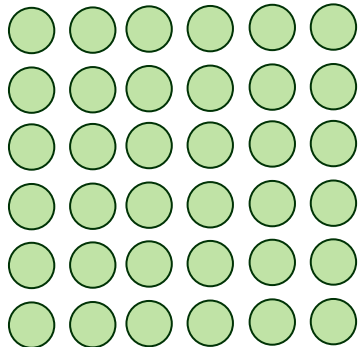
Comparison group

50% attend Russell Group institutions

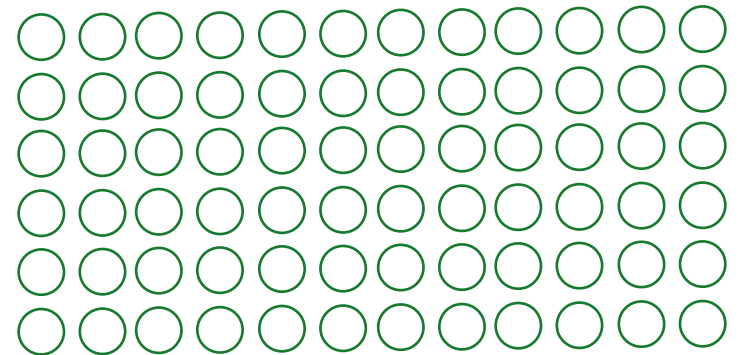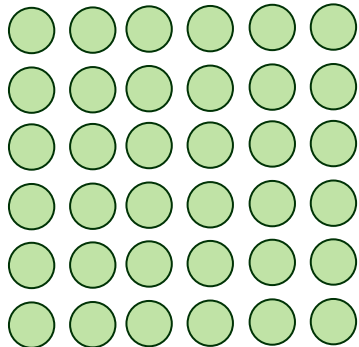In this example the impact of the programme is 10 percentage points (20% increase)

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Feasible evaluation

Programme group

Comparison group

Choose individuals with very similar characteristics to programme group
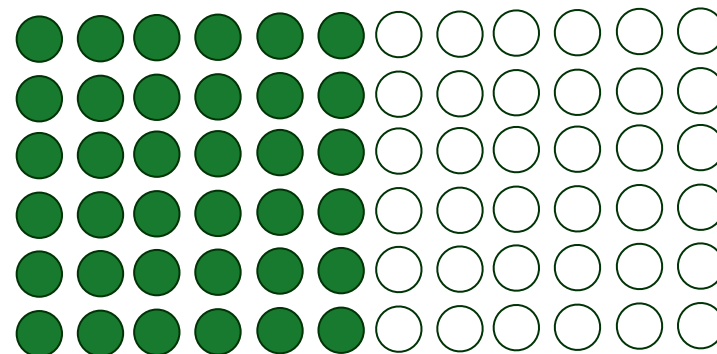
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Feasible evaluation

Programme group

Comparison group

Choose individuals with very similar characteristics to programme group

Disadvantage: we may not observe all the important ways in which treatment and comparison groups differ

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What do we know about SMF participants?

- Background characteristics from application form
  - GCSE attainment
  - Ethnic group
  - Eligibility for free school meals/education maintenance allowance
  - Postcode
- A-Level attainment from subsequent SMF survey
- HE destination and subject choice from subsequent SMF survey

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IFS approach to construct comparison group

- Use administrative data to find individuals with similar characteristics to act as our comparison group

  - Eligibility for free school meals
  - Local area characteristics

  proxy for family income

  - Prior attainment
  - Ethnic group

- But we cannot observe:

