

## *Evidence at Your Fingertips Series*

# Cash Transfer Size: How Much Is Enough?

### Key Messages

1. Recent data underscores previous findings that high- and low-value transfers both increase household **consumption** and have the potential to increase asset accumulation and savings. When comparing two transfers, the **higher relative value transfer** typically produces greater impacts on economic indicators such as investment as well as consumption and food security.
2. **Higher-value lumpsum transfers may allow households to invest or save more than lower-value cumulative transfers.** The value of the transfer can influence the choice of investment, with higher lumpsum transfers enabling larger, long-term investments and lower value transfers enabling smaller, short-term investments.
3. **Lower-value transfers can be valuable.** Even those less than 10 percent of average annual income or consumption per capita have measurable impacts, particularly when **accompanied by behavior change communication** messages to improve health, nutrition, and education outcomes.
4. **Cash transfers offer greater agency over time-use decisions.** They do not necessarily discourage work but offer the possibility of substituting wage work for care, self-employment, and education for children.
5. High-value transfers and cumulative low-value transfers can both offset the associated costs of seeking and achieving **health and nutrition outcomes** if they are proportional to key cost factors such as the cost of travel to the clinic or purchase of a diverse food basket and if accompanied by messaging or conditionalities in the case of

low-value transfers. In **education**, recent research is less conclusive, indicating that the value of a transfer may be less important when factors such as supply, quality, and distance from school are considered.

6. **The impact of high-value transfers appears to differ according to sex** in particular instances, as well as between working-age adults. In some cases, they can increase intimate partner abuse or decrease women's empowerment, depending on demographic characteristics.

7. **Design factors affect the impact of transfer value.** Policy makers and implementers must consider the confluence of objective, size, duration, predictability, and frequency or timing when designing and implementing cash transfer programs. Larger-value lumpsum transfers lead to more-substantive economic outcomes for households, whereas smaller frequently transferred values can lead to behavior change when distributed effectively and accompanied by appropriate messaging.

## Introduction

This brief examines the effects of varying cash transfer values on outcomes by reviewing the evidence since 2016, inclusive of the COVID-19 pandemic (Box 1). For the purposes of this brief and based on the sample of studies examined, high-value cash transfers refer to those greater

than 30 percent of mean annual household income or consumption per capita for households in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution. Low-value cash transfers refer to those of less than 30 percent of mean annual household income or consumption per capita for households in the bottom 40 percent, hereafter referred to simply as average annual income per capita.<sup>1</sup>

### Box 1: Cash in the Time of COVID-19

An estimated \$3 trillion was spent on social protection responses to COVID-19 worldwide during 2020 and 2021. Monthly payments to offset large shocks in earnings averaged \$42 in low-income countries and \$536 in high-income countries. These transfers varied substantially according to level of country income.

On average, COVID response consisted of historically high value transfers. Cash transfers accounted for nearly 80 percent of monthly income of recipients in low-income countries and 35 percent in middle-income countries. Nearly 1.36 billion individuals received at least one cash transfer payment during this time, with values higher than before the pandemic.

Source: [Gentilini 2022](#).

1 Transfers as a share of mean annual household consumption or income are estimated as derived from World Bank Open Data. Previous research has found 20 percent of average annual income or consumption to be the threshold between high- and low-value transfers. Recent effects of the pandemic or availability of data on average annual consumption specific to the year of each study may have increased values in this study, although this cannot be confirmed in this evidence brief alone.

Some studies dating back to 2008 were included when transfer values were not available. Fifteen studies were more-recent studies providing comparative analyses of included in the review (Table 1) (See Appendix A for details).

