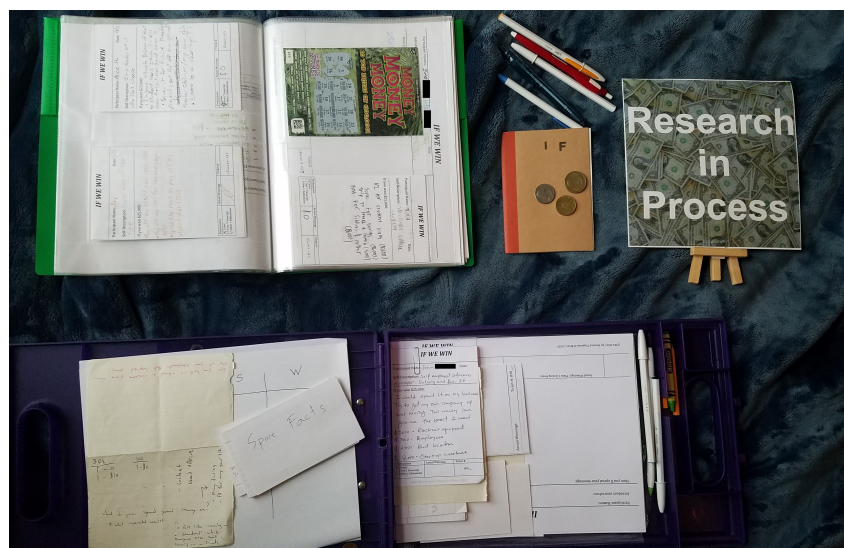


Thanks to your support, I've been able to dedicate time to exploring and reactivating research from my 2019 project *If We Win*. This is the first of what I hope to make several features on this project. If you've got questions in the meantime, why not [submit them for the AMA](#) this **Sunday, April 18th at 12pm**? You can find the link and more details in my [Patreon Post](#).

For now, enjoy the April Highlight!


April Archive Highlight - *If We Win*



If We Win asked participants to answer together a question that was only mostly hypothetical: *what would you do if you won the lottery?*

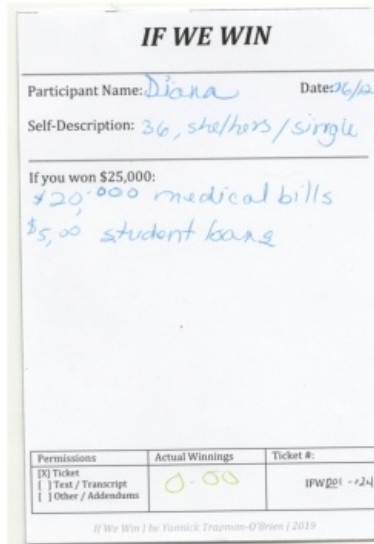
2 to 4 participants at a time were given a lottery ticket with a top prize of no less than \$25,000 per person; in return, they agreed to set down in writing a plan for spending their winnings, and joined a conversation about how much that money really is, and what it could mean to them.

If they won, the ticket was theirs to cash. If they lost, the ticket entered the archives of the research project, along with their written plans.

IF WE WIN		
Participant Name: Heather		Date: 6-15-19
Self-Description: 23 y/o aspiring city planner from California w/ a heart in Beijing		
If you won \$25,000:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - squirrel away \$ for next food housing \$5,000 - pay off the loans \$10,000 - take myself to various medical professionals and fix my body ↳ medicine \$2,500 - Heather trip - some crazy indulgence Italy? for 2,000 - invest in some social thing \$5,000 ↳ ranchhouse rehab 		
Permissions	Actual Winnings	Ticket #:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ticket <input type="checkbox"/> Text / Transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Other / Addendums	\$0	IFW003-025
<small><i>If We Win</i> by Yannick Trapman-O'Brien 2019</small>		

Note: While participants were shown that spending plans would be made public, and many participants felt comfortable sharing their full names, as a rule I do not list full names of participants in my work, out of concerns for privacy.

