



**MAYORS FOR A
GUARANTEED
INCOME**



INTERIM BRIEF
Guaranteed Income
After One Year in Baltimore
Encouraging economic stability for young families



Authors:
Haisheng Yang
Hannah Thomas
Randall Juras

June 2024

CONTENTS

Authors + Acknowledgment

iii

Introduction

01

What Is BYFSF, and How Were Pilot Participants Selected?

02

Who Participated in the Pilot?

03

Evaluation Methods

04

What Outcomes Are Included in This Interim Brief?

05

How Did GI Affect Families' Lives During the First Year After Beginning to Receive Payments?

05

Incomes Increased for BYFSF Participants, but They Were Still Economically Vulnerable

Receiving GI helped Some BYFSF Families Move into More Independent Living Situations

BYFSF Participants Reported Being Less Stressed, and Emotional and Mental Health Might Have Improved

What Do These Results Mean?

10

AUTHORS & ACKNOWLEDGMENT



Supporting Team

Brittany Davis

Tresa Kappil

Emma Cocatre-Zilgien

Zoe Greenwood

Bry Pollack

Meryl Finkel



Authors



Haisheng Yang



Hannah Thomas



Randall Juras

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions to the interim brief, the research process and the larger guaranteed income pilot. Tresa Kappil and Brittany Davis for review of the brief drafts and oversight of the data collection and writing timeline. Bry Pollack for editing assistance. Emma Cocatre-Zilgien, Zoe Greenwood, Wyatt Bush, Terry Ceranski, and Michelle Kahnmann for their work in leading and supporting survey data collection and analysis. Christine Galarza, the Baltimore community research fellow, for her role in assisting with survey data collection. Meryl Finkel for quality assurance of the final product. Jeff Smith and Maria Claudia De Valdenebro for the layout and graphics of the interim brief.

This guaranteed income program and study was supported by Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs, the Kresge Foundation, the Abell Foundation, the France-Merrick Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CareFirst, Hoffberger Family Philanthropies, Open Society Institute – Baltimore, and the Zanyvl and Isabelle Krieger Fund. The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of those listed.

Most importantly, we would like to thank and acknowledge the participants who volunteered their time to respond to our surveys.





“The Baltimore Young Families Success Fund is, fundamentally, about putting our families in a position to succeed.”

-Mayor Brandon M. Scott

Guaranteed income after one year in Baltimore

Encouraging economic stability for young families

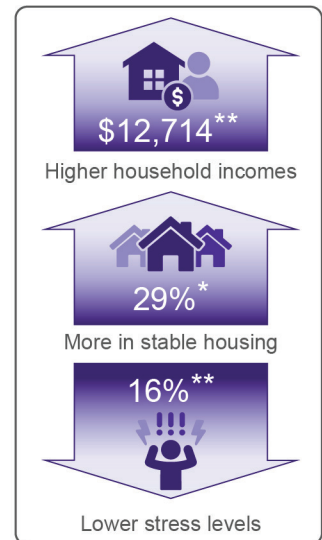
Introduction

In 2022, Mayor Brandon M. Scott launched the Baltimore Young Families Success Fund (BYFSF), a guaranteed income (GI) pilot program that would give 200 parents living with few economic resources and aged 18 to 24 an unconditional monthly cash payment of \$1,000 for two years.¹ Mayor Scott envisioned BYFSF as an innovative approach to alleviating poverty, addressing fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and combating Baltimore’s long history of redlining and racial segregation.

Designed in partnership with a steering committee, a group of nonprofit, foundation, and community and institutional leaders, BYFSF selected CASH Campaign of Maryland (CASH), a local non-profit, to administer the payment program. Abt Global, BYFSF’s research partner, designed an evaluation to understand whether GI might change participants’ lives. This interim brief reports how GI participants are faring during the first half of the pilot period compared with a similar group of Baltimore City residents who were not offered and did not receive the monthly cash payment (“control group”).

Overall, both the six-month and one-year data show that participating in BYFSF increased income, helped participants transition into more independent living situations, and improved mental and emotional health. These results, described in detail below, demonstrate early potential for GI as an intervention to improve the overall well-being of young families.

Exhibit 1. Outcomes for BYFSF participants differed from the control group after 6 months



* indicates differences were significant at $p < .10$
 ** indicates differences were significant at $p < .05$

¹ Of them, 130 were selected to participate in Abt’s study of the GI program; Baltimore funded an additional 70 families to be part of a “storytelling cohort” who were asked to share their experiences publicly.