Table 1: **Studies Reviewed**

Country	Program	Scope of comparison
Kenya	Give Directly	Randomization of high-value transfers: cumulative over 9 months vs lumpsum
Kenya	COVID-19 Microenterprises	Two low-value lumpsum transfers
Kenya	Hunger Safety Net Programme	High-value vs low-value monthly cumulative values over 2 years
Rwanda	Give Directly & Catholic Relief	High-value lumpsum vs cumulative low-value transfers over 12 months
Zambia	Child Grant Program	Two low-value bimonthly transfers; compared between countries
Ghana	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty	
Niger	Filets Sociaux par le Cash Transfert	Low-value monthly transfer over 5 months vs control
Cambodia	Cambodia Education Sector Support Project	Two low-value transfers received cumulatively over 12 months
Malawi	Schooling, Income, Health Risk	High- vs low-value monthly (Zomba Cash Transfers)
Malawi	Incentive Program/ HIV	Two low-value transfers (lumpsum)
Mexico	Oportunidades/ Progresa	High vs low cumulative value of monthly transfers
Mexico	Oportunidades/ Progresa and Domestic Violence	Two low-value monthly transfers
Ecuador	Bono Solidario	Two low-value monthly transfers over time vs control
United States	Earned Income Tax Credit/ Paycheck Plus	Low-value cumulative transfer over 12 months
United States	Baby's First Years	High- vs low-value monthly transfers over 4 years
Global	Unconditional Cash Transfers and Graduation Programs	High- vs low-value transfers; compared between countries

Sources: Araujo, Bosch, and Schady 2016; Baird, McIntosh, and Öxler 2011; Barr, Eggleston, and Smith 2022; Bobonis, González-Brenes, and Castro 2013; Daidone et al. 2019; Filmer and Schady 2011; Hayshofer and Shapiro 2018; Kohler and Thornton 2012; Manley, Fernald, and Gertler 2015; McIntosh and Zeitlin 2021; Merttens et al. 2020; Stoeffler, Mills, and Premand 2016; Troller-Renfree et al. 2022.

Some studies compared high-value with low-value transfers, and others compared high-value transfer programs with other high-value transfer programs or low-value transfer programs with other low-value transfer programs with one program providing higher- or lower-value transfers than the other, as outlined in Appendix A.

Focusing on noncontributory monetary transfers, including conditional and unconditional cash transfers, this

literature review addresses three overarching questions about the impact of cash transfers on consumption and assets, education, health and nutrition, savings, labor and time use, and empowerment. These outcomes have been selected because of availability of comparative analysis of transfer values over the past decade. A subsequent brief addresses timing (duration and frequency) of transfers, although some intersecting aspects are highlighted in this brief.

## Key Questions

1. What is the evidence of the impact of varying cash transfer values on a range of individual and household outcomes?
2. How might the evidence influence program design and implementation of cash transfer programs?
3. What remains unknown about the effect of varying cash transfer values?

## Key Findings

### Consumption and Assets

Cash transfers are often hailed as a viable way for people to escape the poverty trap if they are low value yet consistent and sufficient to meet basic needs or high value enough to be considered a "big push." Contrary to small, modest payments—frequently distributed through national and subnational social assistance programs—high-value one-time transfers have been used as vehicles whereby beneficiaries can meet their consumption needs and invest in productive assets and activities to increase income. Research supports the idea that varying the value of transfers can measurably affect consumption and asset accumulation, although greater value (larger size or intensity) does not automatically lead to greater consumption.

Within 15 cash-transfer programs, households receiving **high-value transfers spent more on food** than those receiving low-value transfers ([Bastalgi et al. 2016](#)). Similarly, benchmarking a maternal and child nutrition program against an unconditional cash transfer in Rwanda showed that high-value cash transfers of \$517 (estimated 118 percent of average annual income) increased consumption substantially more than low-value transfers of pooled value \$90 (estimated 21 percent of average annual income) or an in-kind transfer valued at \$70 (which included \$5 direct transfer of materials and

inputs to the household) ([McIntosh and Zeitlin 2021](#)). The high-value transfer of \$517 also increased investment and improved child health and nutrition outcomes. (More details can be found in the Cash Transfers Versus In-Kind Transfers: Do Outcomes Vary According to Modality? evidence brief.)

