

# Using Administrative Records and Survey Data to Study the Effectiveness of Self-Sufficiency Interventions for Housing-Assisted Families: Observations from the NYC Work Rewards Demonstration

Stephen Nuñez  
November 1, 2016

*Using Administrative Data for Program Evaluation and Research:  
Recent Successes and Next Steps*



# MDRC

- **Not-for-profit social policy research organization**
- **Mission: Build evidence to improve the lives of low-income families**
- **Rigorously evaluates (and sometimes helps design) innovative social policies**
- **Pioneered large-scale random assignment evaluations of social programs**
- **Extensive experiences acquiring, managing, and analyzing administrative records from state and local agencies for sample members.**

# Presentation Overview

- **This presentation:**
  - **Focuses on New York City's Work Rewards demonstration (targeting housing-assisted families)**
  - **Highlights MDRC's successful use of administrative records, survey, and program MIS for the evaluation**
  - **Illustrates particular opportunities and considerations for comprehensive evaluations**

# Work Rewards Demonstration

**Sponsor:** NYC Center for Economic Opportunity

## Random assignment evaluation

- Effectiveness of FSS program alone
- Effectiveness of FSS + more immediate work incentives
- Effectiveness of work incentives alone

## Target group:

- Voucher-holders (Section 8)
- Family income  $\leq$  130% of federal poverty line

# Policy Context for Work Rewards

- **Federal housing assistance helps about 5 million households (not an entitlement)**
- **Housing subsidies can take a few forms – vouchers (47%); public housing (23%); other (30%)**
- **Work is not uncommon – in 2014, 71 percent of workable households had worked recently, or were subject to work requirements**
- **Many work part-time – work is typically low-wage and inconsistent**
- **Efforts to boost household earnings are vital.**

# Policy Context for Work Rewards

- Families contribute 30 percent of adjusted income toward rent and utilities – government pays rest
- As income falls, families pay less
- As income grows, 30 percent “tax” on extra income – in the form of a reduced housing subsidy
- Other means-tested benefits also affected – government benefits will fall to zero when income exceeds certain thresholds

# What is FSS?

## Case management, 5-year contract

- Referrals to supportive services

## Employment and training services

- Job readiness, resume prep, job development and referrals, and referrals to training programs

## Asset building: Rent increases due to work are saved in escrow accounts

- Family must reach goals of 5-year contract
- Can't claim escrow funds if receiving cash welfare
- Interim disbursements (e.g., for ed./training, pay debt)
- Final disbursements have no limitations on use

# What is FSS+incentives?

## **FSS + workforce incentives**

- **Cash rewards for:**
  - **Sustained full-time work:  
\$150/month**
  - **Completed education/training**
- **Paid every 2 months over 2 years**



# Types of Research Questions Examined

- Are program participants graduating from FSS and receiving escrow *disbursement* (PHA data)?
- Does FSS increase *work*, earnings, other outcomes (vs. control group) – (UI, survey, TANF/SNAP data)?
- Do more immediate work incentives “add value” to effects of FSS alone (PHA, UI, survey data)?
- Do impacts on employment/earnings lead to changes in public benefit and housing voucher receipt? (PHA, UI, TANF, SNAP data)?
- Do program impacts vary for subgroups?



# Primary Domains and Data Sources

Domains	Data Source	Key measures	Follow-up
<b>Employment</b>	NY Department of Labor UI data/respondent survey	Employment, earnings, job characteristics/benefits	24 quarters (UI) and 42-month survey
<b>Public Benefits</b>	NYC Human Resources Administration /respondent survey	TANF/SNA & SNAP receipt and dollar value	24 quarters (HRA) and 42-month survey
<b>Housing</b>	NYC HPD PIC and MIS	HCV receipt, subsidy value, escrow credits, graduation	24 quarters
<b>Material hardship, finances, education</b>	Respondent survey	Degree conferral, savings, debt, poverty	42-month survey



# Survey vs. Administrative Records

## Administrative data

- Longitudinal data, time-series
- Full sample (all beneficiaries, for example)
- Data collection driven by administrative needs
- Important to understand data release requirements

