Impact of broadband internet on preventive healthcare behaviors in Senegal

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Abstract

Sub-Saharan African countries face multiple health challenges. In these countries, the disease burden affects people at a younger age and the main channels of morbidity and mortality are preventable and treatable diseases. Yet, sub-Saharan countries invest little in preventive health care. Available literature has shown that providing health information can have an important impact on health behaviors. In sub-Saharan Africa most of the internet traffic (fixed and mobile) goes through backbone networks. The arrival of optic fiber submarine cables since 2010 brought international broadband connectivity in Senegal which increased the availability of high-speed internet in areas near the already existing networks. Thanks to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) datasets combined with Afterfibre database, and using de Difference-in-Difference methodology, the objective of this study is to assess the impact of the arrival of broadband internet on preventive health behaviors in Senegal. Our results are mixed. Access to broadband is found to have a positive impact on use of bednet, the impact on the use of antenatal care remains unclear while no impact on child immunization is found.

Key-words: Preventive healthcare; Broadband Internet; Senegal; Difference-in-difference