



Research Article

Public preferences for health and non-health outcomes of Universal Basic Income and alternative income-based policies: A mixed-method feasibility study

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Plain language summary

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In the United Kingdom, there are big differences in the health of people living in rich and poor areas and between people from different walks of life. One way to reduce this health divide is to make sure people have a decent income. A Universal Basic Income that gives everyone in society a regular cash payment with no strings attached could help achieve this aim. However, different income-based policies exist and, because of limited public budgets, hard decisions need to be made about which policies to introduce. Governments wanting to bring in Universal Basic Income need to know what people think of it compared to other income-based policies and if people would give up anything for its introduction. Currently, policy debates are lacking this evidence.

This study aimed to develop different income-based policy scenarios and to explore how to design and test survey questions that ask the public how much they value these policies.

We identified six income-based policies – Universal Basic Income, Minimum Income Guarantee, Negative Income Tax, Participation Income, Targeted Basic Income and Universal Credit. The design of these policies and how they would impact on health outcomes and income was described. Fifty members of the public from across Glasgow and Newcastle participated in a survey. This involved choosing between and ranking policies and saying how much, if anything, they would be willing to pay for their introduction.

Overall, participants understood and engaged with the different policy scenarios and the different survey questions. There was no clearly preferred policy. Different people liked different parts of different policies, such as who receives it and what you need to do to get it. These survey questions should now be developed for a bigger United Kingdom study to explore what the public think about different income-based policies.