



# Signposts to Success:

Report of a BICN Survey of Ontario Basic Income Recipients



**Basic Income Canada Network**  
**Réseau canadien pour le revenu garanti**





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Some respondent details in this report may have been changed to protect the privacy of recipients, without altering the substance of the information.

The Board of the Basic Income Canada Network gratefully acknowledges the work of Sheila Regehr and Joli Scheidler-Benns in carrying out and analysing the results of this survey, and in preparing this report.

*Report Designed in Canada by Barton Creative*



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## Introduction

In the summer of 2018, the newly-elected provincial government announced it would cancel the Ontario Basic Income Pilot (OBIP) begun in 2017. The Basic Income Canada Network (BICN) and the Ontario Basic Income Network (OBIN) quickly collaborated with LeadNow to run a petition to save the pilot.

About thirty thousand people signed the petition. We asked those who signed if they would agree to be contacted for further advocacy work, and if they were a pilot recipient. Over 1,500 people checked both those boxes. A Recipient Survey prepared by BICN went out to this group, during the period of December 2018 to mid-January 2019. We received 424 recipient responses, over 9.4% of the 4,500 recipients enrolled in the pilot. OBIP concludes in March 2019 when the last cheques are set to go out. As this is being written, it is not clear how OBIP recipients will fare after this date, and whether or not some will be eligible for Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program as alternative sources of support. There is great anxiety about this question among OBIP participants and their allies.

OBIP had a built-in evaluation component that promised to yield valuable data over the three years of the project. Evidence was to be gathered on questions such as OBIP's effects on recipients, and the practicalities of delivering the program. The cancellation of OBIP in the summer of 2018 is not only devastating for those losing benefits. It also means that we have lost a very valuable opportunity to gather evidence on the delivery of basic income in the real world settings of three Ontario locales – Hamilton-Brantford, Thunder Bay, and Lindsay.

Our report is designed to partially compensate for this very unfortunate missed opportunity to gather evidence on basic income. Our report is based on direct feedback from those who received benefits as participants in OBIP.

Our survey results are clear and compelling indicators, or signposts of success, that basic income leads us on a much better path than the one we are currently following. No matter what issue or problem is our focus, from food security or mental health, to precarious work, or the future of our economy, basic income is a critical part of the solution.

We are sincerely grateful to recipients who shared their experiences with us. We remain deeply concerned about the lives of all pilot participants and Canadians across the country who are still struggling in the face of outdated remedies that cannot offer the hope a basic income provides. Thanks are also due to BICN supporters and donors for making the survey possible. We are committed to advocating for pilot participants and for a national basic income. This survey report is a powerful tool for that work; the work -- and the hope -- will go on.

The BICN Board of Directors  
February, 2019



## Highlights of Survey Results (...and some lowlights)

We asked 22 questions. For several questions, we invited comments. The many we received paint a vivid picture of the human stories behind the numbers. The last question invited open-ended commentary. After our survey was designed, we gained access to the government's baseline survey and were able to draw some interesting points of reference.

Themes/patterns that struck us as most important as the pilot got underway:

1. **Agency.** Overall, results show that given genuine choices, recipients made the most of them. Their decisions were based on unique personal circumstances that did not always fit into bureaucratic boxes. Some BI recipients paid down debt, some got teeth fixed, others went back to school, enrolled their children in recreational programs, or put some money aside for a future need. Almost everyone ate better.
2. **Anxiety relief.** The baseline survey shows over 80% of participants reported moderate to severe psychological stress when they enrolled. Many had unmet physical and mental health needs. A subsequent reduction in anxiety and stress not only came quickly for many, it translated into other benefits such as greater confidence in pursuing plans, better employment performance, and a reduction or elimination of the need for medication.
3. **Social connection.** Responses and commentary from several questions indicate how basic income combats isolation (that often goes along with anxiety and depression) and increases social engagement. These positive outcomes include increased time and financial ability to be with family and friends, the boost in confidence that the purchase of appropriate clothing brings, and the connections that come with children's sports programs or adult exercise programs. In the baseline survey, almost 11% of participants volunteered in the community; among the recipients in our survey over 25% volunteered.
4. **Immediacy of change.** Pilots that focus primarily on employment responses to a basic income risk missing the steps that it takes to get to sustained, longer-term outcomes in employment and other aspects of life. It is striking in our responses that there were many significant improvements in people's lives so quickly. Some recipients had only been enrolled in the pilot for a few months.
5. **Education.** The baseline survey shows that a majority of participants had limited education and that 62.4% with jobs felt those jobs did not offer prospects for advancement. Among our recipients, 32.5% decided to invest in furthering their education or upgrading skills; again a signal that given real options, people will make the most of them in order to get ahead.
6. **Employment.** On this issue, optional, open-ended comments provided by people to several questions are more revealing than the fixed answers to questions. Finding and keeping employment is a multi-faceted challenge. High transportation needs going into the pilot are closely connected with recipients telling us they used their additional income to buy bus tickets to get to their job or a job interview, or to fix their car or put gas in the tank in order to get to work. Reduced anxiety translated into better job

performance, job promotion and entrepreneurial activity. Dental work, improved health, and new, appropriate clothing added to the confidence to pursue employment or invest in education to improve longer-term job prospects.

And then, suddenly, cancellation of the Ontario Basic Income Pilot changed the story:

7. When cancellation was announced, anxiety and health problems returned, even worse than before for some (going backwards is terribly hard) and plans ended or changed. Responses are wide-ranging and involved nerve-wracking decisions such as trying to stay in school or dropping out to save tuition money for food. People who moved into better housing faced the prospect of having to seek worse accommodation and move again, while some were stuck with a lease wondering how they will afford it. Some people who were using their basic income to pay down debt decided to pay it down faster. Others started saving. Some felt that they would manage, but almost everyone was devastated and felt betrayed.
8. Our last question gave people the opportunity to tell us about negative aspects of being on the program. Recall that there were stories of administrative difficulties at the beginning, and worries about enrolling and losing access to services, or having to file taxes. A few respondents did run into these difficulties and there are critical lessons to be learned from their experience. The vast majority, however, said that the only negative thing about the pilot was its cancellation.

*See more stories on BICN's Website at  
[www.basicincomecanada.org](http://www.basicincomecanada.org) or  
in the Lindsay Advocate at [lindsayadvocate.ca](http://lindsayadvocate.ca).*

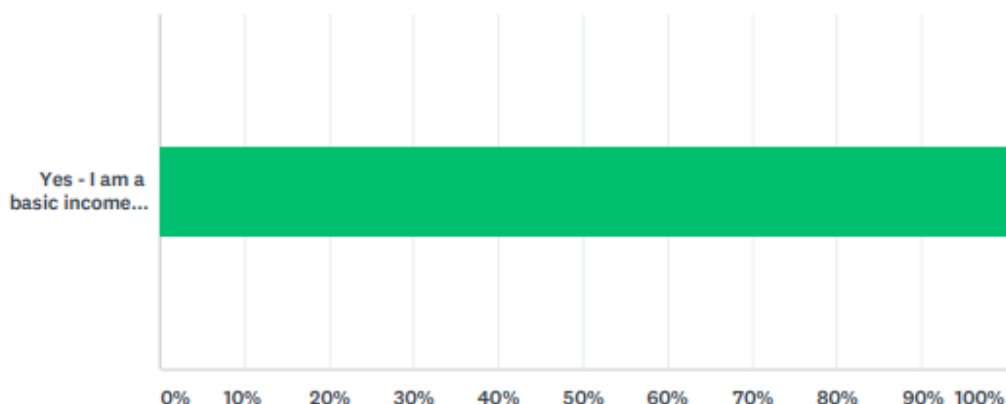






## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 1 – Consent



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - I am a basic income recipient	100.00%	424
TOTAL		424

The total number of individuals receiving basic income under OBIP.

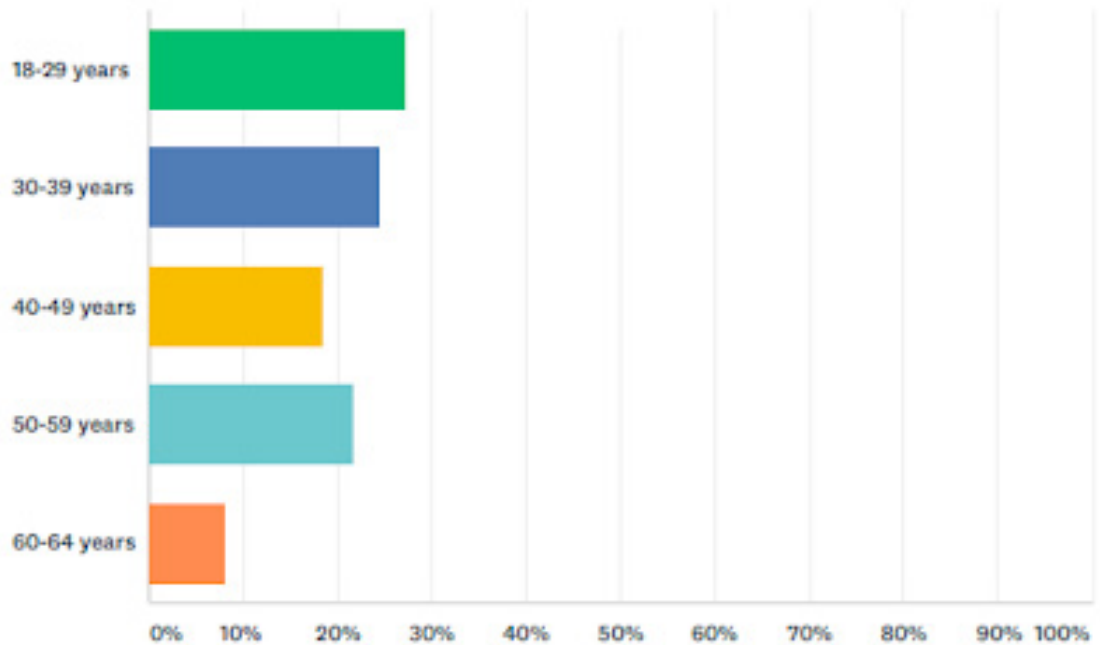
Responses to all of the questions are summarized here with illustrative examples of commentary in the respondents' own words. Excerpts from respondents' comments have in some cases been edited for grammar, length or protection of privacy.

