



PROJECT HOME TRUST

BASIC
INCOME PILOT
PROGRAM

FINAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



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Project Home Trust's Basic Income Pilot Program had a transformative impact on the households of twenty low-income single mothers from June 2023 to May 2024.

They reported greater ability to meet basic needs and cover emergency expenses, improved outlooks, and better health, which extended to their children. These impacts were immediate and lasting, although they varied over time as households faced life's inevitable ups and downs. Participants' spending reflected prudent allocations focused on basic needs, and they reported stable work patterns and increased educational pursuits. When compared to a control group, participants showed substantial positive outcomes across many dimensions of household life.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE FINANCIALLY STABLE. At the program's outset, just 5% of Participants and 6% Controls were "doing okay" or better financially. One year later, that percentage was unchanged for Controls, but had risen to 53% of Participants.

PARTICIPANTS ARE BETTER ABLE TO PAY FOR BASIC NEEDS. In the beginning, four in five Participants and Controls (79%) said it was "very" or "somewhat" difficult to pay for basic needs such as food and rent. One year later, that had shrunk to just one in four Participants (26%), but the share of struggling Controls was still high – 84%.

PARTICIPANTS COULD BETTER HANDLE AN EMERGENCY EXPENSE. Consistently, 0% of Controls say they would be able to handle a \$400 emergency expense without missing payments on other bills. For Participants, this percentage increased from 5% at the beginning of the pilot to 42% by the end.

PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR FINANCIAL FUTURE. At the outset, Participants and Controls expressed similar, uncertain outlooks regarding their finances. One year later, nearly all Participants (95%) thought they would be the same or better in one year, compared to just 42% of Controls.

PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE SATISFIED WITH LIFE. About two-thirds of Participants (68%) reported greater life satisfaction at the program's end, and only 5% reported lower satisfaction. By contrast, just 21% of Controls reported higher satisfaction. On a scale from 0 to 10, Participants' average life satisfaction rating rose from 6.3 to 7.9 while Controls declined slightly from 6.0 to 5.4.

GAINS EXTENDED TO PARTICIPANTS' CHILDREN. From June 2023 to May 2024, the share of Participants reporting their children were "very happy" grew from 47% to 89%. For Controls, it fell from 63% to 42%.



These results suggest there is significant potential for basic monthly income, combined with social support services, to improve the lives of low-income women and their dependents, alleviating economic stress and empowering them to take positive steps toward self-sufficiency

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the experiences of twenty individuals who participated in Project Home Trust's Basic Income Pilot Program, as reported by them in surveys taken every four months from June 2023 to May 2024.



It reduced stress on paying for basic expenses like rent. I'm less worried about getting evicted at any time and payments are made on time now. (No more late fees.)"

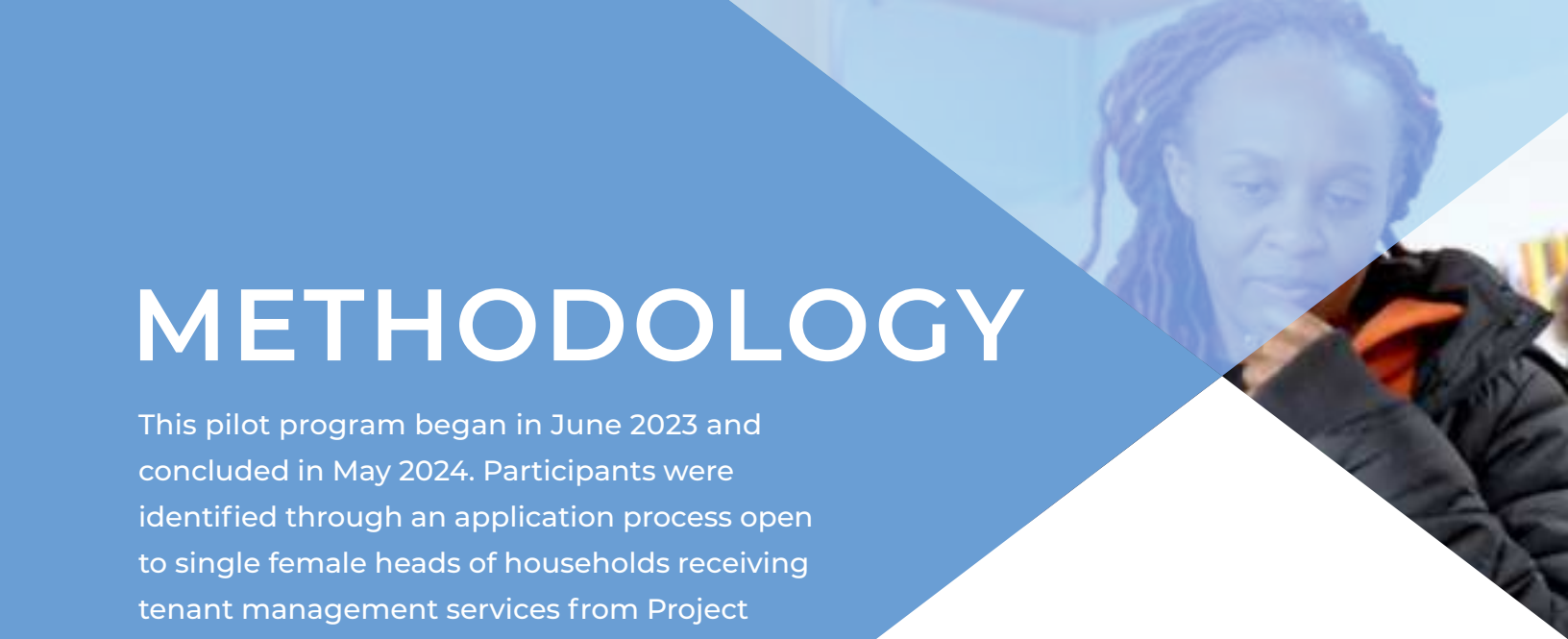
These individuals received monthly checks for \$1,000, attended monthly group meetings where they shared ideas and strategies for increasing household stability, and received training on topics such as budgeting, building credit, and career options. Of the twenty Participants, fourteen lived in Cumberland County, five lived in Androscoggin County, and one lived in York County. A control group of twenty individuals also completed surveys during this time. They received \$50 gift cards to compensate them for their time but did not receive the \$1,000 monthly payments. Seventeen members of the Control group lived in Cumberland County and three lived in Androscoggin County. Comparing the responses of these groups helps to assess the impact of the extra supports received by Participants, the most notable of which is the monthly payment.

