



Impact of Guaranteed Income Pilots on Food Insecurity: Evidence from 16 U.S. Mayor Guaranteed Income Programs

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Abstract

Food insecurity affects nearly 13.5% of U.S. households and is a major public health issue. Guaranteed Income (GI) initiatives offering recurring cash transfers with no work requirements have been suggested to favorably impact household food insecurity. In this study we evaluated effects of GI interventions on food insecurity within sixteen municipal programs that took place between 2022-2023, consisting of twelve randomized controlled trials and four pre-post designs. The data was curated from reports published by the Center for Guaranteed Income Research at University of Pennsylvania. Overall, these interventions provided \$3,500–\$12,000 unconditional cash over 10–24 months, with monthly payments ranging from \$350-\$1,000. The pilot studies focused primarily on economically disadvantaged groups. Most programs enrolling adults aged 26 to 44 years, typically those living below 100-200% of the federal poverty level. Food insecurity was measured as self-reported reductions in food consumption due to lack of resources assessed using survey data at baseline, during and after the intervention. 14/16 pilots reported food insecurity outcomes. Six of the fourteen pilots (43%) demonstrated statistically significant reductions for GI recipients at one or more timepoints, with limited sustained effects. Among the three pre-post pilots, only the Saint Paul program showed a temporary decrease, which reversed after the intervention ended. In conclusion, we found modest improvements with limited sustained effects in improving food insecurity across GI pilots performed in the US. This highlights the need for future studies to evaluate whether longer intervention durations or higher payment amounts could achieve sustained food security improvements.

Keywords: Food insecurity, guaranteed income, cash transfer programs, economic insecurity, social policy evaluation