This is reflected in one participant’s response to an open-ended survey item about how respondents planned to use the GI cash payment: *“Just trying to get on my feet as a single parent.”* Additional data being collected over the next year will help us further understand the experience of families enrolled in BYFSF, as well as explore whether improvements seen at this interim point can be sustained during the remainder of the program and after it ends.

What Is BYFSF, and How Were Pilot Participants Selected?

Mayor Scott, along with the steering committee, envisioned that BYFSF would improve the well-being of young families with low incomes in Baltimore. By giving them money directly, the intent was for young parents to be empowered to make financial decisions and investments in childcare, continued education, or housing as they needed.

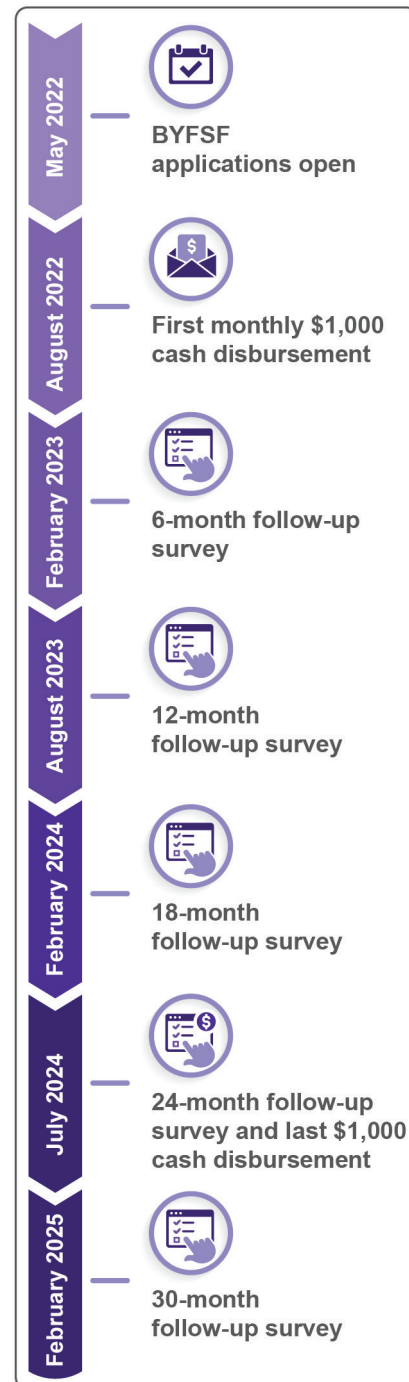
The BYFSF was designed for young families based on insights and recommendations from the steering committee, which delved into areas such as maternal health family involvement, healthcare, and other related areas.

By the end of the application period, 4,019 Baltimore parents had submitted an eligible application. The study then randomly selected 130 of these applicants to be offered the GI and participate in research activities.

CASH Campaign of MD provided benefits counseling and onboarded participants. The purpose of benefits counseling was to make potential participants aware of any possible loss of benefits—e.g., housing assistance, Social Security Income, or the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program—as a result of the increase in income from receiving a GI. Of the 130 applicants initially selected for the study, 23 could not be contacted, were not eligible, or decided not to participate. New families were randomly selected from the pool of eligible applicants to fill these slots.

GI payments were disbursed starting in August 2022. CASH Campaign of MD works with Steady, a financial technology company, to make monthly deposits into recipients’ bank accounts. If recipients do not want to or do not have access to a bank account, Steady provides a debit card that is reloaded every month with \$1,000.





Exhibit 2. BYFSF timeline



Who Participated in the Pilot?

The BYFSF targeted Baltimore City residents with full or partial caretaking responsibilities. Generally, young people aged 18 to 24 are at a phase of life with enormous opportunity as they launch into adulthood. As these opportunity youth move into more independence, they have the potential to link to training, workforce, and housing opportunities in ways that build meaning, stability, and the opportunity for social and economic mobility in their lives. This is harder when parenting a child, particularly a young child—as childcare is expensive and time, physical, and mental demands of caregiving are high.

