



# HudsonUP

## Basic Income Pilot:

### Year Two Report

**Leah Hamilton, MSW, PhD**

HudsonUP Principal Investigator  
Associate Professor, Appalachian State University  
Senior Fellow, Jain Family Institute

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# Executive Summary

The HudsonUP basic income pilot launched in the Fall of 2020 with 25 low to mid income residents of the city of Hudson, NY, who are receiving an unconditional \$500 per month for five years. A second cohort of 50 individuals launched in the Fall of 2021. While many basic income pilots are currently launching across the United States, HudsonUP is unique in its length; most current pilots are designed to last twelve to twenty-four months. This gives researchers a unique opportunity to study the longer-term effects of basic income on the trajectory of recipient lives. The following report represents quantitative and qualitative outcomes for recipients in the pilot's second year. Surveys and qualitative interviews were conducted in two "waves," and will continue biannually. In year two of the pilot, recipients participated in surveys ( $n=27$ ) and interviews ( $n=24$ ) in January and February of 2022, and again in July 2022 (surveys=21, interviews=19). Future annual reports will continue to follow outcomes for these cohorts as well as the third cohort of 53 individuals, which launched in Fall 2022.

## Key Findings:

- Full and part-time employment rates increased across both cohorts:
  - Employment rates for Cohort One are 72% above baseline and 150% above baseline for Cohort Two, meaning that while a third of participants were working in Cohort One before payments began, half are working now. In Cohort Two, while 16% were working before payments began, 40% are now employed.
- Increased self-reported savings among both cohorts
- Steady improvements in health
- Emergent qualitative themes:
  - Experiences of external instability due to pandemic and inflation
  - Financial stability due to HudsonUP despite external uncertainty
  - Physical and mental health stability
  - Progress towards long-term goals
  - Positivity about universal basic income
  - Increased connectedness and generosity

# Background

A small but diverse community of approximately 6,000 residents, Hudson, NY, is, in some ways, an archetype of small-town America. Globalization and outsourced manufacturing left many residents unemployed in the 1970s and 1980s. In recent years, however, Hudson has become something of a tourist destination due to its historical architecture and proximity to New York City, bringing growth in tourism-related service sector employment, which now represents nearly [one in four](#) local jobs. The service industry has provided Hudson with a lower unemployment rate than the national average but also brings lower wages, fewer benefits, and greater job insecurity, especially with the lingering effects of the global pandemic and inflation. As a result, Hudson's [median](#) annual household income between 2015 and 2019 was \$39,346 with a 23% poverty rate (twice the national rate of 11%).

Today, Hudson boasts a thriving antique and artistic community, but the city's economic growth has not been equal across social groups. Living at or below the [federal poverty level](#) are 14% of white households, 20% of Black households, 35% of Asian households, and nearly 25% of Latinx [Hudson households](#). A quarter of local children live in poverty. [Hudson also has](#) twice the national rate of persons with disabilities (18% vs. 9%). Only 65% of households have access to broadband internet, compared to 80% nationally. Gentrification has also created a housing affordability crisis, with [one-third of households](#) in Hudson's larger Columbia County classified as [rent-burdened](#), spending 30% or more of their income on housing each month, compared to one-quarter of households nationally.

To address the economic realities of an unstable employment sector and growing inequality, local nonprofit leaders in Hudson, NY launched HudsonUP, a five-year basic income (BI) pilot project with 25 recipients in the fall of 2020. The project is funded and administered through a partnership between the Eutopia Foundation, The Spark of Hudson, the Humanity Forward Foundation, and the Greater Hudson Promise Neighborhood. In the fall of 2021, an additional 50 participants were added. In fall of 2022, a third cohort of 53 individuals also began receiving five years of support from HudsonUP. Now serving 128 individuals, the HudsonUP pilot will support [approximately](#) 2% of all Hudson residents, nearly 5% of Hudson households, and 9% of residents living in poverty. HudsonUP therefore now constitutes an important piece of the social safety net in the city of Hudson.

Decades of research [consistently associate](#) basic income or regular cash-support policy with decreased poverty, little to no change in employment, increased school enrollment and attendance among the children of recipients, more positive family interactions, and

improved mental and physical health. It also comes without the [disincentives](#) for income and asset development that plague modern American safety net programs that are heavily means-tested to phase out rapidly with increased income.

From the perspective of HudsonUP leadership, the aim of the pilot is twofold:

1. To empower participants to craft their own financial futures, without the interference of paternalistic policy and cumbersome bureaucracy;
2. To demonstrate the transformational potential of basic income programs in the long term as few pilots have taken such a longitudinal approach.

These goals informed a pilot design that emphasized agency and unconditionality for pilot recipients, forming a unique case study to contrast with some existing safety net programs. The results from the pilot can shed light on how a similarly-structured basic income program would function in other localities across the US. Please see the [appendices](#) for more details on our selection methodology and research design.

