Diff-in-diff as a causal design

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7 September 2026

Originally shared on LinkedIn.

According to The Mixtape, "diff-in-diff is a causal design, not simply four numbers subtracted in a row."

"Design" implies some assignment to treatment by the researcher, otherwise it's "simply four numbers subtracted in a row" plus "assume a can opener" (parallel trends). To get parallel trends by design probably means some kind of random assignment. But then you probably don't want to do diff-in-diff:

Evaluating natural experiments, in *Empirical Research in Accounting: Tools and Methods*.