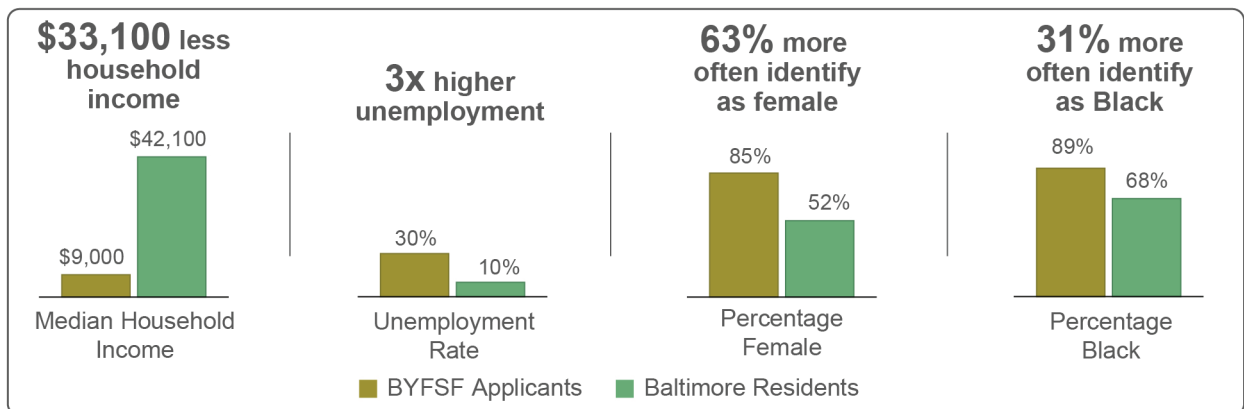
Exhibit 3. BYFSF Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility Requirements	
	Baltimore City residents
	Aged 18 to 24 at the time of application
	Full or partial caretaking responsibility
	Household income at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level

Baltimore’s opportunity youth have historically faced above-average unemployment—between 14 and 19 percent—compared with the city unemployment rate of 2.8 percent. In 2021, 16 percent of young adults aged 18-24 did not attend school or work and had no degree beyond high school, limiting their future employment opportunities.²

It is no surprise, then, that opportunity youth who applied to BYFSF face extreme economic difficulties. Despite receiving supplemental nutrition or income assistance, nearly 80 percent of BYFSF participants reported experiencing food insecurity in the past month. Household size varied between two and nine family members, with an average household size of three members.

Exhibit 4. BYFSF applicants faced more economic difficulties, were more likely to be female, and more likely to be Black than similarly aged Baltimore residents*



The Abt team constructed demographic estimates for Baltimore residents aged 18 to 24 using 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates from 2022.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). 2022 American Community Survey 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample. Retrieved from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums/2022/1-Year>

² Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, “Youth Not Attending School and Not Working by Age Group in Maryland” and “Young Adults Ages 18 to 24 Not Attending School, Not Working, and No Degree Beyond High School in Maryland.”



How participants thought about spending GI pilot cash when they applied to the program

When asked on surveys how they or others would spend the cash, participants reported struggling to cover the costs of basic needs. One said, “I know for me, I want to catch up on my rent and car note, since that’s the two highest bills I have.” One parent said, “I’ll spend mine 100% on childcare to better my son’s education, people skills, and to allow me the time to become a better mom.”

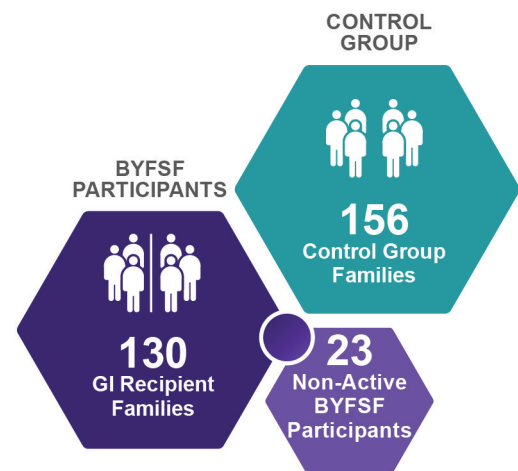
Evaluation Methods

The study of BYFSF uses an experimental research design to assess the impact of guaranteed income (GI). The study team randomly assigned eligible applicants either to the “BYFSF participant group” offered a GI or to a control group not offered a GI but who could access whatever other services and supports were available in the community. All BYFSF participants who accepted the GI offer and 156 randomly selected members of the control group have been asked to respond to follow-up surveys at 6-month intervals, which will continue through the end of the pilot. Together, the BYFSF participants and control group members make up the research sample.

The graphic shows the number of study members in the experimental groups. Note that not all study members in the BYFSF group receive a GI: 23 of the 153 BYFSF participants could not be contacted, proved to be ineligible, or declined the GI payment for various reasons such as the potential loss of Social Security or other benefits. These “Non-Active BYFSF Participants,” did not receive a GI but are included in our analysis as is standard practice in randomized experiments. This type of experiment is called an intent-to-treat research design.

