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Mandating Access to Affordable Housing, City by City

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Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center

Key question

To what degree are preemptive mandates from higher-level governments effective in broadening access to affordable housing and increasing community social mix?

Case study

France's SRU law, passed in 2000, reformed in 2013.

Key findings

Law has reduced concentration of social housing and encouraged its production in high-income cities—though perhaps not quickly enough.

Agenda

- The social mix objective
- Research methods
- Impacts of the French SRU law
- Implications for the U.S.

The social mix objective

France invested heavily in suburban and exurban social housing from the 1950s-1970s

- Over the long term, ghettoized communities with limited resources resulted
- Wealthier communities hoarded wealth partly by excluding social housing construction



Under socialist government in 2000, the SRU law was passed to mandate 20% social housing by 2020 for most urban communities

- Law was reformed in 2013 to mandate 25% social housing by 2025
- Mandate was associated with penalties for non-compliance, including fines, removal of certain local powers (eminent domain, building permits)



Jean-Claude Gayssot



*Cécile
Duflot*

What we want to know

Did the law encourage more equitable distribution of affordable housing within metropolitan areas?

How did the law's implementation vary between communities?

How could a similar law be implemented in a U.S. state?

Research methods

Data collected

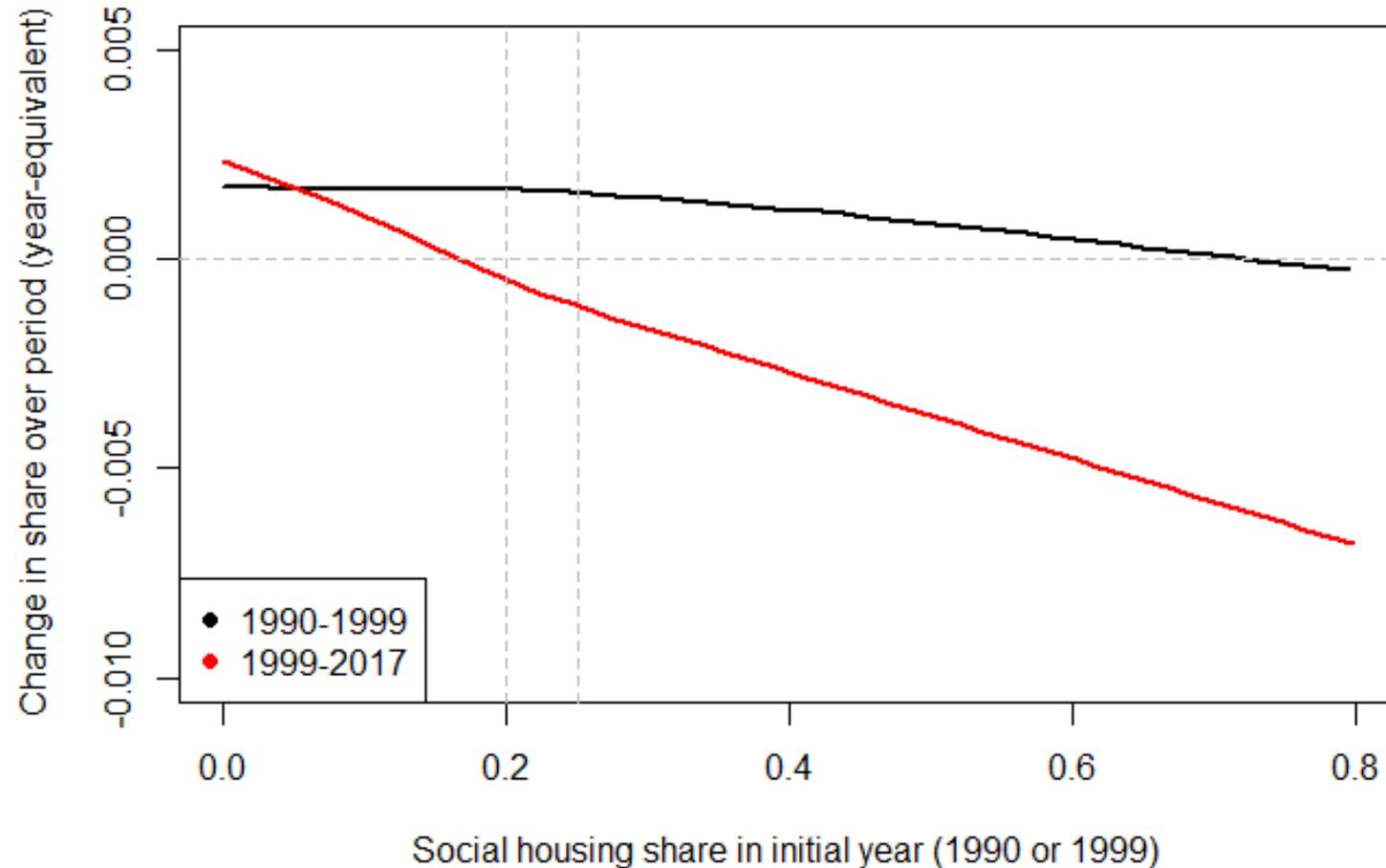
- Social-housing levels, demographic characteristics, and election results for all French municipalities (Insee).
- Data on project-based federally supported affordable housing in all Connecticut townships, including public housing, project-based Section 8, Section 212, Section 236, and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (U.S. Census; HUD).

