Food Insufficiency Following Discontinuation of Monthly Child Tax Credit Payments Among Lower-income U.S. Households

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IMPORTANCE: The 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit provided advance monthly payments to many US families with children from July through December 2021 and was associated with a reduction in food insufficiency. Less is known about the effect of the discontinuation of monthly payments. OBJECTIVE: To assess whether the discontinuation of monthly Child Tax Credit payments was associated with subsequent changes in food insufficiency among lower-income US households with children. DESIGN, SETTING, AND PARTICIPANTS: This population-based cross-sectional study used data from the Household Pulse Survey, a recurring online survey of US households conducted by the US Census Bureau, from January 2021 to March 2022. This study estimated difference-in-differences regression models for households making less than $50?000, less than $35?000, and less than $25?000 annually, adjusting for demographic characteristics and state of residence. The estimation sample of households making less than $50?000/y included 114?705 responses, representing a weighted population size of 27?342?296 households. EXPOSURES: Receipt of monthly Child Tax Credit payments, as measured by living in a household with children during the period of monthly payments from July through December 2021. MAIN OUTCOMES AND MEASURES: Household food insufficiency, as measured by a respondent indicating that there was sometimes or often not enough food to eat in the household in the previous 7 days. RESULTS: Among 114?705 households making less than $50?000/y, respondents were predominantly female (57%); White (71%); not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (79%); had high school or equivalent education (38%); and were unmarried (70%). Following the discontinuation of monthly Child Tax Credit payments, food insufficiency in US households with children increased by 3.5 percentage points (95% CI, 1.4-5.7 percentage points) among households making less than $50?000/y, 4.9 percentage points (95% CI, 2.6-7.3 percentage points) among households making less than $35?000/y, and 6.2 percentage points (95% CI, 3.3-9.3 percentage points) among households making less than $25?000/y. These estimates represent a relative increase in food insufficiency of approximately 16.7% among households making less than $50?000/y, 20.8% among households making less than $35?000/y, and 23.2% among households making less than $25?000/y. CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE: In this population-based cross-sectional study, discontinuation of monthly Child Tax Credit payments in December 2021 was associated with a statistically significant increase in household food insufficiency among lower-income households, with the greatest increase occurring in the lowest-income households.

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