The Geopolitics of Repressions

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Outline

Motivation

Literature Review

Theoretical Expectations

Historical Background

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Conclusion

Motivation

Soviet Union, 1920s - inclusion of minorities

- Individuals from ethnic minorities promoted to leadership positions
- The languages and culture of minorities supported (Martin, 2001)

Motivation

Soviet Union, 1930s - repression

- Mass arrests and deportations targeted at ethnic minorities
- Over 240,000 people executed just in the NKVD's National Campaigns of 1937-1938 alone (Martin, 1998, p. 855)

Motivation

- What caused this sharp reversal in Soviet policy towards its minorities?
- Why states sometimes choose to accommodate or assimilate its ethnic minorities but repress them in other cases?

Literature Review

- Role of institutions (Davenport, 2007) and economic shocks (Blaydes, 2018)
- Cultural distance, legibility of an ethnic group (Blaydes, 2018)
- States with many ethnic groups more likely to repress demands for autonomy due to precedent setting (Evera, 1994; Toft, 2005; Walter, 2009)

Theoretical Expectations

- Mylonas (2013) and Butt (2017) highlight importance of geopolitical factors
- If a minority has ethnic ties to an external power which is
  - an ally to the host state, repression is less likely since that could jeopardize the alliance
  - an enemy, repression is more likely because the minority is viewed as a potential ‘fifth column’

Historical Background

Main phases in Soviet-German relations

- Neutrality (1921-1933)
- Hostilities (1933-1939)
- Non-aggression pact (1939-1941)
- War (1941-1945)
- Post-war period (after 1945)

Data

- Data on Soviet repressions come from database of Russian NGO Memorial
- More than 2 million records of individual arrests by the Soviet secret police mostly from archival sources
- 38 ethnic groups, years from 1921 to 1960
- Large fraction of observations with missing ethnicity and date of arrest
  - Imputation of ethnicity based on names using Naive Bayes classifier ▸ more
  - Imputation of date of arrest based on date of trial ▸ more

Difference-in-differences

- Dynamic difference-in-differences model with ethnicity and year fixed effects
- Identifying assumption - parallel trends
  - β_k for $k < 1933$ can help assess its plausibility

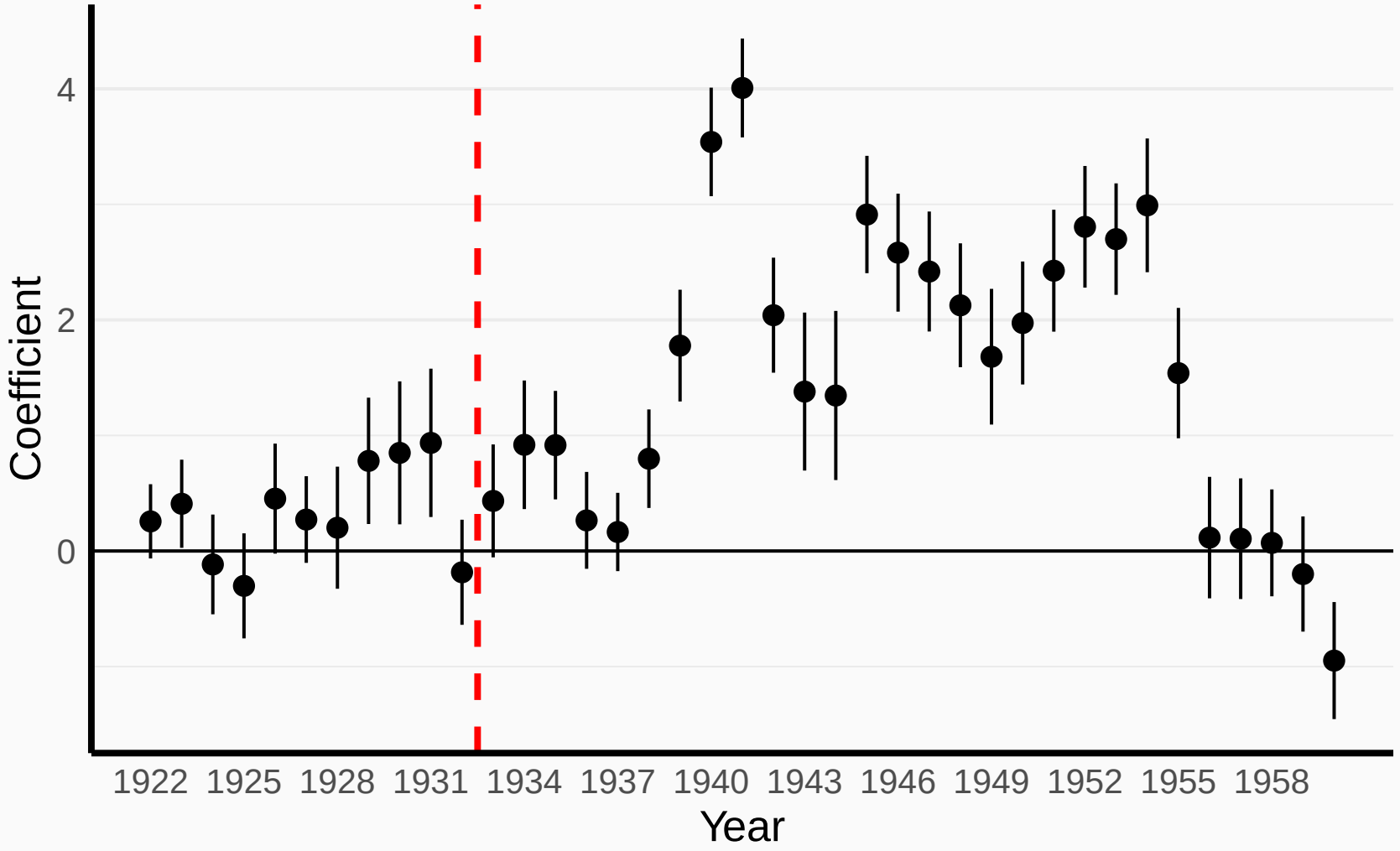
$$\log(1 + y_{it}) = \sum_{k=1922}^{1960} \beta_k \, \text{German}_i \cdot \text{Year}_t^k + \lambda_t + a_i + \text{Relations}_{it} + u_{it}$$

Synthetic Control Method

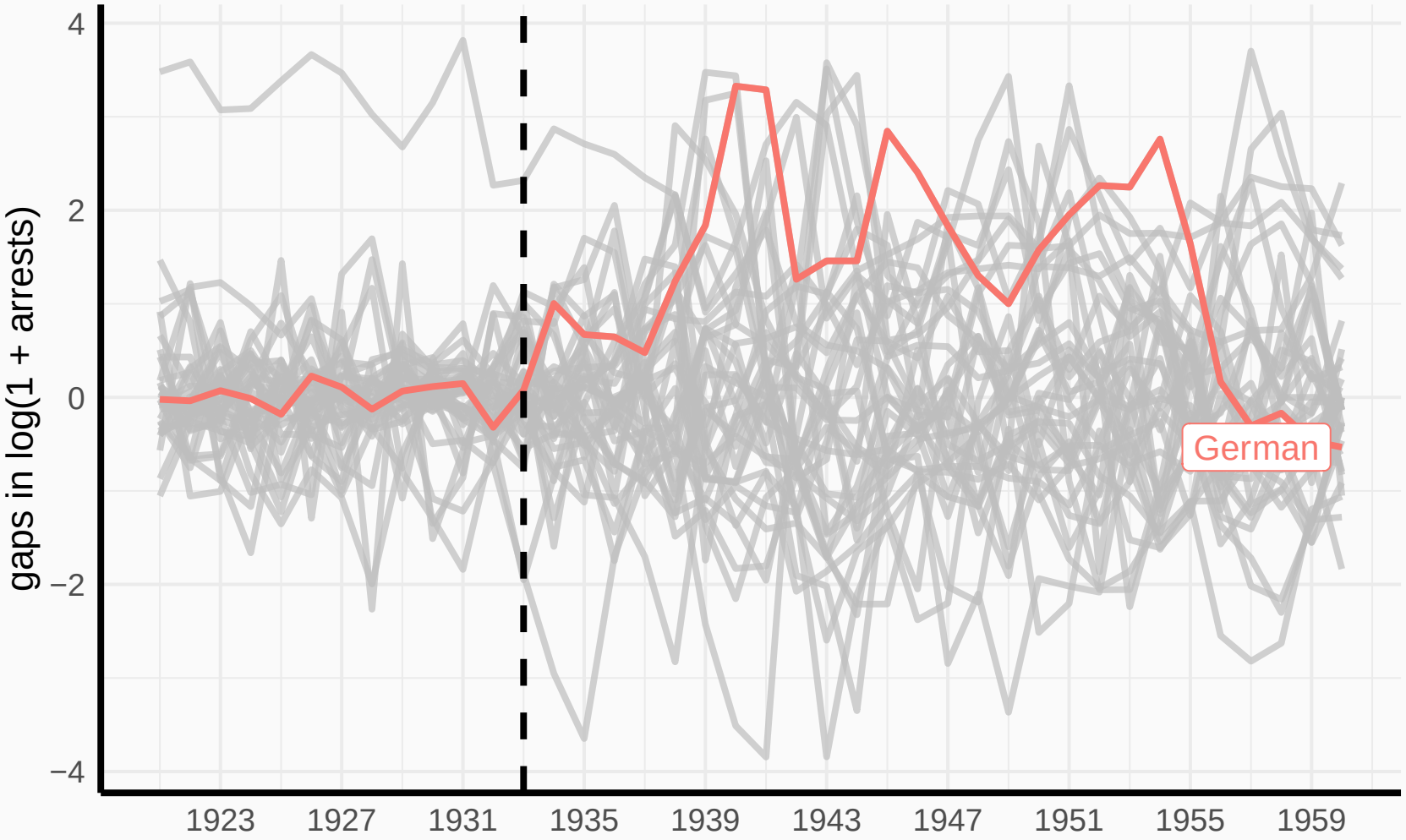
- Synthetic version of the treated unit is constructed as linear combination the control units based on matching of pre-treatment outcomes and other covariates
- The treatment effect is estimated as a difference between the actual values and the synthetic control
- Significance is assessed with placebo tests (applying the same procedure to control units)

Results

Difference-in-differences



Synthetic Control Method



Difference-in-differences - Robustness Checks

- Only ethnic groups without independent state ▸ here
- Only rehabilitated individuals ▸ here
- Only arrests from 250 km border frontier ▸ here
- Only arrests outside 250 km border frontier ▸ here
- Ethnicity-specific time trends ▸ here
- Different ethnicity imputation adjustments (none, parsimonious, full matrix) ▸ here
- Stata standard errors ▸ here
- Different base years
  - The whole pre-treatment period (1921-1932) omitted ▸ here
  - Years 1921-1926 omitted ▸ here

Synthetic Control - Robustness Checks

- Mean of the outcome used as a predictor (instead of all pre-treatment outcomes) ▸ here
- Only ethnic groups without independent state ▸ here
- Only rehabilitated individuals ▸ here
- Only arrests from 250 km border frontier ▸ here
- Only arrests outside 250 km border frontier ▸ here

Conclusion

- Large and significant increase in repressions with war
- Strong persistence of the effect of war (nearly 10 years)
  - Difficult to explain only by geopolitical concerns of the state
  - Consistent with desire for collective punishment of Germans for war

Thank you for your attention.

References i

- Blaydes, Lisa (2018) *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Butt, Ahsan I. (2017) *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy against Separatists*, 1 edition, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Davenport, Christian (2007) *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Evera, Stephen Van (1994) 'Hypotheses on Nationalism and War', *International Security* 18 (4), pp. 5–39.