## Survey data

- Point-in-time, snapshots, multiple waves
- Potentially broader coverage of topics
- Recall issues (esp. long-term)
- Non-response bias
- Response rates and loss of statistical precision
- Cost considerations

# Survey vs. Administrative Records: Employment Outcomes

## State UI:

- Earnings in person-quarter units aggregated across employers (some studies may have access to employer level data)
- Does not cover: self-employment, informal employment, federal/military or out-of-state jobs
- Does not cover: job characteristics (hourly wage, benefits, or schedule)

## Survey:

- Can provide information on all types of employment and job characteristics
- Reference-frame alignment



# Using Baseline Survey Data to Understand Who Enrolled

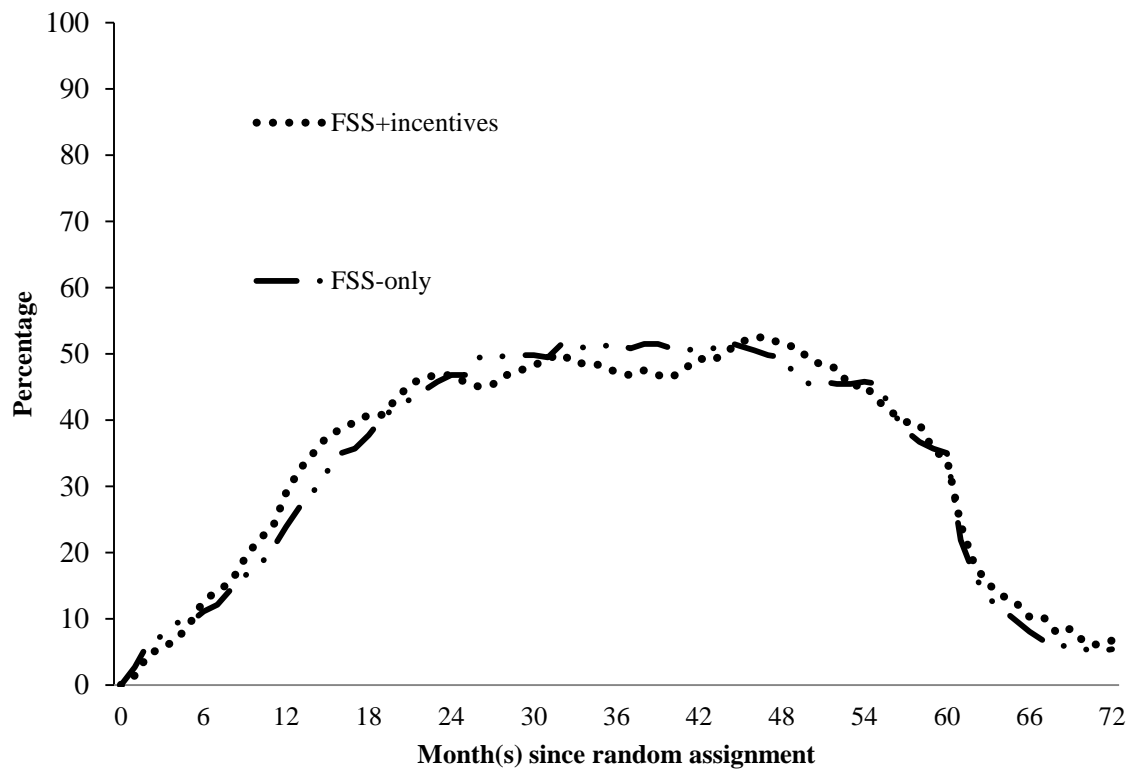
# Who enrolled in the FSS Study?