## Year Two Findings

### Cohort One

The participants in the HudsonUP pilot represent a wide breadth and depth of human experience. From college students to retirees, the participants offer a snapshot of life in Hudson and the country as a whole. Demographically, they represent an array of racial, gender, and educational backgrounds. Of the 14 participants who completed the online survey at wave one, six identify as White (including one Latinx), six as Black, and one as Asian (one respondent declined to report their race). The majority of participants (11) are female, two are male, and one person is non-binary. In terms of education, one person has not completed high school, four hold a high school diploma or GED, three attended some college, five hold either an Associates or Bachelor's degree, and one holds a postgraduate degree. Five were currently pursuing further education.

In the fourth wave of data collection, in the Summer of 2022, 10 Cohort One participants completed the quantitative survey, and 12 completed an interview with the Principal Investigator. In general, Cohort One appears to be reaching a certain amount of personal and financial stability. However, the ongoing pandemic, inflation, and economic instability have significantly affected their lives. For example, at wave three in Winter 2022, their average savings had increased by almost 44% above baseline but had declined to only 5% above baseline by summer 2022. This is consistent with national trends in which personal savings rates [dropped](#) by more than 50% between December, 2021 and July, 2022. Other

improvements appear to be stabilizing, such as employment. At both waves in 2022, employment had increased by nearly 75% from baseline. Their general health has also fluctuated but overall improved by approximately 13.5% above baseline. Again, it is likely that the ongoing pandemic and increasing inflation in 2022 (which was noted qualitatively by most participants) continues to affect their overall financial and personal stability. It is important to continue tracking this group's outcomes in the long term to better understand the role of HudsonUP and other external environmental factors.

## Cohort Two

In the fall of 2021, the HudsonUP pilot introduced a second cohort with 50 additional participants. Of those, 23 expressed initial interest in participating in the formal research process. Ultimately, 15 participants completed the baseline survey, and 12 completed an interview with the Principal Investigator. In the summer of 2022, 11 completed the online survey, and seven completed an interview with the Principal Investigator. Like Cohort One, Cohort Two includes a diverse representation of the Hudson community. Respondents range in age from 24 to 67, with an average age of 42. In terms of education, three respondents reported having less than a high school education (20%), three held a high school diploma or GED (20%), four had some college but no degree (26.6%), one held an associates degree (6.6%), three held a bachelor's degree (20%), and one held an advanced degree (6.6%). In terms of race and ethnicity, one participant identified as Asian (6.6%), seven as African American (46.7%), three as "other" (Guyanese and Jamaican) (20%), and five as White (33.3%). Participants were allowed to choose multiple racial categories, and no participants indicated Hispanic/Latinx ethnicity. Five respondents identified as male, nine as female, and one as non-binary. Participants reported an average monthly income of about \$673 and an average savings of \$1,741.93. Finally, in terms of employment, four respondents (25%) were working part-time, two were working full-time (12.5%), and five (31.2%) were unemployed for reasons other than retirement or disability.

## Financial Precarity and Stress Before HudsonUP

Before turning to the emerging themes in year two of the pilot, we will first discuss the experiences of Cohort Two in the Winter of 2022, collected only a couple of months into their payments with the pilot. An overwhelming theme of Wave 1 interviews with Cohort Two was the financial stress and economic precarity they experienced before joining HudsonUP. Participants described their financial strain in the following ways. "[Finances] affected us [in] that we had nothing. Living on one check is definitely not a way to go," "I worried a lot," "[Our budget] was tight. We cut back on so much just to make sure that we covered our bills...very little on the extra stuff," and "there's that blanket of stress that is constantly looming over us." One participant who had recently been released from prison

explained that they “struggle day to day, but I just see it like I’m in a better place than where I was at, as far as me being in prison... And I won’t never do nothing to go back. So I’d rather be broke than living there with money.” A parent explained that “[our] kids couldn’t do things that they wanted to do. I have to tell them like certain things they wanted to participate in they couldn’t because well we got to pay the light bill this week and we got to pay this this week. And it was never anything extra.”

Several participants had chronic or acute health conditions that affected their finances. For example, one father explained that after an injury at work, his ability to provide for his family changed dramatically. “I’m used to working. Used to be able to move around, and then I hurt my back and that all changed. I wasn’t the breadwinner of the family. I couldn’t just go out and get a job to help my family. So I was relying on public assistance and I was relying on unemployment. Then unemployment stopped. And I’m still not getting paid from worker’s comp, so I had zero income. No income at all.” One young immigrant explained that “[finances] affect us many different ways, because we have family members in [our home country] so we have to send money to, plus my mom, when she came to America, she didn’t get a chance to finish her school, because I had a health condition.” Another participant who had been waiting to be approved for a worker’s compensation claim explained that “I was to the point where I was ready to just say, forget this case and I’m just going to have to deal with the pain of my back of me standing or sitting. I would’ve had to deal with that just to get some money in the house...I have to do something to feed my family.” One mother who was unable to work while caring for a child with severe disabilities, explained that “my daughter, my eight year old is disabled. So getting [disability support] services is really difficult.”