A systematic review of 17 studies of temporary unconditional cash transfers and multi-intervention graduation programs in 14 countries showed that unconditional cash transfers increased household consumption by 0.35 standard deviation per unit of transfer consistently in varying developing country contexts ([Kondylis and Loeser 2021](#)). It also found that higher value of a transfer for households experiencing a scarcity poverty trap can reduce household poverty, although higher value does not indicate greater longevity of effects or cost-effectiveness, which complementary interventions such as graduation programs may provide over a longer time horizon. Researchers attribute the incongruity to decreasing returns to scale and frictional poverty traps that are not overcome simply with higher transfer values. This review also posits that households may choose to use higher-value transfers for more than just consumption.

Beyond consumption, high-value transfers (e.g., those that the [nongovernmental organization GiveDirectly](#) has provided in East Africa of \$200 and more), or the larger of two transfers, have been found to result in more-productive investments by households than lower-value

cash transfers. Likewise, a comparison of two monthly low-value transfers in Zambia found that the larger of the two (valued at 28 percent of median monthly household consumption) **triggered investment decisions proportional to the value of transfers**,<sup>2</sup> whereas in Ghana, the smaller of two transfers (valued at 10 percent of median monthly household consumption) did not have similar results ([Daidone et al. 2019](#)).

**The evidence is inconclusive as to whether transfer values have lasting impacts (medium and long term) on investment.** Despite positive and persistent effects on consumption and agricultural revenues three years after a transfer in Kenya, no significant differences were found in value of nonland assets, nondurable expenditures, or total monthly income indices between households receiving high-value lumpsum transfers (\$1,525) and those receiving low-value transfers (\$404) ([Haushofer and Shapiro 2018](#)). Another study found that cash transfers spurred investments in livestock assets that were sustained for more than 18 months for households in rural Niger ([Stoeffler, Mills, and Premand 2016](#)) and that even low-value transfers of 10,000 African Financial Community francs per month (approximately \$20, or 20 percent of household monthly consumption) disbursed over 18 months had significant impacts on extremely poor households when coupled with access to savings groups. More research on longevity of impacts is needed to determine how time affects the impact of cash transfers on monetary poverty.

### Consumption and Assets Pathways

Recent data underscore previous findings that high- and low-value transfers increase household consumption and have the potential to increase asset accumulation. Higher-value lumpsum cash transfers may allow households to invest more, but increasing the value of cash transfers

does not guarantee that impacts will persist over time, with poverty traps and declining marginal returns as value increases limiting their effects.

In particular, studies indicate the versatility of cash transfers as a reason for their impact on consumption and productive investments. If the value is sufficient, research shows that most **recipients who receive one-time high-value transfers or consistent low-value transfers that accumulate choose to consume and to invest when given the opportunity.** The value of the transfer can also influence the choice of investment, with higher lumpsum amounts leading to larger long-term investments and smaller amounts to smaller short-term investments ([Bastalgi et al. 2016](#)).

This choice of investment between high and low value transfers may not hold true if conditions are not in place to optimize the use of transfers, such as in the face of scarcity poverty traps. For example, if there are market knowledge asymmetries, liquidity absorption problems, or access barriers, a recipient may not be able to use a cash transfer effectively for consumption and investment, which may contribute to the lack of long-term impact observed in some studies or a greater need for messaging and mechanisms such as savings through which to invest productively.

## Savings

**The value of a transfer may trigger different levels of savings** in recipient households ([Bastalgi et al. 2016](#)). Some recent research in Rwanda confirmed this, showing that high-value cash transfers increased consumption and investment through savings more than low-value transfers ([McIntosh and Zeitlin 2021](#)), although in-kind transfers coupled with savings training and messaging, including behavioral change communication and

2 Beneficiaries of Zambia's Child Grant program received a higher low-value transfer of 28 percent of median household consumption, and beneficiaries of Ghana's Orphan and Vulnerable Children program received a low-value transfer of 10 percent of household consumption (later tripled). Most of the evaluated programs received a cash transfer equivalent to 20 percent to 25 percent of median household consumption.

participation in savings and internal lending communities, had the greatest effects on savings. This may be due to the instrumentation of the in-kind transfer reducing transactional costs to households while messaging and savings mechanisms made savings easier to accomplish.