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- Martin, Terry (1998) 'The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing', *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (4), pp. 813–861, DOI: 10.1086/235168.
- Martin, Terry (2001) *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Mylonas, Harris (2013) *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

References iii

- Toft, Monica Duffy (2005) *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Walter, Barbara F. (2009) *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent*, 1 edition, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Additional Analyses

- Map of German population in the USSR ▸ here
- No imputation of date of arrest ▸ DiD ▸ SCM
- Considering only western border areas
  - Only arrests from western border areas ▸ DiD ▸ SCM
  - Arrests from western border areas excluded ▸ DiD ▸ SCM

Replication

The R scripts and the LaTeX source codes of the thesis manuscript are available at:

`https://github.com/martin-kosiik/Geopolitics-of-Repressions`

The Beamer source code for this presentation itself are available at:

`https://github.com/martin-kosiik/presentation-geopolitics-of-repressions`

Ethnicity imputation

- Let $\boldsymbol{x} = (x_1, x_2, x_3)$ be person's first, last, and patronymic names
- Assuming conditional independence, we can express probability that a person has ethnicity E_k given his names as:

$$p(E_k \mid \mathbf{x}) = \frac{p(E_k)\ p(\mathbf{x} \mid E_k)}{p(\mathbf{x})}$$

- Naive Bayes classifier chooses ethnicity with the highest posterior probability as its prediction

◂ back

Ethnicity Imputation Adjustments

- The accuracy of model's predictions differs substantially by ethnicity
- To address this, we apply adjustments to the predictions
  - Parsimonious:

$$P_{it} = \alpha_i R_{it} + (N_t - R_{it}) \cdot (1 - \beta_i)$$

  - Full (confusion) matrix:

$$P_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^{K} b_{ij} R_{jt} \qquad i = 1, \ldots, K$$

◂ back

Imputing Missing Date of Arrest

- Date of arrest is missing for 1 650 912 observations
  - For 903 49 of them, date of trial is available - we use it for imputation
- We model number of days between date of arrest and trial (y) in two-stages:
  1. Logit to predict whether $y = 0$ (arrest and trial happening on the same day)
  2. Log-linear regression on the subset of the data for which $y > 0$

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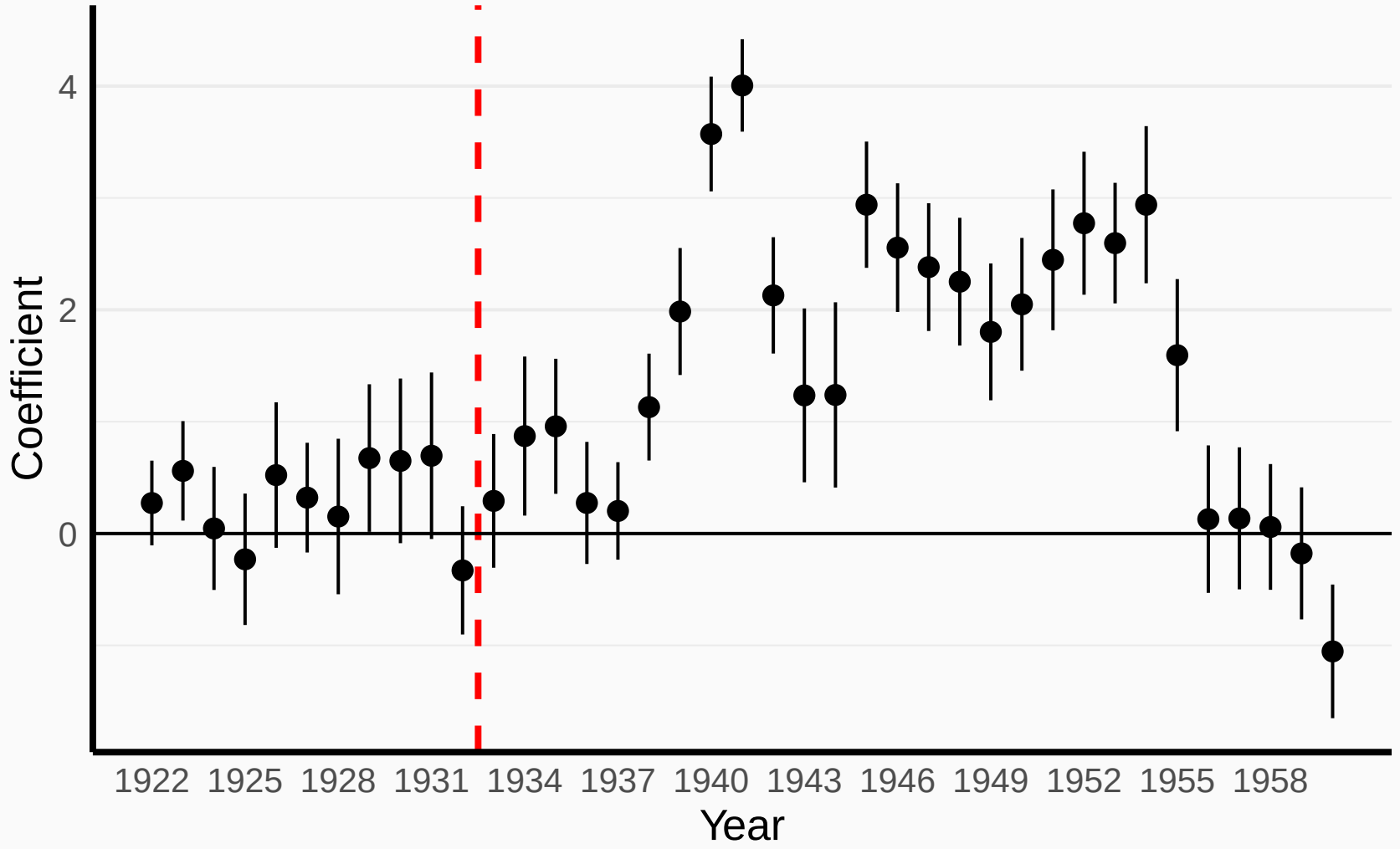
DiD - Only Ethnicities without Independent State



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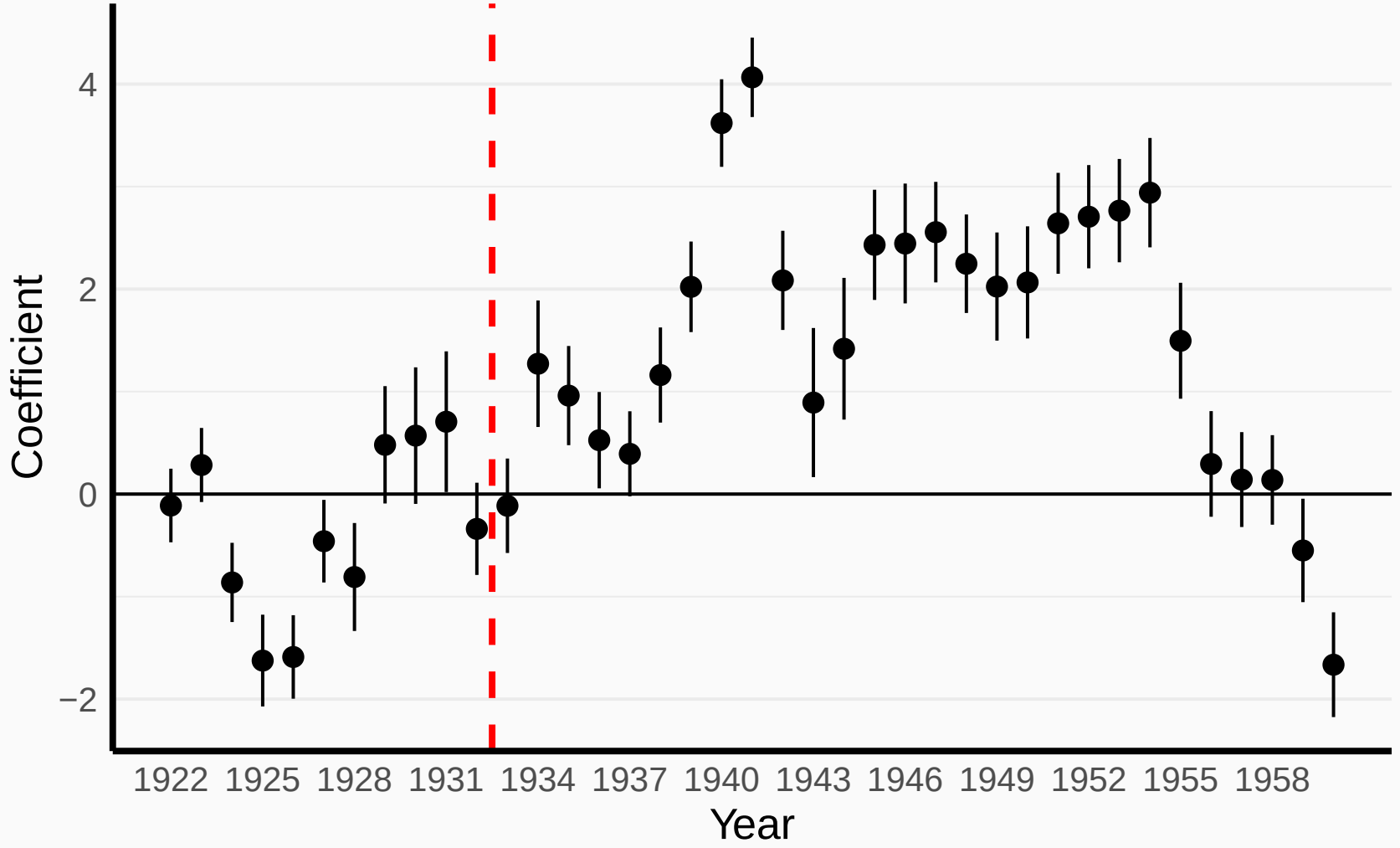
DiD - Only Rehabilitated Individuals



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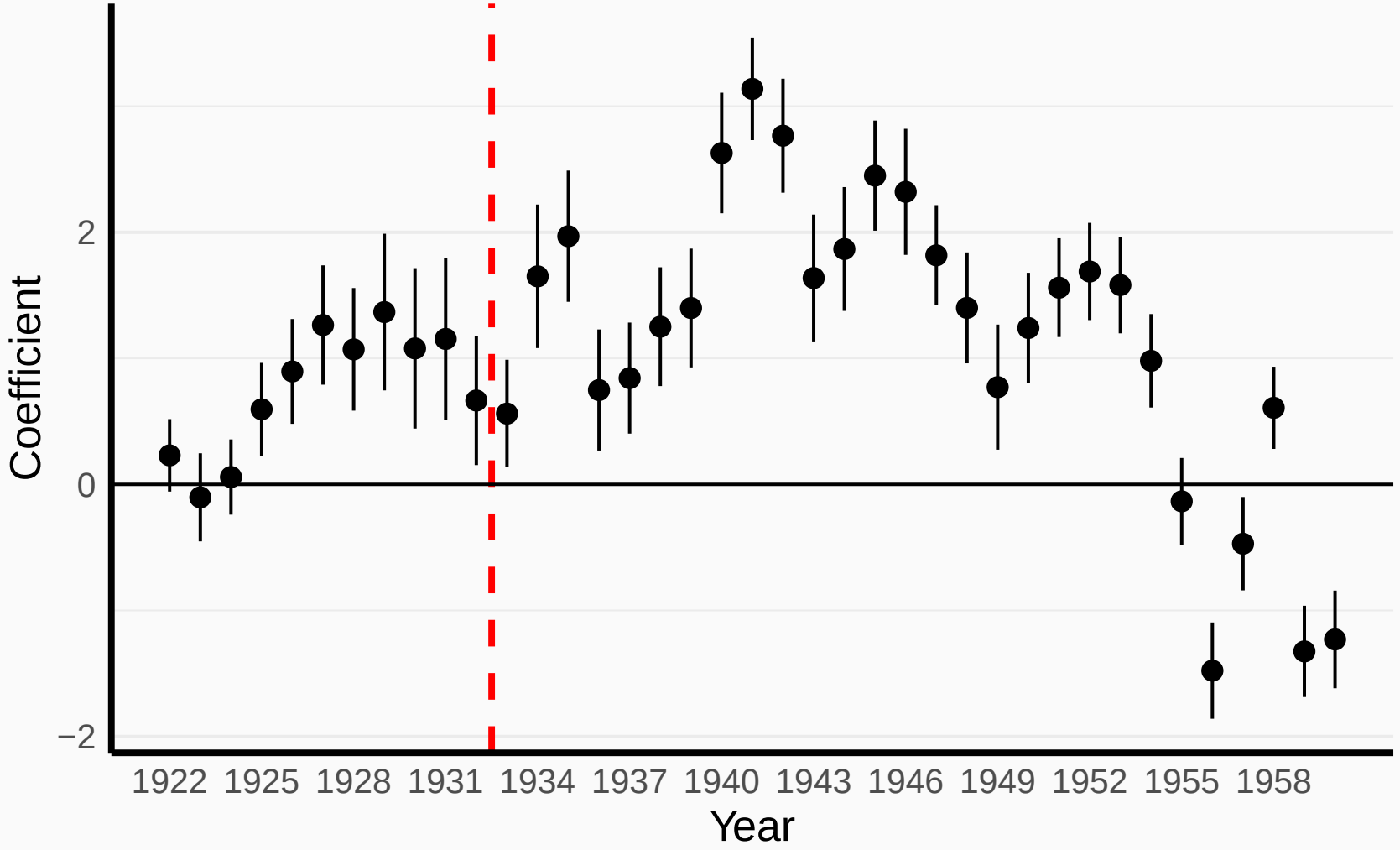
DiD - Only arrests from Border Areas