Some participants had health conditions that were intermittent, making it difficult to hold a steady job. For example, they explained that “[jobs] never last because my body’s like... Sometimes I wake up where I can move like a 30-year-old. Some days I wake up where I can’t move like a hundred-year-old,” “It’s kind of off and on. Sometimes, I can get up and move around, and do what I have to do, and stuff like that, but then sometimes when it hit me real bad, then I have to relax, and get on my heating pad,” and “there is a lot of people like me, that I could go work, but who’s to say how long it’s going to last?” One participant whose husband has a chronic health condition explained how difficult it is to receive public benefits due to the recurrent nature of his illness. “It’s [public assistance] bad because everything goes off of what you earn. So if he doesn’t go in for those days, like in housing, for instance, it goes by, okay, he’s supposed to do 40 hours a week, but if he gets sick and he’s out for two or three days out of that week, he’s not making that same amount.”

Some participants had experienced severe declines in their income due to COVID. They explained that “It all started in April when I had got sick...Got COVID. Everything was just terrible. It’s me, my fiance, and my kids in one little room,” and “I’m currently still

*unemployed, unfortunately. We're both performers. And so obviously, the pandemic wasn't kind to us...our industry shut down and then we went through our savings pretty quick."* Another explained that *"Once the pandemic hit it really...That really took a lot of the wind out of my sails. I'm still pretty behind on my electric."*

For many participants, their finances had been exacerbated by the high cost of living in Hudson. According to Zillow.com, the average home value in Hudson has increased nearly 30% from \$260,638 in July, 2020 to \$330,996 in July, 2022. Participants explained that *"it's kind of challenging because the price of rent up here is so much. It used to be... A lot of people moved from the city up here because it was cheaper. But up here is getting just as expensive,"* *"I went to a guy and I asked him how much was a one-bedroom. He told me I needed \$5,800 just to move in. I almost fainted,"* and *"I think right now in Hudson, the biggest problem is the lack of job opportunities, prices have risen, especially for homes. Rent is insane. If we didn't live in affordable housing, there's no way."* When asked about their savings, most reported that they had little to no money set aside for emergencies or retirement. For example, *"My retirement is not very good. I guess it [my plan] was just to try and find some part-time work and try to put some money away, but I haven't really been able to so far,"* and *"No [I didn't have savings]. I want to open up me a savings account but I just can't get ahead. Every time something come up."*

These participants described HudsonUP as a lifeline; most of them experienced severe financial insecurity (average incomes of \$1700 per month) and had very little savings before the pilot (\$670 in average savings). For example, participants stated that *"I do really thank God and thank my sister up above that I got the chance to even be in this opportunity to get this extra help. And it's like, all right, well now is your time to shine. You need to do what you got to do,"* *"It was just...this little boost of sunshine,"* *"When I had got the call that I had won the lottery, that was basically like a God's gift. Because...I had nothing,"* *"It's helping me out a lot. It's giving me something to look forward to...I was able to get Christmas gifts and stuff like that. So yeah, I'm grateful,"* *"Right now, I'm not going to lie, HudsonUP is saving my life in a way,"* *"It's [HudsonUP] more of help than anything because without it, I would be totally screwed. I would be going, woop, woop, bonkers, because it's like, I really don't got no money,"* *"HudsonUP gave me hope,"* *"HudsonUP right now is reassuring me that basically...It's put hope in my heart,"* *"Even if we're not touching it, it's nice to know that this is accumulating as a savings just in case anything goes down and we need some emergency help,"* and *"I'm totally grateful. And I think that it's really helped me keep my head above water."*

## Experiences with Traditional Public Assistance

Many HudsonUP participants have had experiences with traditional public assistance programs such as Disability Insurance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,



and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. For many participants, these experiences had been either positive or neutral, with most expressing gratitude for any help available to them. For example, they explained that *“they [DSS] helped me out in a nice little bit,” “[My experience is] always positive. It helps out a lot. I mean, if I didn't have it then I'll probably be way more stressed than I already am,” “As soon as you apply, you could get a response or you could go to the building, and [it] definitely helped out,” “I said the little bit they give me I thank God for it. I ain't going to say it pay all my bills but I try to get most of them,” “In some ways it did help us so I wouldn't say it's negative. Definitely made a difference in some way or another. I wouldn't say the impact was dramatic, but I would say it definitely did help us out,” and “They were super helpful for sure...SNAP was super helpful. It turns out most of our money is spent at the grocery store.”*

For other participants, their experiences with traditional assistance programs had been more negative due to harmful experiences with staff. One participant explained that *“I get discouraged easily...I don't get no food stamps or nothing, because they used to give me the runaround. They would tell me, ‘Do this.’ I do it. Then it's, ‘Do this, do this, do this, do this.’ Then they get mad with me. Like a lot of them, not just me, but I'm just saying, I see how their attitude is towards people. I'm like, that's kind of foul, because you guys are acting like that money's coming, that food stamp is coming out of your pocket.”* Another explained that due to the dehumanizing experience she had with public assistance workers decades earlier, she had never applied for another program until HudsonUP. *“I have never, no matter how down and out I've ever been since then, I've never asked for help from anybody.”*