The study team estimates impacts of the GI as the difference between the BYFSF participants’ mean outcomes and the control group’s mean outcomes, making statistical adjustments to account for study members leaving the sample over time. The control group’s experiences represent what would have happened without the intervention. The study’s [pre-specified analysis plan](#) identifies outcomes that best measure the program’s effect on BYFSF participants’ quality of life, mental and emotional well-being, and income and employment.

The study team uses classical statistical hypothesis tests to determine which impacts can be confidently attributed to the GI. In this interim brief, only findings with p-values of less than .05, which is a standard threshold, are described as **statistically significant**. Additional technical detail will be included in the final study report, this brief is intended as a preview of our final findings.



Some caveats to keep in mind:

- The findings presented here are preliminary and may be updated once we include analysis of interview data and future survey follow-ups.
 - Analysis of surveys fielded through 30 months, 6 months after the final GI disbursement, will provide more insight into whether and for how long the impacts of GI can be sustained.
 - In-depth qualitative interviews will highlight recipients' experiences and provide an understanding of the mechanisms that led to improvements observed in their lives.
- Impact estimates could be limited by small sample size.
 - The study's small research sample means that, for statistical reasons, GI would need to have large impacts through 12 months for the study to be able to detect them.
 - It is possible that BYFSF may have had affected more outcomes than are highlighted in this brief, but that the effect on those outcomes was too small to be flagged as statistically significant.

What Outcomes Are Included in This Interim Brief?

The study team surveyed BYFSF participants and control group members at the time of application and then again at 6 and 12 months after the first cash disbursement. The surveys asked respondents questions about their quality of life, physical, mental, and emotional well-being, income, paid and unpaid work, childcare arrangements, how they spent time with their children, and their children's access to healthcare.

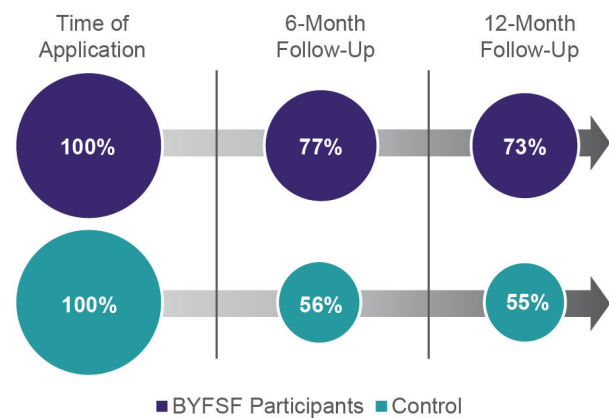
By contrasting the survey responses of the BYFSF participants with the responses of control group members we can assess how GI changes the lives of young parents participating in BYFSF.

Not all those sent surveys at the 6- and 12-month follow-ups completed them. Our analytic models used to estimate impacts include statistical controls to adjust for this non-response.

How Did GI Affect Families' Lives During the First Year After Beginning to Receive Payments?

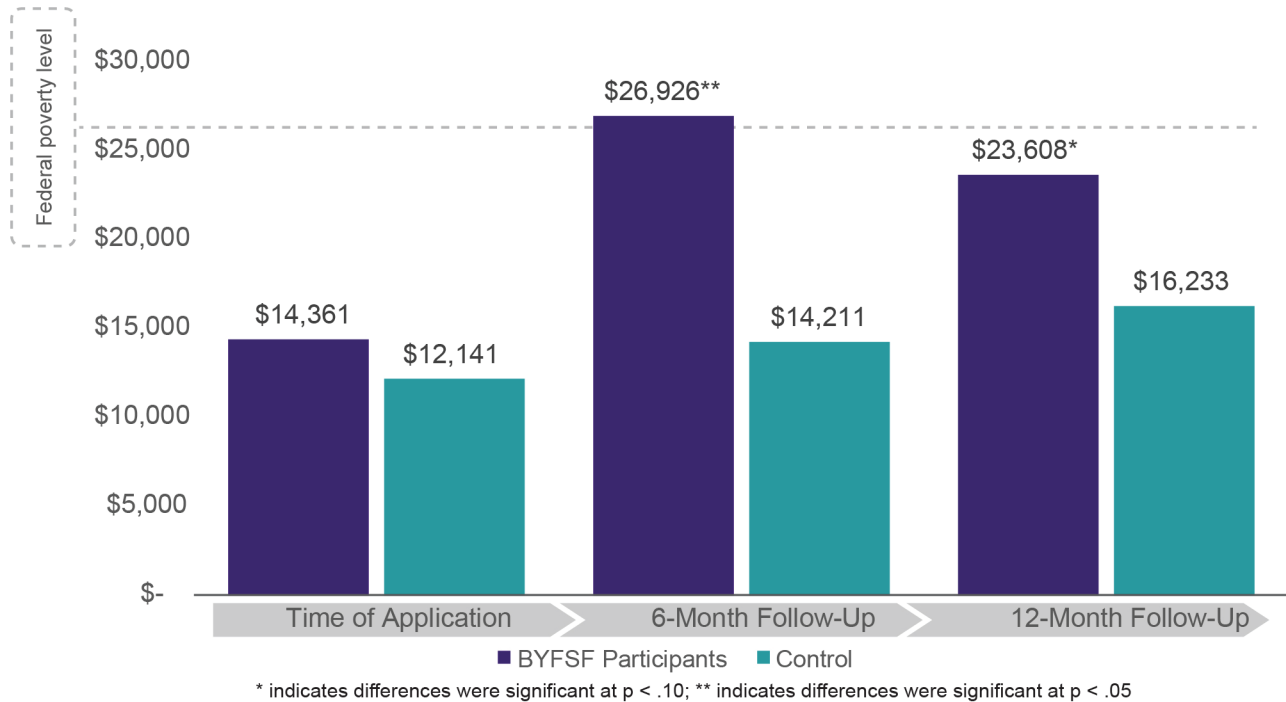
The initial findings suggest that BYFSF families are doing better than control group families one year into the pilot in three key areas: income, housing, and mental health. These results suggest progress towards the program's goal