The goal of this evaluation was to gain a preliminary understanding of basic income payments and to gauge the potential merit of a larger program to serve more households. The Control group used in this evaluation is not perfectly comparable to the Participants (see Appendix III for more details), but the preponderance of positive results gives us confidence in the program's potential.

The surveys asked over thirty detailed questions about the physical and mental well-being of respondents and their families, their finances, work and education status, life satisfaction, and plans for the future. Collectively, they paint a detailed picture of respondents' overall well-being and how it has fluctuated over the course of the pilot. This report highlights five survey questions that emerged as "Key Performance Indicators" of how respondents were fairing. They relate to financial security, basic needs, emergency expenses, financial outlook, and life satisfaction. The report also summarizes changes to respondents' mental and physical health, their children's well-being (Participants and Controls were parents to 33 and 35 children under the age of 18, respectively), and work and educational status. For the complete results of these surveys, see the Appendix.

The quotes at the bottom of some pages in this report are Participants' responses to the open-ended survey question, "In the past month, what effect did the \$1,000 have on daily life in your household?" Some responses have been lightly edited for clarity.





METHODOLOGY

This pilot program began in June 2023 and concluded in May 2024. Participants were identified through an application process open to single female heads of households receiving tenant management services from Project Home, with incomes below 60% of the area median income, and who did not face a significant loss of benefits from higher earnings (“benefits cliff”).



It helped out to prevent my child and me from getting evicted from our apartment.”

Twenty individuals were randomly selected from the pool of applicants. Herein, these individuals are referred to as “Participants”. Members of the control group (“Controls”) were chosen from the remaining applicants and from other Project Home tenants and given a \$50 gift card for completing surveys as part of the evaluation.

Members of the Participant and Control groups share many – but not all – individual and household characteristics. Their responses to survey questions related to household size and composition, mental and physical wellness, work status, and outlook were very similar. However, Participants reported higher levels of formal education, longer residency in the U.S., younger children in their household, and somewhat better social supports. In addition, while it

was required that the basic income payments would not jeopardize Participants’ public benefits, no such requirement was made of Controls (who did not receive additional income). While having a control group allows evaluators to isolate the impact of the additional supports given to Participants, these differences should be kept in mind when assessing the results of this pilot.

Both groups completed surveys at four-month intervals through the duration of the program. These were administered in person and virtually, with the assistance and, when necessary, translation services of Project Home Trust coaches. In June 2023, a baseline survey collected information on the conditions facing individuals and their households at the program’s outset. It asked basic demographic information such as age, level of education, and household composition, plus questions about respondents’ physical and mental well-being, financial security, future plans, and more. Subsequent surveys asked many of the same questions to gauge changes over time, and to understand how Participants spent the \$1,000 payments they received. This process created a rich dataset with which to assess the impact of these funds over time and through changing circumstances. In this report, results from the initial survey are referred to as “Baseline” or “outset”. One member of the participant group and one member of the control group were excluded from this analysis because they were unable to complete all surveys. It is important to keep in mind the small size of the groups when assessing these results; each participant represents roughly 5% of the sample.



“It helped to reduce my worry for meeting my daily bills and I started planning more for my family’s future. I started putting some of my salary towards my kid’s college fund after my basic bills were met.”



RESULTS

Overall, the results are striking. Participants reported immediate, significant improvements in their overall financial security while Controls continued to struggle. Positive shifts spanned many dimensions of household life, from basic needs and emergency expenses to mental health and parenting.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

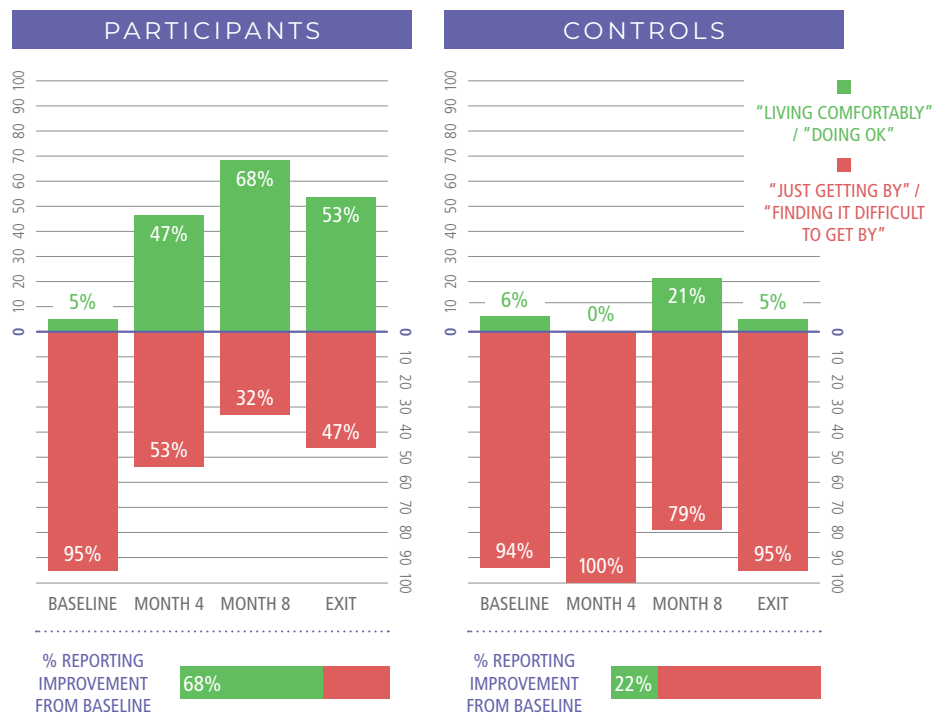
Amid a wealth of information, five questions emerged as key indicators of how well participants and members of the control group were fairing. They illuminate changes to financial security, basic needs, emergency expenses, financial outlook, and life satisfaction.