Analytical approach

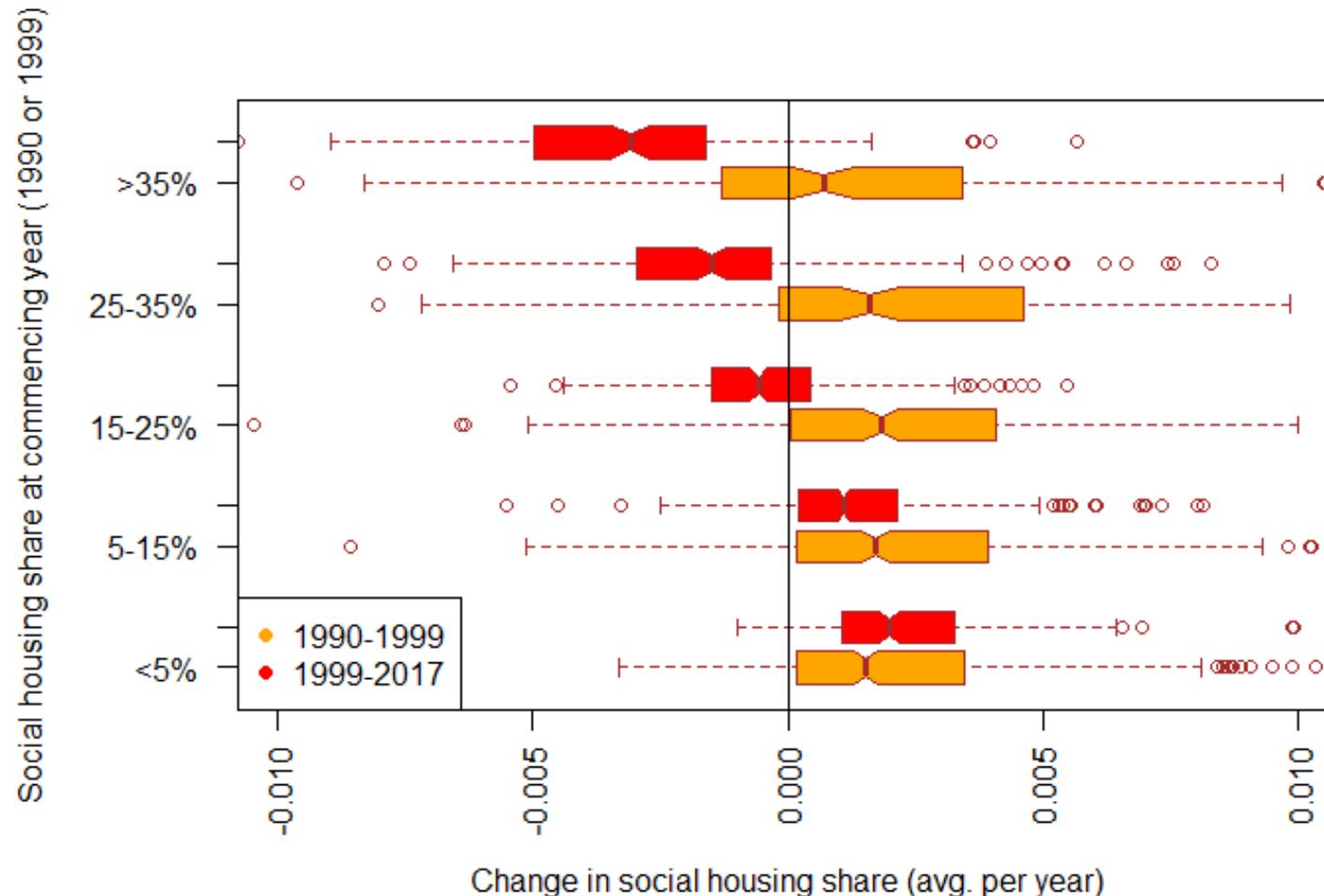
1. Identification of communities impacted by SRU law
2. Difference-in-differences analysis to compare “treated” and “non-treated” municipalities
3. Analyses of social-housing concentration through Herfindahl, isolation, and centrality indices
4. Comparison with conditions in Connecticut