**We caution that it is not possible to directly compare the data gathered in the very extensive baseline survey carried out by the Ontario government research team and data from BICN's recipient survey. Nonetheless, there are interesting and insightful points of reference between the two data sets, as noted below.**



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 2 - What's your age?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
18-29 years	27.19%
30-39 years	24.49%
40-49 years	18.43%
50-59 years	21.80%
60-64 years	8.09%

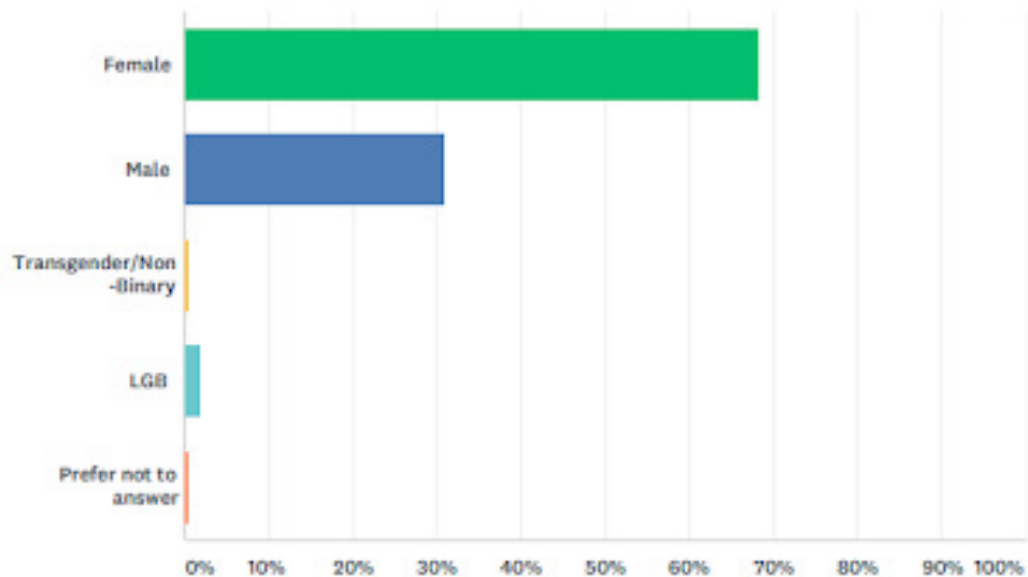
According to the baseline survey, the average age of the BI recipient was 38.1 years. The data collected from the BICN survey is consistent with the baseline.





## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 3 – I am



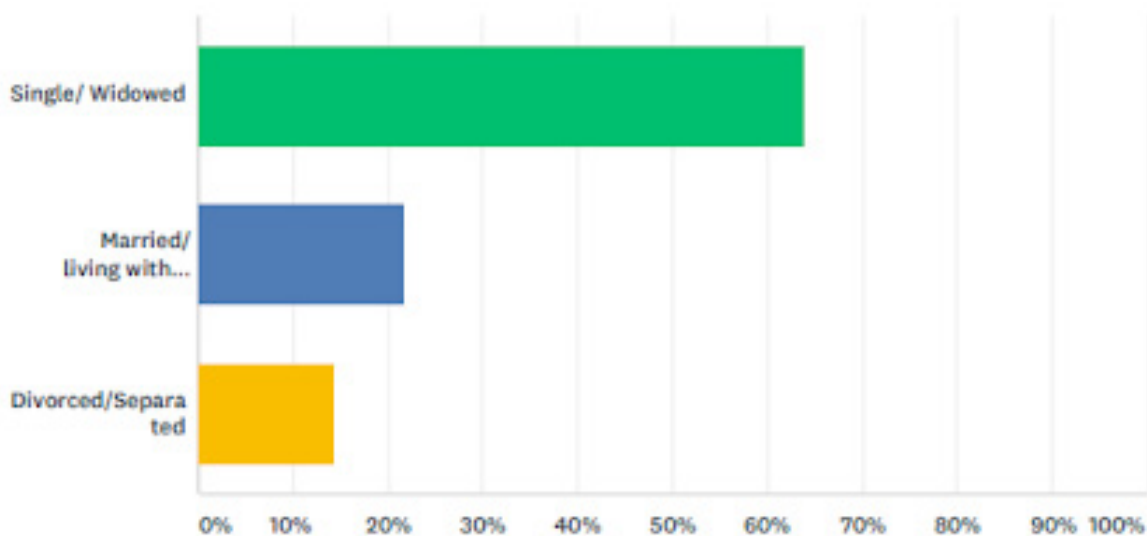
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	68.21%
Male	30.91%
Transgender/Non-Binary	0.44%
LGB	1.99%
Prefer not to answer	0.44%

In the baseline survey, 52.5% were female, 46.6% were male and 0.9% were “other” including transgender/non-binary, LGB. Our survey had a higher female response rate at 68.21% and lower male rate. Our population sample also had more than double the baseline response rate from the Transgender/Non-Binary and LGB groups at 2.4%.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 4 – I am



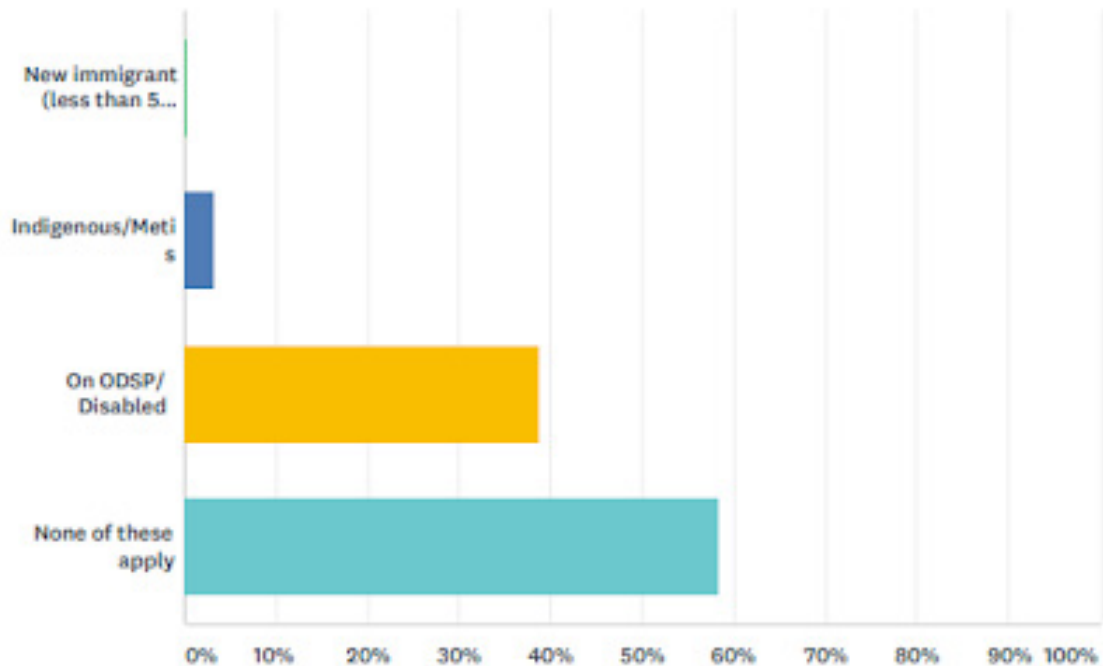
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Single/ Widowed	63.96%
Married/ living with partner	21.76%
Divorced/ Separated	14.29%

The baseline survey indicated that 86.2 % were considered single and only 13.8% of the people had a spouse or common law relationship. The baseline survey did not account for people who considered themselves divorced or separated. If we assume that those who are in this category would be considered single, then the response rate for single in our survey would be 78.25%, which closely resembles the baseline.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 5 - I am a



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
New immigrant (less than 5 years)	0.22%
Indigenous/Metis	3.28%
On ODSP/ Disabled	38.73%
None of these apply	58.42%

