WIC Participant Perceptions of the Cash-Value Benefit Increase: Perspectives from 4 States

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Marisa Tsai, MS MPH, UC Berkeley
Cristina Gago, PhD MPH, Harvard University
Overview

01 Background

02 Findings from DE

03 Findings from NC

04 Findings from CA

05 Findings from MA

06 Synthesis and Implications
**Positionality Statements**

**Emily**: As it relates to this project, I am a non-Hispanic white woman that has never experienced food insecurity or participated in a federal nutrition assistance program. I am also not a mother or a caregiver, but I am a native North Carolinian. My positionality presents many limitations related to this project; however, I have tried to build out a diverse team and stakeholder advisory board to, at least in part, address some of these limitations.

**McKenna**: As White, middle-class women who obtained our degrees from predominately White academic institutions, we acknowledge that we will never fully understand the experiences of historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups or families experiencing poverty. However, we are committed to continuously challenging our biases, engaging deeply with these populations, forming reciprocal research partnerships, and ensuring that our findings will directly inform more equitable policies and practices.

**Cristina**: As a childless Hispanic white cisgender woman who has never experienced food insecurity or participated in a federal nutrition assistance program, I acknowledge that I will never fully understand the experience of the WIC caregivers we surveyed. To address this limitation, we have intentionally built a diverse team of collaborators, who have helped actively shape every stage of the research project.

**Marisa**: In relation to this project, I am a childless Asian American daughter of immigrants who qualified but did not participate in federal nutrition assistance programs. I acknowledge that my background presents limitations, and I have learned from and appreciated the diverse team of researchers involved in this project.

**Cristina**: As a childless Hispanic white cisgender woman who has never experienced food insecurity or participated in a federal nutrition assistance program, I acknowledge that I will never fully understand the experience of the WIC caregivers we surveyed. To address this limitation, we have intentionally built a diverse team of collaborators, who have helped actively shape every stage of the research project.
Adequate Fruit and Vegetable Consumption is Critical for Disease Prevention
USDA Increased WIC Funding for Fruits and Vegetables During COVID-19
COVID-19 Related CVB Increase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Pandemic and Beginning of Pandemic</th>
<th>March 2021</th>
<th>June 2021</th>
<th>September 2021</th>
<th>December 2021</th>
<th>March 2022</th>
<th>September 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original benefit amount:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $9/month for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• $11/month for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding individuals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Rescue Plan is enacted, including a provision that expands access to fruits and vegetables for mothers and children participating in WIC by increasing benefit amount to $35/month per person for up to four months.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Via a continuing resolution, fruit and vegetable benefit increase extended through December 2021 at these levels:</td>
<td>Via a continuing resolution, enhanced benefit extended through March 2022</td>
<td>Via 2022 Appropriations Act, enhanced benefit extended through September 2022</td>
<td>Enhanced benefit extended through December 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC agencies begin implementing the $35 per month, per participant, fruit and vegetable benefit through September 2021.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$24/month for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$43–47/month for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding individuals</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In NC, benefit dipped back to ~$10/month/person in October 2021

Image: (Food Research and Action Center, 2022)
WIC participants’ perceptions of the Cash-Value Benefit increase during the COVID-19 pandemic

McKenna Halverson
Research Questions

1. How did increases to the CVB allotment during the COVID-19 pandemic impact WIC participants’ perceptions of the benefit?

2. How did increases to the CVB allotment during the COVID-19 pandemic impact WIC participants’ grocery purchases, food preparation, and fruit and vegetable consumption patterns?
**Semi-Structured Phone Interviews**

**Data Collection**
- 51 WIC participants in Wilmington, DE
- March – June 2022
- 30-minute phone interviews
- $20 incentive

**Recruitment**
- ShopRite (supermarket chain)
- Child care centers
- Churches
- Community Partners
Measures

- Demographics
- Food Security Screener: Hunger Vital Sign
- Impact and Perceptions of the CVB Increase:

**Representative Interview Questions**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Can you describe how the shifts in your Cash-Value Benefit amount impacted your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What do you usually buy with your Cash-Value Benefit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How do you use the items that you purchase with the Cash-Value Benefit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>When you have more money to spend as part of your Cash-Value Benefit, how do your purchases change if at all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>How does having more money in the Cash-Value Benefit change the way your family eats? For example, do meals or snacks look different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How much money makes a difference? Does a difference between $11 and $47 change the kinds of foods you would buy? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What would your ideal Cash-Value Benefit amount be?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sample Characteristics (N = 51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>M(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>30.88 (7.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Children (WIC)</td>
<td>2.3 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $30,000</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $60,000</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $60,000</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/GED or Less</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College or More</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecure</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Enrolled in SNAP</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants Who Would Like Higher CVB Than Current Amount</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- Increased Purchasing of Fruits and Vegetables and More Frequent Shopping Occasions
- Increased Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables
- Enhanced Dietary Variety
- High Participant Valuation of the Increased CVB Allotment
Results