Impacts of the French SRU law

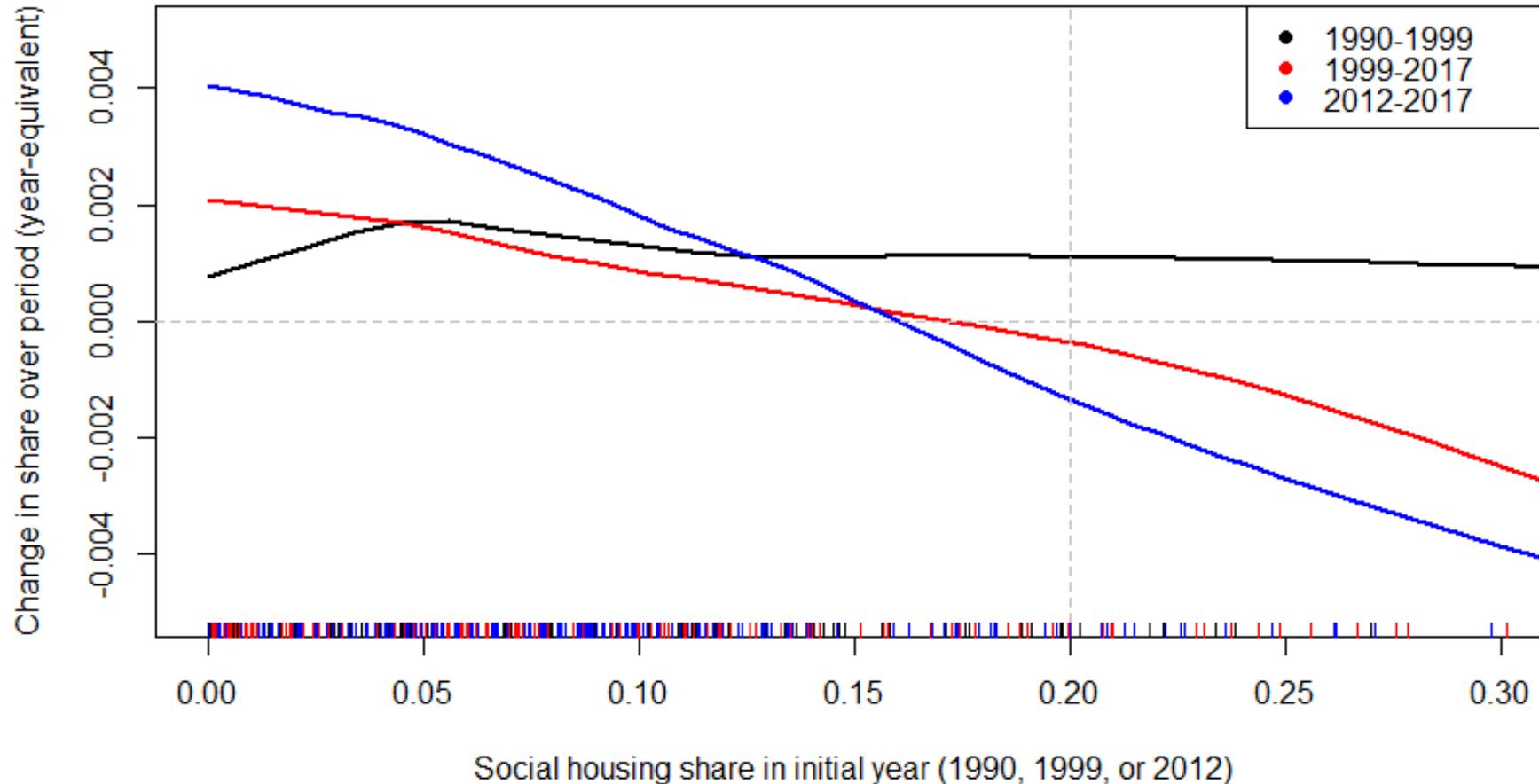
SRU appears to have significantly impacted social-housing distribution based on comparison with pre-1999 period