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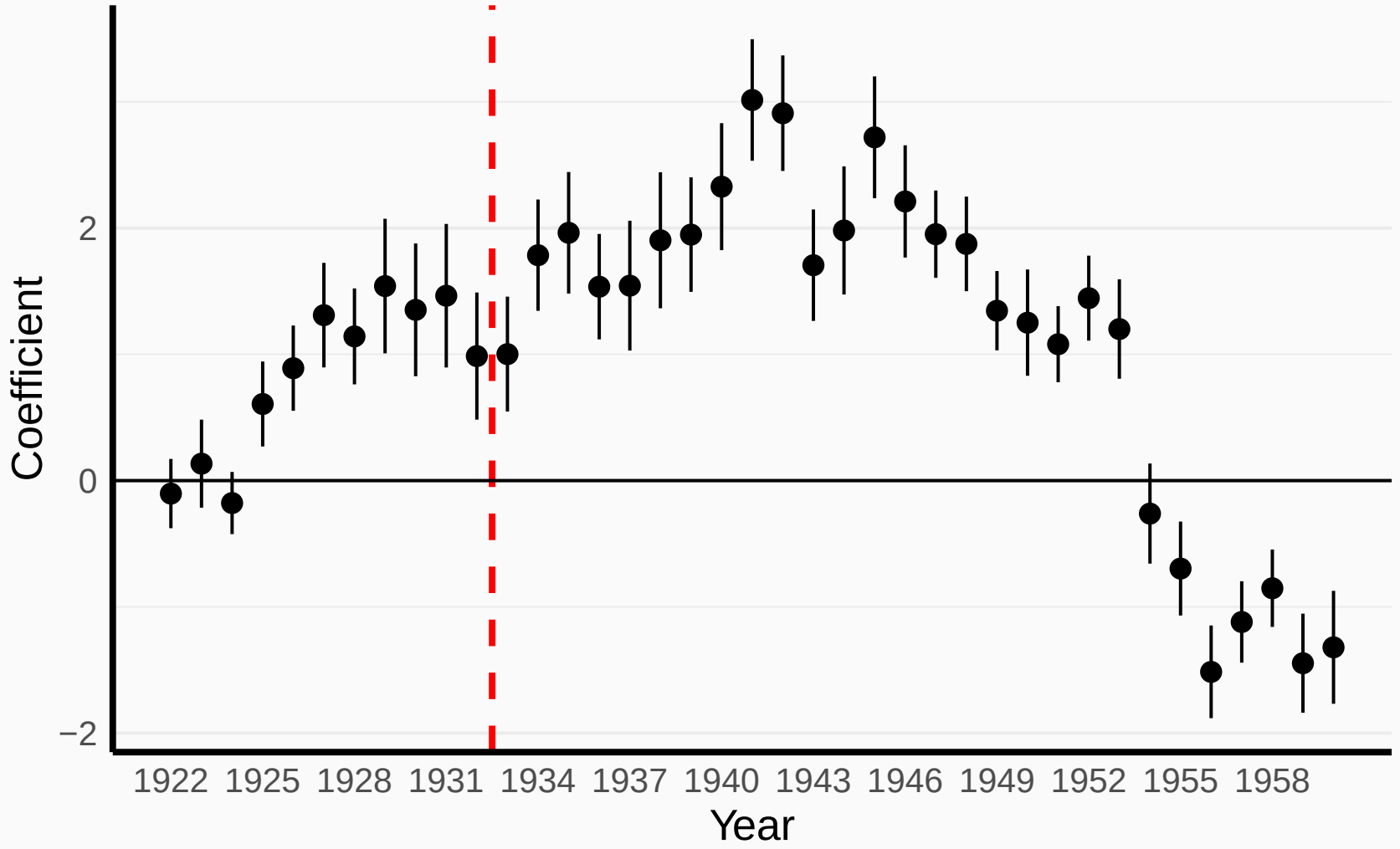
DiD - Only arrests from Western Border Areas



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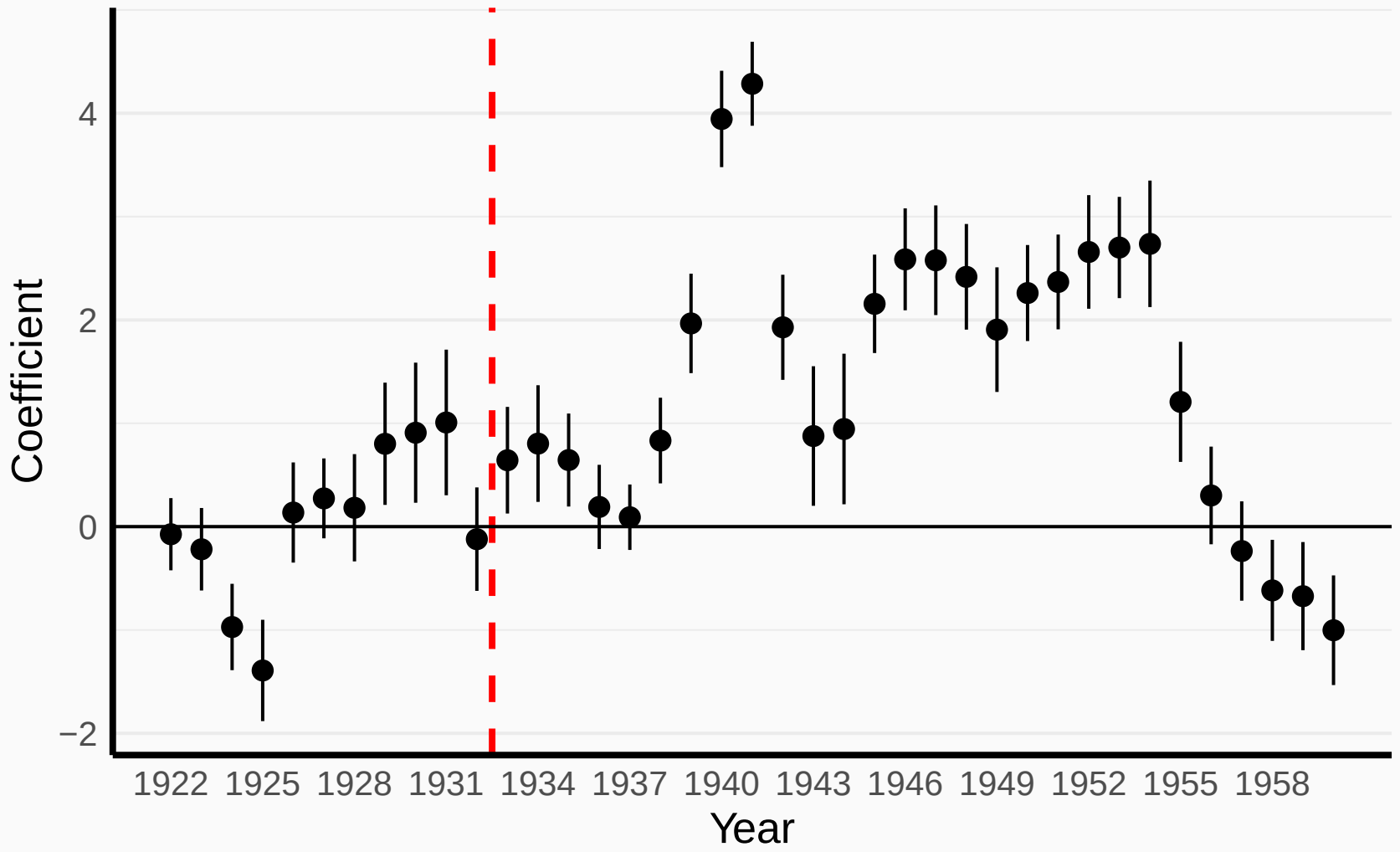
DiD - Arrests from Border Areas Excluded



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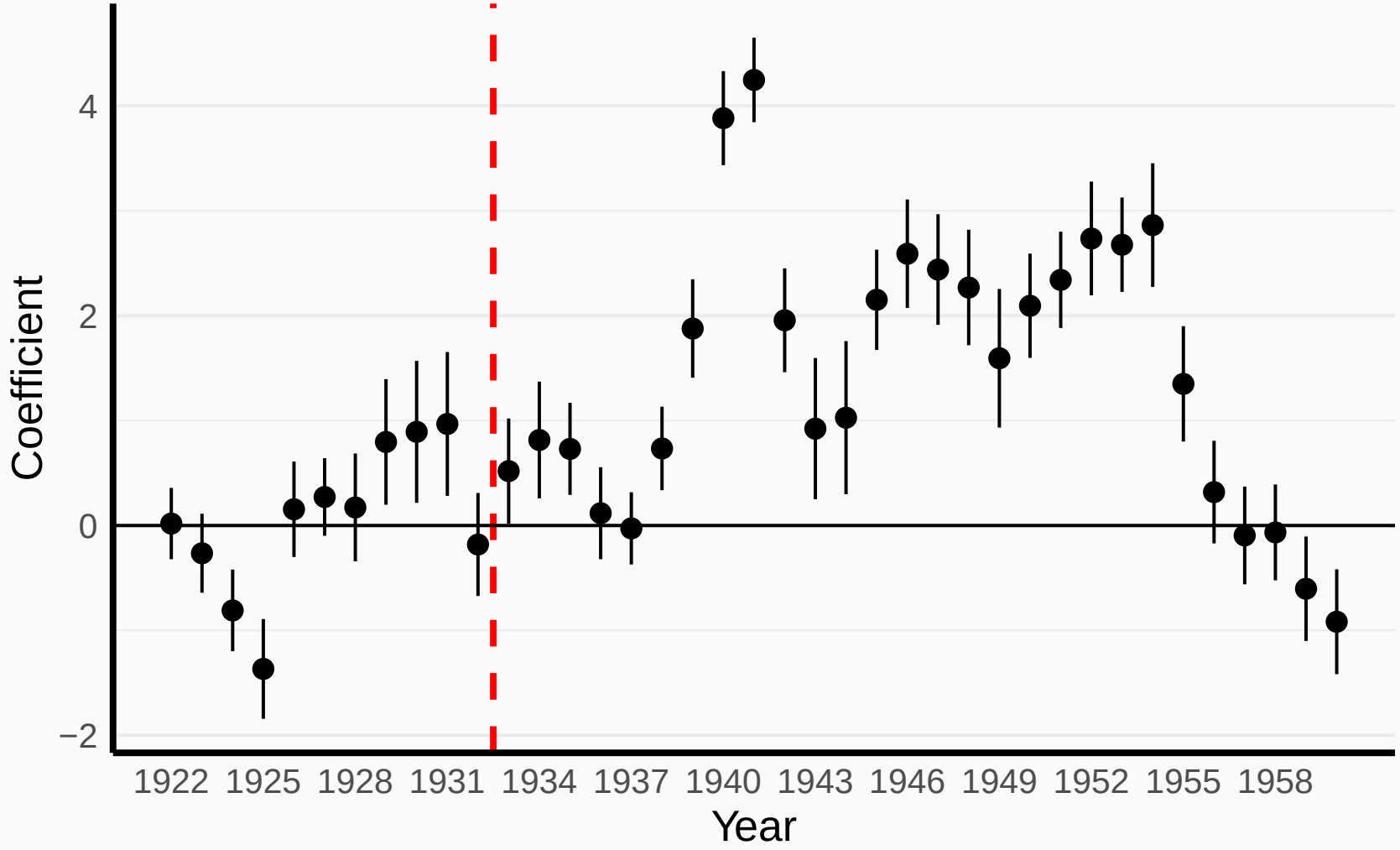