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Black/non-Hispanic</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Lack HS diploma or GED</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Employed at baseline</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Working full-time at baseline</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Receiving SNAP (household)</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Receiving TANF (household)</b>	<b>18</b>

# Assessing FSS Graduation Rates and Escrow Disbursements with PHA data

## The Opportunity NYC Demonstration: Work Rewards

### Percentage of Households Receiving Escrow Credit, by Month Since Random Assignment, FSS Study, Core Sample



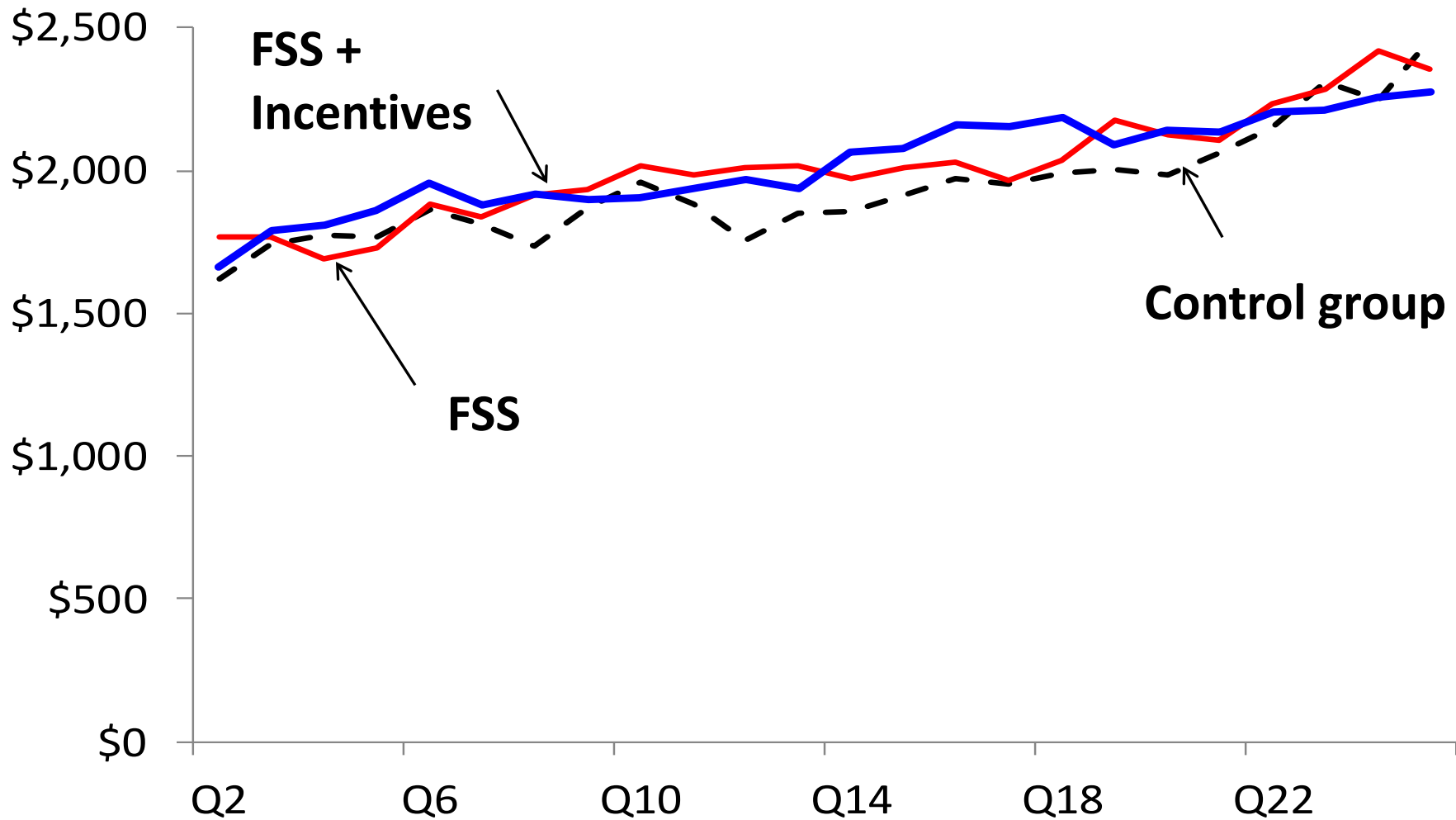
SOURCE: MDRC calculations using administrative records data from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

NOTES: The core sample includes housing voucher recipients who were randomly assigned