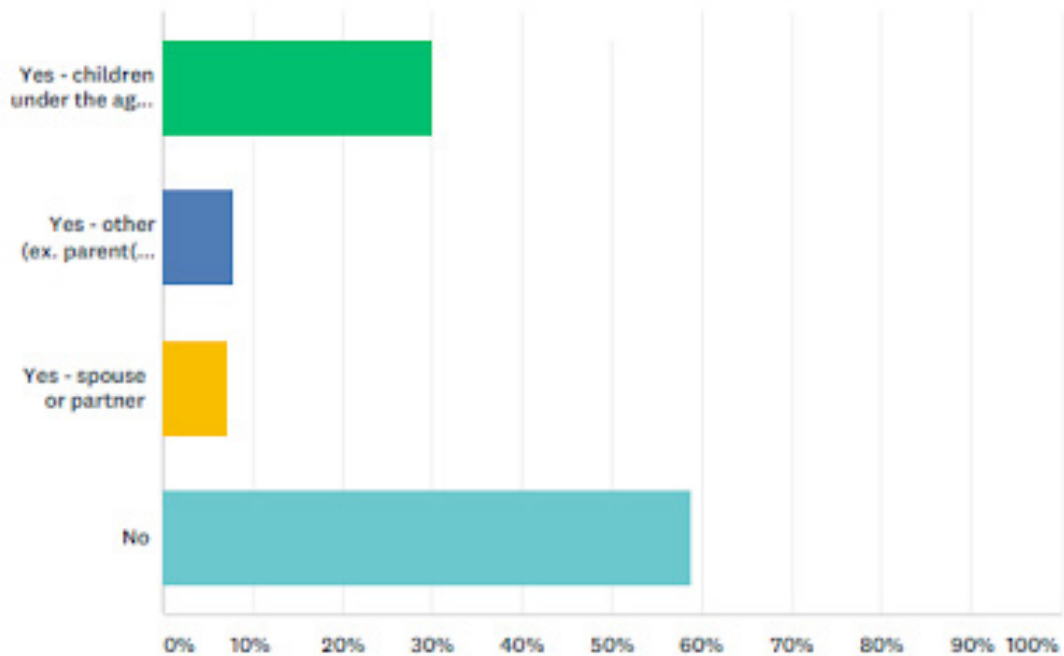
The baseline survey noted that 27.6% of the BI participants were on ODSP. Our respondents included people who had been on ODSP and those with a disability but were not on ODSP. The share of our respondents identifying as Indigenous is smaller than the 11.2% in the baseline survey.

A striking fact that BICN found in the baseline survey is that 81.7% of participants identified as white, although in Thunder Bay, 23.9% identified as Indigenous. If the pilot had included Toronto, for example, we would have seen a more complete reflection of the diversity of Canada's population. Given that some other pilots have shown that the most disadvantaged at the start tend to benefit the most, our survey results indicate the great potential of basic income to improve the lives of racialized populations and others facing multiple challenges and forms of discrimination.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 6 – I have dependents



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes - children under the age of 18	29.87%
Yes - other (ex. parent(s), grown children over age 18, etc.)	7.74%
Yes - spouse or partner	7.08%
No	58.85%

According to the baseline survey, 72.8% had no children under the age of 18, while 27.2% had children, 23% had a parent living with them, and 10.3% had a brother or sister living with them.

Our survey indicates similar results for children under 18 at 29.87%. Question 6 allowed respondents to provide comments. Of the 46 who commented, most simply indicated how many children they had. Some, however, provided insight to their unique situations, such as a mother caring for a younger sibling as well as her own small child, or the impact of disabilities on care demands.

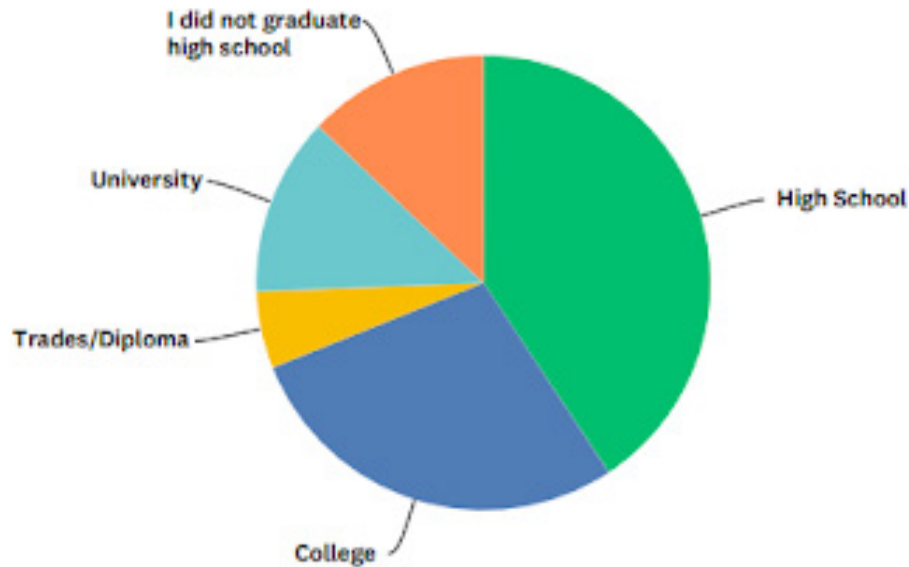
“I take care of my mother as she is sick. But she is also on the pilot. When it’s cut, I will need to help her get by again, like before though because ODSP is not even close to enough to live on, especially with her needs.”

“I found out I was pregnant a month before the cancellation announcement.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 7 – My last level of school completed

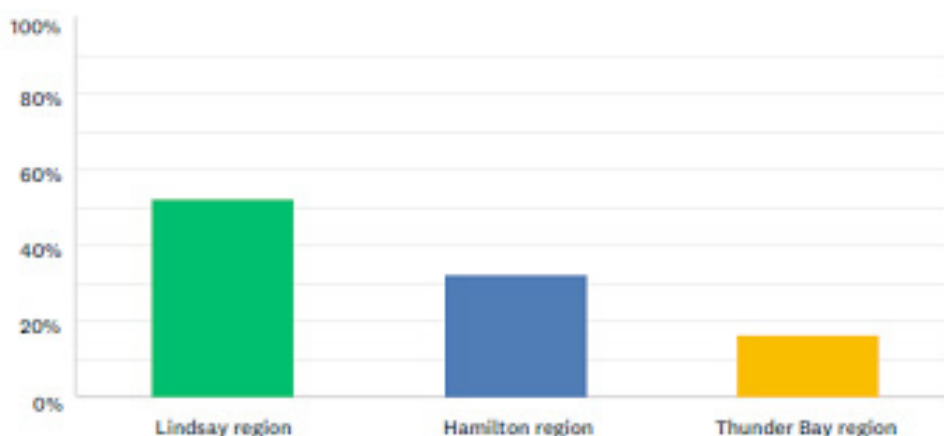


The baseline survey indicated that 58.8% of the people had a high school diploma or less (26.9% did not graduate). Our survey had a higher percentage of respondents with a high school diploma and higher education degrees. It is apparent in question 14 how important education is to respondents.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 8 – Which municipality were you enrolled in?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Lindsay region	51.90%
Hamilton region	31.99%
Thunder Bay region	16.11%

Our survey's high response from the Lindsay area at 51.9% reflects the fact that Lindsay had the highest number of actual recipients (1,890) and no control group members, who account for almost half of the other community participants. But this is still higher than the expected 42% of recipients living in Lindsay. Lindsay is the smallest pilot site in overall population size. It may be that in a small community it is easier to spread the word to encourage people to complete the survey. Community effects were one of the areas of particular interest in the design of the pilot and the selection of one locale that is close to a saturation site, like Dauphin, Manitoba was in the 1970s Mincome experiments.