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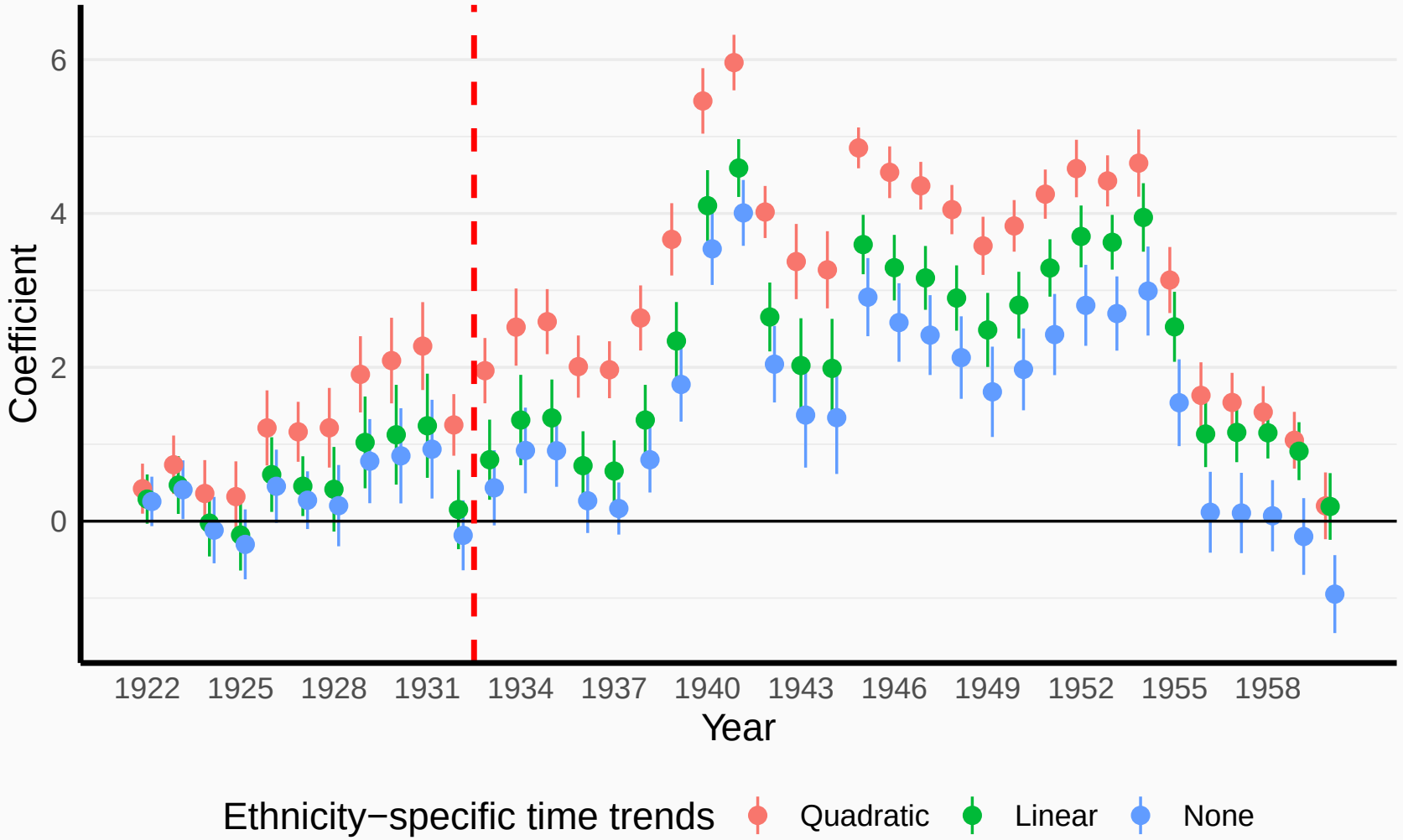
DiD - Ethnicity-specific time trends



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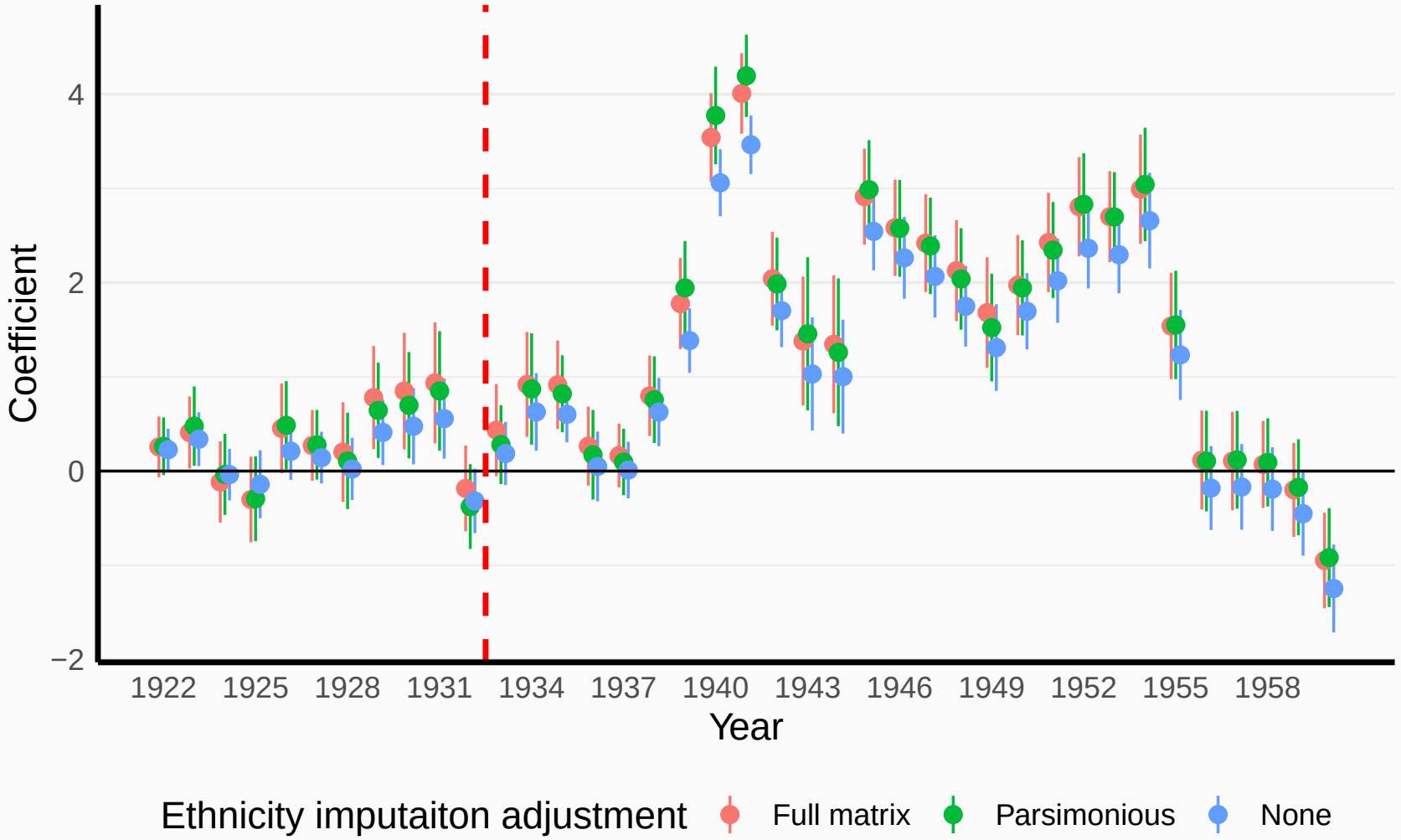
DiD - Different Ethnicity Imputation Adjustments



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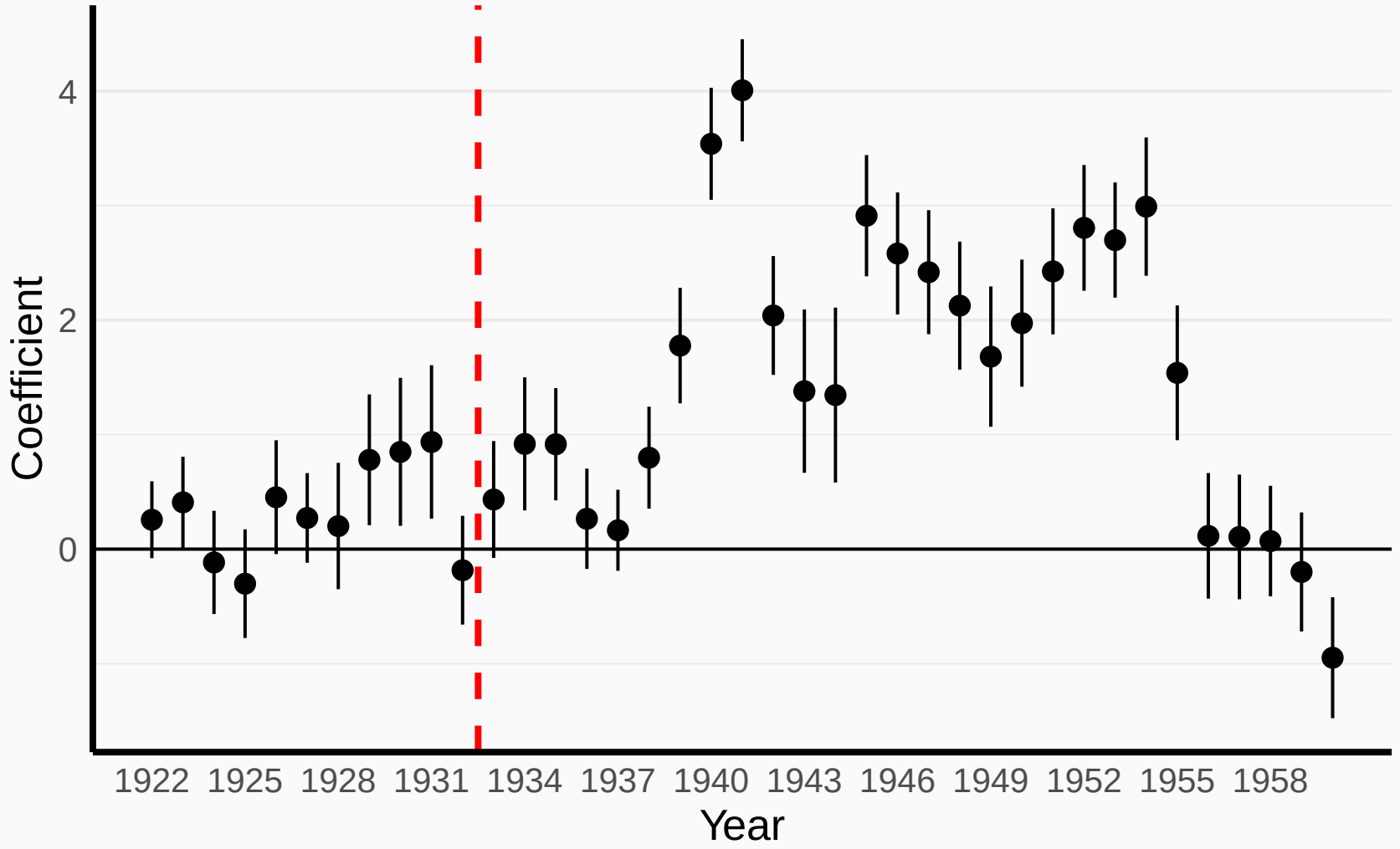
DiD - Stata Standard Errors