Exhibit 5. Attrition Rates for BYFSF Participants and Control Group Members



to help stabilize young parents facing economic challenges and improve their overall household well-being. However, we cannot predict whether these gains will be sustained over the pilot's second year.

Exhibit 6. Household incomes increased for BYFSF participants



Incomes Increased for BYFSF Participants, but They Were Still Economically Vulnerable

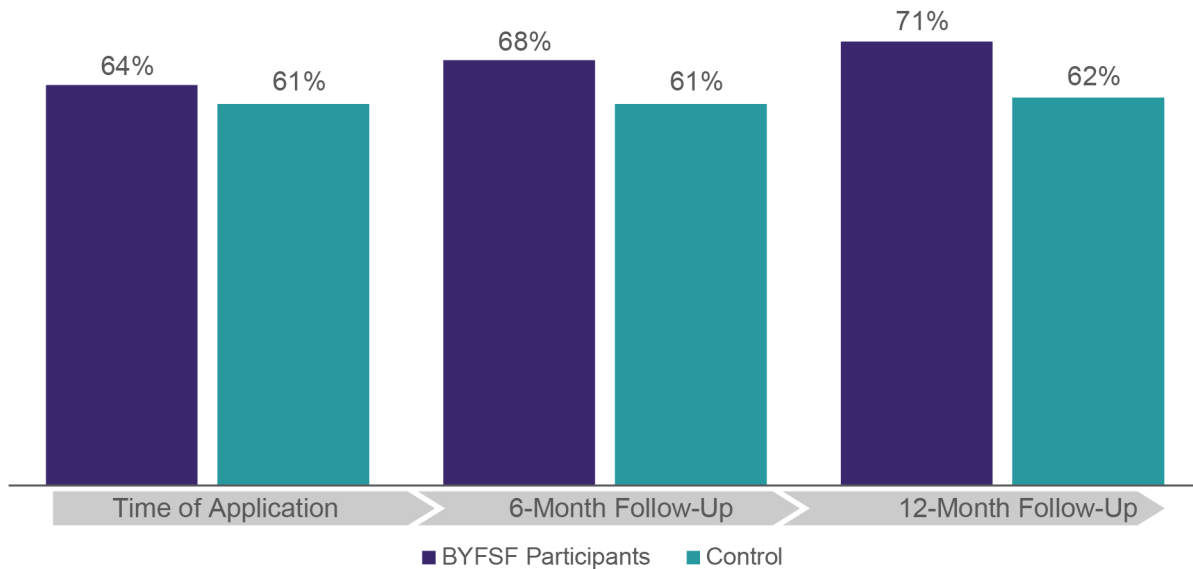
One of the goals of GI programs is to improve financial well-being. In Baltimore, halfway through the two-year pilot, household incomes increased across the entire research sample (both BYFSF participants and control group members). But incomes increased more for BYFSF participants than for the control group during the first year. At the beginning of the study, BYFSF participants and control group members had similar household incomes.

By the 6-month follow-up survey, BYFSF participants' household incomes were nearly 90 percent higher than control group members' household incomes (\$26,926 vs. \$14,211). After 12 months, BYFSF participants' household incomes remained higher than control group households' incomes, although slightly less so.