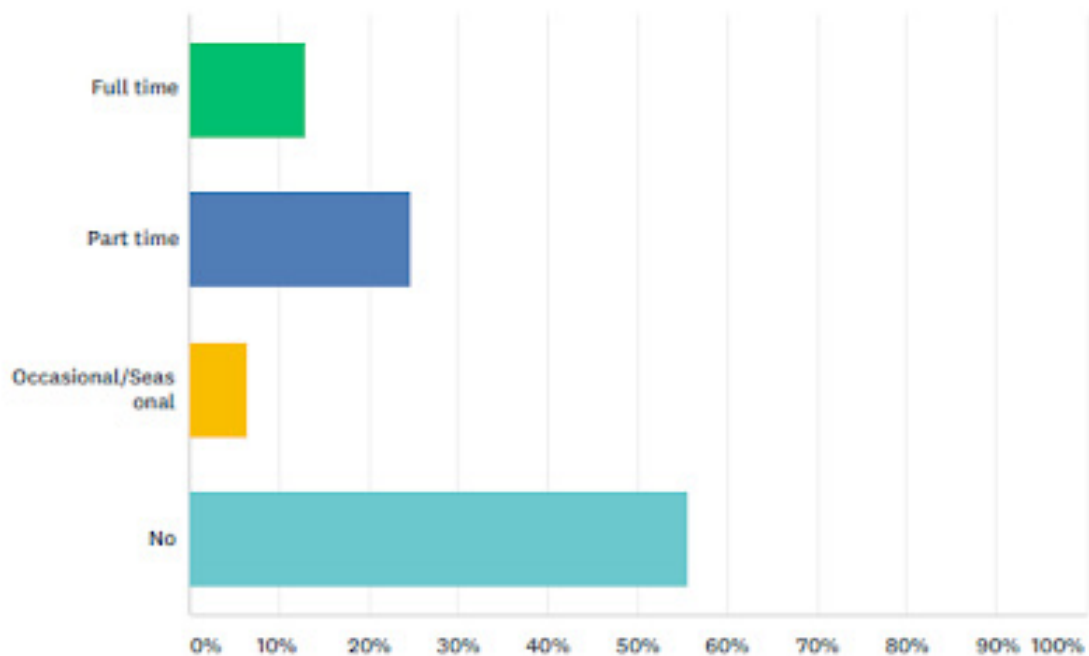
### Question 9 – Indicated number of months on BI

The answers to this question ranged from 4 months to 14 months. This reflects that participant enrollment in the pilot was staggered and began first in the Hamilton/Brantford area. Lindsay came on board later so recipients there were just starting to get cheques when the cancellation was announced. If the pilot had not been cancelled, it would have been possible to gain knowledge of whether and how people's lives changed the longer they were on the pilot.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 10 – Did you have a paid job in 2018?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Full time	13.05%
Part time	24.78%
Occasional/Seasonal	6.42%
No	55.75%

The baseline survey asked only about recent employment in the past 4 weeks and indicated that 35% of the participants were employed and of these people, 44.7% worked full time. Very significantly, 62.4% did not think their job 'offered prospects for career advancement'!

Of participants in the baseline survey, 27.6% had been on ODSP and 18.4% had been on Ontario Works.

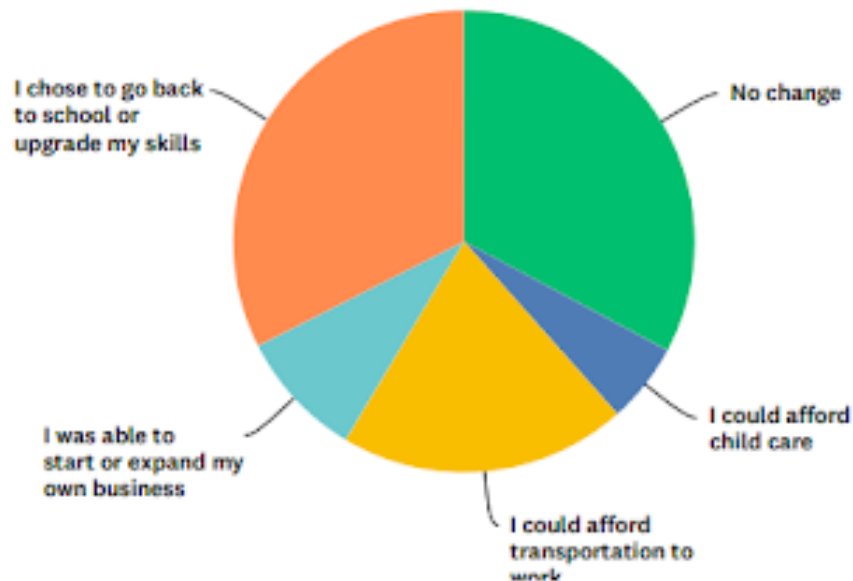
Our survey responses, asking about the past year, indicate a higher percentage of people having some employment at 44.5%, but a smaller percentage with a full-time paid job. Question 11 provides more detail on how the basic income affected the ways in which people decided to spend their time and money.





## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 11 – How did Basic Income change your work life?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No change	32.84%
I could afford child care	5.60%
I could afford transportation to work	20.15%
I was able to start or expand my own business	8.96%
I chose to go back to school or upgrade my skills	32.46%

The baseline survey showed 12.7% of participants had been enrolled in some capacity in post-secondary pursuit and that education levels overall were not high.

If you recall our Question 7, our recipient respondents tended to be better-educated. In Question 11, we see that nearly one third chose to go back to school in some capacity. This is a strong indicator that people recognize the importance of education in today’s economy but had barriers to access before the pilot. And it reflects the fact that most people with jobs see them as dead-end prospects. It is not lack of awareness or ambition or other factors that are holding people back -- it is lack of income security. These responses likely underestimate the positive effects of BI on work life as respondents could only choose one answer. Several respondents experienced more than one change overall.

For example, a seasonal worker who responded ‘no change’ had taken some short on-line courses and had other training plans to expand self-employment. But nervousness about



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

what a new government might do made this worker save money for other needs instead. The plans were there, but they were cut short.

The many comments received reveal the wide range of ways in which people's working lives were helped by the basic income, including managing employment, family and community responsibilities.

"Basic Income changed my life. I am a full-time university student and had a (non-paid) placement four days a week; there was almost no time for a part-time job. Five days before I was told I was accepted, I cried .... because there was no job that would take me for just Sundays."

"I was able to stay at home with my infant daughter while my fiancé went back to school and this March when she finishes, I am going back to work."

"It changed my life, I was able to pay rent and child care much easier."

"I could afford a proper home for our newborn baby and be able to provide for her while working a 50 hour a week full-time job."

"I was able to get the medical equipment I needed so I didn't have to leave work for my asthma."

"I could afford transportation to work."

"I even got my license for first time because of this pilot thing...no work in this city for my field so without this I will be homeless again."

"I was saving for a vehicle so I could pursue self-employment without fear of not making ends meet."

"Even with a low employment income, I became more committed to my job serving a vulnerable population because I knew the basic income supplement would allow me to pay all of my bills and eat well."

"I run a non-profit mental health agency that offers free [services]...if I stop receiving the basic income, I will not be able to keep the agency open because I will have to find a part-time job."

"I was able to search for a good apprenticeship without settling for something less professional."

"It allowed me to start planning for the exhibition of my artwork."

"I was able to move to a city where I could find better work opportunities and get married."

"I was choosing between two jobs; was able to choose the one which paid less but was more fulfilling and more valuable professionally."

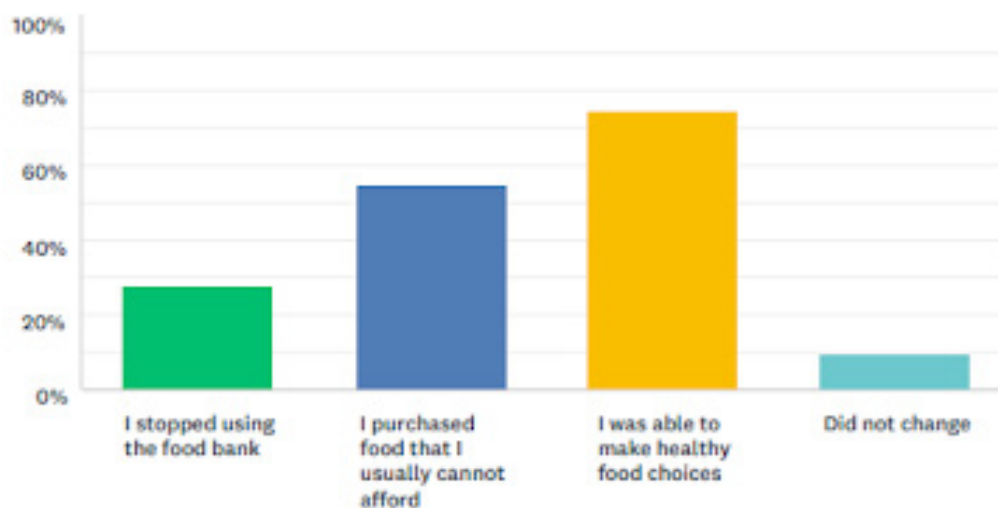
"I was able to try out a few different jobs .... try new things, see what fits me and what doesn't without having to worry about where my food was going to be coming from."

"It helped fill in the gaps when I had precarious (part-time) employment while looking for something more sustainable."



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 12 – Food Insecurity



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I stopped using the food bank	27.82%
I purchased food that I usually cannot afford	55.17%
I was able to make healthy food choices	74.25%
Did not change	9.66%

In the baseline survey, 48.4% reported experiencing severe food insecurity. BICN’s survey comments indicated that the higher quality food recipients were able to purchase while on the pilot improved their lives – sometimes dramatically.

People with physical and mental health problems saw improvement, through the remission of migraines, fatigue and depression, for example, or relief from the symptoms of fibromyalgia, celiac disease or IBS. People succeeded in gaining or losing weight to be healthier. Some were also better able to manage other conditions or disabilities.

“With the pilot we were able to change the way [our daughter] ate ... in order to live a normal life. She has since blossomed and overcame depression and anxiety with the proper foods she is getting ... such a blessing to our family!!”

“I was beginning to lose weight slowly because I could actually afford better options.”

“I gained weight! I am in normal range now.”

“I could afford to use small local groceries closer to me.”