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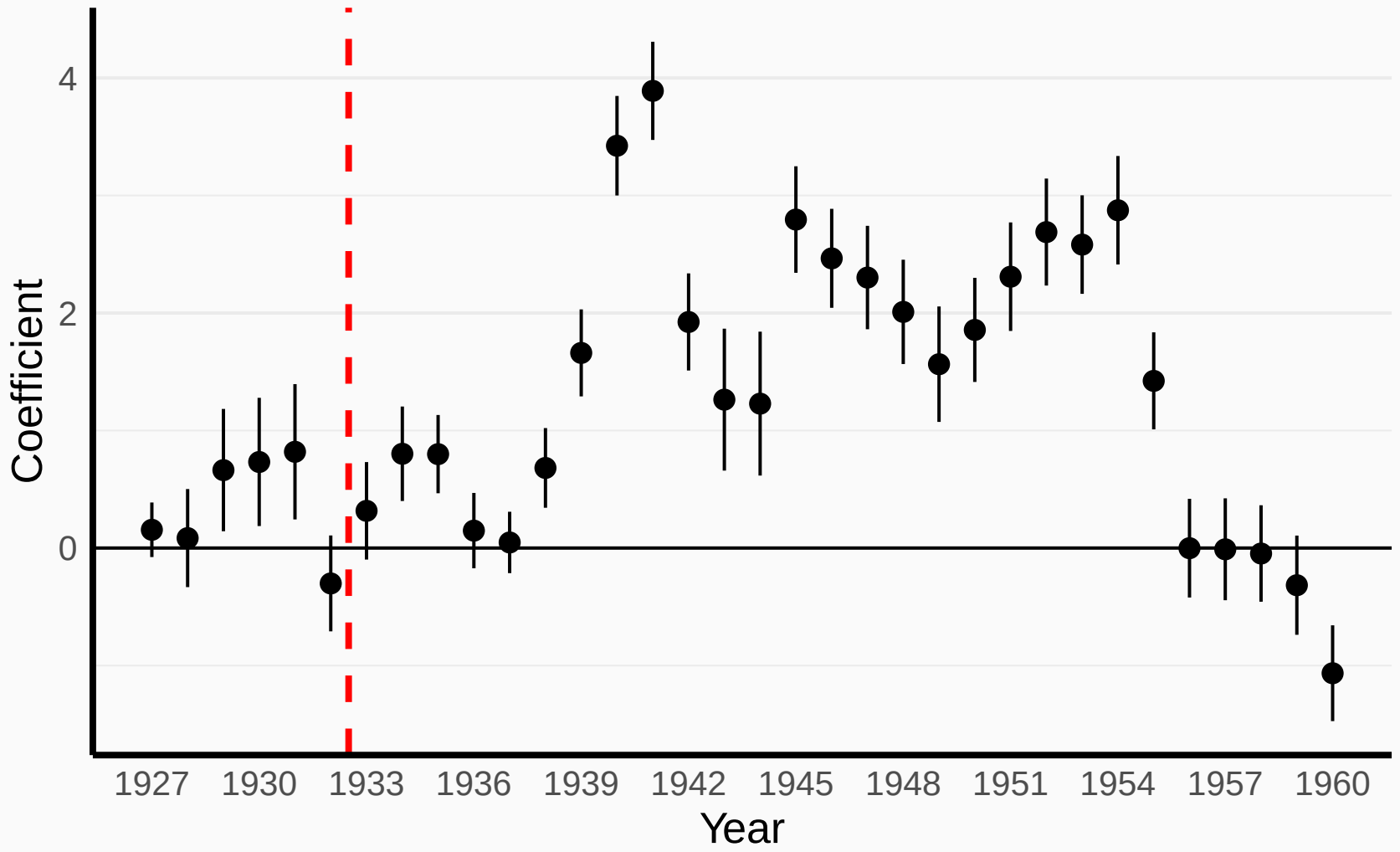
DiD - From 1927



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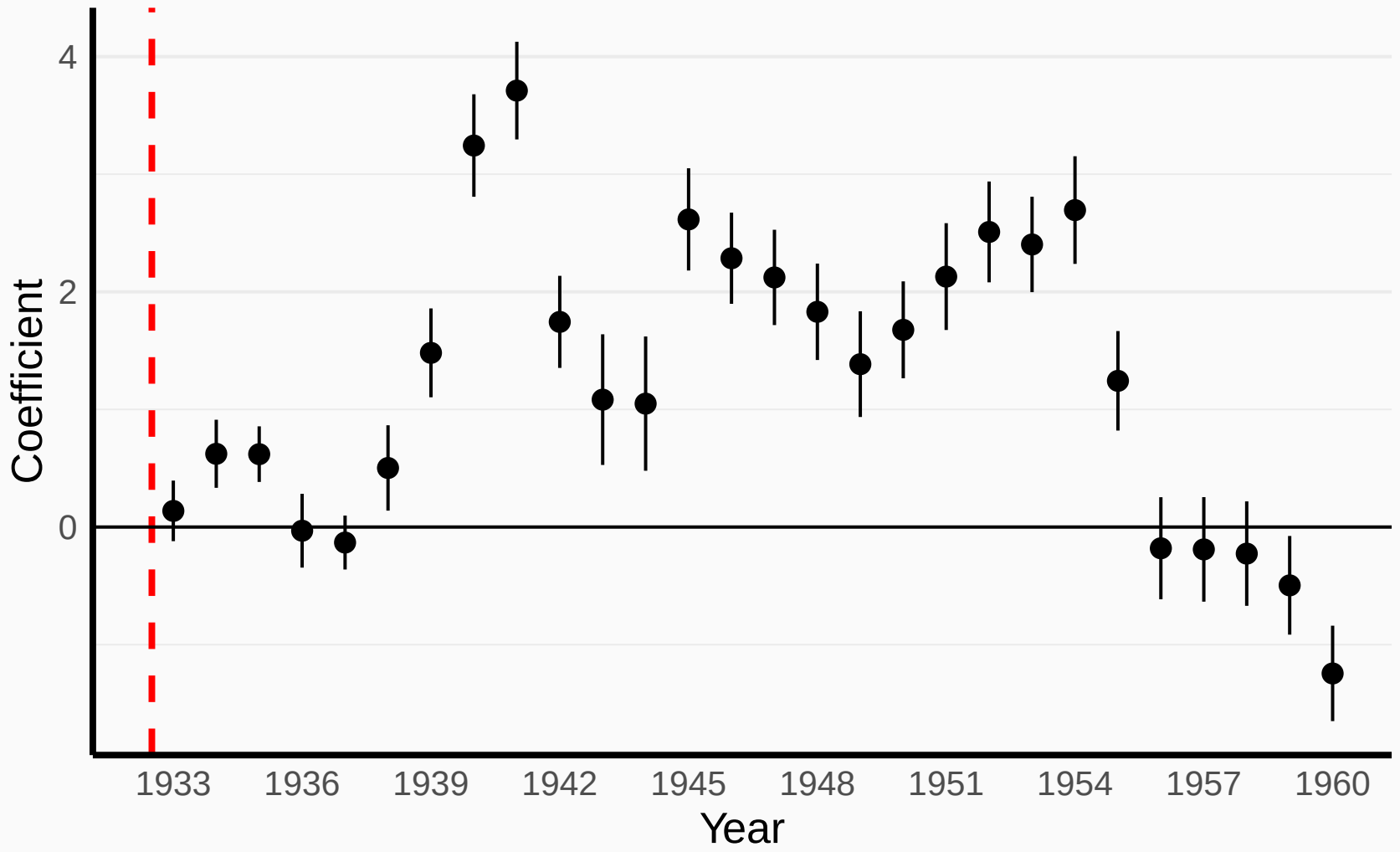
DiD - From 1933



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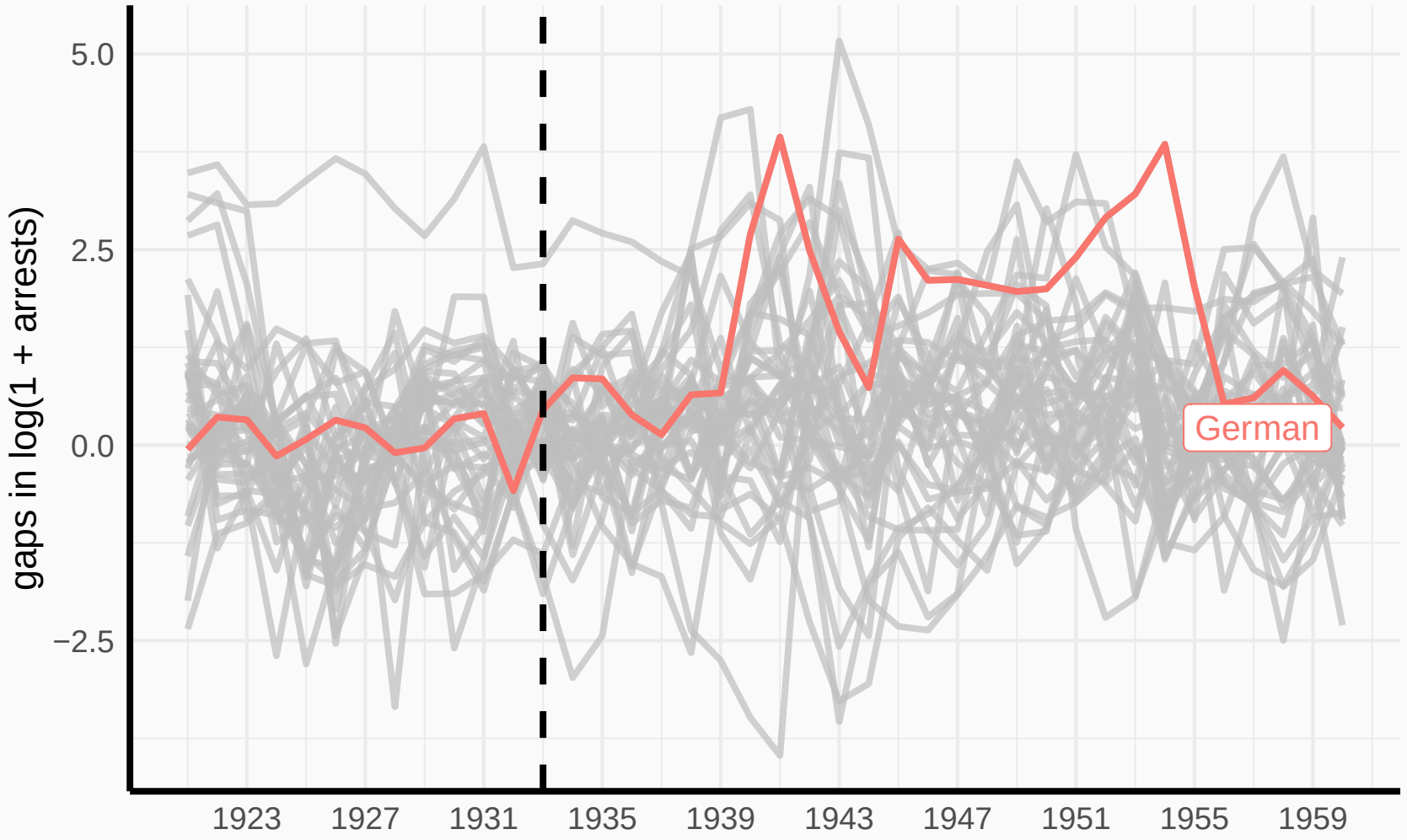
SCM - Mean of the Outcome as a Predictor