Increased Purchasing of Fruits and Vegetables and More Frequent Shopping Occasions

“Before the pandemic, the fruit and vegetables, it wasn't as significant, [...] it wasn't as much money. So, I could probably get maybe a few bananas [...] , but now I can get like a lot of fruit and a lot of vegetables, and it's like really significant. $50 goes a long way for fresh fruit.” – Respondent 40

“Oh, he loves fruit. It allows me to get fruit twice throughout the month, rather than just the one time. It is a big help with dinner and getting and having broccoli and cabbage.” – Respondent 53
"We were able to have more. I basically make sure that we have a full vegetable at every meal, and I know that's like a really big deal and it kind of makes me weary that we weren't having a full fruit and vegetable at every meal." – Respondent 11
Results

Enhanced Dietary Variety

“Yeah, just give(s), [...] different variety. And like I said, I tried different fruit, you know, different things. So, it did help a lot with [...] the little bit extra.” – Respondent 23

“It was great. Cause my five-year-old, she loved bananas, my son and my oldest, they loved apples and then the little halo. So, it was good. I was like, go ahead and pick out what you want.” – Respondent 28
High Participant Valuation of the Increased CVB Allotment

"I usually pretty much use my produce benefits to the full extent of their abilities, because that's my favorite part of WIC.” – Respondent 25

“Yeah, I think it really did help me to kind of start educating myself on what types of fruits and vegetables we could eat. How it helps our health.” - Respondent 11
Collaborators and Funders

Funder
• Healthy Eating Research

Academic Advisor & Coauthor
• Dr. Allison Karpyn

Research and Community Partners
• Conscious Connections, Inc.
• Village Tree, Inc.
• Delaware WIC team
• WIC Learning Collaborative
• Dr. Christina Chauvenet
“I think that’s the most beneficial change that WIC has made in a really long time”

Perceptions and Awareness of an Increase in the WIC Cash Value Benefit

Emily Duffy, MPH RD
Collaborators and Funders

**Co-Authors**
Daniele Vest
Cassandra Davis
Marissa Hall
Molly De Marco
Shu Wen Ng
Lindsey Smith Taillie

**Stakeholder Advisory Board**
Equity Before Birth
NC DHHS
El Centro Hispano
Kelly Kitchens-Collins
Lindsay Guge

**Collaborators**
Global Food Research Program
NC WIC Research Collaborative
Dr. Christina Chauvenet
McKenna Halverson
Marisa Tsai
Cristina Gago

**Funders**
Carlina Population Center
NC TRaCS
RWJF Healthy Eating Research
Objectives

1. Qualitatively examine 1) perceptions and awareness of the CVB increase 2) barriers and facilitators to using the increased CVB and 3) perceived effects of the CVB increase on household fruit and vegetable consumption.

2. Understand whether experiences and perceptions of the CVB increase differed by rurality.
Virtual Focus Groups

Recruitment
- Local WIC agencies***
- SNAP Ed Implementing Agencies and FNS agents
- Stakeholder advisory board

Data Collection
- March 2022
- 5 rural and 5 urban/suburban focus groups (n=55)
- 4-8 participants per group
- 1 hour Zoom group discussion
- $40 incentive
- Used a semi-structured focus group guide
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rural (n=26)</th>
<th>Urban (n=29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Age</strong></td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>16 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern/North African</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participates in SNAP</strong></td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>16 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0–24,999</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
<td>10 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25–49,999</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>16 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000+</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/GED or Less</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>16 (62%)</td>
<td>13 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College or More</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (41%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Rural Counties**
  - 78 counties with an average population density of 250 people per square mile or less.

- **Regional City and Suburban Counties**
  - 16 counties with an average population density between 250 and 750 people per square mile.

- **Urban Counties**
  - 6 counties with an average population density that exceeds 750 people per square mile.

