Sesame Street was introduced in November 1969 as an educational, early childhood program with the explicit goal of preparing preschool age children for school entry. Early studies found sizable short-term effects on test scores that are comparable to the documented effects of other early childhood education programs. In this project, we provide additional evidence of the effects of children’s exposure to Sesame Street on later outcomes. We exploit county-level variation in viewer’s ability to watch the show generated by the distance to the closest tower broadcasting the show and whether that channel was UHF or VHF. We use Census data to explore how this variation relates to outcomes including grade-for-age status in 1980, educational attainment in 1990, and labor market outcomes in 2000. The results indicate that preschool-aged children with greater access to Sesame Street when it was introduced experienced improved early educational outcomes, particularly boys and black, non-Hispanic children and those living in economically disadvantaged areas. We find limited evidence, though, of persistent relative increases in ultimate educational attainment or labor market outcomes.

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