  - Motivation
  - Desired future occupation
  - Parents' level of education
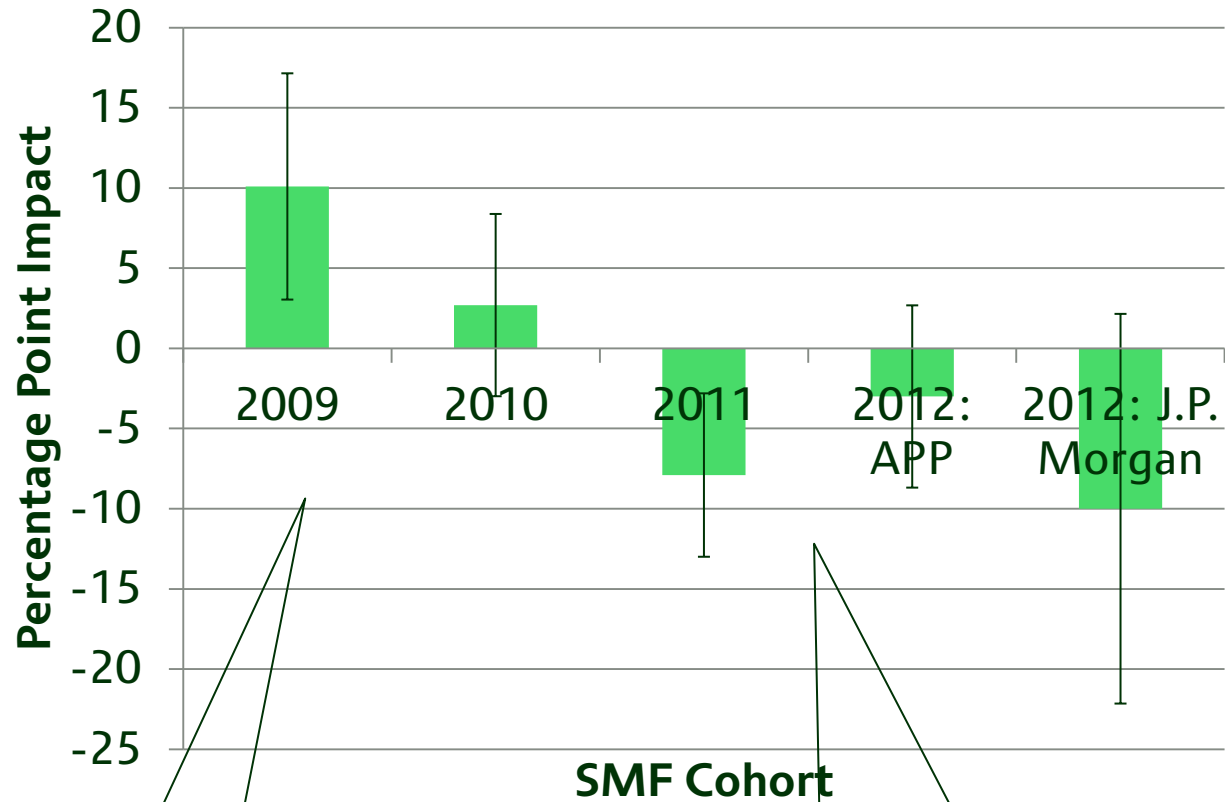 - etc . . .

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Concerns about approach

- Survey non-response
  - If SMF participants (who answered the survey) are more motivated than individuals with similar attainment, etc, in admin data, then we will be overestimating the impact of the SMF programme
  - Hope that this potential bias is relatively small – but can't be sure

- Comparison group for 2011 and 2012 cohorts
  - We do not yet have access to administrative data for these cohorts
  - This means we have to use the 2010 cohort for our comparison group
  - Not ideal because we know HE participation has been increasing over time (and SES gaps have been falling slightly)
  - Impacts may be upward biased for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts

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Evaluation findings

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University participation

Chart: Percentage Point Impact vs. SMF Cohort

Y-axis: Percentage Point Impact (20, 15, 10, 5, 0, -5, -10, -15, -20, -25)

X-axis (SMF Cohort): 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012: APP, 2012: J.P. Morgan

