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Supporting Information for

Communicating Amounts in Terms of Commonly Used Budgeting Periods Increases Intentions to Claim Government Benefits

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This PDF file includes:

Supplementary studies

Other supporting materials for this manuscript include the following:

Datasets for all studies

Pilot Study 1: Exploring people's budgeting periods and payment frequency preferences

Method. This study explored the budgeting style and payment frequency preferences of government benefits recipients. We pre-registered this study on Aspredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/6ba9a.pdf). Four hundred and ninety-nine government benefit recipients completed this study online in exchange for monetary compensation. Participants were first asked to think about how they naturally budget and to select their typical budgeting period from a list of seven options (daily, weekly, bi-weekly (every two weeks), monthly, quarterly, yearly, or other). Next, participants read, "Imagine you start a job on January 1 where you earn a salary of $60,000 a year. Your HR manager gives you the option of getting paid yearly or monthly," and saw a calendar depicting the two options ($60,000 on January 1st or $5,000 on the first of every month). They were then asked to think about how they managed their finances and which option they would choose: to get paid yearly ($60,000 on January 1st) or to get paid monthly ($5,000 on the first of every month). Next, using an open-ended text question, participants were asked why they chose the payment frequency they selected. Participants were then asked to think about what they wrote in the open-ended question above and to select which option best summarized the reason for their choice. Participants could choose as many options as they wanted from a list of eight options: (1) money now is better than money later, (2) it would help me budget better, (3) it would help me spend less, (4) it matches the timing of my bills, (5) I like stability in my income, (6) I would want to invest the money, (7) It would help me buy something I normally wouldn't be able to afford, and (8) other (please write your reason below). Except for the "other" option, which was always displayed last, the order of the options was randomized. Lastly, participants reported their general demographic information (e.g., gender, age, education).

Results. First, we analyzed participants' typical budgeting periods. As depicted in the table below, only 0.6% of participants reported budgeting on a yearly basis. Instead, most people reported budgeting on a weekly or monthly basis (28.3% and 39.5%, respectively).

Typical Budgeting Period	% of Participants
daily	12.8%
weekly	28.3%
bi-weekly (every 2 weeks)	17.2%
monthly	39.5%
quarterly	1.0%
yearly	0.6%
other	0.6%

Table P1. Percentage of participants who selected a particular budgeting period (pilot study 1).

Next, we analyzed participants' payment frequency preferences. The vast majority of participants preferred a monthly (vs. yearly) payment frequency (84.8% vs. 15.2%, X^2 (1, N = 499) = 241.30, p < .001. Finally, we analyzed participants' self-coded reasons for their payment frequency preferences. As the table below denotes, 71.4% of participants who chose the monthly payment frequency did so because they thought it would help them budget better.

Reason	Monthly	Yearly	All
Money now is better than money later	13.2%	59.2%	20.2%
It would help me budget better	71.4%	32.9%	65.5%
It would help me spend less	40.0%	11.8%	35.7%
It matches the timing of my bills	41.6%	5.3%	36.1%
I like stability in my income	52.7%	18.4%	47.5%

I would want to invest the money	6.4%	52.6%	13.4%
It would help me buy something I normally wouldn't be able to afford	4.0%	10.5%	5.0%
Other	1.4%	5.3%	2.0%

Table P2. Percentage of participants who selected a particular reason for their payment frequency choice. Participants could select more than one reason (pilot study 1).

Supplemental Study 1: Exploring People's Payment Frequency Preferences as a Function of the Type of Income Considered

Method. This study explored whether the payment frequency preferences of government benefit participants vary as a function of the type of income they considered. We pre-registered this study on Aspredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/8rf99.pdf). Six hundred government benefit recipients completed this study online in exchange for monetary compensation. Participants were first asked to think about how they naturally budget and to select their typical budgeting period from a list of seven options (daily, weekly, bi-weekly (every two weeks), monthly, quarterly, yearly, or other). Next, participants were randomized into one of three conditions, and were asked to think about $15,000 either as a salary (i.e., regular income), government benefit, or lottery winning (i.e., windfall). Participants read, "Imagine you receive $15,000 a year in [salary from your job / benefits from the government / winnings from the lottery]. You have the option of getting paid yearly or monthly," and saw a calendar depicting the two options ($15,000 on January 1st or $1,250 on the first of every month). They were then asked to think about how they managed their finances and which option they would choose: to get paid yearly ($15,000 on January 1st) or to get paid monthly ($1,250 on the first of every month). Next, using an open-ended text question, participants were asked why they chose the payment frequency they selected. Participants were then asked to think about what they wrote in the open-ended question above and to select which option best summarized the reason for their choice. Participants could choose as many options as they wanted from a list of eight options: (1) money now is better than money later, (2) it would help me budget better, (3) it would help me spend less, (4) it matches the timing of my bills, (5) I like stability in my income, (6) I would want to invest the money, (7) It would help me buy something I normally wouldn't be able to afford, and (8) other (please write your reason below). Except for the "other" option, which was always displayed last, the order of the options was randomized. Lastly, participants reported their general demographic information (e.g., gender, age, education).