Enabling households to save even small amounts can have demonstrable long-term effects. For example, children in the United States whose families received greater increases in child-related tax benefits or refunds (\$1,300 annually)—allowing their families to consume and save more—had 1 percent to 2 percent greater increases in adult income per year than children of families just above the cutoff, who received smaller tax benefits ([Barr, Eggleston, and Smith 2022](#)).<sup>3</sup> These intergenerational impacts merit further study.

## Pathways

Although recipients consume part of a transfer, when the value is sufficient, they may also save to invest in productive assets. Increasing the value of transfers increases the productive impact not only through investments, but also through savings. Increasing the value of a transfer **or coupling a low-value transfer with other measures may not only affect savings, but also increase investment.**

## Labor and Time Use

Cash transfers are criticized for encouraging dependence and laziness in recipients ([Baird, McKenzie, and Özler 2018](#)). Although this is largely unfounded, exaggerated, and contrary to evidence, the effect of high-value transfers on the labor supply may exist at margin under certain conditions. For example, the income effect underlying the trade-off between labor and leisure appears most evident when transfers are substantial or prolonged, such as very large one-time lottery winnings or regular predictable pensions ([Baird, McKenzie, and Özler 2018](#)). In these

cases, recipients are most likely to trade labor for leisure. In addition, high-value transfers determined according to threshold values may generate perverse incentives for households close to a cut-off threshold to appear poorer by reducing labor income to remain eligible. The trade-off effect is much weaker for large lumpsum cash transfers that recipients cannot rely on and for very poor recipients, who depend on all forms of income. Ultimately, the choice of labor versus leisure depends not only on transfer value, but also on frequency and household circumstances.

Low-value transfers of \$50 (equivalent to about one month of average profit, less than 10 percent of average annual income per capita) to a randomly selected group of micro-enterprise owners in Kenya did not lead to closure of firms ([Brooks et al. 2020](#)). Instead, beneficiary firms were 5 percentage points more likely to be open and remain open an additional half hour a day than enterprises that received a low-value transfer of \$5 (less than 1 percent of average annual income per capita). The larger of two low-value transfers encouraged businesses to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Studies of cash transfer programs across Africa have found an inverted relationship between paid wage labor and value of unearned cash transfers ([Daidone et al. 2019](#)). Similarly, a shift away from paid wage labor to own-farm labor in Zambia was observed when households received high-value transfers ([Prifti et al. 2019](#)). This was not due to dependency; with low-value transfers, households remained in paid labor, when available, to supplement their low overall income. For many households, increasing the value of a transfer can enable the choice of engaging in self-employment and entrepreneurship through own-farm labor while reducing engagement in paid wage labor.

Not all recipients shift to new forms of profitable labor. High-value transfers have no effect on paid labor or reduce working hours of adults in favor of caring for dependents or alleviating the workload of adult family members ([Bastalgi et al. 2016](#)). If transfers are insufficient

<sup>3</sup> The tax credit for the average lower-income household was approximately \$1,300 (10 percent of income).



to cover income losses from child labor plus additional costs for attending school, adults may have to increase time on labor activities, such as low-paid casual work. In general, **the value of the transfer affects the types of work a recipient chooses.**

## Pathways

High-value transfers can provide recipients with greater resources to increase their participation in more-profitable income-generating employment activities, such as their own agriculture, or to divert their time to care for dependents. Transfers can also increase low-paid casual work if they are insufficient to meet the opportunity costs of reducing child labor and school fees.