Equivalent to a 12% increase

Possibly due to earlier cohort used to construct comparison group

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Russell Group participation (amongst those going to university)
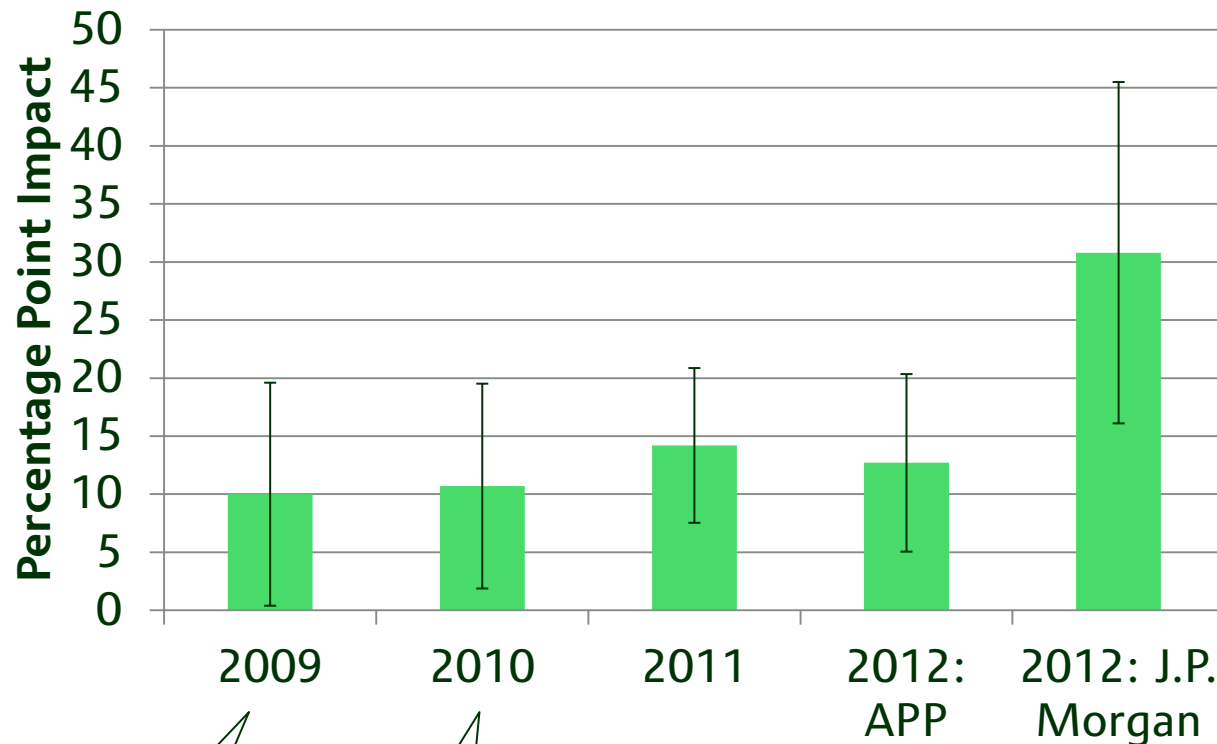
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"Top 10" participation (amongst those going to university)
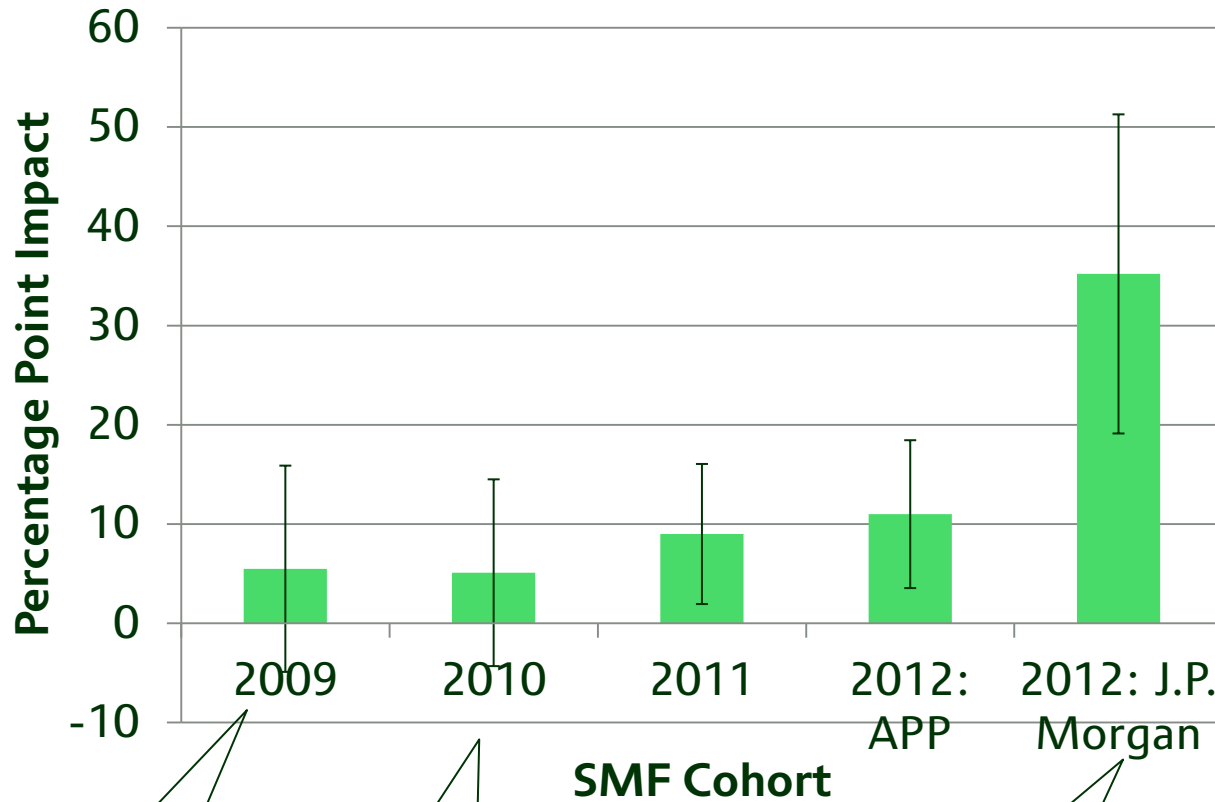
Other

- Little impact on subject choice, conditional on HE participation
  - Some exceptions, including the probability of studying business and finance for participants on the J.P. Morgan Residential Programme

- Impact is largely similar for participants inside and outside London

- Little impact on the probability of attending an institution outside home region
  - Positive impact for 2012 cohort

Summary

- Amongst those who went to university, SMF programmes appear to have increased participation at high status institutions

  – Increase at Russell Group institutions between 17% and 27% across SMF cohorts

  – Increase at institutions most visited by top employers between 13% and 43% across SMF cohorts

- Larger impact for J.P. Morgan residential programme

- Findings are subject to assumptions

- Difficult to compare results across cohorts

  – Changing selection criteria across cohorts

  – Necessity to use earlier cohort to construct a comparison group

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Conclusion

- The SMF programmes seem to have had a sizeable positive effect on institution choice and/or Russell Group application success amongst high achieving young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who might otherwise have gone to different universities

- Magnitude is roughly equivalent to the difference between pupils who achieve three A grades at A-level and three A* grades at A-level, on average, conditional on participation

- Amongst those who go to university, probability of attending a Russell Group institution is higher than those from private schools

- Estimation method could be replicated for other programmes to determine the most effective ways to increase socio-economic mobility and access to professional occupations

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