1

OVERALL FINANCIAL SECURITY

At the outset, Participants and Controls gave nearly identical assessments of their financial conditions. When asked, “Overall, how well are you managing financially these days?”, only 5-6% were “doing okay” or “living comfortably”. One year later, their responses were dramatically different. Over half of Participants (53%) said they were “doing okay” or better, and 68% reported some level of improvement. The most negative response category, “finding it difficult to get by”, dropped from 32% to 0%. By contrast, most Controls were still struggling: Just 5% were “doing OK” or better and 42% were “finding it difficult to get by.” Only 22% showed improvement from the baseline.

“Overall, how well are you managing financially these days?”



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (continued)

2 BASIC NEEDS

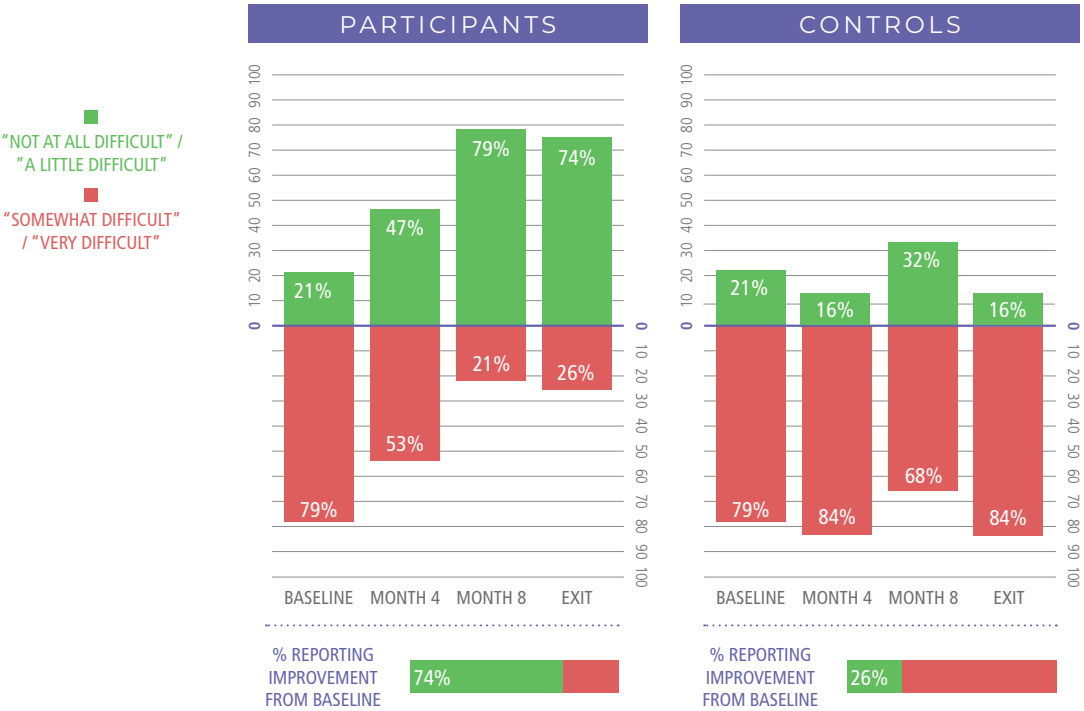
At the program’s outset, nearly four in five Participants and Controls (79%) said it had recently been “very” or “somewhat” difficult to pay for basic needs. One year later, that had shrunk to just one in four Participants (26%), but the percentage of struggling Controls was still high – 84%. Despite this progress, 63% of Participants were still finding it “a little difficult” to meet their basic needs. Just 11% said doing so was “not at all difficult.”

Individually, nearly three in four Participants (74%) reported some level of improvement in their ability to meet basic needs. The share of Controls that improved was much smaller – just over one in four (26%). In fact, over half of Controls (53%) were having more difficulty meeting basic needs in May 2024

compared to one year earlier. By contrast, just 5% of Participants were having more difficulty.

Focusing on food, at the beginning of the program 11% and 16% of Participants and Controls, respectively, said recently there was “often” or “sometimes” not enough to eat in their households. One year later, that share was unchanged for Controls (16%) but 0% for Participants. Looking at housing, at Baseline 11% of Participants and 16% of Controls were behind on rent. That percentage initially fell for Participants, to 0% after three months, but then rose, returning to 11% one year later. For Controls, it fluctuated – rising to as much as 26% three months into the program before falling to 11% after one year.