Other participants described the negative incentives created by income and asset limits of many programs. For example, one woman was unable to build savings or participate in mainstream banking because *“when I was doing DSS, you couldn't have no bank account...You couldn't put no money in no savings, or checking, or something like that, or they will find out about it.”* Others said *“I still receive some food stamps. So it does help a little, although transitioning, once you have become employed and are no longer eligible for the program, I think that's horrible. They don't transition, they just cut you off,” “It's like, once you are able to get a job and things like that, you no longer meet their requirements. It's like, okay, well, we can't help you no more. Instead of helping you get a little bit further ahead so that you could have a little cushion and don't have to worry about being back in a situation where you have to depend on them anymore,” and “When you're homeless...they don't give you an opportunity to save so that when you're no longer homeless so that you can come out of that homeless situation, that makes it almost impossible if you don't have other programs to help you.”*

## Long-Term Goals

Finally, we spoke with Cohort Two participants about their goals over the next five years of the pilot. They described their dreams of building savings and reducing debt, pursuing higher education, being able to retire, gaining stable employment, starting or growing a small business, and owning a home. For example, one mother explained that her goal was to *“own my own home, start my own business that I can do and still be at home with my daughter.”* Some of the participants were trying not to use their HudsonUP funds, instead, treating it like a savings account for their future goals. For example, they said *“that’s [HudsonUP] a little extra for life. That’ll be like a savings,”* *“it’s nice to have the HudsonUP payments as a bit of a safety in the back of our minds. We’re trying to not touch it as best we can,”* *“We’re trying to as best we can not touch the HudsonUP payments so that it can be a hidden savings in the background,”* and *“I’ve obviously used it. I’ve been trying not to. I’m trying to use it only when necessary.”*

Interestingly, many of the young people in the pilot, some of whom were the children of immigrants, described a desire to launch into independence, but were carrying additional responsibilities to care for their aging parents and siblings. For example, one graduate student described her goal of completing her education and gaining stable employment. *“I think growing up, my parents would emphasize that, ‘You have to go to school, you have to get an education. You can’t be where I am. You guys can’t be like this.’ So I think that was my driving force growing up.”* Another young participant described his goal of buying a home for himself, his mother, and his younger siblings. *“The goal was, if I could get all the money together I was going to put a down payment on the house....That’s my plan, but now you guys [HudsonUP] become bigger my plan, because since I won and I have the ability to save money, so that’s my plan.”*

## Emergent Themes: Year Two

### External Uncertainty

In the Summer of 2022, the Principal Investigator interviewed both cohorts again. As mentioned above, many HudsonUP participants described being significantly affected by larger economic events, including the ongoing pandemic and inflation. For example, one student participant explained that *“Everything is kind of pricey. Especially with gas and all that on the rise....I’m taking a break from school so I can work.”* One participant who cares for her aging mother explained that *“with the price of gas, I go through almost half a tank going up [to my mother’s home] and back.”* Another explained that even though she had been saving most of her HudsonUP funds to buy a home, she was planning to defer that

plan until the housing market cooled: *“We have inflation. The housing market here is...just out of reach. And so, you know what? If it's not my time, it's not my time.”* Instead, she planned to continue building savings in the interim, *“having some money to fall back on or for emergencies that come up is so much more important right now than a house.”*

For some participants, uncertainty came from individual circumstances in their own lives, including attending graduate school, recovering from serious medical emergencies, caretaking for ill family members, or ending unhealthy relationships. One graduate student who was also responsible for several family members with medical needs explained that *“it's just a struggle to balance everything.”*

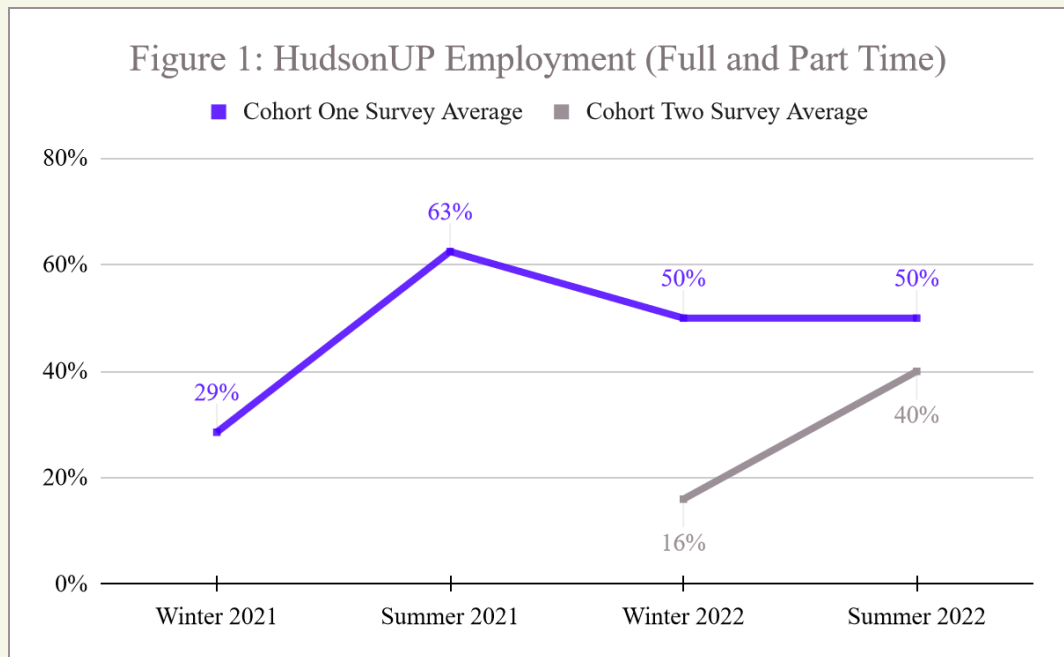
Several participants remained affected by the uncertainty created by other public assistance programs: For example, one participant feared that a \$2 raise at work would end her health care benefits. Other participants were still recovering financially from the end of extended federal unemployment. One older participant was anxiously waiting on a local non-profit who had promised to help with back due rent. A participant who rents a poorly-maintained apartment worried about being evicted if she complained about the condition of her housing, as she had seen happen to a neighbor. In another instance, a veteran had been on the waiting list for subsidized housing for many months.