BYFSF participants' and control group members' levels of labor force participation remained stable over the first year of the study. At the 6-month mark, labor force participation increased since application for BYFSF participants and remained stable for control group members. While there is a 7 percentage point difference in labor force participation at 6 months, this difference is not statistically significant. By 12 months, labor force participation further increased for the BYFSF participants and the control group continued to remain stable, resulting in a non-significant 9 percentage point difference between the groups. These results suggest that BYFSF participants did not leave the work force once they started receiving a guaranteed income payment. However, we will continue to track income and labor force participation to see if any significant trends emerge.³

³ BYFSF participants may be experiencing fewer issues at work related to childcare. For instance, at 6 months, fewer BYFSF participants reported being fired from their job in the last year due to childcare issues. A full year into receiving the GI, BYFSF group members reported being less distracted at work due to childcare issues experienced in the past month. However, other measures indicate that BYFSF group members missed more work at 12 months because of childcare issues. As we continue gathering data, more clarity should emerge at the 18-, 24-, and 30-month follow-ups.

Exhibit 7. Receiving GI did not decrease labor force participation for BYFSF participants



Through the first year of the pilot, BYFSF participants remained economically vulnerable. At 6 months, they reported an average household income of \$26,926 and an average household size of three people, which is only about \$2,000 above the 2023 federal poverty level for a family of three.⁴ At 12 months, their average household income fell to \$23,608, approximately \$1,200 below the federal poverty level. Likewise, the unemployment rate for BYFSF participants, 12 months after the pilot started, remained about 2 to 3 times higher than the average unemployment of similar Baltimore residents.

That said, some BYFSF participants may be deciding to invest their GI in education, rather than use it to supplement their incomes. At the beginning of the study, 16 percent of BYFSF participants and control group members reported applying to college or a trade school; at 6 months, 24 percent and 15 percent did; and at 12 months, 27 percent and 13 percent did.⁵ Future analyses of data through the study's 30-month follow-up will begin to show whether these educational aspirations came to fruition.

Receiving GI helped Some BYFSF Families Move into More Independent Living Situations

Young people aged 18 to 24 are in the initial stages of adulthood, when they take up more independent living situations. Following this expected pattern, during the study period, both BYFSF participants and control group members moved away from living with friends or family and into rental units. However, this trend was more pronounced with BYFSF participants, suggesting the GI might have played an important role in facilitating increased independent housing stability. At time of application, 39 percent of BYFSF participants lived with friends or family and 52 percent rented.^{6, 7} At 6 months, the percentage of BYFSF participants members living with friends or family had fallen to 25 percent and the percentage renting had increased to 67 percent, a change that was marginally statistically different from the control group. This difference remained essentially unchanged through 12 months.

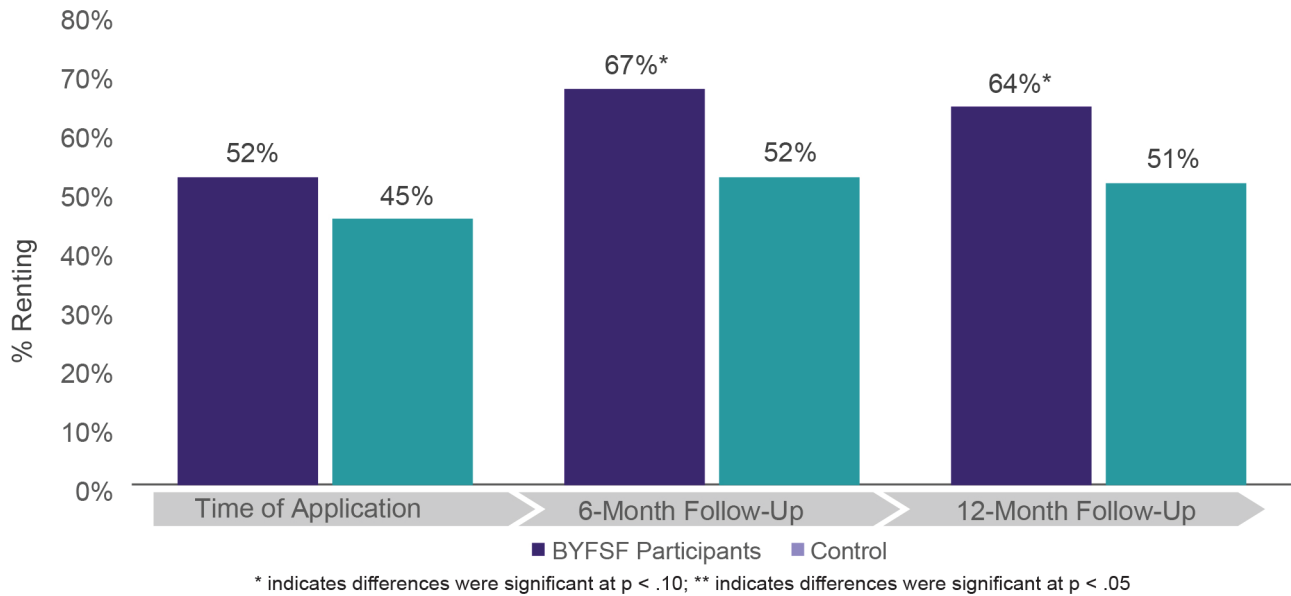
⁴ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "2023 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States," <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1c92a9207f3ed5915ca020d58fe77696/detailed-guidelines-2023.pdf>