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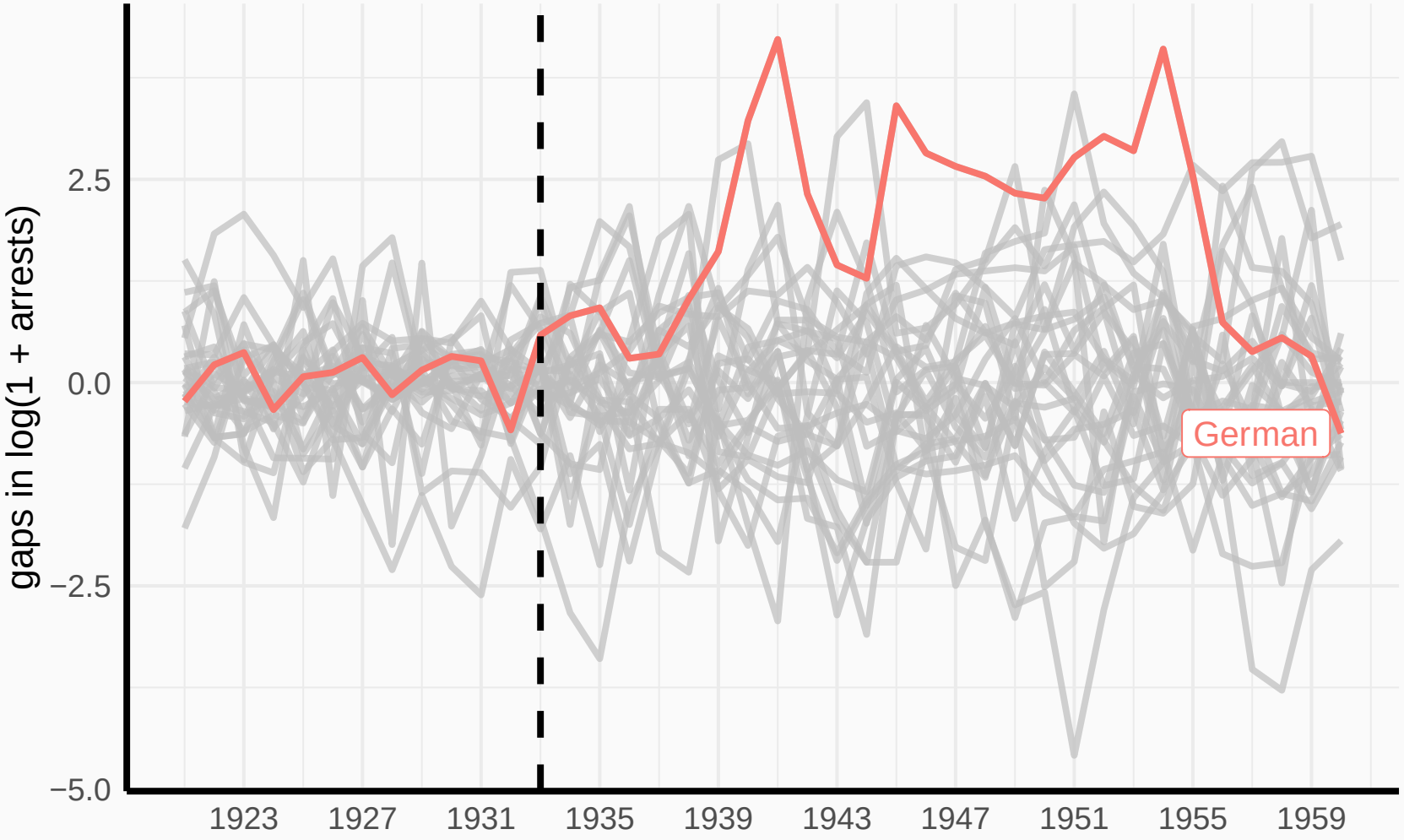
SCM - Only Ethnicities without Independent State



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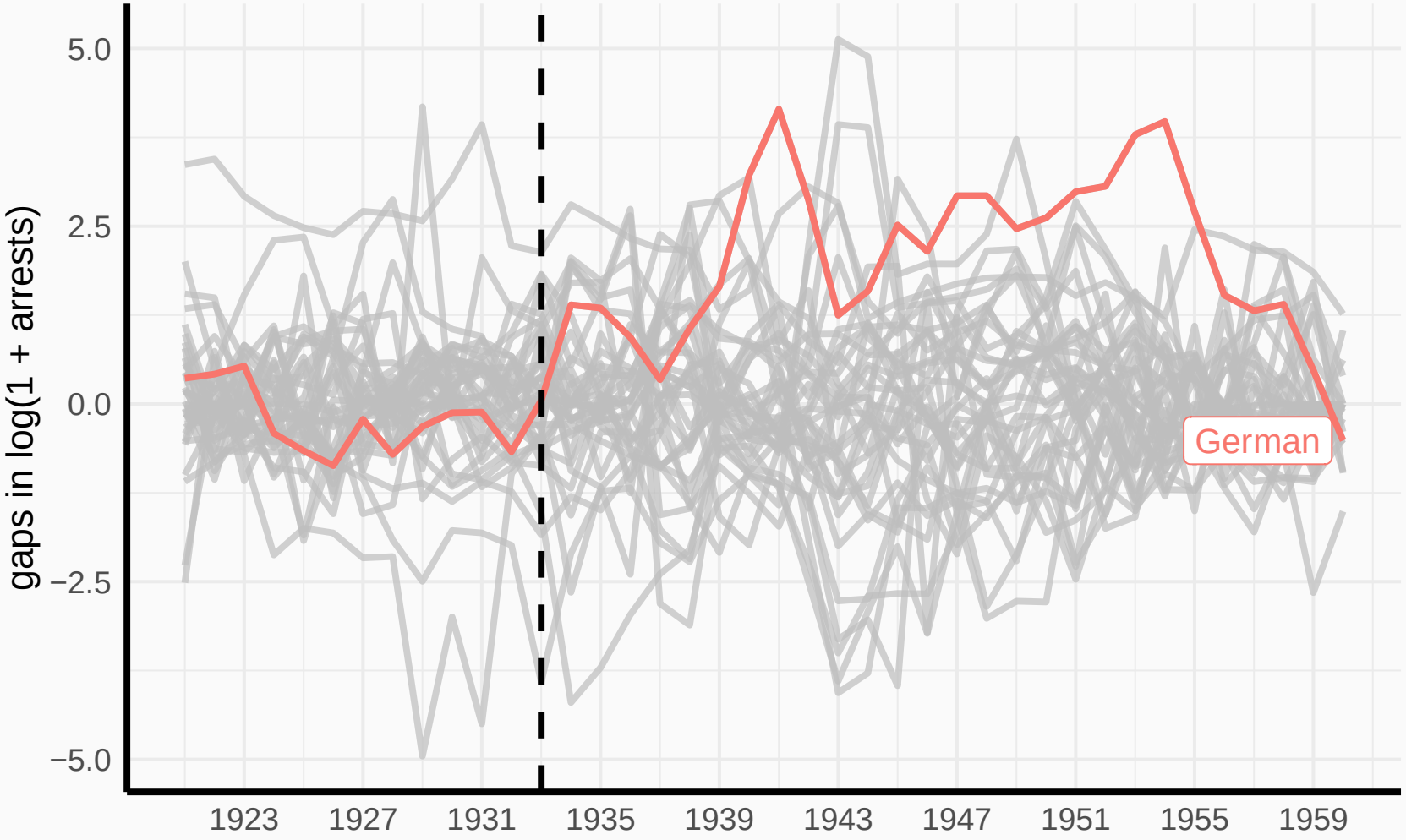
SCM - Only Rehabilitated Individuals



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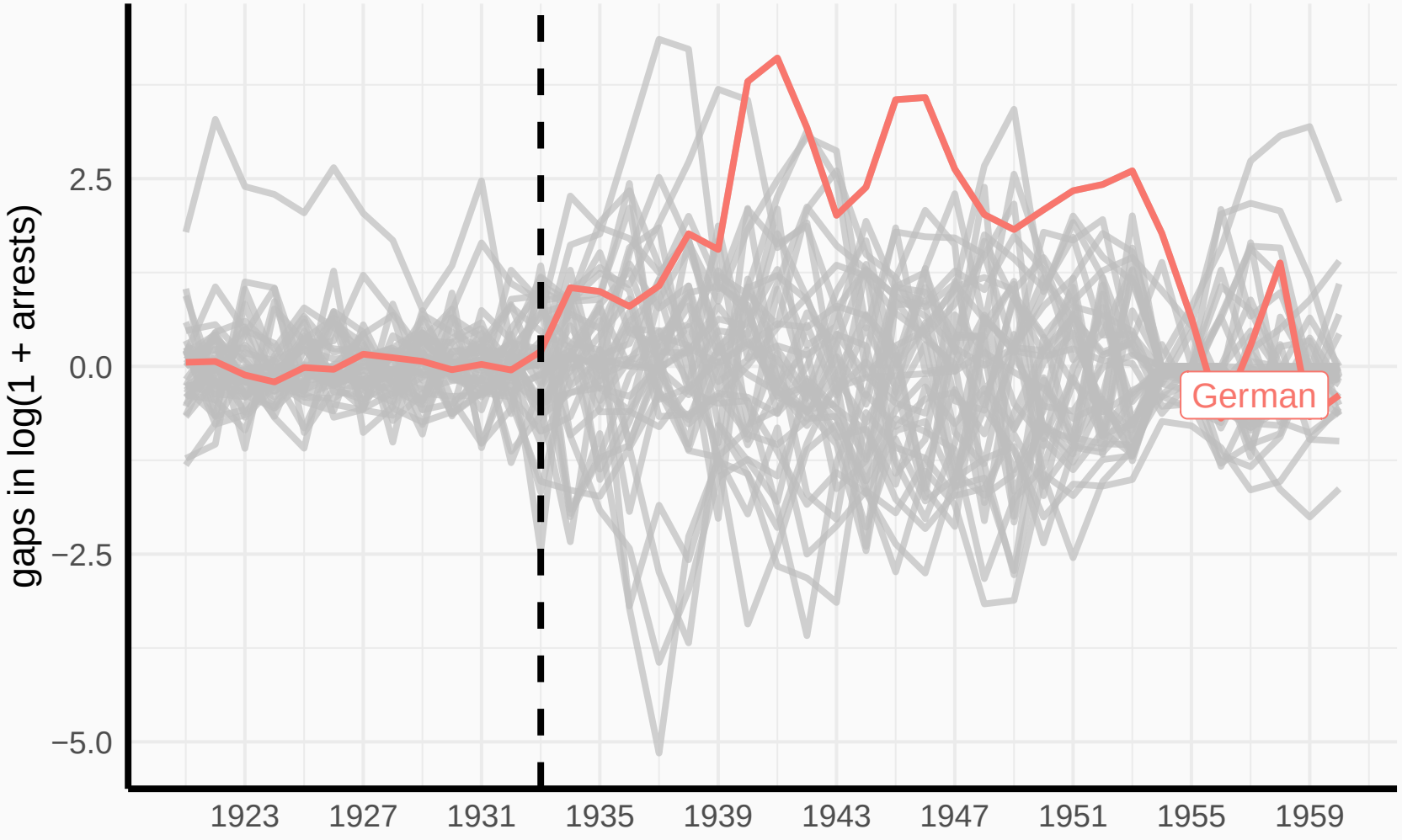
SCM - Only Arrests from Border Areas



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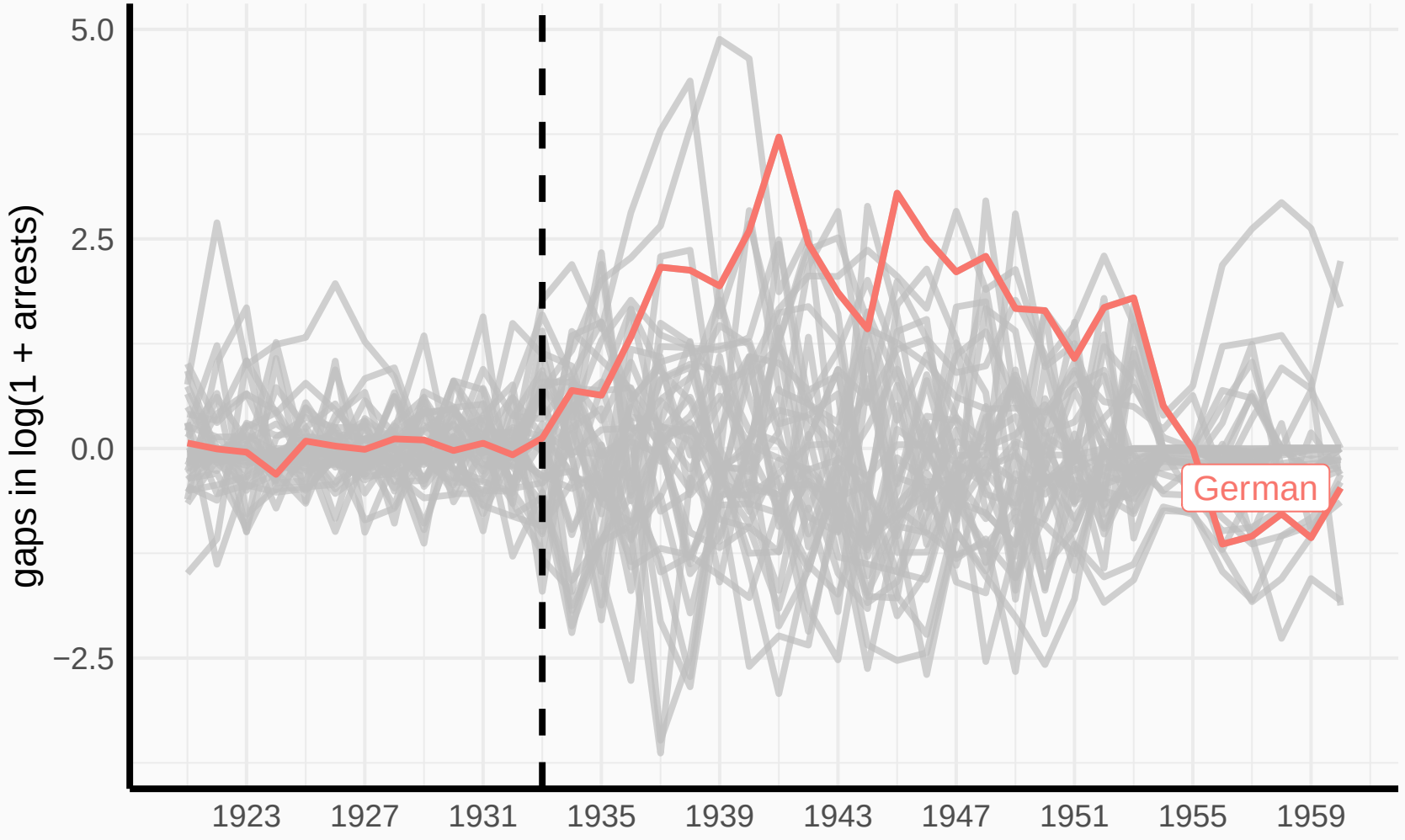
SCM - Only Arrests from Western Border Areas