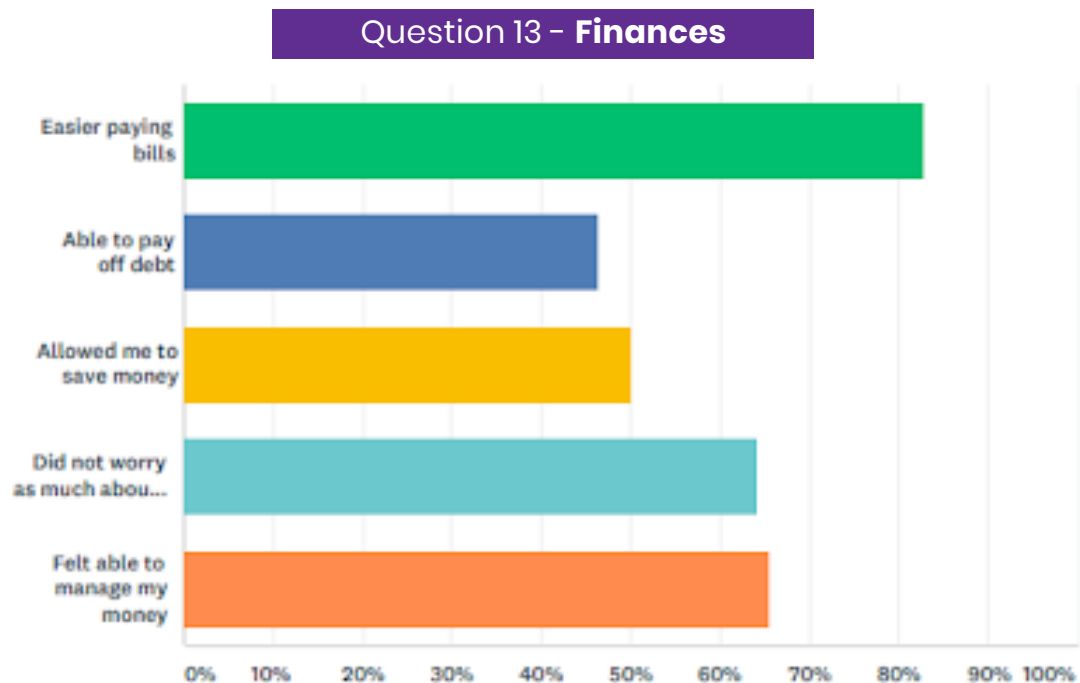
“Cooking quality food saved hours and hours a week.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

"I have been able to buy more fruit, vegetables and more often, meat. I hardly ate meat on ODSP because it is too expensive. I can even go out with friends again for dinner which empowers me and makes me feel so good."

"I joined a medical weight loss program at the hospital."



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Easier paying bills	82.86%
Able to pay off debt	46.43%
Allowed me to save money	50.00%
Did not worry as much about unexpected expenses	64.29%

The baseline survey showed that the average share of income spent on shelter was 55.1%, with 43.6% of participants reporting real financial problems and falling behind in meeting their financial obligations. More than half were behind on bills two or more months in a row during the previous 12 months. If an unexpected expenditure of \$500 occurred, over 43% would not be able to pay. The use of pawn brokers, and payday loan or cheque-cashing services was not uncommon.

In BICN's survey, recipients indicated several positive changes in their financial situation, using a range of strategies.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

"I was able to get out from under payday loans. I was able to feel dignity in living and hope for being able to maybe buy a cheap car, pay off debt and not being looked down on by my neighbors."

"I was able to pay arrear taxes owed to city otherwise possible foreclosure which was putting me in deep depression and was feeling suicidal."

"I am slowly getting out of debt and [was] a little less depressed - now this programme has been cancelled."

"I got rid of Visa [credit card] debt in hopes of soon being able to afford a car."

"I did not pay off all debt but am making headway."

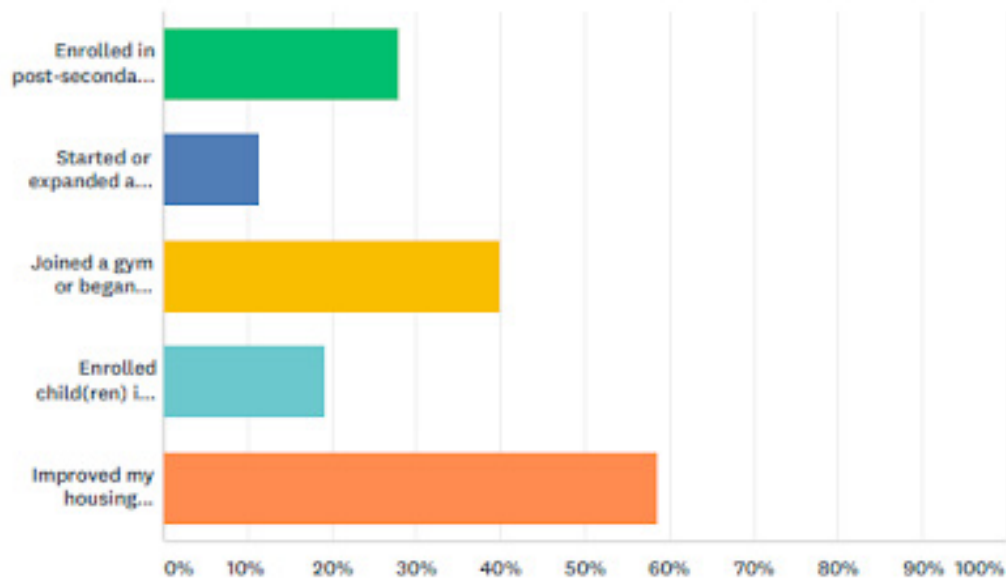
"It helped me pay my bills on time."

"I saved money because of no late fees and not using credit."

"I was able to handle financial emergencies that happened."

"I was able to focus on school full-time without worrying about paying bills."

### Question 14 - Plans Made for Future



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Enrolled in post-secondary school or training	27.84%
Started or expanded a business	11.36%
Joined a gym or began fitness goals	40.06%
Enrolled child(ren) in a sport, club or other extracurricular activity	19.32%
Improved my housing situation	58.52%



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

The most important point about the comments under Question 14 is that people did find they were able to plan – for the first time in many years, for some respondents. Their experiences indicate that there are multi-dimensional routes to success that depend on unique, personal circumstances. People must have the autonomy that a basic income provides to make their own decisions.

One individual, who was disabled as a result of an accident, and suffered complications of depression and overweight, lost about 100 pounds on OBIP and was planning further fitness improvements to function better at home, at work and in the community. There are many other examples:

“Bought a used car and got insurance. Invested in appointments and medicine I needed for my health condition.”

“I was working towards (getting) needed auto repairs.”

“I paid for drivers ed and started saving so I can go to post-secondary.”

“I got my license, a vehicle, and some newer rollers and brushes for my work.”

“Basic income has allowed me to receive an education that I otherwise wouldn’t be able to receive.”

“I began to save for my own future schooling and enable my wife to go back to school to work towards becoming a nurse.”

“I was able to take random courses, like CPR training that I could not afford to do before.”

“I just needed to finish three more classes to graduate from [university]. I wanted to get a car to help my mom get to appointments...eventually move into a more appropriate place to accommodate my mother’s [disability] needs.”

“I was able to do some necessary home repairs.”

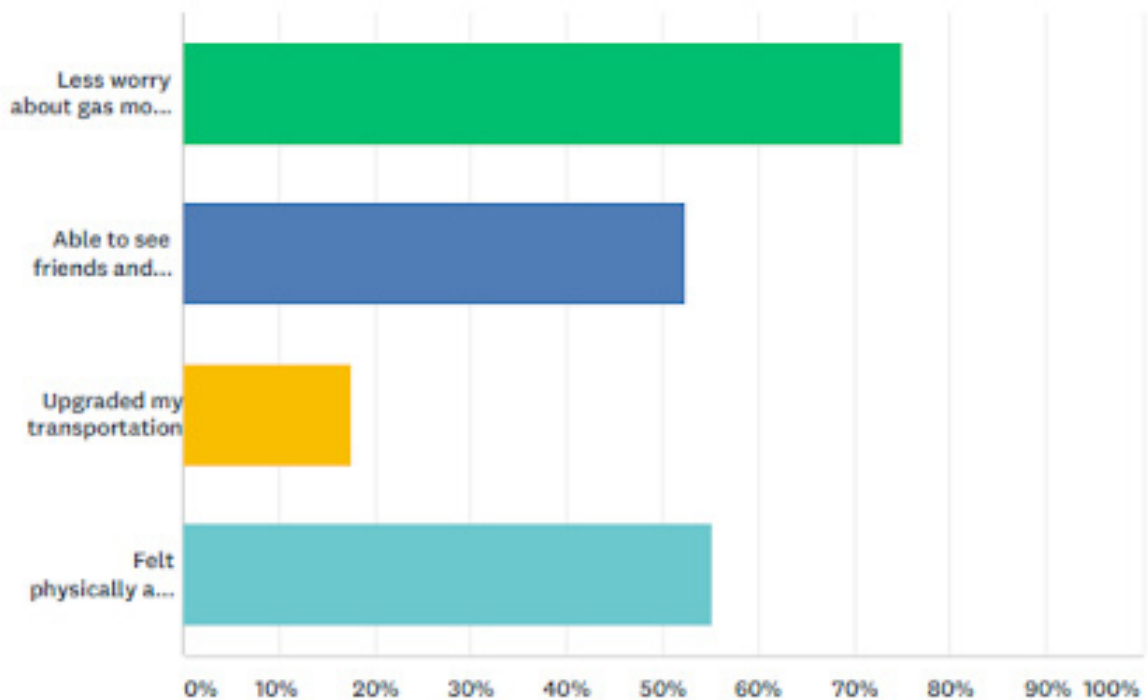
“I wanted to improve my housing situation, but never got a chance.”