# Impacts on Employment and Earnings

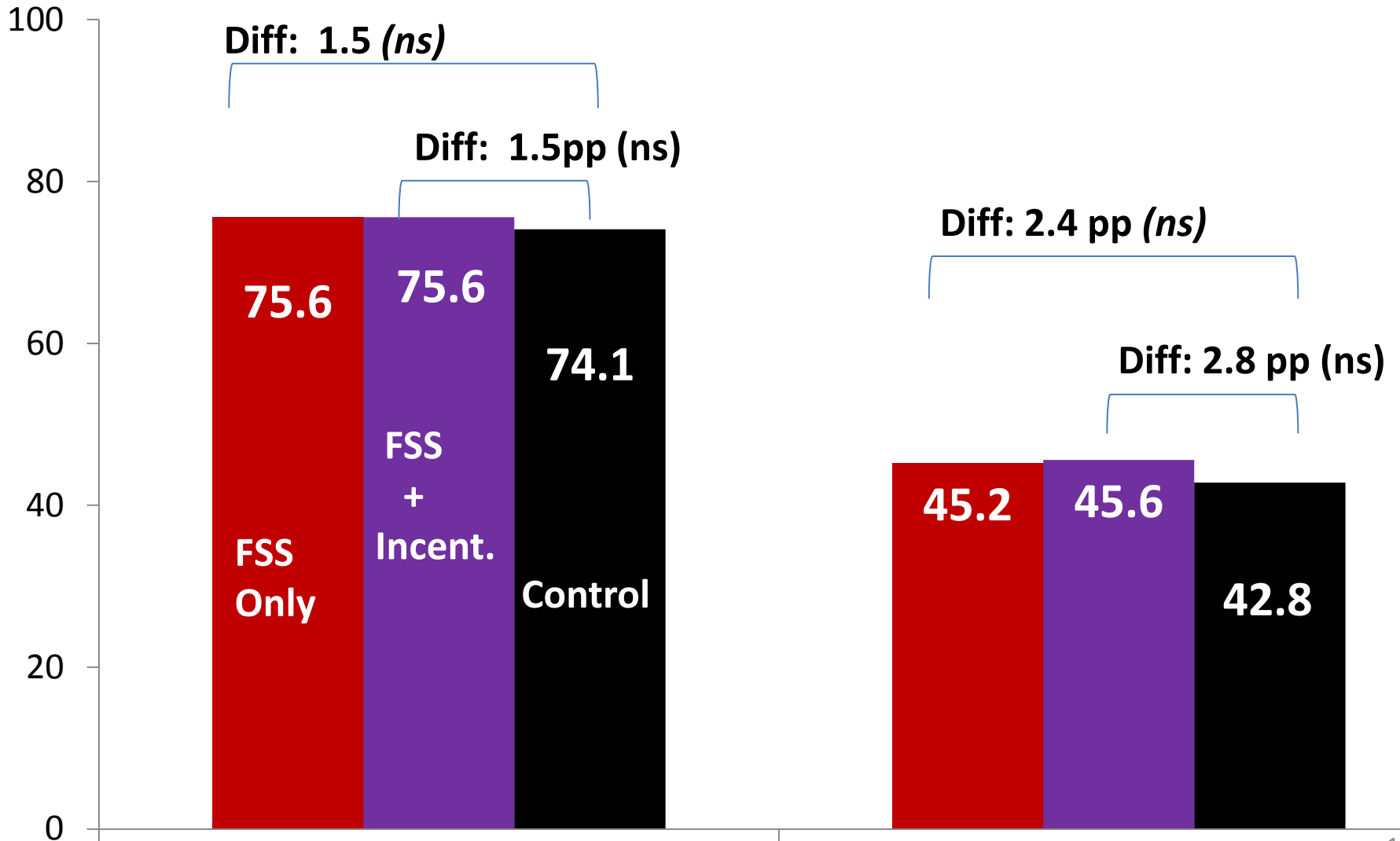
# Tracking UI earnings for the full sample