⁵ At 12 months, this difference was marginally statistically significant at 12 months, with a p-value of 0.09. At 6 months, this difference was associated with a p-value of 0.18.

⁶ Housing outcomes are reported in the online appendix, Table C3.

⁷ At time of application, 4 percent of BYFSF participants reported experiencing homelessness and 4 percent of BYFSF participants reported living in public housing.

Exhibit 8. More BYFSF families moved into independent living situations faster than the control group



In another sign of housing stability among BYFSF participants, none reported being unhoused at the 6- or 12- month follow-up, compared with 2 and 5 percent of control group members, respectively.

BYFSF Participants Reported Being Less Stressed, and Emotional and Mental Health Might Have Improved

Financial stress is associated with poor mental health outcomes, a trend exacerbated for those who are unmarried, unemployed, and have low incomes. Financial stress mediates many other health outcomes. For BYFSF participants, receiving a GI increased their ability to cope with personal problems and exert control over their lives. When they applied for the GI program, BYFSF participants and control group members reported experiencing similar levels of stress, as measured by the Perceived Stress Scale, which rates stress on a scale of 0 to 16. By 6 months, BYFSF participants scored 1.2 points lower on the Perceived Stress Scale than at the time of application and had significantly lower stress scores than control group members.

Despite this decrease and difference, both BYFSF participants and control group members would be characterized as “moderately stressed.” Again, this difference remained essentially unchanged through 12 months. In addition to lower stress levels, BYFSF participants also reported higher levels of feeling like they matter to their family and peers.⁸

Health Outcomes

The City of Baltimore is particularly interested in better understanding whether BYFSF participants experience any improved health outcomes. No significant impacts were observed on any physical health outcomes after 6 or 12 months. Self-reported outcomes included: perceptions of general health, any issues with work or daily activities because of physical issues, whether physical health limited their ability to do typical activities. The research team will continue to track these outcomes at 18 and 24 months.

⁸ BYFSF participants and control group members were also asked questions about their physical health, but a year into receiving GI, no statistically differences were detected.

Exhibit 9. BYFSF participants reported lower scores on the Perceived Stress Scale