## “The Undercurrent of Stability”

Despite the uncertainty they felt, an overarching theme for many participants was gratitude for what one participant described as *“the undercurrent of stability.”* Others explained that *“I'm grateful that I can just stay afloat in the economy the way it is”* and *“I had been trying to save up an emergency fund with the HudsonUP grant, and I managed to save up a little...Last month was the first time I had to pull from it to be able to cover my rent, because I just wasn't making it. I was a little sad because I was really hoping I could just keep adding it up. But at the same time, I was so glad I just had somewhere to pull from.”* Overwhelmingly, participants expressed that HudsonUP had created stability in their lives. When asked about changes in their finances, employment, health, or housing, most replied along the lines of one participant who simply said *“there haven't really been any changes. It's just useful having extra money, to be honest.”* An artist explained that even though art sales can be seasonal and unpredictable, having HudsonUP afforded her greater stability in those periods of uncertainty: *“In the past three months I've just had nothing. Everything's just nosedived...Every day I'm like, oh man, I'm so glad I got [HudsonUP]... I try to think of my situation if I didn't have that, and how would I just be figuring it out? It reminds me of other times when I've had real lows and didn't have that backup. I had to borrow money from friends or family or be late on my bills.”*

These experiences of stability stand in stark contrast to the feelings of precarity that many participants described before joining HudsonUP. For example, one participant whose husband has significant health complications, making his employment unstable, explained: “*Even with my husband not being able to work...at least I've still been able to stay stable and not have to worry about my next meal or am I going to get evicted or those type of things, which I've had in the past.*” Another participant who recently experienced a significant medical emergency explained that having the HudsonUP funds allowed her to rest and recuperate: “[HudsonUP] just allowed me to recover and not take jobs that could probably make my recovery longer.” One participant, who had recently graduated from college said “*During this time, you hear a lot about inflation, the rising cost of groceries and gas and to pay bills and stuff. Without a source of income, it could be really scary and anxiety-inducing.*”

This qualitative sense of stability also arose in the biannual quantitative survey. Full and part-time employment rates for Cohort One remain 72% above baseline and 150% above baseline for Cohort Two. See Figure 1 for more details.



## Progress Towards Goals: “My present self is taking care of my future self”

The stability created by HudsonUP, despite larger economic and life uncertainty, has allowed many participants to continue progress toward their long-term goals. Several

participants discussed getting caught up on past due debts or continuing to save the HudsonUP funds for future investments, small businesses, a home, reliable transportation, or higher education. For example, one participant said, *“Even if it’s a hundred dollars, a couple hundred, I see how much I can contribute every month...so my present self is taking care of my future self in some way.”* We see evidence of this continued investment in the quantitative survey as well. While savings rates for Cohort One have fluctuated throughout the pandemic and inflation, they continue to climb steadily above baseline. See Table 1 for more details.

Table 1: Average Total Savings

	Winter 2021	Summer 2021	Winter 2022	Summer 2022
Cohort 1: Average Savings	\$1,754.00	\$1,656.00	\$2,516.67	\$1,850.00
Cohort 2: Average Savings			\$1,741.93	\$3,265.00

We see these investments beginning to slowly pay dividends for some participants. For example, a gentleman planning to start a small business for the first two years of the pilot was excited in the Summer of 2022 to report that he had just gotten his official business license and the first mail with his business name on it. A participant who first entered the program while living in emergency motel housing due to homelessness lived with family at year two and was about to begin a new job. Another who had been working through the approval process for a subsidized veterans apartment for many months was happy to report that he had just received the final approval and planned to move in soon. Several students and recent graduate participants spoke of looking forward to completing school and *“settling down somewhere.”*

