

Basic Income and the Question of Immigration:

Evaluating Citizen-based vs. Residency-Based Proposals

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Introduction

- Basic income is a government welfare program that aims to alleviate poverty, provide economic security, and reduce inequality
- Many non-citizen immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers would stand to gain benefits if a basic income were implemented in the United States
- There is much debate over whether the program should be citizen-based or residency-based
- Some experts argue that including immigrants in a basic income program would increase the immigration rate and cause spending to spike
- The experiences of immigrants or those who are undocumented should be taken into account



Citizen-Based

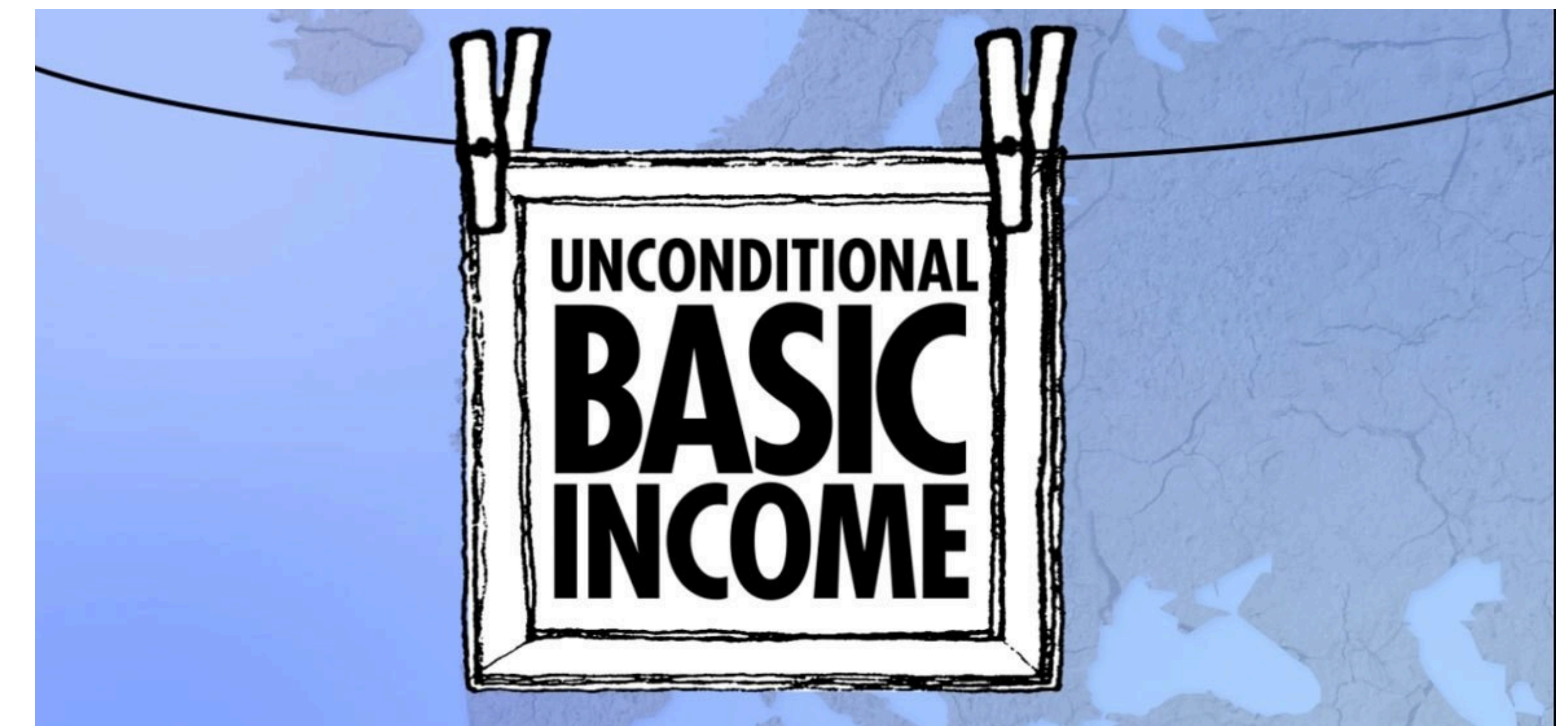
- Sees basic income as part of social contract: citizens vote, pay taxes, serve in juries, and defend the nation when needed, so they should be secure against poverty
- Lower overall cost due to the restriction of distribution
- Can encourage the process of naturalization
- Less likely to spur political backlash
- Provides a clearer guideline towards how basic income should be distributed and who receives it
- Would create two-tier society

Residency-Based

- Immigrants are the most impoverished groups in the U.S., they make up 14% of the impoverished population
- Naturalization takes up a lot of time and money (~\$750), this would allow them to get started
- According to Arloc Sherman, the grant provided by a basic income plan can support one's day-to-day life but it is not so generous that people would take advantage rather than contributing
- Both documented and undocumented immigrants pay taxes and contribute to the economy as citizens do (4.5% of workforce is undocumented, paid around \$75.6B in taxes)
- Could be based on how many years individuals have resided in the U.S.
- Can alleviate overall poverty levels which is better for the economy

Contribution

- Clearly establish the arguments on both sides as this debate has been going on for many years
- With some of the primary problems established, the different sources are used to analyze whether it would ever be a feasible plan
- Analyzes whether this would ever be a possibility in the future as political debates, financial debates, and others, are taken into account
- Allows others who want to join the conversation to have a clear understanding of what has been discussed so far so that there can be more noticeable gaps in the debate



Debate

- Whether or not basic income should be inclusive or exclusive of immigrants raises an ethical debate
- It is impossible to discuss basic income without addressing its intersection with debates about immigration; a residency-based program would attract opposition from anti-immigration advocates (and vice versa)
- Pilot programs in North Carolina, Minnesota, and Manitoba have shown that basic income can decrease poverty levels and health related issues

Key Sources

- Naturalization Process
 - USCIS Government Website
- Guaranteed Income Pilot Program Act of 2023
 - Congress.gov
- Tax Congress
 - American Immigration Council
- Viral cash: Basic income trials, policy mutation, and post-austerity politics in U.S. cities
 - Doussard, Marc