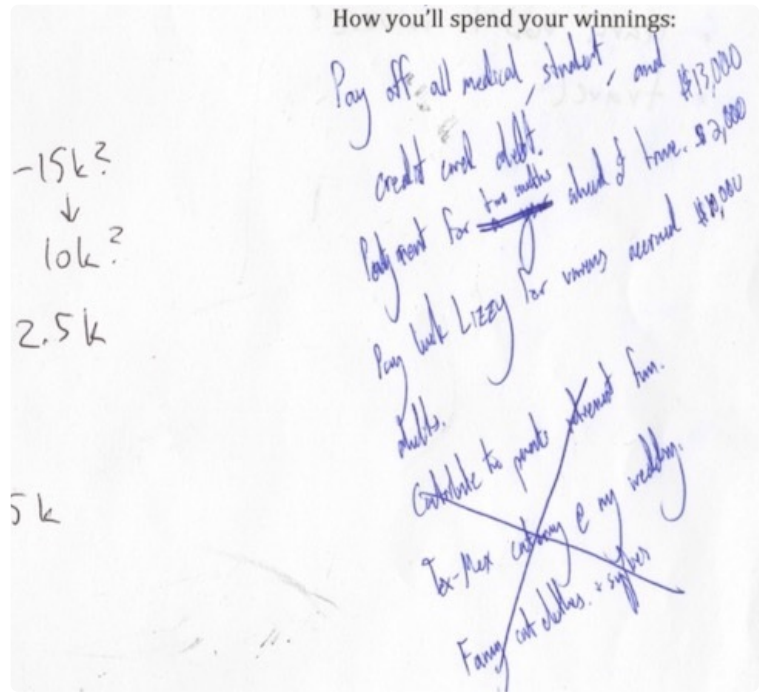
The 2019 run was pretty small; about 13 participants in early beta testing, and then 27 participants total. I experimented with several different formats, but settled on 3 players all scratching the same \$100,000 ticket, which they would in theory split 3 ways (the fourth \$25,000 would go to the federal and PA state taxes, which take 24% and 3.07%, respectively). By playing together, I wanted to explore creating exchanges with multiple individuals at once, and to learn what happens when people made contracts with each other, and not just me. I also wanted to see if it was possible to create a space where it felt safe (and even exciting) to talk about money, and to examine the ways we value it, and encounter some other perspectives.



I really like If We Win; the conversations I got to share with participants felt surprising, open, and complicated. It's also an oddly-shaped performance, with around 3 audience members per session, a run-time varying from 20-50 minutes, and a playing space as small as a table. In my 2019 run I leaned into that oddity, and ran the piece in the lobby of a number of other theater and cabaret performances during Philadelphia's SoLow Fest, as well as one night in the backroom of local bar and South Philly favorite Tattooed Mom. I've always had an interest in theatre forms that can co-exist or cohabitate with other performances, events, and spaces (if you want to hear me talk for a hour straight, get me started on "[Stolen House Shows](#)")

This is definitely a piece I hope to run again, and a data set I want to keep building. It was designed to be an in-person experience, and that's definitely where I'd like to take it again, but I've also done some preliminary tests to see what it's like to have this conversation in remote digital spaces. This is an area where I'd love to hear from my patrons: would you be interested in alpha/beta testing remote interactions in this piece?

You'll see more deep-dives on this content in the coming months, but since I hope to be in this headspace for a while, I wanted to give you an overview of some of the data from 2019, and the kinds of stories that emerge.



It's important to note that this data is by no means representative of larger trends - the collection model isn't designed to report on any given or controlled population, (and even if it was, the sample sizes are much too small). Instead, each data point is a snapshot. It speaks to one person at one moment in time. The main drive of the piece was to look at a given amount of money (\$25000) and repeatedly ask "how much is that?" In doing so, we get to explore our broader perspectives about money, wealth, fairness, finance, and more.

That being said, having data on how even a few individuals would spend a sudden windfall in 2019 takes on a new resonance in light of the Stimulus payments of 2020.

Today, I want to look at the only ticket in the initial run that won an actual prize - TTM002

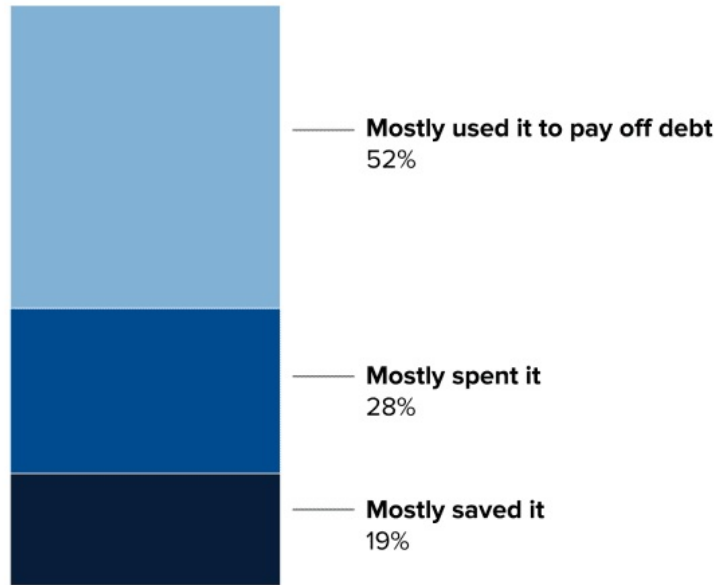
Taken together, the planned spending of those three participants looks something like this:

