



OpenResearch

Who Are Our Participants?

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Our Partners

First and foremost, participants are our partners in this research. We are grateful they chose to participate in the study and share their lives with us. The quality of the data and its effectiveness at informing future policy depend entirely on participants' willingness to take part in the research and thoughtfully share their experiences. Building trust, respect, and communication channels with participants was central to our approach and incorporated in every aspect of implementation. Highlighting their experiences as we share our findings is equally important.

Participant Characteristics at a Glance¹

Demographics at the time of enrollment (3,000 total participants)

Income Level	Other Characteristics
<p>33% under federal poverty level (FPL)</p> <p>43% between 100% and 200% of FPL</p> <p>24% above 200% of FPL</p> <p>\$29,900 average household income</p>	<p>57% had at least 1 child</p> <p>20% had a college degree</p> <p>42% were under 30 years old (all between ages of 21–40)</p> <p>67% identified as female</p>
Geography Type	Race
<p>13% rural</p> <p>18% suburban</p> <p>16% medium urban</p> <p>53% large urban</p>	<p>47% White (non-Hispanic)</p> <p>30% Black (non-Hispanic)</p> <p>22% Hispanic</p>

Enrollment into the Study

Eligibility Criteria

We partnered with local nonprofits in Illinois and Texas to recruit participants for the study. Before recruiting participants, we outlined a series of eligibility criteria. Individuals had to:

1. Reside in one of 19 study counties in Texas and Illinois

¹The federal poverty level is a measure of income issued every year by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Department of HHS calculates the federal poverty level using income before taxes and adjusts it for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Federal poverty levels are used by the U.S. Government to determine an individuals' eligibility for certain programs and benefits. For more information about HHS Poverty Guidelines see: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.

2. Be between the ages of 21 and 40
3. Have a total household income that did not exceed 300% of the federal poverty level
4. Not currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or live in public housing, as the unconditional cash could put benefits in jeopardy



Individuals in this age range are more likely to be at a stage of life where they are making decisions around work, education, relationships, and family formation that could shape their lives for years to come. Unconditional cash transfers could affect their decisions, providing the support needed to pursue new opportunities if they wish. Focusing on this age group helps address key questions related to employment and economic stability, as they are more likely to be active in the workforce.

Income eligibility was determined by participants' total household income during the year prior to enrolling in the study. The chart below shows the federal poverty levels by household size for 2019, the year prior to enrollment for most participants. The household income of roughly 33% of participants was below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL), 43% had incomes between 100% and 200% of FPL, and 24% had incomes above 200% of FPL.

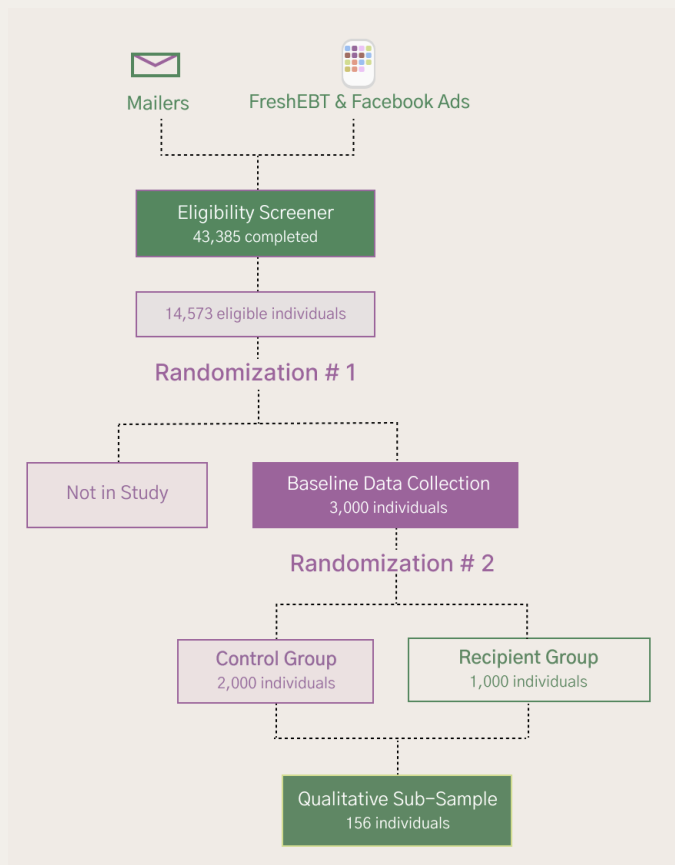
Household Size	100% FPL (2019)	200% FPL (2019)	300% FPL (2019)
1	\$12,490	\$24,980	\$37,470
2	\$16,910	\$33,820	\$50,730
3	\$21,330	\$42,660	\$63,990
4	\$25,750	\$51,500	\$77,250
5	\$30,170	\$60,340	\$90,510
6	\$34,590	\$69,180	\$103,770
7+	\$39,010	\$78,020	\$117,030

Additionally, individuals who received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), lived in public housing or had a Section 8 voucher (also called Housing Choice Voucher) or other housing subsidy, and lived in households in which another member received SSI were not eligible to participate. Receiving the cash transfers could jeopardize individuals' eligibility for housing assistance and SSI, and getting back on these benefits is difficult and may take years. Losing this assistance could cause permanent harm.

Recruitment

We reached out to potential participants in three ways. The first was a mailer sent to residences within the 19 study counties across Texas and Illinois. This letter invited them to take part in a cash assistance program where they could receive “\$50 or more” each month if chosen to participate. A vast majority (87%) of participants were recruited in this way.

The other two methods of participant outreach were targeted ads on Facebook and FreshEBT, an app that many Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients use to manage their benefits. These ads were targeted based on geography and age. 1% of participants were recruited via Facebook and 12% were recruited through FreshEBT.



Randomizations

Eligibility and Enrollment

Over 43,000 people filled out the intake survey, and roughly 14,500 respondents met the eligibility criteria for the program. From this group, we randomly assigned individuals to be enrolled in the study, ensuring representation in participant characteristics like age, race, income, and geographic location. We began enrolling participants in person and administering surveys in the fall of 2019.² Enrolling all 3,000 participants took approximately one year.

² Midway through enrollment, COVID-19 necessitated a transition to enrolling participants over the telephone.

Recipient and Control Participants

After all participants were enrolled, we randomly assigned participants to one of two groups: one that would receive a \$1,000 monthly unconditional cash transfer (recipient group) and one that would receive \$50 per month (control group). Everyone had equal odds (1 out of 3) of being randomly assigned to the \$1,000 recipient group. This process yielded recipient and control groups that were balanced and representative.