Cash transfers allow recipients to invest in their own farms through agricultural and nonfarm businesses, increasing the return on work and causing recipients to work more. In addition, cash may provide insurance that can stimulate investment in new, risky activities, such as self-employment or reduction in child labor. Transfers can lead to more spending on business activities for self-employment, and cash transfers that increase education and reduce child labor can improve labor market outcomes for adolescents when they become adults.

This review found weak recent evidence of the depreciation of human capital, the impact of grant eligibility conditions on work, and the impact of health productivity.

## Education, Health, and Nutrition

Different cash transfer values may have different effects not only on consumption, savings, and labor, but also on human capital development, most notably through health care and nutrition, although recent evidence on education is mixed at best. Recent studies concur that **the greater the transfer as a share of average annual income, the more likely recipients are to adopt lasting healthy behaviors that improve the health and nutrition of children, yet even**

**transfers of lower value, when combined with accompanying measures, can create incentives that spur behavior change of households.**

For example, female Kenyan micro-enterprise owners who received \$50 (equivalent to 1 month of average profit but less than 10 percent of average annual income per capita) in coordination with a COVID-19 information campaign spent an average of 22 percent more on personal protective equipment than a control group that received a smaller transfer of \$5 to cover mobile telephone costs and time spent engaging in the study (Brooks et al. 2020). The \$50 intervention also improved an index of risk mitigation practices such as hand washing and mask wearing during the pandemic.

Building the body of evidence on cash and health, another study ([Manley, Fernald, and Gertler 2015](#)) found that high-value transfers (estimated 40 percent average annual consumption) were associated with small but statistically significantly higher child height-for-age z-scores and a greater likelihood of attending required health checks through Progres/Oportunidades in Mexico than low-value transfers (estimated less than 30 percent of average annual consumption).

Another study ([Merttens et al. 2013](#)) found no effect of monthly high-value transfers (17 percent to 28 percent of mean monthly consumption) on dietary diversity or child malnutrition despite a cumulative effect on average food consumption over two years through the Hunger and Safety Net Program in Kenya, indicating that higher values do not automatically equate to higher investments in health and nutrition, which more influential exogenous factors such as drought, famine, and other acute crises affect. This underscores the importance of timing in combination with value. To illustrate, mothers in the United States were provided high- and low-value unconditional cash transfers shortly after giving birth (Troller-Renfree et al. 2022). Receipt of high-value transfers (15 times as great in value as other mothers) relative to average annual consumption in the bottom quintile in the country had positive effects on early childhood brain activity

after four years of transfers, as tested using resting electroencephalography. (See brief on Timing for more insights on timing of transfers to pivotal life stages.)

Despite notable effects on health and nutrition, recent **short- and long-term evidence on education impacts based on transfer value is less conclusive and much more limited compared to health.** A study of Progresa/Oportunidades in Mexico found that high-value transfers statistically significantly improved cognitive and verbal test scores ([Manley, Fernald, and Gertler 2015](#)). By contrast, in Ecuador, no difference was found 10 years later between children in the Bono Solidario (\$7) and (\$15) groups receiving varying low-value cash transfers in tests of language, mathematics, attention, working memory, recovery and behavioral outcomes ([Araujo, Bosch, and Schady 2016](#)). Cambodia's Education Sector Support Project, which transferred \$45 and \$60 annually, did not find a statistically significant effect of transfer value on school attendance ([Filmer and Schady 2011](#)), whereas a small but significant decrease in test scores was found for the unconditional arm of Malawi's Zomba Cash Transfer Program, which transferred \$60 or \$180 annually, despite an increase in enrollment with higher-value transfers ([Baird, McKenzie, and Özler 2011](#)).