“In the past 7 days, how difficult has it been for your household to pay for usual household expenses, such as food, rent, car payments, medical expenses, and so on?”



3 EMERGENCY EXPENSES

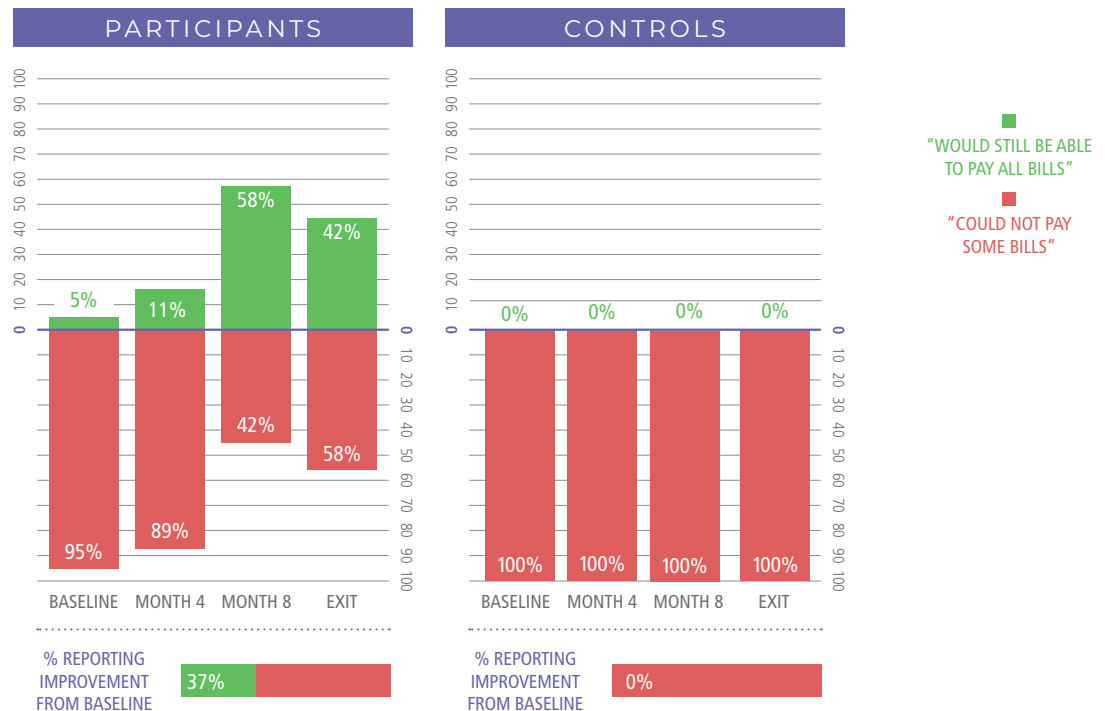
At the beginning of the program, nearly all Participants and Controls (95% and 100%, respectively) said they would be unable to pay other bills if faced with a \$400 emergency expense. Through the duration of the program, there was no change in Controls' responses. By contrast, the percentage of Participants who would be able to pay all bills rose to 11% in October and 58% in February before ending the year at 42% in May 2024. Individually, over one-third of Participants (37%) reported greater ability to pay an emergency expense in May, and none (0%) reported less ability to pay. There was no improvement in Controls' ability to pay.

The monthly payments received by Participants appear to have allowed some of them to accumulate a small cash reserve. At the outset, only 16% would pay a hypothetical \$400 expense with "money

currently in my checking/savings account or cash", with the remaining Participants either unable to pay the expense by any means (32%), borrowing from someone they know (32%), using a credit card (16%), or selling something (5%). One year later, 42% would pay an emergency expense with cash or money from a bank account and no Participant indicated that they would be unable to pay the expense by any means. For Controls, the share that would not be able to pay the expense by any means remained constant at 79%.

Participants also reported an increase in their support network. At the outset, 37% said they were "rarely" or "never" able to ask others for help when problems arise. One year later, that share was just 11%. For Controls, it also rose from 22% to 42%.

"Suppose you had a \$400 emergency expense that you had to pay. How would it impact your ability to pay your other bills this month?"



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (continued)

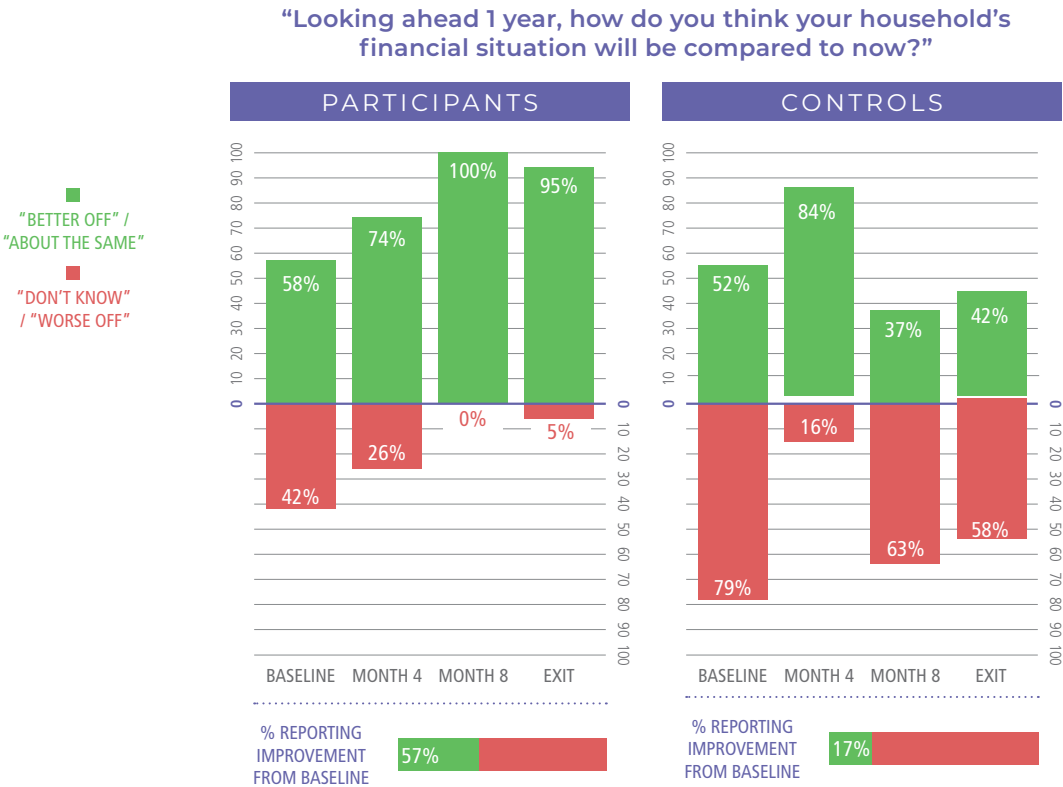
4 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