“It was helping me pay for dental work. [My teeth were] causing me to be sick and then I wanted to go to school for office administration.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 15 - Mobility



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less worry about gas money or transportation costs	74.88%
Able to see friends and family more often	52.22%
Upgraded my transportation	17.49%
Felt physically able to do more activities	54.93%

Some of the comments in earlier questions addressed mobility issues, especially related to transportation for employment. Mobility factors matter to people very personally too.

“Also able to afford to drive my mother to work and exercise programs which she otherwise would not be able to attend since she is elderly.”

“Took a trip to visit my friend. My first in 15 years!”

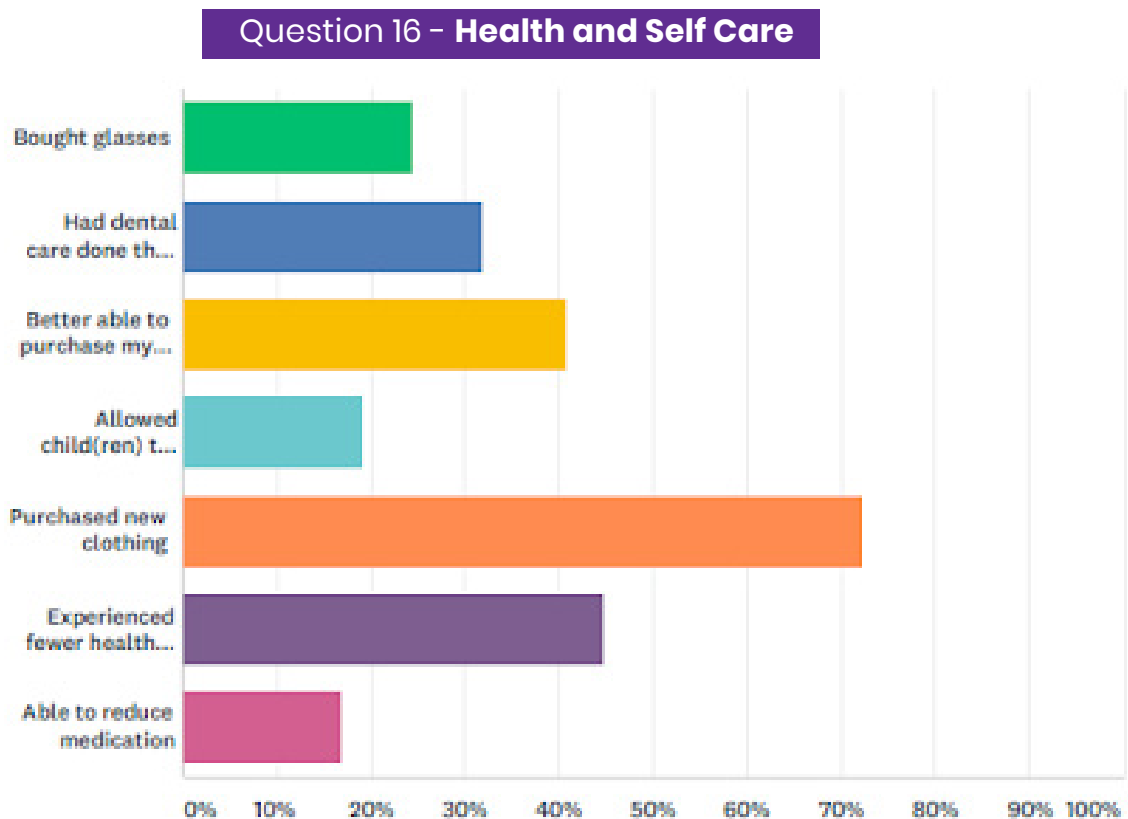
“I was able to pay for my scooter repairs.”

“I was able to afford quality shoes which I desperately needed because of painful feet issues.”





## Questions from survey with responses and explanations



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Bought glasses	24.38%
Had dental care done that was put off before	31.77%
Better able to purchase my medication	40.89%
Allowed child(ren) to go on field trips or try a new activity	19.21%
Purchased new clothing	72.17%
Experienced fewer health problems	44.83%
Able to reduce medication	17.00%

Given that the baseline survey indicated that pilot participants had many unmet health needs when they enrolled, it is not surprising that so many of BICN's respondents took care of these once they were on the pilot and that their well-being improved as a result. The comments on dental care in particular indicated how very expensive this work can be, making it difficult to get it completed early in the pilot period.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

The top answer, however, was the purchase of new clothing, something that affects everyone because it impacts how you present yourself to the world and how other people perceive you. It affects confidence and job prospects as well as being functional. For parents, the importance of greater opportunities for their children to do field trips at school and to enroll in other activities cannot be underestimated.

“I was able to ..... buy my children brand new snowsuits and boots.”

“I hadn’t had new clothes in years...”

“I purchased professional clothing for my office”

“I need dental work done and it was on the list to take care of in these 3 years because it’s long overdue and I need some very serious work done but can’t afford it.”

“Allowed me to pay for my drug prescriptions required for my heart condition and my hip replacement pain.”

“I didn’t skip getting my prescriptions or stretching them out to last longer.”

“I stopped my incontinence. Greatly reduced my stress, anxiety, depression.”

“I was able to pay for physiotherapy.”

“I purchased hearing aids and glasses.”

“Purchased a freezer to enable me to take advantage of sale items.”

“I used the money to increase my health and safety around my home.”

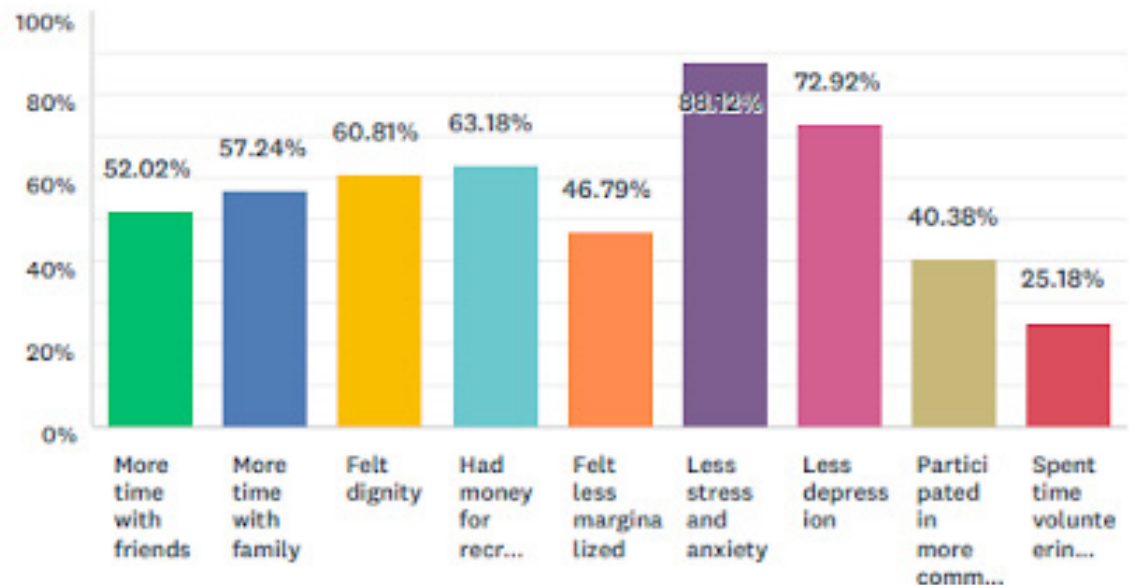
“I am able to do more activities with my daughter i.e. taking her bowling or to the movies.”

“This program has helped me afford to put my children in extracurricular activities that I will most likely not be able to afford next year.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 17 – Social Inclusion



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
More time with friends	52.02%
More time with family	57.24%
Felt dignity	60.81%
Had money for recreation	63.18%
Felt less marginalized	46.79%
Less stress and anxiety	88.12%
Less depression	72.92%
Participated in more community events	40.38%
Spent time volunteering in the community	25.18%

On the BICN survey, over 88% of respondents experienced less stress and anxiety during the pilot, and almost 73% experienced less depression. At the start of the pilot 80.9% of participants were suffering from moderate to severe psychological stress. Furthermore, comments throughout our survey indicate just how dramatic the improvements were for some people. Research shows that social inclusion is important for positive health and societal outcomes, and the comments on the BICN survey reflect this very strongly.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

"I see my daughter and grandkids more and don't worry about gas so much."