## Pathways

Higher-value transfers and greater exposure to lower-value transfers over time (producing a cumulative effect) can offset the associated costs of seeking and achieving health and nutrition outcomes if they are proportional to key cost factors, such as cost of travel to a clinic or purchase of a diverse food basket, and if accompanied by messaging or conditionalities in the case of low-value transfers. These tend to improve health and nutritional outcomes by increasing health-seeking behavior and purchasing power. These results do not occur in a vacuum and must therefore be combined with access to care and nutritious food, reliability and duration of transfers, and accurate communication about healthy behaviors.

The main mechanism by which cash transfers are thought to increase access to education in the short term is by removing financial barriers to schooling. The introduction of additional money is also expected to reduce child labor and drop-outs and to increase enrollment. It is presumed that cash offsets the opportunity costs of sending children to school and gives families economic incentive to educate their children. Under this assumption, transfers may have greater effects, especially in secondary school, if the value is high enough to cover the loss of income generated by child labor (opportunity costs) in addition to the direct costs of schooling, but as studies show, this is not always the case. The value of a transfer may be less important than other influential exogenous factors such as traditional obstacles to enrollment and educational attainment, including supply, quality, and distance from school. These factors are more common at the secondary school level.

## Empowerment

Cash transfers are increasingly used in programs designed to reduce gender violence and intimate partner violence because they tend to provide a financial safety net that enables women to leave abusive relationships. **Recent research generally supports the claim that cash transfers can reduce physical abuse of women by strengthening their bargaining power, although studies from 2008 to 2016 have showed that high-value cash transfers have the potential to increase physical abuse in certain demographic tiers more than less-conspicuous low-value transfers.**

In Mexico's Progresa/Oportunidades program, the greater of two low-value transfers (24 percent of average annual income per capita [625 pesos] versus 4 percent [100 pesos]) increased the likelihood of abuse because it increased women's bargaining power and men's rent-seeking behavior ([Angelucci 2008](#); [Bobonis, González-Brenes, and Castro 2013](#)). This was particularly pronounced in households whose members had limited education and



for women who had few alternatives because of their youth, limited education, and lack of job prospects.

In a sexual health incentive program in Malawi, the larger of two low-value transfers (\$16, \$4) to women had a significant positive impact on safe sex practices—abstinence or use of condoms—despite being equivalent to only an estimated 5.5 percent of average annual income per capita. Conversely, larger transfers to men increased the tendency to use a condom but also the likelihood of risky sex ([Kohler and Thornton 2012](#)). It is believed that the men used the larger transfers to buy risky sex, whereas women used the transfers to avoid risky sex for money.

A study of the long-term impact of unconditional cash transfers in rural Kenya did not find significant differences in female empowerment indicators between two high-value transfers (\$404, \$1,525) three years after the program began, although significant differences due to limited statistical power could not be excluded ([Haushofer and Shapiro 2018](#)). More-recent studies on abuse, sexual practice, and empowerment are not available but would strengthen these findings.

## Pathways

Higher-value transfers can be expected to increase financial independence and thus decision-making power, reduce or delay marriage and pregnancy, increase use of contraception, and reduce risky sexual behavior, especially for women. Violence can increase or decrease depending on the value of the transfer, demographic composition, and resources available to partners in need.

Lower-value transfers often reduce intimate partner violence, whereas higher-value transfers can increase the aggressive behavior of male partners with traditional views on gender roles if their partner's right to high-value transfers threatens their identity ([Angelucci 2008](#)). These results reject standard unitary, collective, and bargaining models by showing that, although targeting

women as recipients of micro-credit or other programs can reduce alcoholism and intimate partner violence in most households, the risk of violence can increase for households receiving large sums. Lower-value transfers may be better absorbed and even concealed, with fewer unintended effects related to physical abuse. Further studies are needed, particularly given the plethora of gender-sensitive cash transfer programming since 2008.