# Impacts on UI employment, Years 1-6

## Ever Employed (%)

## Average / Quarter (%)



# Survey Shows Large Employment Impacts

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Control Group Average</b>	<b>FSS + Incentives vs. Control Impact</b>
<b>Employed at the time of the survey (%)</b>	44.39	10.67***
<b>Worked at least 30 hours per week (%)</b>	28.46	8.77***
<b>Employer-provided benefits (%)</b>		
Paid sick days	18.22	4.61*
Paid vacation days	20.61	6.19**
Paid holidays	22.26	5.37*
A health or medical insurance plan	17.43	1.9



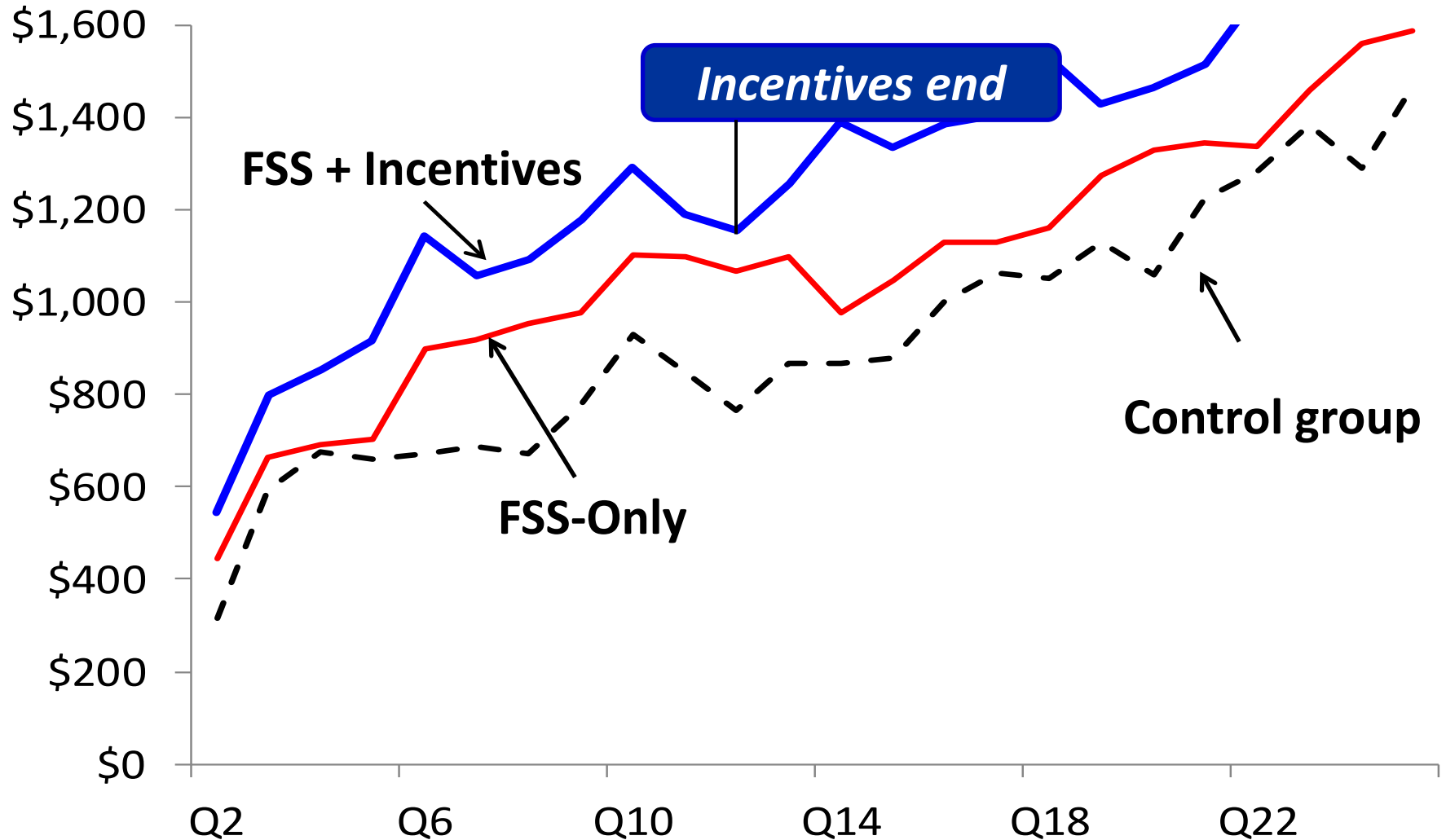
# Why This Difference?

