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Do Gun Buybacks Save Lives? Evidence from Panel Data

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Abstract

In 1997, Australia implemented a gun buyback program that reduced the stock of firearms by around one-fifth (and nearly halved the number of gun-owning households). Using differences across states, we test whether the reduction in firearms availability affected homicide and suicide rates. We find that the buyback led to a drop in the firearm suicide rates of almost 80%, with no significant effect on non-firearm death rates. The effect on firearm homicides is of similar magnitude but is less precise. The results are robust to a variety of specification checks and to instrumenting the state-level buyback rate. *JEL* (I12, K114)

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