Interestingly, in year two, some participants reported that thanks to the stability afforded by HudsonUP, they were now able to pursue some lifelong dreams. For example, for the first time in two years, one retired participant disclosed that *“I am a writer. I have not really pursued it to the fullest, so I’m going to be able to dedicate some time to it.”* Another spoke of savings towards a dream of completing the Muslim pilgrimage (*Hajj*) with his family. Several participants are artists and explained that HudsonUP allowed them to avoid working odd jobs and instead focus on their art. One artist stated that *“[HudsonUP] has allowed me to be the artist that I need to be.”*

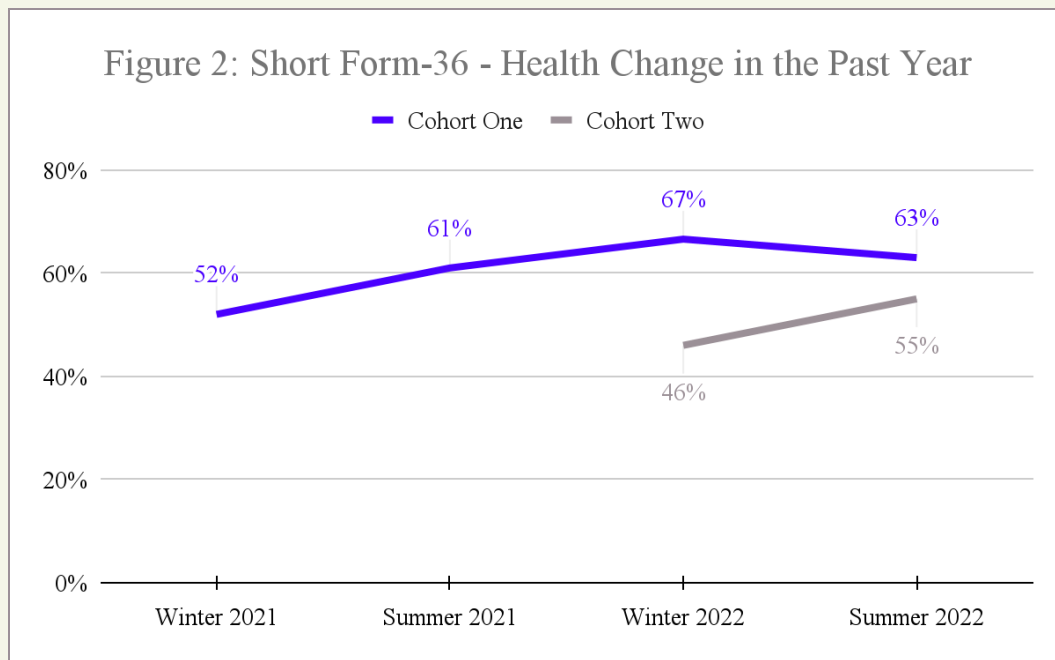
## Health Stability: “Everybody’s healthy and happy”

As noted above, most participants reported that they had experienced continued stability in their physical and mental health. Many also described stability in the health of their children and partners, as one mother explained, “*everybody's healthy and happy. I can't complain.*” Some reported that because of the HudsonUP funds, they could take better care of their health, pursuing previously unaffordable care. One participant noted that “*I was able to go to the dentist. I just had a bunch of dental work done.*” Of course, some participants continue to experience chronic or acute health issues but reported that HudsonUP allowed them to prioritize their health in those instances. For example, one 65-year-old participant with chronic health concerns who had been out of work due to the pandemic was able to retire with the help of HudsonUP: “*With this [HudsonUP] money, I decided...I could maybe afford not to go back to work [and instead retire]...If I had been younger, I just would've gone back.*”

We also see these steady improvements in the quantitative survey via the [Short Form 36 Health survey](#). However, given the longitudinal nature of the study and small sample size, it is expected that we would see some fluctuations over time. For example, while Cohort One reports that their General Health has improved by an average of 13.5%, Bodily Pain by an average of 4.8%, and Social Functioning by an average of 2.8%, other areas such as Physical Functioning (-16.4%), Role Limitations Due to Physical Health (-20%) Energy and Fatigue (-7%) have actually declined from baseline. Meanwhile, Cohort Two reports improvements in every area within the health survey including Physical Functioning (+33.3%), (Fewer) Role Limitations Due to Physical Health (+38.9%), (Fewer) Role Limitations due to Emotional Problems (+11.5%), (Greater) Energy, (Less) Fatigue (+11.4%), Emotional Wellbeing (+12.7%), Social Functioning (20.9%), and (Decreased) Pain (26.9%) except for their General Health which declined by an average of 7% from baseline. Again, with a small sample size, these statistical variations are to be expected. However, when asked about their health compared to the previous year, we observe a steady incline in both groups throughout the program. See Figure 2.