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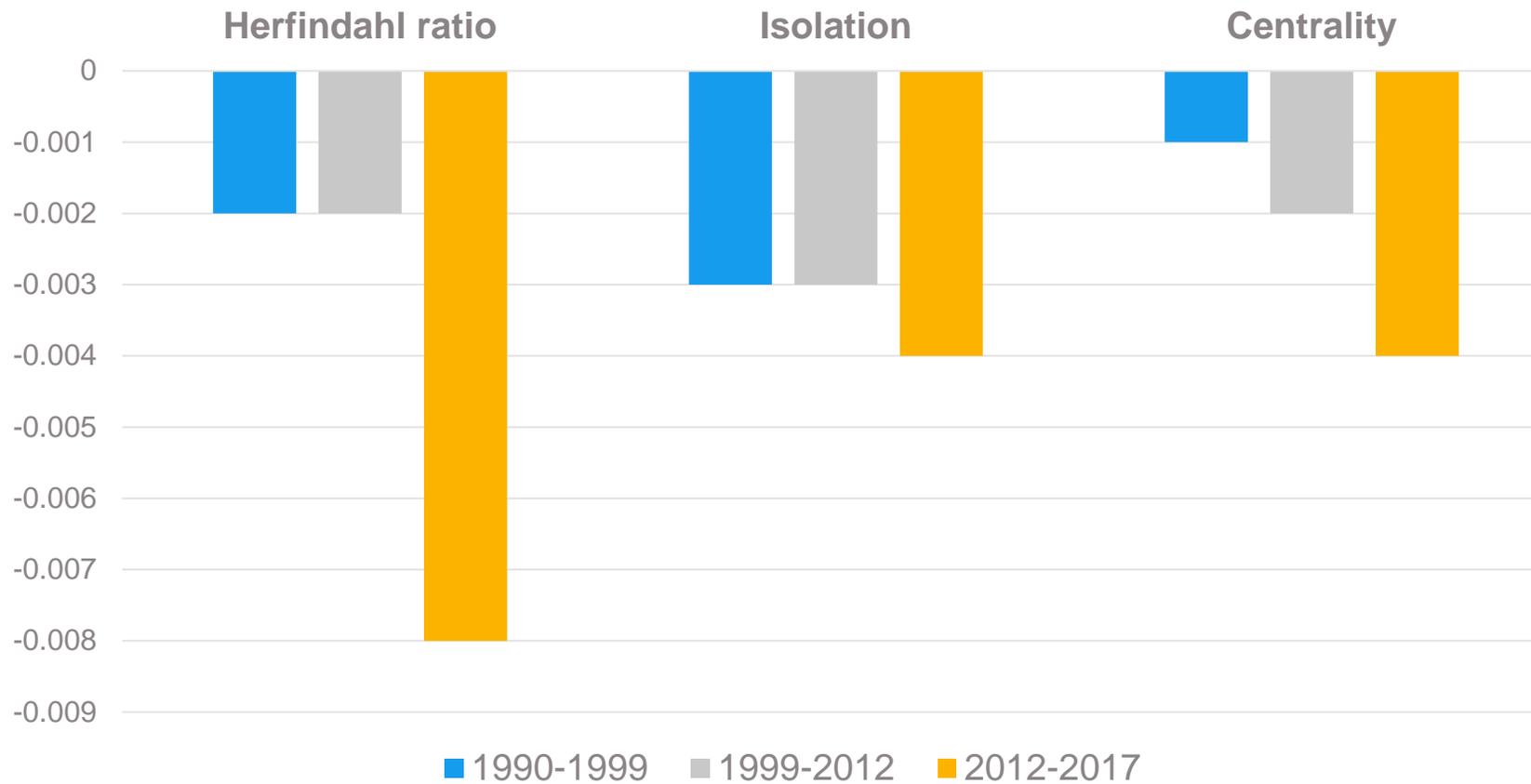
Wealthy communities have been particularly impacted by the law, especially since 2013 reforms