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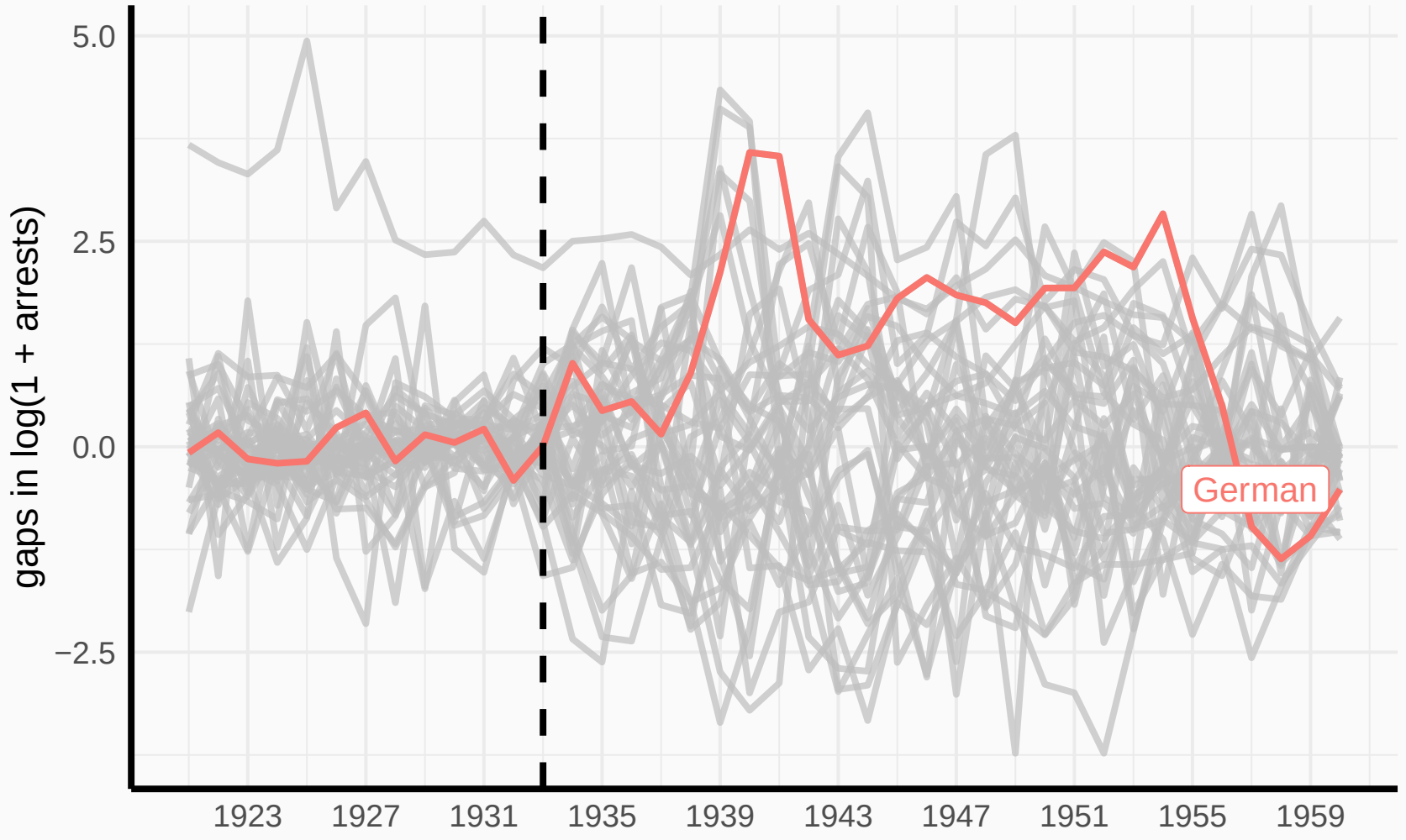
SCM - Arrests from Border Areas Excluded



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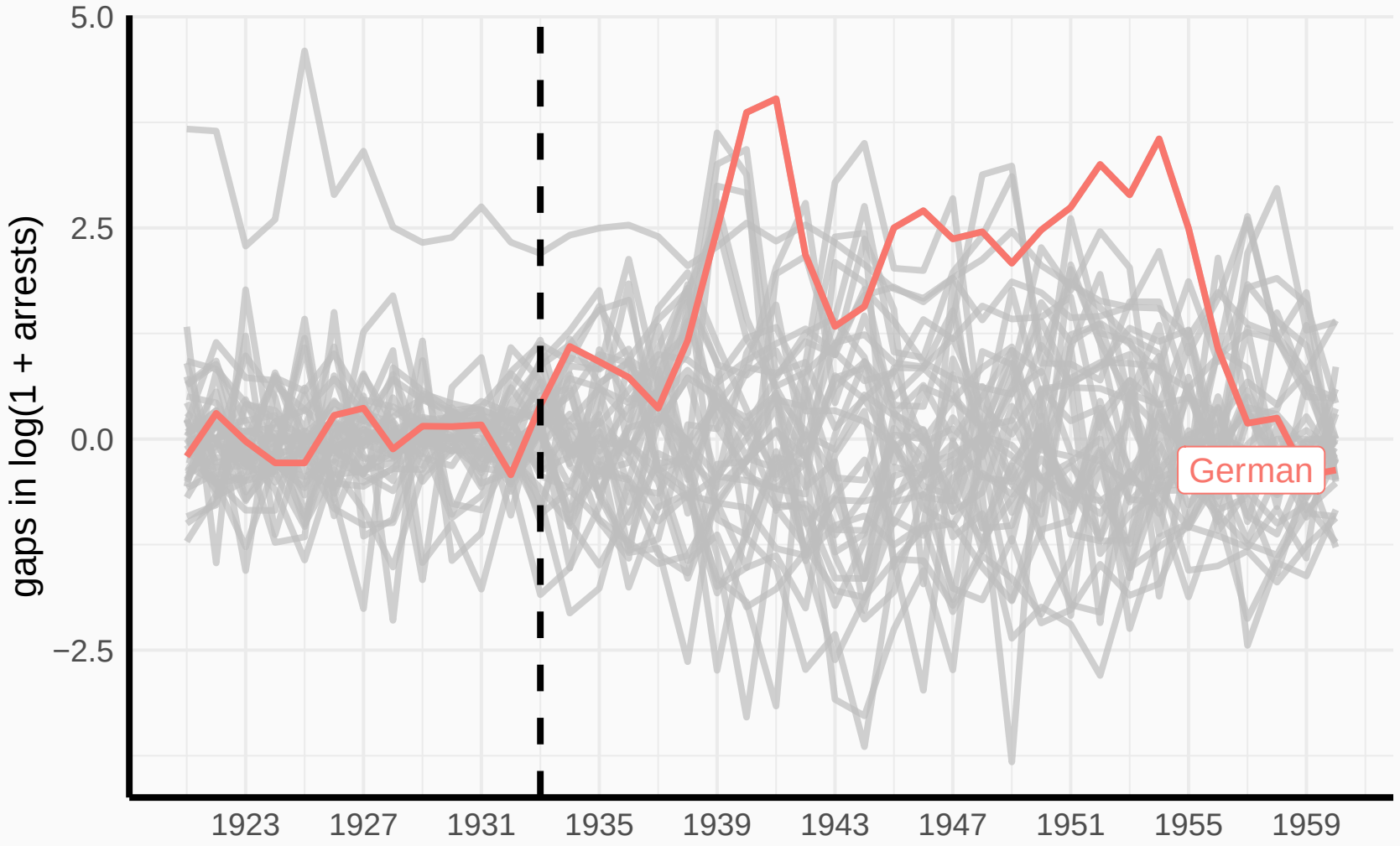
SCM - Arrests from Western Border Areas Excluded



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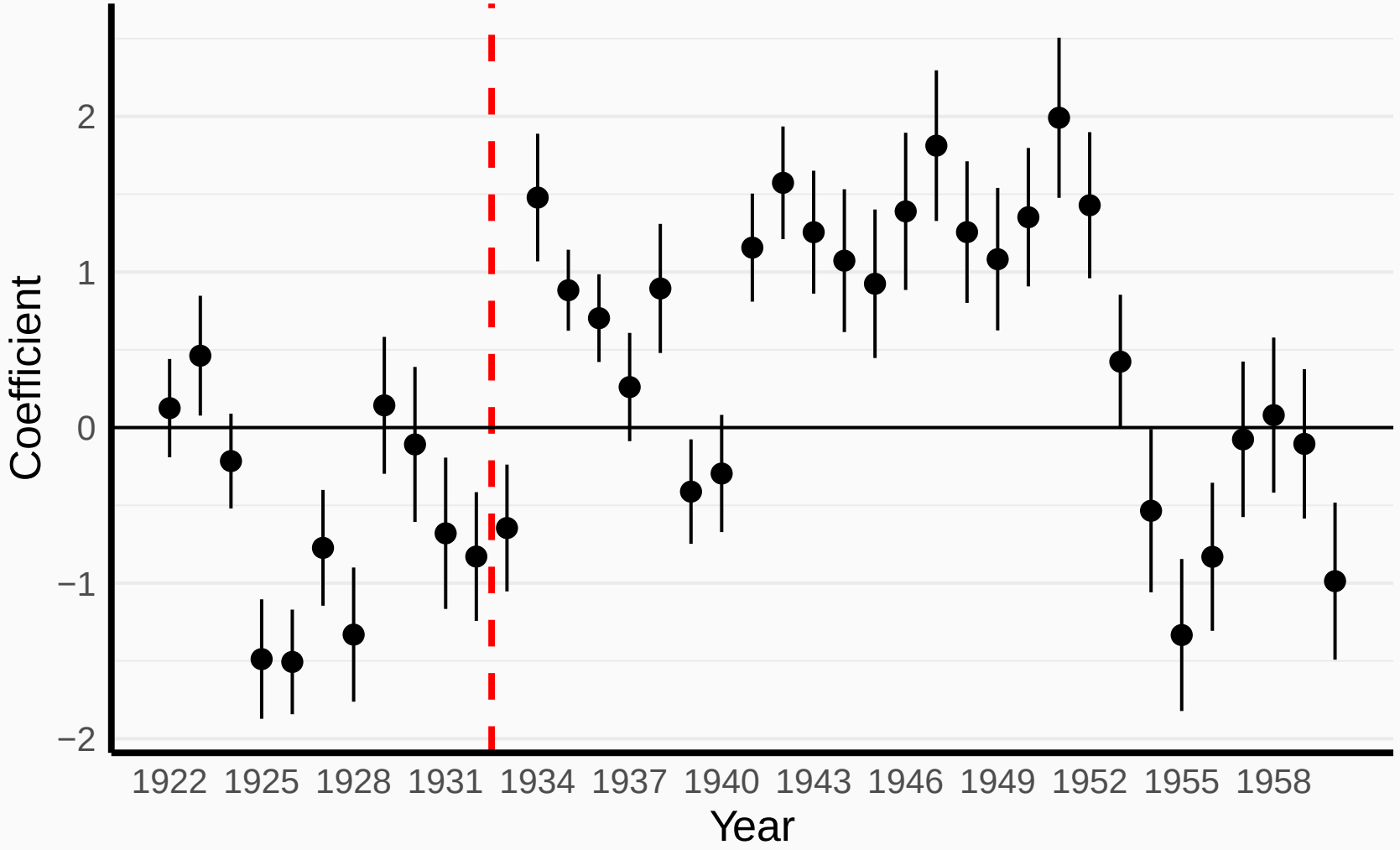
DiD - No Imputations of Arrest Date