Relatedly, a recurring theme in every wave of data collection has been the improvements to participants' mental health due to their reduced financial strain. For example, one participant explained that “*I can view my life in a more positive light now that I have money.*” Others said that “*It's just having that peace of mind in the back of your head that, if something does happen, I do have a little plan B or backup option. Having that peace of mind just makes me a little calmer,*” and “[*With HudsonUP*] *I could prioritize my mental and emotional health.*” Further contributing to their increased mental stability was the ability to afford small luxuries such as a short family vacation or birthday celebration. As one

participant explained, "I don't have the stress of worrying about my daily or monthly bills. If I want to go on a two-day trip, I can squeeze that out."



## Positivity About UBI: “Everyone would benefit”

As in previous waves, participants expressed overwhelming gratitude for the HudsonUP program. For example, “I love this program, and I can't say thank you enough, and I'm a very lucky individual.” One participant said of program staff, “You guys are definitely life savers and changers.” Further, in the Summer of 2022, we asked Cohort One what they think would happen if everyone in the country received a basic income, based on their two years of experience with the program. A few participants expressed uncertainty over how it would be financed and implemented and one expressed concerns about inflation. Overwhelmingly though, Cohort One believed that a truly universal basic income would have positive effects on society. They said, “I think the economy would be better. I think more people would be able to enjoy the nice side of things and not always be catching up on bills, catching up on bills, catching up on bills,” “I feel like it would bring families closer. It might make a lot less stress for families. And which means that if the parents are less stressed out, the kids would be less stressed because their parents aren't. So I think all around it would be really a cool thing because then I think it'll create positivity in a lower economic communities as well,” “I think everyone would benefit, at least in terms of like emergency situations...especially nowadays the economy is so terrible, so having that backup for just stability,” “I think frustration levels of people would definitely be lower. Definitely go down. I



*think people would be able to sleep at night. I think they would be more creative. I think people would be more grateful, more willing to help others,” “We don't need to leave people out,” “Everybody has a story and we have not walked in anybody else's shoes but our own, so we don't have the right. So when you can see past that and say, ‘You know what? Let me give this person a hand,’ because a lot of times that's all they need,” “People would be nicer to each other,” and “The working class would unite.”*

## Connectedness and Generosity

When asked about their lives, many participants mentioned improved relationships with their family, friends, and community. For example, one participant was able to travel for a sibling's wedding and spend more time with his family. He explained, *“it was nice being [at the wedding] with my parents. We were able to really connect. I was able to spend time with them and connect with them in a way that was impossible before and I had never done before.”* One participant who has recently gained greater financial and housing stability explained, *“I haven't been seeing [my children] lately, but I'm going to get to see them soon. Stuff is working out.”* Some participants noted that HudsonUP had improved their ability to feel connected to the community around them. For example, one participant explained *“It's just amazing that if you're in the right space, and you get blessed like this, how you become more grateful, more open, and more compassionate and empathetic towards other people. I've always had those qualities, but it's heightened because you know you can do it without concern.”*

Relatedly, many participants felt they were better positioned to help those around them. They told stories about being able to help their friends, family, and even strangers in public, like a woman struggling to pay for her groceries or a man who needed train fare. One participant explained, *“I try to wait for opportunities where I can help somebody.”* Others said *“[HudsonUP] has also afforded me opportunities to help others, like if my child needs something. If she falls behind on something, I can jump in,” “I'd say it's nice to have the extra income so I can help my mom with whatever she needs,” and “I can help my brother pay his mortgage.”* Another explained that this generosity was directly related to his participation in HudsonUP, *“That gratitude [for HudsonUP] really permeates into different aspects of my life and my relationships with others. Not even my family, but anyone I come across that asks me for help.”* He further explained how this generosity affects his own life, *“Just to be able to do [help others] that makes me feel nice. I mean, for myself, it lets me have more positive self-esteem.”*



# Conclusion

In summary, we continue to see stability and steady progress toward goals among all HudsonUP participants, despite the uncertainty created by external events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation. Participants specifically report that the program has allowed them to maintain this stability and progress due to receiving HudsonUP. We see continued growth in their employment, savings, and health outcomes. Even for participants who entered the program with complex experiences such as homelessness and disability, we see momentum toward their long-term economic self-sufficiency. Recipients describe that HudsonUP has allowed them to pursue life-long dreams and become more connected and generous with those around them. These experiences allow them to see the positive impacts that an unconditional basic income could have on others.

# Appendix A

## Selection Procedures

### Recruitment

For each of the three cohorts, an online survey to apply for the HudsonUP program was launched and remained open for several weeks. The HudsonUP advisory board and Greater Hudson Promise Neighborhood staff ensured that the application was widely circulated in the community. The online survey collected basic demographic data including name, email address, physical address, phone number, gender, racial and ethnic identity, last month's income, and a preferred contact method. For the first cohort, the sample was randomized into a treatment (n=25) and control (n=50) condition, although the control group was later dropped due to low response rates.