At the beginning of the pilot, Participants and Controls had similar perceptions of their households' financial futures. Respectively, 42% and 48% of Participants and Controls either didn't know what their financial situation would be in one year or thought they would be "worse off." The remainder thought they would be "about the same" or "better off". If anything, the Participants were slightly more pessimistic: 16% thought they would be "worse off" compared to 5% of Controls.

One year later, Participants were notably more optimistic: 84% of Participants thought their finances would be better in one year, compared to just 5% of Controls. Individually, over half of Participants (57%) reported some level of improvement in their outlook, compared to fewer than one in five Controls (17%). According to a Project Hope staff member, a portion of Participants' improved outlook may be from the confidence and knowledge they gained in group meetings: "The mothers encouraged each other on taking certain short classes. Particularly more interest was shown in budgeting and credit building."



It helped to reduce my worry for meeting my daily bills and I started planning more for my family's future. I started putting some of my salary towards my kid's college fund after my basic bills were met."



5 LIFE SATISFACTION

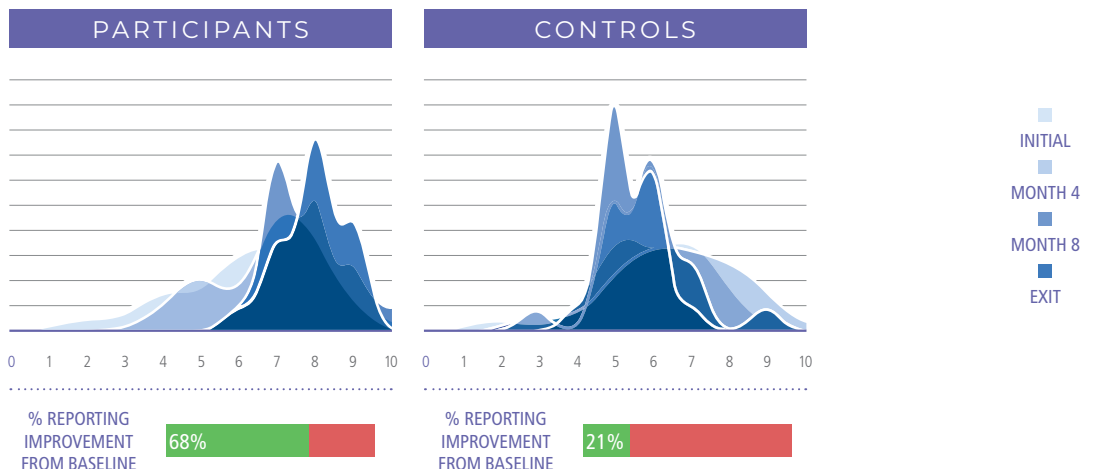
Improvements in Participants' financial stability corresponded with higher life satisfaction. On a scale from 0 to 10, Participants' average life satisfaction rating rose from 6.3 to 7.9 while Controls declined slightly from 6.0 to 5.4. Individually, about two-thirds of

Participants (68%) reported greater satisfaction after one year of the program, and only 5% reported lower satisfaction. By contrast, only 21% of Controls reported greater satisfaction while even more (58%) felt less satisfied.



I used to work two jobs. Now I'm able to spend more time developing and preparing to start my business. I spend more time with my child. I am able to plan more for our future..."

"Overall, on a scale from 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with life as a whole?"



AVERAGE SCORE	BASELINE	MONTH 4	MONTH 8	EXIT
PARTICIPANTS	6.3	6.8	7.7	7.9
CONTROLS	6.0	6.6	5.8	5.4

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

The financial gains described above yielded improvements in other dimensions of household life. Participants reported some mental health improvements, less stress, and more confidence with parenting. At the same time, they worked more and expressed greater aspirations.

