

**WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
PARTICIPANT AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS 2012: SUMMARY**

Background

WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2012 (PC 2012) summarizes the demographic characteristics of participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nationwide in April 2012. It includes information on participant income and nutrition risk characteristics, estimates breastfeeding initiation rates for WIC infants, and describes WIC members of migrant farm-worker families. PC 2012 is the most recent in a series of reports generated from WIC State management information system data biennially since 1992.

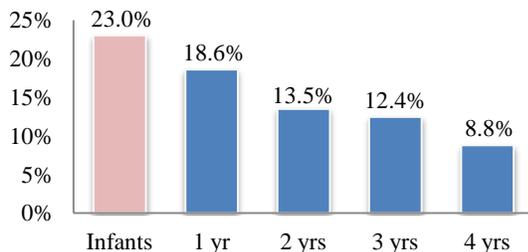
Findings

In April 2012, there were 9.7 million women, infants, and children enrolled in WIC¹. This figure is higher than FNS WIC participation because it includes those who may not have received or used their benefits. Of these 2012 participants:

Demographics

In 2012, just over 76 percent were under age 5, with more younger than older children participating. Over half (53.4 percent) of WIC participants were children (ages 1-4), 23.0 percent were infants, and 23.6 percent were women.

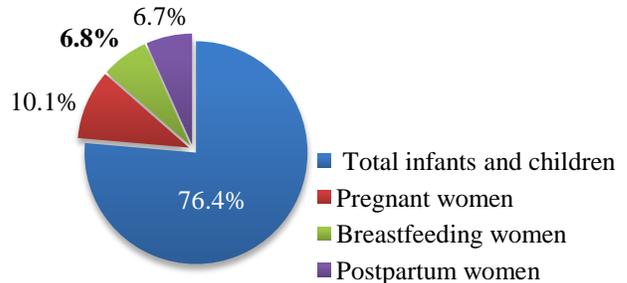
Figure 1 – Percent of Infant and Children Participants by Age



For the first time, the proportion of breastfeeding women exceeded that of non-breastfeeding postpartum women. Among all WIC participants, 10.1 percent were pregnant

women, 6.8 percent were breastfeeding women, and 6.7 percent were postpartum non-breastfeeding women.

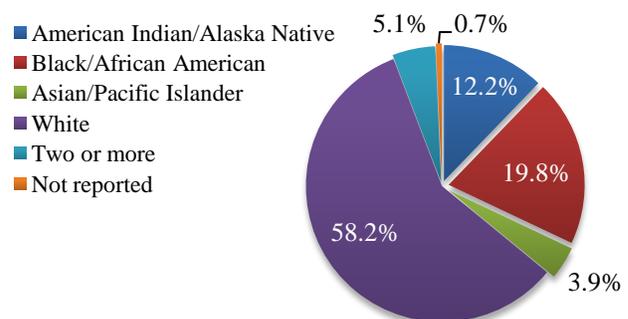
Figure 2 – Percent of WIC Participants by Category



Federal data standards require race and ethnicity to be reported separately. In 2012:

- Race data show that Whites are the largest group of WIC participants (58.2 percent) followed by Blacks or African Americans (19.8 percent), American Indians or Alaskan Natives (12.2 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islanders (3.9 percent). About 5 percent of WIC participants reported two or more races. Race was not reported for 0.7 percent of participants.
- Ethnicity data show that Hispanics made up 41.5 percent of WIC participants.

Figure 3 – Race of WIC Participants²



²Hispanics make up 41.5 percent of WIC participants

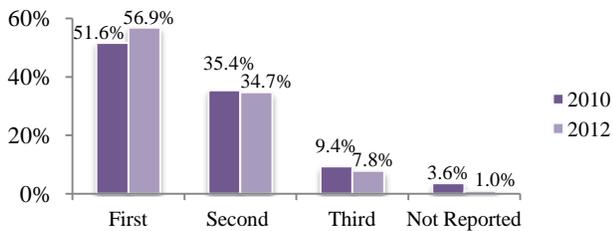
In April 2012, there were 35,972 individuals identified on State WIC enrollment files as being from migrant farm worker families, making up less than half of 1 percent of the population receiving WIC services.

¹ The report refers to these individuals as “participants.”

Enrollment

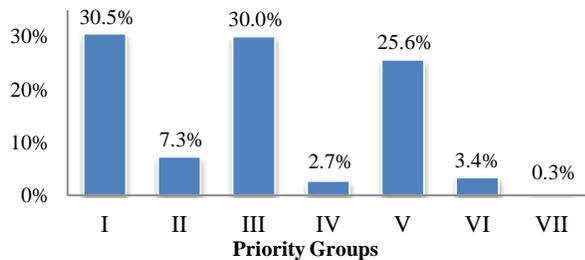
In 2012, over half (56.9 percent) of pregnant WIC participants enrolled in WIC during their first trimester, an increase of more than 5 percentage points over 2010 (51.6 percent). Most of the remaining women (34.7 percent) enrolled in their second trimester, and 7.8 percent enrolled in the third trimester.

Figure 4 – Trimester of WIC Enrollment



WIC participants are divided into priority groups designed to ensure that those who are at the greatest nutrition risk are first to receive benefits in periods when funds are limited. In 2012, the majority of participants were in priority groups I (pregnant and breast-feeding women, and infants at nutrition risk due to anthropometric, biochemical, or medical condition), III (children with group I nutrition risks), and V (children at nutritional risk because of an inadequate dietary pattern).

Figure 5 – Participants Grouped by Priority Group



Income

While WIC benefits are generally provided for women, infants, and children whose incomes are at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL), some participants become income eligible for WIC through their participation in other means-tested programs.

The distribution of WIC participants reporting income shows that **almost three-quarters of WIC participants (73.1 percent) had incomes of less**

than 100 percent of FPL. This compares to 15.0 percent in the U.S. general population. About 1.5 percent of participants reporting incomes had incomes greater than 185 percent of poverty, compared to 68.5 percent in the overall U.S. population. This figure is down from about 3 percent in 2010 and more closely aligns with the historical average of 1.6 percent (2000-2008).

Table 1 – WIC and U.S. Participant Income as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level

Income as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level	WIC Participants	U.S. Population
Below 100%	73.1%	15.0%
100 to < 130%	12.7%	5.8%
130 to < 150%	5.8%	4.0%
150 to < 185%	6.9%	6.7%
185% and over	1.5%	68.5%

Health Conditions and Behaviors

Obesity in children has begun to decline among WIC participants. In 2012, 15.3 percent of children who were 1 year old were considered overweight compared with 16.8 percent in 2008. Similarly, for children ages 2 to 4, 14.7 percent were overweight in 2008 compared with 14.0 percent in 2012.

Breastfeeding initiation increased. Among the 86 WIC State agencies that reported breastfeeding data for 2012, 67.1 percent of all 6- to 13-month-old infants and children were currently breastfed or were breastfed at some time compared with 63.1 percent in 2010.

Seventy-one WIC State agencies were able to provide breastfeeding duration data on at least 75 percent of infants. The median duration of breastfeeding was 12 weeks, with substantial variation existing among States. The proportion of infants and children breastfed for 6 or more months has a lower bound estimate of 21.6 percent and an upper bound estimate of 28.7 percent.

The PC 2012 report also includes State-level tabulations for breastfeeding, migrant populations, and other variables.

WIC PC reports for 1996-2012 can be downloaded at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.