Difference-in-differences models show a 2 to 6 percent increase in social housing share over 10 years

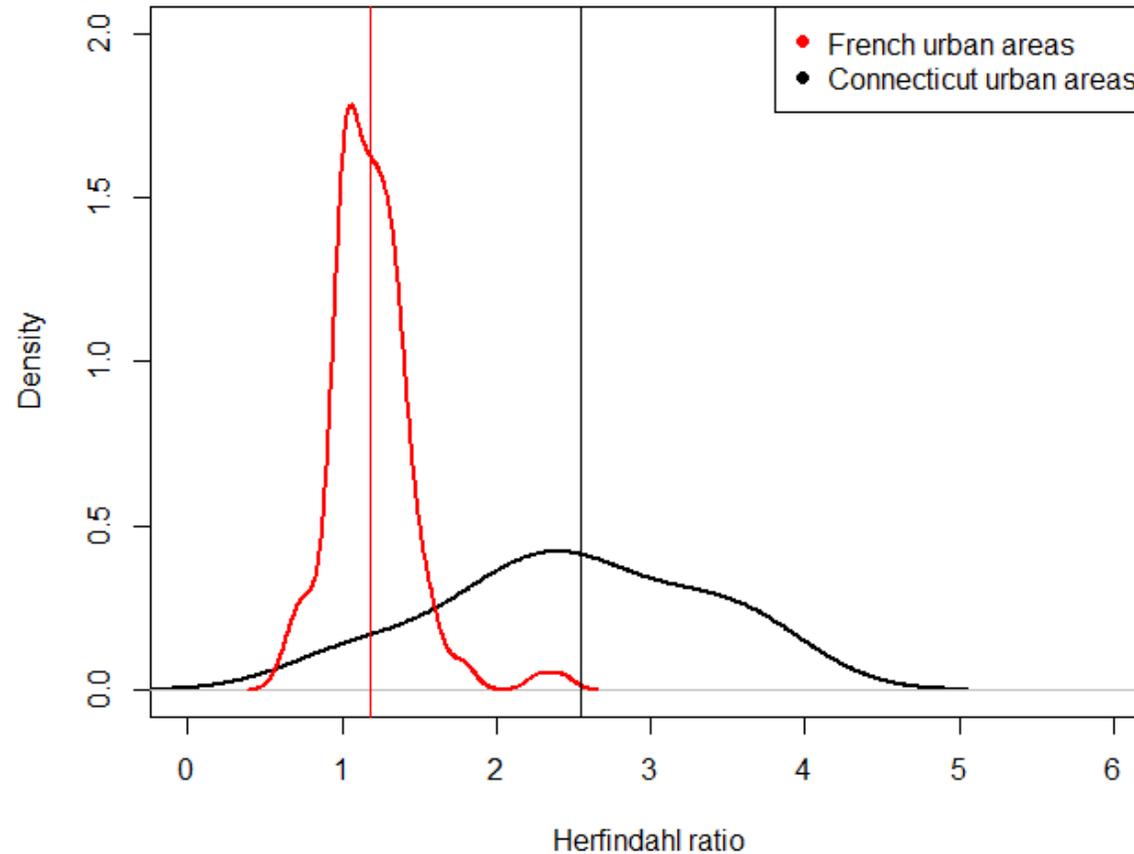
- Once controlling for social housing shares at the beginning of each period, population change, party control, and ideology of residents
- Represents a 5 to 15 percentage point increase in social housing from 2000 to 2025, depending on the model

Measures of social-housing concentration by urban area show major declines—after penalties were increased



Implications for the U.S.

Affordable housing is far more concentrated in Connecticut urban areas than French ones



A fair-share mandate that required a moderate increase in subsidized housing by municipality could be effective

- In the New Haven urban area, a 2-percentage-point increase in suburban towns' affordable housing share (compared with a 2-point decline in the central city) would be associated with a massive reduction in concentration
- Herfindahl index would fall from 4.49 to 2.41
- New Haven's share of regional units would fall from 65% to 45%
- This would require the addition of ~2,800 affordable units regionwide

Thank you!

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