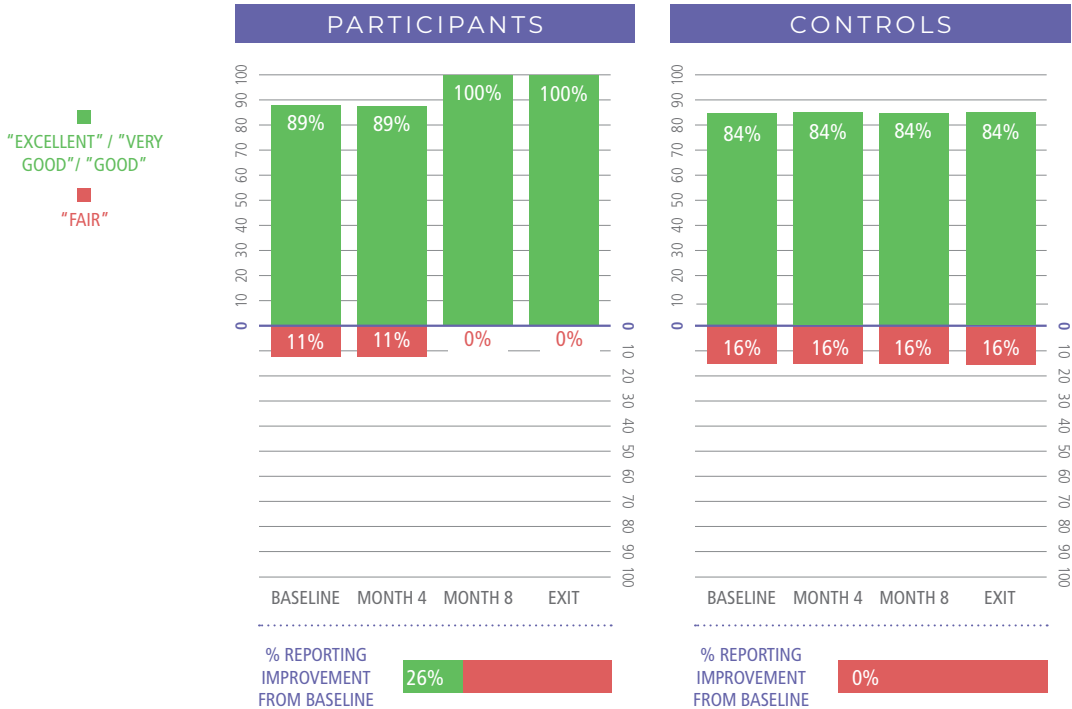
PHYSICAL HEALTH

Participants' and Controls' self-reported physical health remained relatively stable across the duration of the program. At the outset, 89% of Participants and 84% of Controls said their health was "good" or better, while 11% and 16%, respectively, said it was "fair" or

"poor". One year later, 100% of Participants reported being in "good" or better health. Meanwhile, 16% of Controls were still "fair." No Participants or Controls reported "poor" health in the final two surveys.



"In general, how is your physical health?"





My housing is more secure and my niece's mental health has improved. Also mine has improved."

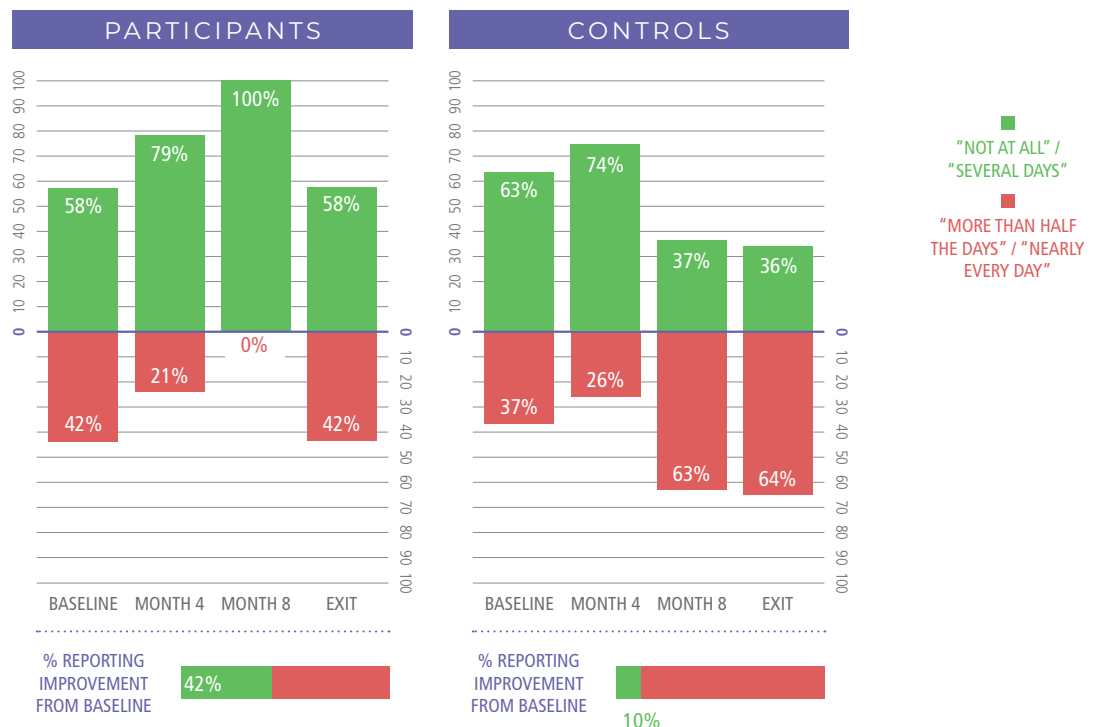


MENTAL HEALTH

Participant's self-reported mental health also improved. At the outset, 31% of Participants reported "not at all" to feeling "down, depressed, or hopeful" during the last two weeks. One year later, 89% reported "not at all". For Controls, the share that reported "not at all" declined from 37 to 16%. Several other questions followed the same trajectory: the share of Participants who reported "not at all" increased from 26 to 68% to "feeling little interest or pleasure in doing things" (Controls also increased, from 16 to 36%); from 16 to 37% to "not being able to control or stop worrying" (Controls decreased from 16 to 5%); and from 5 to 42% to "feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge" (Controls increased from 5 to 10%). The

share of Participants who felt their family life was "rarely" or "never" under control fell from 21% at the outset to 0-5% in the fourth and eighth months of the program, but then rose to 37% as the program finished. Controls experienced similar fluctuations, rising from 11% at the outset to 47% after eight months before falling back to 16% as the program finished. A Project Home staff member observed positive outcomes within the Participant group: "The involvement in planning monthly meetings together (two moms per month) led to more confidence and more knowledge sharing. I noticed the moms felt more equipped knowing they were teaching others something new."