## Emerging Insights

Recent research indicates that for cash transfers to be effective, they should either be significant lump-sum amounts, constituting 30 percent or more of the average annual consumption per capita, or should yield continuous cumulative benefits over time. It is crucial to consider both high-value and low-value transfers, as even smaller amounts can play a significant role in providing basic protection and ensuring equity. When combined with targeted messaging on health, nutrition, and education, low-value transfers can serve as sufficient incentives for promoting healthy behaviors, as well as encouraging enrollment and school attendance for children. The success of these efforts is not only tied to the amount of the transfer but also to the presence of conditions and accompanying measures, such as behavior change communication, emphasizing their overall value.

Policy makers and implementers should assess the objective and the primary intended results of cash transfers to determine the optimal value and its interaction with other factors such as timing, duration, and frequency. Low-value transfers can lead to good outcomes for immediate, acute needs, including food insecurity, and in times of crisis. These transfers are also most beneficial when predictable and combined with messaging. High-value transfers may best be used to drive broader gains in poverty reduction and human capital development through investment, savings, and improvements in health and nutrition. High-value transfers may also curb potential inflation impacts when provided to a specific group such as poor households rather than the general population,

which could reduce potential for market distortions. For acute needs, high-value transfers can be directed to recipients with greater need, with lower values for a broader segment of the population. Inflationary impacts may also be seen with a threshold of 30 percent to define low-value versus high-value transfers in this brief, unlike previous measures of 20 percent, although more evidence is required to support this.

Relative transfer size also affects impact. This brief has reviewed studies comparing high- and low-value transfers, as well as those comparing different high-value and low-value transfers. In the latter case, slightly higher or lower value can generate differences for households even if both are above or below a 30 percent threshold of average annual consumption per capita.

Depending on the program objectives, high-value cash transfers of greater than 30 percent of average annual income per capita increases consumption and productivity where market conditions permit, increasing savings and investment, improving health and nutrition outcomes for women and children, and strengthening women's bargaining power. Recent evidence is inconclusive on the impact of transfer value on increasing educational attainment and increasing women's empowerment by reducing physical abuse.

Previous research has shown that low-value transfers received regularly seem to have greater impact on cognitive test results in the early years of a child's life and brain development than later in primary and secondary school. Despite the small amount, the regularity of cumulative transfers combined with messaging have noteworthy impacts on early childhood development and healthy behavior. Depending on the target group, such as young women with low education, regular low-value transfers may also have fewer unintended consequences for physical abuse than high-value transfers. Practitioners should apply gender, income, and age-sensitive lenses to program design and make a clear assessment of potential impacts on different levels of education.

There is limited evidence in recent studies of the impact of different values of cash transfers on education and empowerment, so further research is needed. More information is also needed about the impact of the value of transfers on income poverty over time. There are notable regional and contextual gaps, with most evidence and research are coming from Latin America; the United States; and sub-Saharan Africa, particularly eastern and southern Africa. Further research from Asia, Europe, Western Africa, and North America is needed to complement this analysis.

It is possible that the impact of an additional transfer unit on certain indicators is not significant beyond a certain transfer value. For example, an additional unit could have no impact on expenditures if recipients decided to save or invest the additional money. The existence and form of such threshold effects and nonlinear effects are areas that are ripe for further research to determine optimal transfer values.

Although the value of cash transfers is important, it is one of many factors. Intended purpose of a cash transfer, household demographic characteristics, frequency, behavioral change, communication and messaging, market opportunities or obstacles, and duration combine with value to produce (or not produce) intended results. This series of policy briefs examines the interaction of these factors.

## Appendix A

Robust recent evidence is available of the impact of cash transfer value on consumption, savings, employment, and health. Data on the impact of value on education and empowerment are lacking from 2016 on, so earlier studies were used. Table A.1 provides an overview of the 15 studies included in this brief: program focus, country context, program name, size of transfers, and outcomes measured. Certain studies compare high-value transfers with low-value transfers, whereas others compare two high-value or two low-value transfers of different sizes.

Table A.1.

