

## **The Impacts of Free Secondary Education: Experimental Evidence from Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

Following the widespread adoption of free primary education, African policymakers are now considering making secondary school free. We exploit randomized assignment to secondary school scholarships among 2,064 youths in Ghana, combined with 11 years of follow-up data, to establish that scholarships increase educational attainment (at the secondary and the tertiary levels), knowledge, skills, and preventative health behaviours, while reducing fertility, especially for women. Eleven years after receipt of the scholarship, winners show private labour market gains, primarily in the form of better access to jobs with rents. We develop a simple model to interpret the labour market results and think through the welfare impact of free secondary education, and the extent to which it depends on the presence of credit constraints, biased beliefs, imperfect altruism and the characteristics of public sector employment.