- **Differences between UI and survey driven in part by gains in employment in the types of work that are not covered in UI**
- **Survey non-response bias analysis: likelihood of responding to survey was highly correlated with likelihood of receiving a financial incentive for work-related activities**
- **Hard to disentangle relative contributions: caution advised in interpreting impact**

# Subgroup Impacts

# Subgroup impacts on earnings

## Subgroup: Not working at baseline



# Assessing Outcomes Beyond Employment

## FSS + Incentives: Not working at baseline

	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)
<b><u>TANF/SNA (%)</u></b>			
Ever received, Years 1-6	69.7	69.9	-0.2
Received in avg. quarter, Year 6	31.2	33.4	-2.2
<b><u>SNAP (%)</u></b>			
Ever received, Years 1-6	94.5	93.2	+1.3
Received in avg. quarter, Year 6	70.3	74.4	-4.2
<b><u>Section 8 Housing (%)</u></b>			
Received voucher in Year 6	85.3	83.0	2.3



# Conclusions

- **Combination of administrative and survey data allowed fuller investigation into program impacts on multiple domains**
- **Administrative records allowed investigation of longitudinal impacts (including post-program period)**
- **Linked data show graduation, employment/earnings impacts did not lead to changes in housing/other public benefits**
- **Follow-up surveys can be used to capture important outcomes but survey response bias analysis is crucial**

# For more information:

stephen.nunez@mdrc.org

[www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)

*Working Toward Self-Sufficiency: Early Findings from a Program for Housing Voucher Recipients in New York City* 2012. Nandita Verma, Betsy Tessler, Cynthia Miller, James A. Riccio, Zawadi Rucks, Edith Yang.

*Building Self-Sufficiency for Housing Voucher Recipients: Interim Findings from the Work Rewards Demonstration in New York City* 2015. Stephen Nuñez, Nandita Verma, Edith Yang

Extra



# Survey vs. Administrative Records (Cont.)

- **BIF**
  - Source of important model covariates and sample descriptive statistics: richer than 50058 administrative data
  - Can also be used to designate subgroups for differential impact analysis
  - Recall issues and confusion can undermine subgroup analysis
- **Work Rewards Analysis:**
  - Self-reported baseline and UI employment line up well. Differential impact findings for employment status subgroups are robust to data source
- Self-reported SNAP receipt **DOES NOT** line up well with administrative records (false positives and false negatives). Consistent with previous literature (e.g. Czajka et al., 2012)

## The Opportunity NYC Demonstration: Work Rewards

### 6 Year Impacts on FSS Graduation and Disbursements, FSS Study, Core Sample

Outcome	FSS+ Incentives	FSS- Only	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
Graduated (%)	65.4	61.5	3.9	0.330
Total amount disbursed (\$)	3,887	2,759	1,128 **	0.020
Total amount disbursed (%)				
\$0	42.9	48.8	-5.9	0.156
\$1 to \$2,000	17.3	12.1	5.2 *	0.076
\$2,001 to \$4,000	11.9	14.8	-2.9	0.303
\$4,001 to \$10,000	11.9	17.3	-5.3 *	0.066
more than \$10,000	16.0	7.2	8.9 ***	0.001
<i>Total amount disbursed, among FSS graduates (\$)</i>	<i>5,919</i>	<i>4,211</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>Total amount disbursed, among FSS graduates (%)</i>				
<i>\$0</i>	<i>15.9</i>	<i>20.7</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>\$1 to \$2,000</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>19.6</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>\$2,001 to \$4,000</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>21.7</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>\$4,001 to \$10,000</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>27.2</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>more than \$10,000</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
Sample size (total = 579)	282	297		