Country	Program	Scope of comparison	% of mean annual household income or consumption per capita for households in the bottom 40 %		Outcome								
			High value	Low value	Consumption and assets	Savings	Labor and time use	Health and nutrition	Education	Empowerment			
Kenya	Give Directly	Randomization of high-value transfers: cumulative over 9 months vs lumpsum			X								X
Kenya	COVID-19 Microenterprises	Two low-value lumpsum transfers		1-8	X	X	X						
Kenya	Hunger Safety Net Programme	High-value vs low-value monthly cumulative values over 2 years	17-28	12		X	X						
Rwanda	Give Directly & Catholic Relief	Randomization of high-value and pooled low-value transfers: lump sum vs cumulative over 12 months	517	90	X	X							
Zambia	Child Grant Program	Two low-value twice a month transfers compared between countries		28-10	X								
Ghana	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty												
Niger	Filets Sociaux par le Cash Transfert	Low-value monthly transfer over 5 months vs control		20	X	X							
Cambodia	Cambodia Education Sector Support Project	Two low-value transfers received cumulatively over 12 months			X	X					X		
Malawi	Schooling, Income, Health Risk	High- vs low-value monthly (Zomba Cash Transfers)	60	20				X			X		
Malawi	Incentive Program/ HIV	Two low-value transfers (lump sum)		1.5-5							X		X

Country	Program	Scope of comparison	% of mean annual household income or consumption per capita for households in the bottom 40 %		Outcome							
			High value	Low value	Consumption and assets	Savings	Labor and time use	Health and nutrition	Education	Empowerment		
Mexico	Oportunidades/Progres	High vs low cumulative value of monthly transfers	40	30				X	X			
Mexico	Oportunidades/Progres and Domestic Violence	Two low-value monthly transfers		4-24								X
Ecuador	Bono Solidario	Two low-value monthly transfers over time vs control		5-10						X		
United States	Earned Income Tax Credit/Paycheck Plus	Low-value cumulative transfer over 12 months		10	X			X				
United States	Baby's First Years	High- vs low-value monthly transfer over 4 years	44	3							X	
Global	Unconditional Cash Transfers and Graduation Programs	High- vs low-value transfers compared between countries	Varied		Higher value		X					

Sources: Araujo, Bosch, and Schady 2016; Baird, McIntosh, and Öxler 2011; Barr, Eggleston, and Smith 2022; Bobonis, González-Brenes, and Castro 2013; Daidone et al. 2019; Filmer and Schady 2011; Hayshofer and Shapiro 2018; Kohler and Thornton 2012; Manley, Fernald, and Gertler 2015; McIntosh and Zeitlin 2021; Merttens et al. 2020; Stoeffler, Mills, and Premand 2016; Troller-Renfree et al. 2022.

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## Evidence at Your Fingertips Series

This note is part of thematic briefs in the series including:

- Evidence Briefs on Cash Transfers: Overview and Ten Key Messages
- Cash Transfer Timing: How Transfer Duration and Frequency Contribute to Outcomes
- Cash Transfer Payment Mechanisms: Do Outcomes Vary According to Payment Mechanism?
- Cash Or In-Kind Transfers: Do Outcomes Vary According Transfer to Modality?
- Can Safety Nets Reduce Gender-Based Violence? How?

The series is launched with that aim that these be living documents. In that spirit, the team welcomes suggestions on materials and topics to be covered in the future series that can serve as useful, practical references for practitioners of social protection.

The series is a joint initiative by Innovations for Poverty Action and the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice comprising Nathanael Goldberg, Lauren Whitehead, Savanna Henderson, Gabriel Olila, Ana Alatrisme Tamayo, Julie Kedroske, Ugo Gentilini, Yuko Okamura, Mohamed Almenfi, Hrishikesh TMM Iyengar, and Mia Blakstad. For any questions regarding this brief, please reach out to [socialprotection@poverty-action.org](mailto:socialprotection@poverty-action.org) and [yokamura@worldbank.org](mailto:yokamura@worldbank.org)

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