"Able to buy grandchildren gifts ...which I was never able to do."

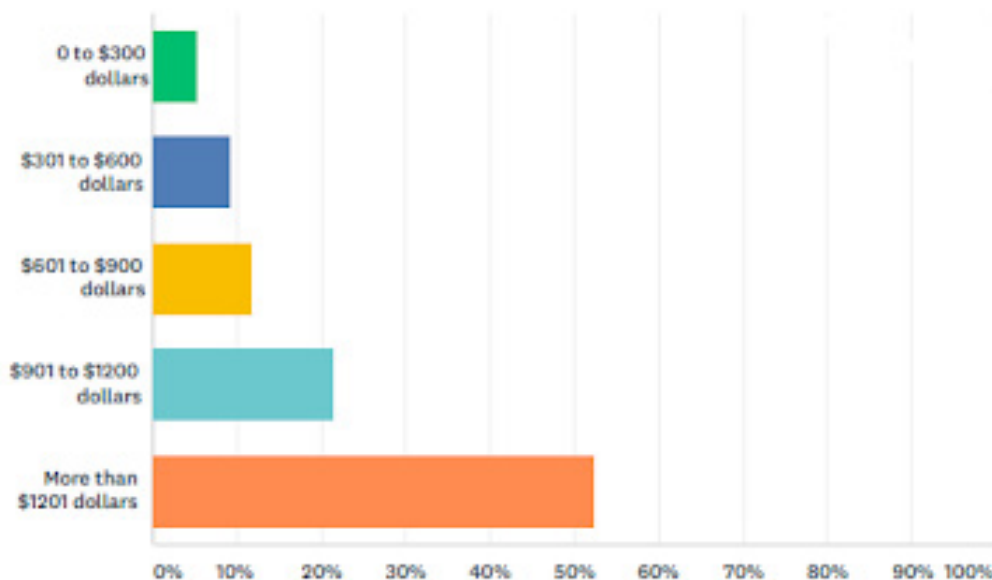
"I joined a weight loss club, great support and made friends. Fun social outing every week!!!"

"I started volunteering in the school and a senior's [home]."

"I began volunteering music [at a local] hospital"

"I would like to start volunteering if I can just have the peace of mind and health benefits of a basic income."

### Question 18 – The amount of basic income I received each month was



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0 to \$300 dollars	5.28%
\$301 to \$600 dollars	9.17%
\$601 to \$900 dollars	11.70%
\$901 to \$1200 dollars	21.56%
More than \$1201 dollars	52.29%



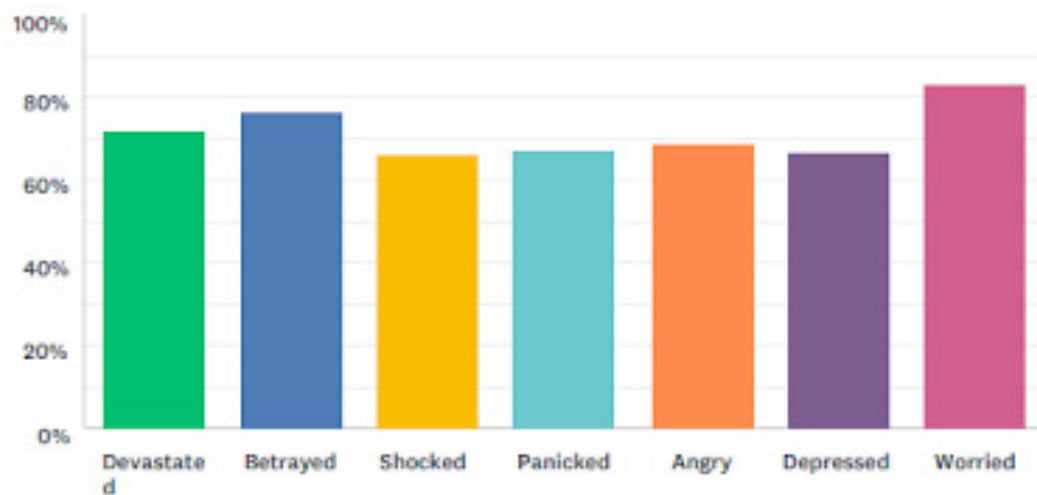
## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

People going from very low income to receiving a basic income would be expected to see significant benefits, but those receiving minimal amounts also found them important.

“I was only getting \$214/month, but every amount counts.”

“We only received a very small amount of money comparatively, but it made a huge difference.”

### Question 19 – When the cancellation was announced I felt



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Devastated	71.60%
Betrayed	76.06%
Shocked	66.20%
Panicked	66.90%
Angry	68.54%
Depressed	66.43%
Worried	82.63%

Some of the anger toward the government’s cancellation of OBIP that was expressed in the comments people made is unprintable, and completely understandable. The shock, betrayal and anger are largely directed outwards, however. Far more troubling is the worry and panic over changing plans again. Going backwards adds largely to the psychological stress which does not help. By far the most worrisome answer is depression, which for some is severe with a risk of suicide being a horrifying possibility.



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

"I am angry, because it was helping me, and I was seeing it help others, and because I have read the research and I know it works, and that the only reason to cancel the pilot was because Ford's government wants to keep people in poverty for ideological reasons."

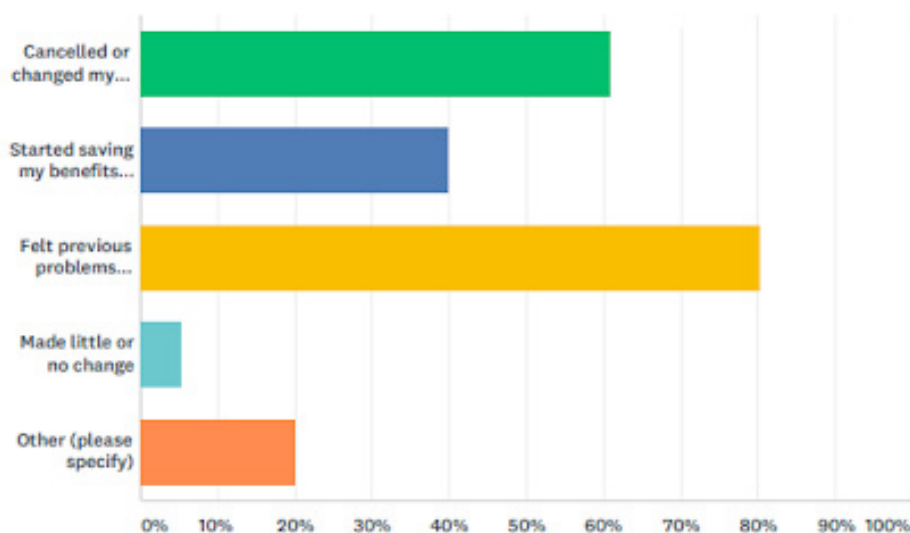
"... now feel I cannot trust whatever the government says."

"I can't understand how Ford can go back on his party's promise to keep it for the duration. I am feeling very worried and despondent about the future."

"[The pilot] was the first thing in three years that genuinely brought any happiness ... I had such a weight off my shoulders. That weight instantly landed on my shoulders again with that [cancellation] news."

"That cancellation was horrific to hear. Now just when I thought life was gonna be more enjoyable... Now that it's being cancelled, I have become so depressed."

### Question 20 – After the cancellation was announced I



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Cancelled or changed my future plans	60.97%
Started saving my benefits before they ran out	39.95%
Felt previous problems returning	80.37%
Made little or no change	5.31%
Other (please specify)	20.09%



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

The vast majority (over 80%) felt previous problems returning while many (almost 61%) had to cancel or change their plans.

“Couldn’t make plans to get my PSW [Personal Support Worker] certificates. Now I will not be financially able to help provide for my family by getting my post-secondary education. Will not be able to change our financial situation. Both my husband and I are now depressed and worrying about our family’s future.”

“I felt better knowing I could do stuff for and with my children. I have an obese son that needed extracurricular activities and now I have to pull him out. I have to start all over again now.”

“I am very disappointed. I was going to go back to school for training to get better employment; now I had to cancel and am back where I started. I feel very depressed.”

“I feel hopeless ... Suddenly all of my options were removed and I was faced with giving up my schooling (which was already partially paid for), losing my home, or both.”

“I don’t know where we are going to live in 3 months (after March).”

“I now also feel like we are going to lose everything ... Everything improved for us ... and now it’s being taken away...”

“I wanted to curl up and die.”

“I have been supporting those who feel scared and suicidal.”

“Stressed, felt depressed, anxious, unsafe, threatened, disinterred, belittled, lied to and dismissed as a human being.”

“I feel the cancellation was grossly unfair and purely politically motivated as opposed to humane or fiscally responsible, considering there is much evidence that basic incomes benefit society and encourage people to better themselves, contribute to communities, etc.