[Densities calculated by the Rural Center based on the 2020 U.S. Census.](https://www.ncruralcenter.org/about-us/)
Focus Group Guide

- WIC enrollment
- Shopping experiences and COVID-19
- Food package
- CVB awareness and perceptions
- Barriers and facilitators to CVB use
- Household dietary behaviors
Similar Themes

Positive perceptions

Perceived increase in consumption

Enhanced fruit and vegetable variety

Highly valued food package component
Awareness of Changes & Implementation Challenges

- Many not notified by WIC
- October decrease created challenges and uncertainty
- Some frustration with the decrease for some families in November

...when we got the first increase, I wasn’t told about it. So I called WIC to make sure that it was accurate because I didn’t want to spend it and then have to be responsible for repaying it…
Barriers to CVB Use More Pronounced in Rural Settings

Facilitators
- Variety of eligible foods
- Household preferences for fruits and vegetables

Barriers
- Insufficient supply
- Inaccurate or unclear shelf/product labeling
- Issues with BNFT app
- General WIC use barriers
- More pronounced in rural groups
Desired Changes to CVB

- Higher amounts to meet needs and keep pace with inflation
- Exchange CVB for baby food for 6-12-month-old children
- Substitute unused components of the food package for more CVB
- Roll over benefits

…if I could say, you know, you can keep this bread and give it to someone who would actually use this bread and someone who will actually use this cereal, go ahead and just give me $5 more for fruits and vegetables, and that would be fine. Like, I just think if it’s like tailored to the child like that
Full Paper: go.unc.edu/cvbstudy

Research Brief: go.unc.edu/cvbbbrief
Increased WIC Cash Value Benefit for fruits and vegetables is associated with higher redemption, satisfaction, and household food security across race/ethnicity groups.

Marisa M. Tsai, MS, MPH
University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute
University of California, Berkeley
Background and research question

• The 2017 NASEM committee issued recommendations on WIC food packages
  • Increase the cash value benefit (CVB) for fruits and vegetables from $9 to $23 for children ages 1-4 years to provide half of recommended intake
• 2021 American Rescue Plan Act allowed USDA to temporarily augment the CVB
  • Augmentation started June 2021, and is extended to December 2022 at $24-25/month
• Primary research question: How are different levels of the CVB associated with changes in redemption, satisfaction, household food security, and child fruit and vegetable intake?
• Secondary research question: Are results universal, or do they differ by race, ethnicity, and language?
Study design

- Longitudinal
- 3 surveys of caregivers of WIC-participating children in Southern California

Baseline participant characteristics (n=1770)\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>% or mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3+ people in the household under 18 years old</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in household currently receiving WIC</td>
<td>1.3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child female</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child age</td>
<td>2.8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>65 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>222 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic English-speaking</td>
<td>798 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Spanish-speaking</td>
<td>532 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>114 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>39 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T1: May 2021 CVB $9

T2: Sept. 2021 CVB $35

T3: May 2022 CVB $24
Measurement of study outcomes

Redemption
- Administrative records

Satisfaction with CVB amount: perceived as sufficient
- Would you say [the $ amount of CVB] is... Too much? Not enough? Just right? Don’t know?
- Dichotomized: satisfied (too much, just right) and not satisfied (not enough).

Household food security: 6 item USDA household food security screener

Child fruit and vegetable intake: NHANES Dietary Screener Questionnaire

Likelihood of remaining on WIC if CVB amount went back to $9
- If the amount [of CVB reverted] to $9 ... how likely are you to keep coming to WIC for your children between age 1-4? Very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, not very likely?
- Dichotomized: likely (very or somewhat likely) and unlikely (somewhat unlikely, not very likely).
Average household CVB redemption per month ($)
increased compared to baseline

*p<0.05, compared to baseline*
Satisfaction with CVB amount (%) varied with CVB value

*Participants reporting CVB amount sufficient (%)*

- **T1**: 7
- **T2**: 76 *
- **T3**: 44 *

*p<0.05, compared to baseline*
Satisfaction with CVB amount by race, ethnicity, and language (%)
Household food security (%) increased, compared to baseline

*P < 0.05, compared to baseline
Household food security by race, ethnicity, and language changed at each timepoint

- **T1**
- **T2**
- **T3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic English</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Spanish</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fruit and vegetable intake increased among children whose intake was lowest at baseline.

*p<0.05, compared to baseline
Likelihood of participation if CVB went back to $9 varied by race and ethnicity (%)

- Asian: 63%
- Non-Hispanic Black: 73%
- Hispanic English-speaking: 75%
- Hispanic Spanish-speaking: 90%
- Other: 74%
- Non-Hispanic White: 68%
Conclusion

• The augmented CVB increased fruit and vegetable access substantially, evident in higher CVB redemption and higher household food security
  • Improved fruit and vegetable access was experienced by all racial/ethnic groups

• Participants satisfaction with CVB increased with higher CVB amount.
  • Increases in satisfaction were larger among racial/ethnic groups that reported lower baseline satisfaction.

• Fruit and vegetable intake decreased in full sample, but intakes increased among children with the lowest baseline FV intake.
Thank you! Questions?

