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Blind Tigers and Red-Tape Cocktails: Liquor Control and Homicide in Late-Nineteenth-Century South Carolina

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In 1893 South Carolina prohibited the private manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcohol and established a state monopoly in wholesale and retail alcohol distribution. The combination of a market decline in the availability of alcohol, reduced variety, and monopoly pricing at state-operated outlets encouraged black markets in alcohol. Because black market participants tend to resort to extra-legal mechanisms for dispute resolution, including violence, one result of South Carolina's alcohol restriction was an increase in homicide. A continuous-treatment difference-in-difference approach reveals that homicide rates increased by about 30 to 60 percent in counties that more vigorously enforced the law.

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