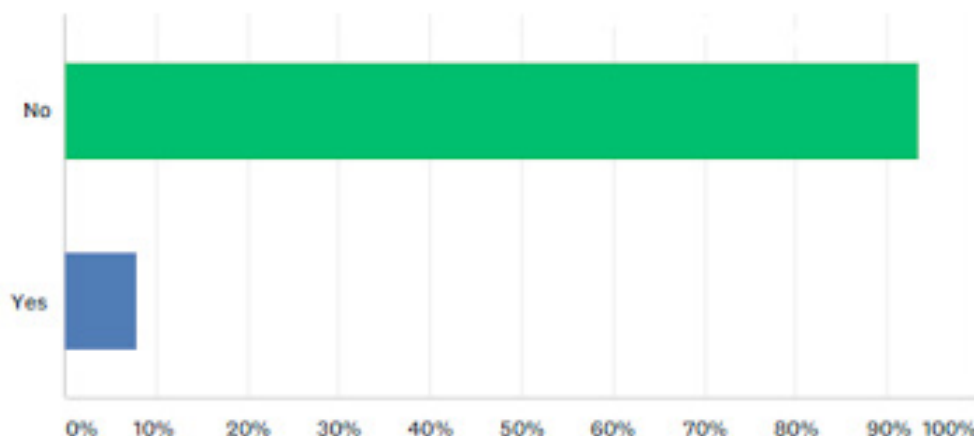
It feels like we didn’t even have a chance to succeed.”





## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 21 – **Basic Income had a negative income on my life**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No	93.50%
Yes	7.66%

Most of the people who answered ‘yes’ to this question described the negative effects of cancellation, just as the people who answered ‘no’ did. Almost everyone found the pilot itself beneficial. But there were a few who indicated difficulties that are important to consider in designing another pilot or a full program. In one case a parent and child living in Ontario Housing saw rent go up a great deal leaving only a couple hundred dollars extra a month. They felt, however, that this was still a benefit to their family.

In another account, an individual left Ontario Works to join the pilot, saw an initial reduction in income even lower than the OW rate because it was based on the previous year’s earnings. If the pilot had continued, the benefit would have been recalculated based on more recent earnings and it would have more than tripled. With cancellation, however, that higher amount will not last long enough to compensate for the initial loss. No one in this pilot was supposed to be worse off but it happened in this case.

“Government broke our agreement [contract] in this pilot project without blinking an eye.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### Question 22 – **Additional comments related to your basic income pilot experience?**

This open-ended question drew responses from 332 recipients. Many responses were very detailed, and we cannot print them all here, including for privacy reasons. We have selected key excerpts that summarize the most consistent messages and offer insights into the lives of basic income recipients that we heard.

“What an amazing help. It gave me a sense of confidence to really think about and make plans for my future. It got me out of a cycle of debt and always being broke, and helped give me mental energy to my life.”

“I felt this program was an angel in disguise.”

“Income pilot allowed us to make future long term plans that were attainable ...Tired of lies and being cheated so wealthy people can get wealthier. I have worked my whole life and never seem to get anywhere; the system has been broken a long time.”

“I planned out the 3-year goals with what I was receiving ... I feel lost now...”

“The basic income pilot saved me at a time when I needed it the most.”

“I had plans to go to school for all three years of the pilot so that when it was over, I would be in a position where I would be educated enough to have a good career. I would be in a higher tax bracket and paying more taxes so I would be contributing more to society.”

“I’m very grateful for how this program has helped me, even though it’s ending prematurely.”

“It was exactly what the country needed.”

“I finally had some dignity and could purchase food and clothing from actual stores and not second-hand stores or food bank; my depression actually decreased a lot along with my anxiety.”

“I felt like I wasn’t a burden on my parents, whom I live with.”

“I felt finally like I was a part of society and not isolated ... able to go out for a tea when asked, pay for uncovered meds needed ... sleep without anxiety. It was a feeling of confidence, self-worth.”

“It gave me a feeling of security....”

“Basic income helped me feel more like the person I was before my illness took over.”

“Found a new network of community to engage with through other recipients...”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

### “My confidence boosted sky high ....

I took 2 months to get my anxiety under control. I found a full-time job in a little less than 2 months ... My kids' confidence went higher, [they] started bringing home better grades ... They have proper winter clothing ... able to play outside ... Basic income made me want to better myself and I did ... Nothing but positive in this household. Thank you Basic Income.”

“As someone who works 40+hrs a week in a factory job that destroys my body, making next to min wage, I was making barely enough to get by ... The basic income program helped me afford my bills ... and allowed me to participate in recreational activities more.”

“I would not have taken that temporary job ... if I were not on BI - ODSP deductions would have dissuaded me. I did not feel “policed” like I have felt in the Ontario Assistance system which added to an overall feeling of dignity and self-respect.”

“Basic income changed my life. I also know people whose lives were changed for the better.... not having to visit the ODSP office every month and have a worker be paid to manage my “case” was great. Having someone to call at BIP only when I had a question was great. Not dealing with the stigma of being on ODSP brought dignity to my life.....”

“After living below the poverty level for over a decade, it was the best thing to ever happen to me! My quality of life has increased 100%.”

### “Since I have Down Syndrome, my sister is my voice, my caregiver, my everything. This made it easier on her.”

“Honestly aside from moving, which was huge, our little girl was able to do gymnastics and get a little outdoor slide and eat lots of fruits and veggies and always had diapers. It was a blessing.”

“It didn't just help me financially. My health, mood and my outlook on my future all improved.”

“Now due to the many incredibly poor choices made by the current provincial government we, and the rest of the world, will never know how positively successful this program would have been. Well, at least the participants will know ...”

### “I was able to live as a happy human being ...

Unfortunately because of the cancellation of the pilot project, my plans will also have to be cancelled.”

“This was a great experience ... The worry is huge. A program that was intended to help so many has now ended.”

“The cancellation will cause great financial problems for me, as I have entered two contracts and obligated to pay for them after my last Basic Income payment.”



## Questions from survey with responses and explanations

“I was in the hospital multiple times a week with health problems from not being able to eat properly, stress, and not having a way to really go anywhere (in life). I’m enrolled in schooling and I intend to go to college next year but don’t know how I will afford anything now.”

“This pilot has given me the chance to spend more time with my children ... A stable house and a stable mom not worrying about putting food on the table or gas in my vehicle to go to work. I am so stressed about this [cancellation].”

“With BI being cancelled ... we will now have to break our lease and move back to a place that is known not to be a safe area ... and my wife’s car will have to be sold, because my ODSP worker would not allow us to own one before ...”

“I have worked full time my entire life ... I have always had multiple jobs and no life. This extra income allowed for some comfort in life and being able to go out with friends and family ... that [the pilot] is taken away before the study barely started is disheartening.”

“I am grateful to all the advocates...

who fight to have the pilot run its 3-year course and if the courts decide to overturn this government’s reckless decision then my hope will be restored.”

“The basic income is a necessity that can and should benefit everyone.”



## Concluding Thoughts

Canadian governments at both the federal and provincial/territorial levels need to invest our money where it will get the best return – and a basic income is that kind of investment. It is certainly cheaper on any given day to buy a bucket to put under a hole in the roof than it is to stop the roof from leaking. But our overflowing buckets – the food banks required by those lacking money for food, and hospitals and welfare offices and police trying (inadequately) to respond to mental illness and social unrest – are not going to fix the holes in our income security system. A basic income can be that solution.

The storm of economic change and social anxiety is gathering speed. Canada has provided forms of basic income to seniors and children for years; it's time to build on those programs, ensure no one is left behind, and create a brighter future for all of us.



## Useful sources on basic income:

If you are interested in supporting the basic income movement, or just getting more information, there are plenty of resources available.

### [Basic Income Canada Network's Primer Series](#)

Basic Income Canada Network offer this series of 12 short 'primers' on the topic that answer many questions, from how it could work, to why it is needed, and how it might impact you.

Basic Income Canada Network, "[The Basic Income We Want.](#)" This brief statement outlines BICN's position that basic income should be part of a broad and high quality range of public programs including health care, affordable housing, and other social supports.

Guy Standing, "[Universal basic income is becoming an urgent necessity.](#)" The Guardian, 12 January 2017.

### [Basic Income for Canada](#)

Made by animator Adam Gaudreau-Brown, of Hamilton, Ontario, this short, animated video explain what basic income is and why it is needed.

[The Case for Basic Income](#) Free Ebook developed by former Senator Art Eggleton



## Websites:

[Basic Income Canada Network](#)  
[Ontario Basic Income Network](#)  
[Basic Income Earth Network](#)



## More detailed reading:

Forget, E. (2011). [The town with no poverty](#): The health effects of a Canadian guaranteed annual income field experiment. Canadian Public Policy, 37(3), 283-305.

Mulvale, J., & Frankel, S. (2016). Next Steps on the Road to Basic Income in Canada. Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 43(1), 27-50.

Smith-Carrier, T. and Green, S. (2017). Another Low Road to Basic Income? Mapping a Pragmatic Model for Adopting a Basic Income in Canada. Basic Income Studies, 12(2), 1-25.

There are also many full length books available. Dr. Evelyn Forget's recent "Basic Income in Canada: The key to a healthier, happier more secure life for all" is comprehensive, evidence-based and warm and human. For an international perspective, Guy Standing has written several books about precarious work, basic income and an important pilot in India.