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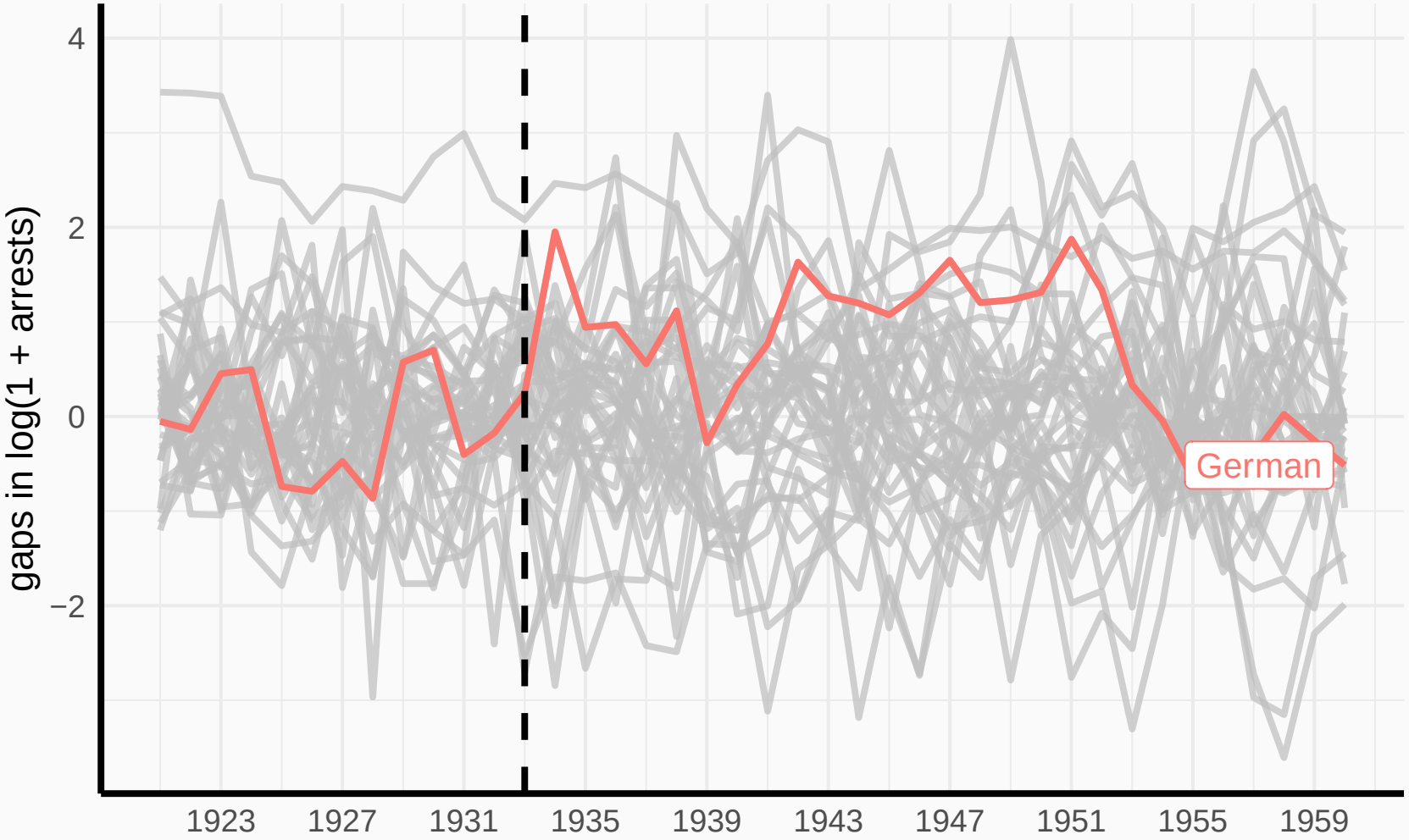
SCM - No Imputations of Arrest Date



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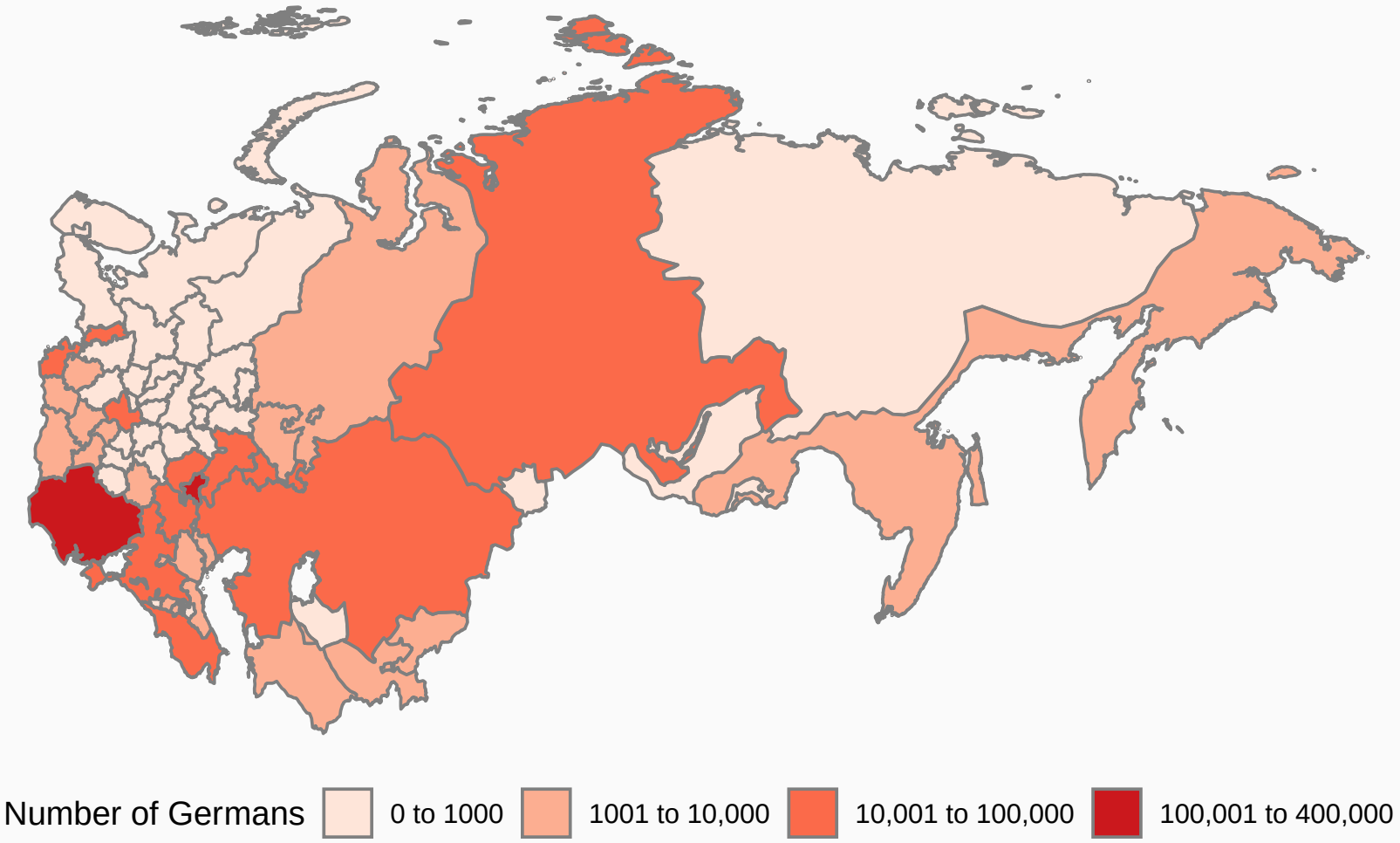
Map of German population in the USSR



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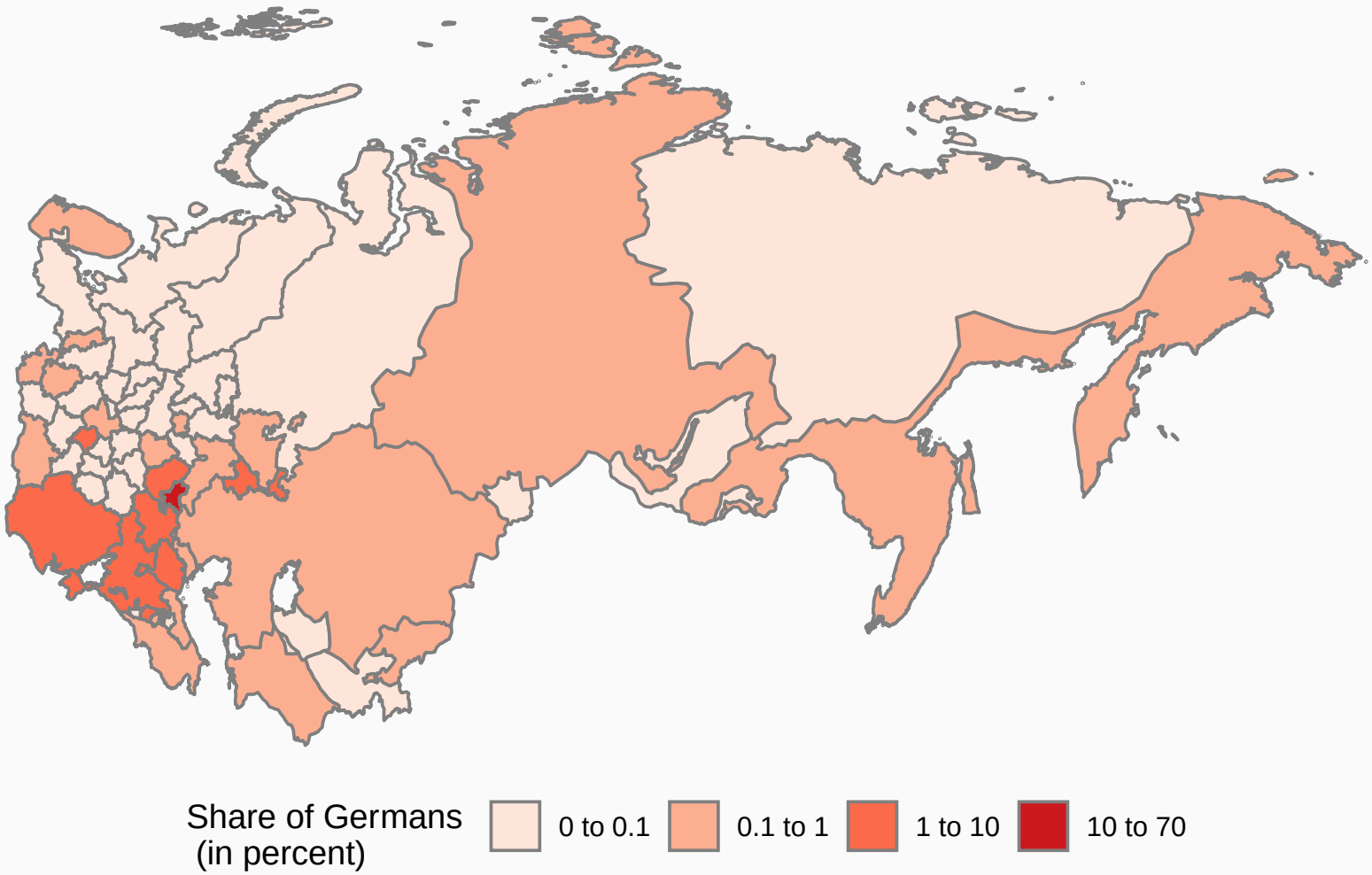

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