### Weighted Randomization

Each of the three cohorts was selected randomly, utilizing a weighted lottery protocol. Randomization was weighted on income, race/ethnicity, and gender identity given location-based propensity to achieve median income as calculated by the [Opportunity Atlas](#). The likelihood to reach median income was proxied on publicly available data from the Opportunity Atlas. The income variable was dichotomized to low (less than or equal to \$25,540) or moderate (greater than \$25,540 and less than the threshold of \$35,153). The gender variable was collapsed from male, female, non-binary/non-conforming, and transgender to only two attributes: male or female. Non-binary/non-conforming and transgender respondents were categorized as "female," as there were no available data on economic outcomes of these gender identities in the Opportunity Atlas data. The race and ethnicity variable included the following attributes: White, Black, or Hispanic/Latinx. The census tract variable included either tract 1200 or 1300.

# Appendix B

## Research Design

This mixed-methods longitudinal inquiry follows the lives of 128 individuals receiving an unconditional monthly income of \$500 for five years, having started with a cohort of 25 recipients and expanding to add 50 additional recipients in late 2021 and 53 in late 2022. This type of research is an excellent fit for a constructivist phenomenological approach, which “describes the common meaning for several individuals of the lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon.”<sup>1</sup> As of May 2021, 15 of the first cohort participants had chosen to participate in the interviews. While phenomenological research design is best implemented with 10 or fewer participants,<sup>2</sup> including more participants allows for the likelihood of attrition over the course of five years. To ensure data quality, qualitative data triangulation was achieved through peer review and “member checking.” Member checking, which is described as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility,”<sup>3</sup> is the process of allowing participants the opportunity to give feedback on summative themes.

Our research questions explore the effects of basic income on recipients’ health, income, assets, family relationships, wellbeing, employment, and future orientation. Data collection includes biannual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews capturing changes to participants’ lives and their perceptions of the role of basic income in this trajectory. In addition to qualitative interviews, participants are asked to complete three validated and reliable scales on a biannual basis: 1) the Short Form 36 measures physical and emotional wellbeing, 2) the Kessler 10 measures psychological distress, and 3) the four-item Perceived Family Relationships Measure provides a snapshot of family wellbeing. Because the sample size is relatively small, quantitative outcomes are analyzed via descriptive statistics only.

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<sup>1</sup> Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Fourth edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 23(3), 197–203. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00990785>

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1st edition). SAGE Publications.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the research design has necessarily adapted to safety considerations, travel restrictions, and participant comfort. Participants are offered the option of either face-to-face or phone interviews. In the winters of 2021 and 2022, interview collection was conducted over the phone due to the peaking of coronavirus variants. Because the study involves deeply personal discussions with potentially vulnerable populations, the research is designed to prioritize ethical procedures. University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received in November 2020. All potential participants were then informed of the research process, including their absolute right not to participate or to discontinue participation at any moment. Recipients were informed that their participation in the research project has no bearing on their payments through the pilot project. Additionally, participants were informed that all data is anonymized and scrubbed of identifying data before publication.

In the Fall of 2021, HudsonUP launched a second cohort with 50 participants. When second cohort members were selected, they were invited to participate in one of four research avenues. First, they are always welcome to not participate at all. An unconditional basic income pilot must prioritize human agency in the research design. Secondly, participants could choose to participate only in the bi-annual quantitative survey. Third, participants could choose to participate in both the surveys and in bi-annual qualitative interviews. Finally, participants may choose not to join the formal research project and instead join a public storytelling cohort in which they would be available for media interviews or documentary features. This “four option” design was proposed to simultaneously maximize participant agency, maintain research rigor, and allow space for public storytelling opportunities.

The biannual survey continues to include the health, well-being, and family functioning scales described above. Additionally, the survey for both cohorts includes two new components designed to fill gaps in the existent basic income dialogue. Firstly, while the effects of basic income are well documented, less is known about implementation best practices.<sup>4</sup> For example, how can we best reach unbanked participants? To begin this exploration, the quantitative survey will include an open-ended question inviting participants to provide feedback on how to improve the HudsonUP pilot.

Another pressing question for basic income scholars is how to affect public perceptions of the policy. Multiple national surveys have found that American support of basic income is roughly split.<sup>5</sup> Further, attitudes towards welfare and “deservedness” appear to

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<sup>4</sup> Jain Family Institute. (2021). “Guaranteed Income in the U.S. - Abridged Toolkit.” <https://www.jainfamilyinstitute.org/assets/jfi-abridged-toolkit-on-guaranteed-income-in-the-us.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Jain Family Institute. (2021) “Messaging Basic Income.” <https://www.jainfamilyinstitute.org/projects/messaging-guaranteed-income/>

significantly influence individual levels of support.<sup>6</sup> Because the United States is currently launching multiple “basic income-like” policies such as COVID-19 relief with the American Rescue Plan Act’s Economic Impact Payments and the temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit, it will be informative to know whether receipt of unconditional cash influences recipients’ perceptions of deservedness and communal responsibility over time. Therefore, the survey will include a validated and reliable “welfare state attitudes inventory.”

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<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, L., Yorgun, M., & Wright, A. (forthcoming). “People nowadays will take everything they can get.’ What would Americans do with a Basic Income? A Mixed Method Approach.”