"In the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by not being able to control or stop worrying?"



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS (continued)

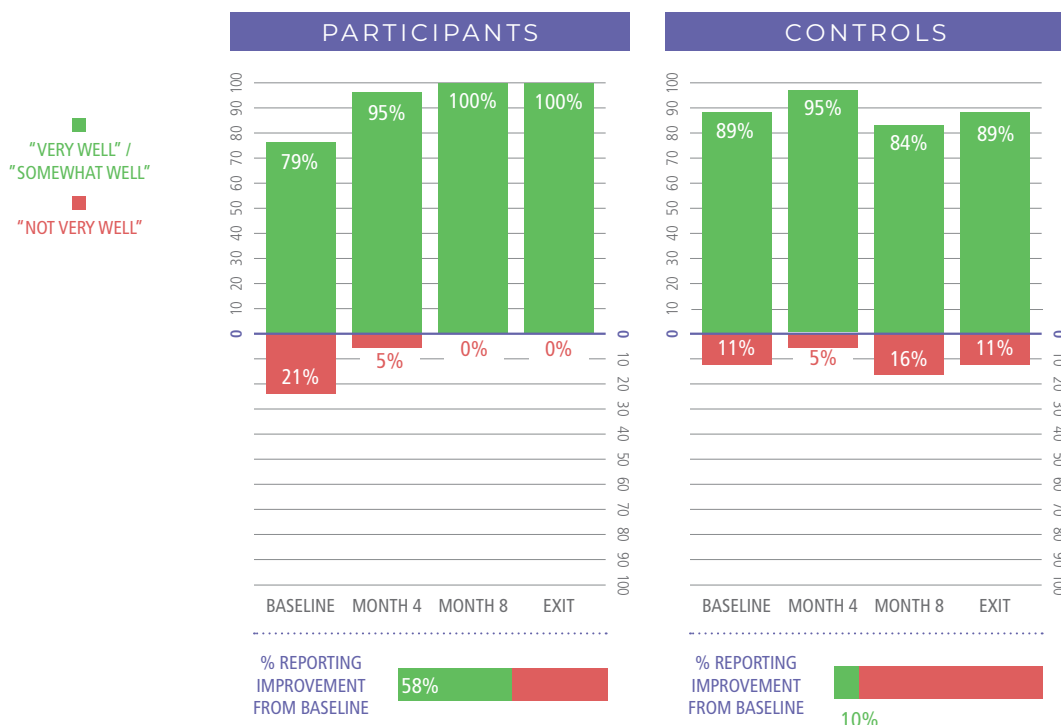


CHILDREN AND PARENTING

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"How well do you think you are handling the day-to-day demands of raising children?"





WORK AND LEARNING



The pay has made a lot of difference in my life. I was able to buy a few [pieces of] equipment for my start-up business."

One common question about basic income payments is whether they negatively impact recipients' work patterns. In this pilot, Participants receiving monthly payments did not reduce their work hours. In fact, they increased them slightly – from 31.7 hours per week at the outset to 36.5 at the end of the program. Weekly median earnings rose from \$600 to \$760, and the share of Participants working rose slightly from 63% to 68%. Most who were not working attributed it to being in school and/or a lack of childcare. For Controls, median earnings rose less, from \$600 to \$660.

Both groups displayed high aspirations for learning and career advancement. At the outset, 89% of Participants said they planned to enroll in an education or training program in the coming year. Following through on this, the share of Participants

enrolled as students rose from 37% at Baseline to 53% in February, before returning to 37% in May. Seventy-four percent of Controls planned to enroll in school at Baseline and 42% were already enrolled. This dipped to just 16% after three months but returned to 42% by the pilot's end.

Entrepreneurial aspirations followed a similar pattern. Throughout the program, 36%-42% of Participants hoped to start a business in the coming year. According to a Project Home staff member, this may be in part due to the monthly group meetings: "When we shared and celebrated moms who started their own business, many more came forward with great ideas they wanted to pursue in the future." For Controls, that share fell from 17% in June to 0% in October and 5% thereafter.

"How many hours a week do you usually work at all jobs?"