Results. First, we analyzed participants' budgeting periods. In line with the pilot study, As depicted in the table below, very few people reported budgeting on a yearly basis (1.0%). Instead, most people reported budgeting on a weekly or monthly basis (30.0% and 40.0%, respectively).

Typical Budgeting Period	% of Participants
daily	11.3%
weekly	30.0%
bi-weekly (every 2 weeks)	15.0%
monthly	40.0%
quarterly	1.2%
yearly	1.0%
other	1.5%

Table S1. Percentage of participants who selected a particular budgeting period (supplemental study 1).

Next, we analyzed participants' payment frequency preferences. The vast majority of participants preferred a monthly (vs. yearly) payment frequency (73.8% vs. 26.2%, X^2 (1, N = 600) = 136.33, p < .001). However, people's payment frequency preferences varied as a function of the type of income considered. The strong preference for a monthly income stream was the same across the salary and benefits conditions (81.1% vs. 81.3%, b = .01, SE = .26, z = 0.06, p = .955) but was significantly lower among those in the lottery condition (59.2%, b = -1.08, SE = .23, z = -4.71, p < .001). The similarity in preferences for payment streams across the government benefits and salary conditions suggests that people may mentally account for government benefits as regular income rather than as a windfall gain.

Finally, we analyzed participants' self-coded reasons for their payment frequency preferences. As the table below denotes, 72% of participants who chose the monthly payment frequency did so because they thought it would help them budget better.

Reasons	**Monthly**	**Yearly**	**All**
Money now is better than money later			
salary	10%	42%	16%
benefits	4%	51%	13%
lottery	9%	46%	24%
It would help me budget better			
salary	72%	32%	65%
benefits	71%	24%	62%
lottery	73%	28%	55%
It would help me spend less			
salary	36%	11%	31%
benefits	39%	16%	34%
lottery	47%	9%	31%
It matches the timing of my bills			
salary	39%	11%	33%
benefits	34%	5%	29%
lottery	31%	12%	23%
I like stability in my income			
salary	52%	32%	48%
benefits	45%	30%	42%
lottery	54%	13%	37%
I would want to invest the money			
salary	3%	58%	13%
benefits	4%	27%	8%
lottery	8%	43%	22%
It would help me buy something I normally wouldn't be able to afford			
salary	4%	21%	7%
benefits	2%	11%	4%
lottery	6%	20%	11%
Other (please write your reason below)			

salary	0%	3%	0%
benefits	1%	3%	2%
lottery	1%	2%	1%
Money now is better than money later	**8%**	**46%**	**18%**
It would help me budget better	**72%**	**28%**	**61%**
It would help me spend less	**40%**	**11%**	**32%**
It matches the timing of my bills	**35%**	**10%**	**29%**
I like stability in my income	**50%**	**22%**	**43%**
I would want to invest the money	**5%**	**43%**	**15%**
It would help me buy something I normally wouldn't be able to afford	**4%**	**18%**	**7%**
Other	**1%**	**3%**	**1%**

Table S2. Percentage of participants who selected a particular reason for their payment frequency choice. Participants could select more than one reason (supplemental study 1).

Supplemental Study 2: Exploring Preferences as a Function of Goals

Method. This study explored the people's income description preferences as a function of their goals. We pre-registered this study on Aspredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/sh5xk.pdf). One hundred and ninety-five participants completed this study online in exchange for monetary compensation. Participants read that the government decided to implement a new benefits program and that it could describe the program in one of two ways: as giving $300 a month or as giving $3,600 a year. Participants were then randomized into one of two conditions: claiming interest and size perceptions. In the claiming interest condition, participants were asked which description would increase their interest in claiming this new benefit. In the size perceptions condition, participants were asked which description would make it seem like the government was giving benefit recipients a larger amount of money. Lastly, participants reported their general demographic information (e.g., gender, age, education).

Results. Consistent with our theorizing and the field experiments, 78.1% of participants responded that the monthly (vs. yearly) income description would increase their interest in claiming the benefit. In contrast, only 42.4% of participants responded that the monthly (vs. yearly) income description made it seem as though the government was giving away more money (78.1% vs. 42.4%, b = -1.58, SE = .32, z = -4.94, p < .001). This finding suggests that policymakers should consider leveraging different messaging strategies when targeting different goals and audiences.