Email: mmtsai@ucanr.edu

Study team

University of California, Nutrition Policy Institute:
• Lorrene D. Ritchie, PhD, RD (Co-PI)

University of California, Davis
• Lauren E. Au, PhD, RD

PHFE WIC:
• Shannon E. Whaley, PhD (Co-PI)
• Christopher E. Anderson, PhD, MSPH
• Catherine E. Martinez, MPH
• Martha Meza
Future research questions

• How did participants spend their CVB (e.g., mostly fruits, mostly vegetables)?
• Does variety of child FV intake change after enhanced CVB?
• How does the increased CVB affect retention?
• Was improved household food security maintained?
RESEARCH TEAM & SUPPORT

Harvard TH Chan School
• Erica Kenney, PhD & Eric Rimm, PhD

MA Department of Public Health
• Rachel Colchamiro, MPH, RD, LDN & Kelley May, MPH, RD

Funding
• NOPREN Early Career Scholar Award
Examine WIC caregiver perceptions of the impact the CVV/B increase posed on ...

(1) FV access & consumption,
(2) Out-of-pocket grocery costs & burden, and
(3) General satisfaction with WIC.
## METHODS

### SAMPLE
- 321 MA WIC caregivers
- Child1y+
- Enrolled 1y+
- Remember increase

### RECRUIT
- Invite via text from MA State Office
- Anonymous survey link

### DATA
- 10-minute Qualtrics survey
- English, Spanish, Portuguese
- $10 incentive
- $75 lottery
SURVEY

GENERAL QUESTIONS
• E.g., Who is currently enrolled & is receiving benefits?

MARKET ACCESS & FOOD NEEDS
• E.g., How long does it usually take you to get to the store?

CVV/B IMPACT
• E.g., How did the CVV/B increase affect the amount you spend on FV with your own money?

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS
• E.g., gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, education, employment
Age
- >40: 22%
- 35-39: 24%
- 30-34: 28%
- 18-29: 26%

Race/Ethnicity
- Hispanic: 46%
- White: 27%
- Black: 12%
- Other: 11%

Language
- English: 68%
- Spanish: 24%
- Portuguese: 7%

Education
- 18-29: 26%
- 30-34: 28%
- 35-39: 24%
- >40: 22%

SNAP

Employment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do they sell FV your <strong>family</strong> likes?</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are FV prices <strong>reasonable</strong>?</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to get <strong>enough</strong> FV last month?</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SHOPPING EXPERIENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where do you shop most?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supercenter</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long does it take to get there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;15min</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30min</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-45min</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45min</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you get there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch a ride</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transit</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out-of-Pocket FV Costs/Month

- $0-25: 17%
- $26-50: 25%
- $76-100: 30%
- $>100: 28%

SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

Where do you shop most?
- Supermarket: 49
- Supercenter: 23
- Other: 9

How long does it take to get there?
- <15min: 54
- 15-30min: 31
- 30-45min: 12
- >45min: 7

How do you get there?
- Car: 19
- Catch a ride: 1
- Public transit: 8
- Other: 7

Do they sell FV your family likes?
- Yes: 97
- No: 3

Are FV prices reasonable?
- Reasonable: 72
- Too expensive: 28

Able to get enough FV last month?
- Yes: 62
- No: 38

Costs/Month
- $0-25: 17%
- $26-50: 25%
- $76-100: 30%
- $>100: 28%
SATISFACTION WITH WIC FOOD PACKAGE

PRE-INCREASE

Satisfied 68%

POST-INCREASE

Satisfied 84%
Caregivers perceived...

- Reduced out-of-pocket cost
- Increased amount FV bought, consumed, & offered
- Improved satisfaction with WIC
Key takeaways

1. WIC participants report strong support for the CVB allotment increase and stated pre-COVID amount was insufficient.

2. Higher CVB allotments decreased participants’ perceived out-of-pocket cost.

3. Higher CVB allotments increased participants’ perceived purchasing and consumption of fruit and vegetables, perceived dietary variety, and perceived satisfaction with the WIC food package.

4. Many participants believe the CVB should be increased further to meet their needs.

5. Implementation challenges should be considered in future emergency food response policy.
Implications

LOCAL AGENCIES
- Reminders via text or recert appointments regarding CVV/B status/changes
- Individualized reminders on CVV/B remaining balance via ShopperApp (where available)

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES
- Collaborate with academic researchers to increase evaluation capacity
- Evaluate CVB increases using grocery store transaction data
- Continue cross-state collaboration

FEDERAL POLICY
- Use research to inform NWA’s ongoing policy and advocacy efforts on CVB increase and new WIC food package
Future research...

Do results differ by race, ethnicity, and language?
How does the increased CVB affect retention?
Was improved household food security maintained?
How did the CVB increase affect food purchases?
Published Research

1. go.unc.edu/cvbstudy
2. go.unc.edu/cvbbrief
Thank you!
Feedback? Questions?

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