AVERAGE HOURS	BASELINE	MONTH 4	MONTH 8	EXIT
PARTICIPANTS	31.7	35.0	33.1	36.5
CONTROLS	31.3	33.2	34.0	36.8

PARTICIPANTS

% REPORTING
IMPROVEMENT
FROM BASELINE



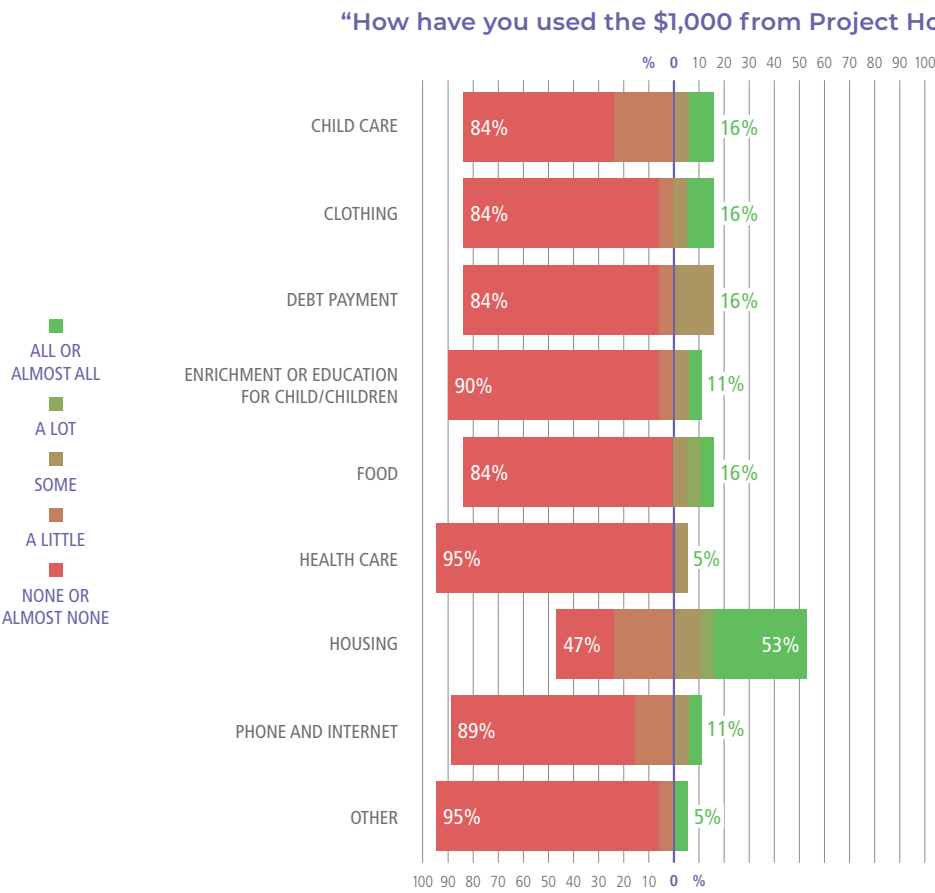
CONTROLS

% REPORTING
IMPROVEMENT
FROM BASELINE



SPENDING CATEGORIES

Participants were asked how they used the \$1,000 they received the previous month. In May 2024, housing was the largest spending category, followed by child care, clothing, food, and paying off debt. Health care was the lowest spending category, perhaps because most Participants were on MaineCare.



The first effect the payments had was on my household’s food security. I am required to pack my daughter’s lunches for daycare and provide 4-5 snacks, five days a week. Rather than deprive her of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other snacks with a higher nutritional value, I was going without those items to stay in our food stamps budget, which also meant that sometimes I was going without breakfast or lunch. A portion of each payment this year was spent on having enough nutritious and fresh food. This eventually had a positive impact on my own health and supported really prioritizing my physical health after discovering how high my risk is for chronic illness, especially cardiovascular disease.”

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

The results of this pilot suggest that basic income payments have the potential to help stabilize and empower low-income households in unique ways across many dimensions of financial, physical, and emotional well-being. These results also suggest questions for further inquiry.

- **How does the size of monthly payments affect their impact?**
For instance, how would payments of \$500 or \$750 compare to \$1000?
- **What happens when payments end? Do participants return to previous levels of instability and stress or do the benefits persist? For how long must payments last to achieve permanent benefits?**
- **What portion (if any) of the positive impacts documented in this report are attributable to the cohort and coaching services Participants received? What would be the impact of a program that delivered only these, and not a basic monthly income? Or only monthly income?**
- **All households in this pilot were headed by single mothers. Would the impact of basic monthly income differ for households of different compositions?**

To build on the results of this pilot, any future programs would benefit from an evaluation that includes a greater number of Participants and a randomly selected Control group that statistically matches the Participants. These changes would increase the evaluation's statistical validity and allow for a more nuanced understanding of the program's impact, including the impact of its various elements, such as the payments, cohorts, and coaching services.



CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the experiences of twenty individuals who participated in Project Home Trust's Basic Income Pilot Program, as reported by them in surveys taken every four months from June 2023 to May 2024.



It reduced the stress of thinking about how I will cover some of my expenses."

The results of this pilot suggest that basic income payments have the potential to help stabilize and empower low-income households in unique ways across many dimensions of financial, physical, and emotional well-being. These results also suggest questions for further inquiry.

- **How does the size of monthly payments affect their impact? For instance, how would payments of \$500 or \$750 compare to \$1000?**

- **What happens when payments come to an end? Do participants return to previous levels of instability and stress or do the benefits persist? For how long must payments last to achieve permanent benefits?**

- **What portion (if any) of the positive impacts documented in this report are attributable to the cohort and coaching services Participants received? What would be the impact of a program that delivered only these, and not a basic monthly income? Or only monthly income?**

- **All households in this pilot were headed by single mothers. Would the impact of basic monthly income differ for households of different compositions?**

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MISSION

to support and create quality housing opportunities for those in need in Maine because we understand that housing stability is the foundation for health and economic prosperity for low income people.

VISION

that every low income household has access to sustainable housing, good health and financial security.

QHC carries out its mission and vision through the Housing Equity Project - statewide housing policy education, and Project HOME, Maine's first housing navigation program specifically designed for all low income people with and without vouchers or rental assistance that removes poverty and voucher stigma and provides financial guarantees with year-long culturally and linguistically appropriate services for every resident. Once housed, Project HOME residents receive tailored in-home health services through, essential needs navigation, financial and professional navigation, and year-long eviction prevention support.

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