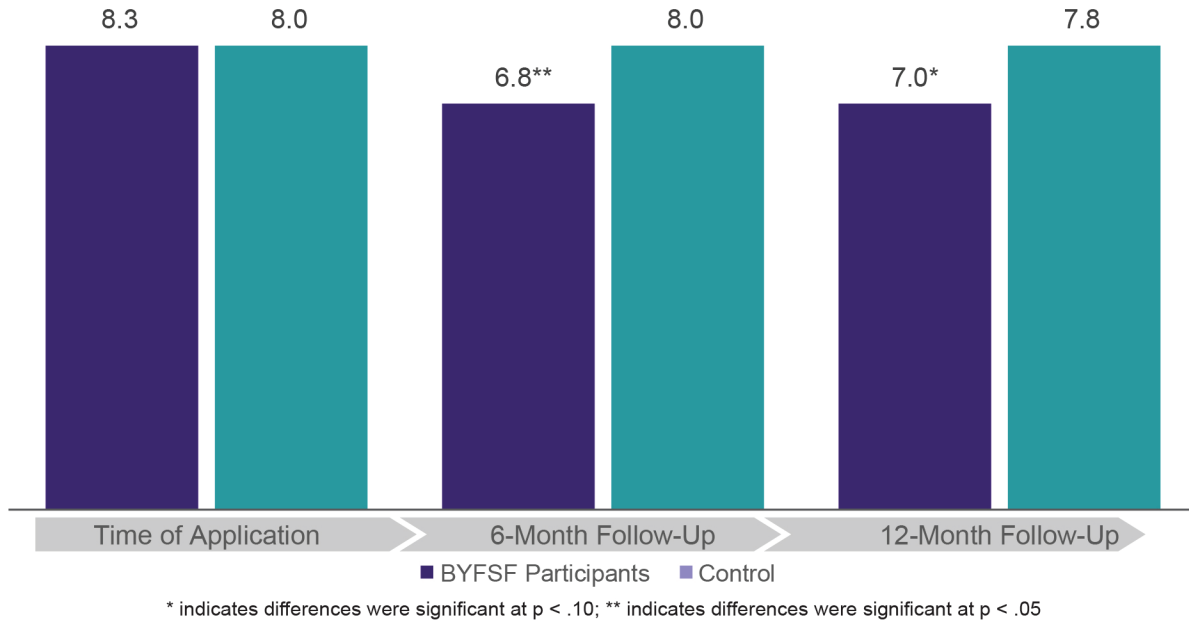


Exhibit 10. BYFSF participants had higher levels of mental and emotional well-being (various scales)

	BYFSF Participants	Control Group	Impact	Relative Impact (%)	Lower CI Bound	Upper CI Bound
Kessler 10: Psychological Distress^a						
6-Month Follow-Up	22.3	21.7	0.5	2.4	-2.2	3.2
12-Month Follow-Up	22.2	23.4	-1.3	-5.3	-4.2	1.7
Adult Hope Score^b						
6-Month Follow-Up	48.4	45.7	2.7	5.8	-0.8	6.1
12-Month Follow-Up	48.3	46.6	1.7	3.6	-1.8	5.1
General Mattering Scale^c						
6-Month Follow-Up	78.6	71.1	7.5**	10.5	0.7	14.3
12-Month Follow-Up	80.7	71.0	9.7**	13.6	1.7	17.6

CI=95% confidence interval

* indicates differences were significant at p < .10; ** indicates differences were significant at p < .05

- ^a Kessler Psychological Distress Scale is intended to measure the level of psychological distress an individual experiences. Kessler, R. C., Barker, P. R., Colpe, L. J., Epstein, J. F., Gfroerer, J. C., Hiripi, E., Howes, M. J., Normand, S.-L. T., Manderscheid, R. W., Walters, E. E., & Zaslavsky, A. M. (2003). Screening for serious mental illness in the general population. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60(2), 184–189. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.60.2.184>.
- ^b The Adult Hope Scale uses a cognitive measure of hope and combines two subscales: 1) Agency, an individual's energy towards pursuing goals, and 2) Pathways, ability to plan and accomplish goals. Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., et al. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 570-585.
- ^c The Interpersonal Mattering scale is intended to measure how important individuals perceive themselves to be to others. Elliott, G., Kao, S., & Grant, A. M. (2004). Mattering: Empirical validation of a social-psychological concept. *Self and Identity*, 3(4), 339-354.



Parent Engagement and Child Healthcare Access

We also collected data from parents on how they spent time with their children and whether their children had medical access when needed. One year in, we do not see any statistically significant impacts. We will continue to track these outcomes through 6 months after the final GI payment.



What Do These Results Mean?

The findings described above suggest that guaranteed income improved at least some aspects of life for Baltimore Young Families Success Fund families at the mid-point of the pilot, including income, housing independence, stress, and mental well-being. However, there are other measures that GI did not seem to affect, such as physical health, childcare opportunities, and financial well-being. Importantly, BYFSF participants maintained similar levels of work as the control group, suggesting that receiving a GI payment did not influence BYFSF participants' decisions to work.

As a two-year pilot, BYFSF is positioned to help the broader field understand the impact of a longer period of GI payments on family outcomes. The study team will revisit all of the outcomes described in this interim brief at the 18- and 24-month follow-ups to understand whether existing impacts of the GI persist, and whether gains emerge for any additional outcomes. The 30-month survey will allow us to understand whether any gains endure beyond the end of the pilot, an important policy question.

The investments made now through GI could help break the cycles of structural poverty and discrimination these young families experience as they launch into young adulthood, propelling them into a brighter future. Halfway through the GI pilot, this report shows promising results for BYFSF helping recipients keep their jobs, become independent, and improve their mental

and emotional health, an important benefit for children in the household.

In the next two years, the study team will continue collecting and analyzing outcome data from the research sample, including conducting interviews with a sample of families receiving GI. This data will help policy makers understand the long-term impact of a GI on young Baltimore families and provide insight into whether and how those families used the GI to change their lives.