Shopping	1500	2.00%
Travel	2100	2.80%
Vehicle	5000	6.67%
Housing	8400	11.20%
Debt	15000	20.00%
Saving	43000	57.33%
Total	75000	

As you'll see in later posts, "fun spending" is super low across the board in the participants from 2019. Not even the flash and glamour of "lottery winnings" could outweigh the realities of economic insecurity or anxieties. As much as \$25,000 feels like it could change your life, time and time again what I heard from participants is that it would just get them above water. Let's compare that to a recent snapshot of stimulus spending from the [US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, taken February 17 - March 1, 2021.](#)

How Americans are handling their stimulus checks

Saving vs. spending breakdown of survey respondents who reported receiving checks in the previous seven days. Survey dates are February 17 through March 1, 2021.



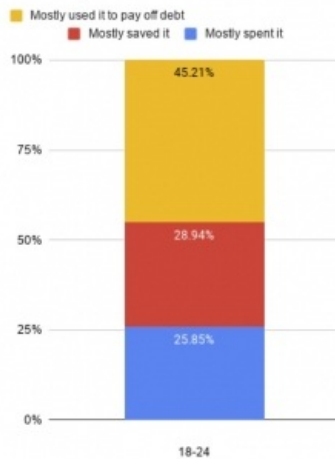
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Week 25, February 17 - March 1



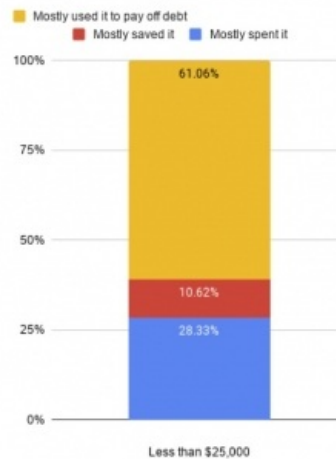
Image courtesy of a [CNBC](#) article, which helped me find the primary source

To be more specific, I wanted to look at those numbers along some of the same demographic lines that these participants reported, so I dove into the Census data to pull a comparison:

18-24 year olds: Census Bureau Week 25 Household Pulse Survey: February 17 – March 1



Income under \$25,000: Census Bureau Week 25 Household Pulse Survey: February 17 – March 1



A lot of data-taking practice involves surveying individuals to tell and inform a larger story. In doing so, the individual disappears. With *If We Win*, I tried to do the opposite; I brought macro data like this to the table, and presented it to individual participants so they could understand themselves as part of and distinct from larger trends. To that end, I'll let the participants have the last word here — and let them tell you how much they won.

IF WE WIN

Participant Name: Kate [redacted] Date: 7/15/19

Self-Description: 24, brown hair, 5'3", actor

If you won \$25,000:

- \$8,400 - Move out
- \$1,600 - travel to west coast
- \$10,000 - loan
- \$5,000 - savings

Permissions	Actual Winnings	Ticket #:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ticket <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text / Transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Other / Addendums	\$ 10.00	TTA002

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Ticket # IFW-005

Ticket Cashed

IF WE WIN

Participant Name: Chelsea Date: 7/15

Self-Description: girl, 23, college grad

If you won \$25,000:

- 5,000 - student loans
- 5,000 - car
- 500 - camping trip/road trip
- 500 - shopping trip
- 14,000 - savings

Permissions	Actual Winnings	Ticket #:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ticket <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text / Transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Other / Addendums	\$10.00	TTA002

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IF WE WIN

Participant Name: Julianne [redacted] Date: 7/15

Self-Description: ~~actor~~ tall red head
~~empathetic~~ empathetic actor person

If you won \$25,000:

Put ~~24,000~~ 24,000 into savings, use 1000 for gas to sustainable hair products from lush because treat yourself. Wait for my partner to nail that job interview. Get ~~in~~ a place ~~in~~ in Philly together to pay our year of rent in advance.

Permissions	Actual Winnings	Ticket #:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ticket <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text / Transcript <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other / Addendums	\$10.00	TTA002

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\$10.00
(split 3 ways)

I hope you enjoyed that introduction to If We Win. Join me next month for something completely different.

Thanks again for your support.

- Yannick Trapman-O'Brien