

WIC PARTICIPANT AND PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS 2014 (SUMMARY)

Background

WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2014 (PC 2014) summarizes the demographic characteristics of participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nationwide in April 2014. 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 2014 is the most recent in a series of reports generated from WIC State management information system data biennially since 1992.

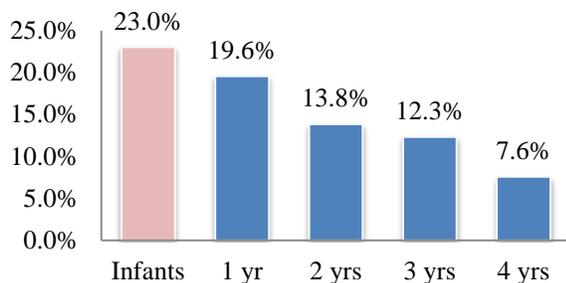
Findings

In April 2014, there were 9.3 million women, infants, and children enrolled in WIC.<sup>1</sup> This figure is higher than FNS WIC participation because it includes those who may not have received or used their benefits, but it is 4.4 percent lower than enrollment in April 2012 (9.7 million). Of the 2014 participants:

Demographics

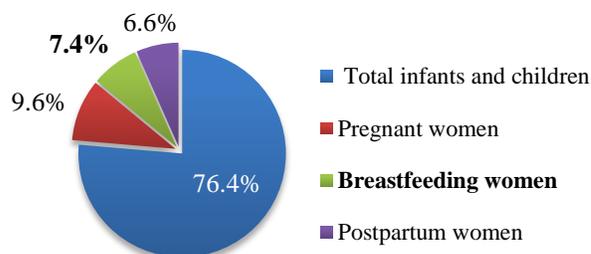
In 2014, just over 76 percent were under age 5, with more younger than older children participating. Over half (53.3 percent) of WIC participants were children (ages 1-4), 23 percent were infants, and 23.6 percent were women. Of the children participating in 2014, the proportion of 4-year-olds (7.6 percent) was the lowest it has been since 1994 (6.4 percent).

Figure 1 – Percent of Infant and Children Participants by Age



The proportion of breastfeeding women exceeded that of non-breastfeeding postpartum women, continuing the trend exhibited for the first time in 2012. Among all WIC participants, 9.6 percent were pregnant women, 7.4 percent were breastfeeding women, and 6.6 percent were postpartum non-breastfeeding women.

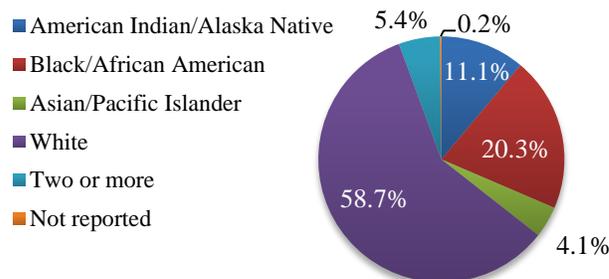
Figure 2 – Percent of WIC Participants by Category



Federal data standards require race and ethnicity to be reported separately. In 2014:

- Race data show that Whites are the largest group of WIC participants (58.7 percent) followed by Blacks or African Americans (20.3 percent), American Indians or Alaskan Natives (11.1 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islanders (4.1 percent). About 5 percent of WIC participants reported two or more races. Race was not reported for 0.2 percent of participants.<sup>2</sup>
- Ethnicity data show that Hispanics made up 41.6 percent of WIC participants.

Figure 3 – Race of WIC Participants<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Hispanics make up 41.6 percent of WIC participants

<sup>1</sup> The report refers to these individuals as “participants.”

<sup>2</sup> Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding and the use of weights.

In April 2014, there were 39,071 individuals identified on State WIC enrollment files as being from migrant farm-worker families, which constitutes less than half of 1 percent of total WIC participation.

**Income**

While WIC benefits are typically provided for women, infants, and children with incomes 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.

**Almost three-quarters of WIC participants reporting incomes (74.2 percent) had incomes of less than 100 percent of FPL,** the highest proportion of participants in poverty since 1994 (76.8%). This compares to 14.5 percent of the U.S. general population with incomes below 100 percent of FPL. About 1.6 percent of participants reporting incomes had incomes greater than 185 percent of poverty, compared to 69 percent in the overall U.S. population.

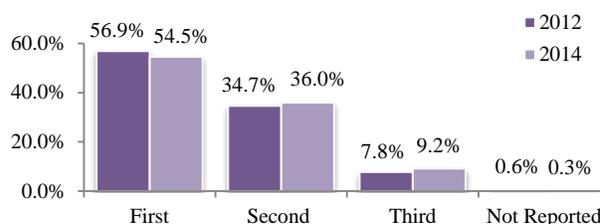
**Table 1 –WIC and U.S. Participant Income as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level**

Income as a Percent of Federal Poverty Level	WIC Participants	U.S. Population
Below 100%	74.2%	14.5%
100 to < 130%	12.3%	5.9%
130 to < 150%	5.5%	3.9%
150 to < 185%	6.5%	6.7%
185% and Over	1.6%	69.0%

**Enrollment**

**In 2014, over half of pregnant WIC participants (54.5 percent) enrolled in WIC during their first trimester, a slightly lower proportion than in 2012 (56.9 percent).** Although this is the first drop in first trimester enrollment figures since 2008 (when first trimester enrollment fell from 51.2 percent in 2006 to 50.6 percent), this is still higher than first trimester enrollment in 2010, 51.6 percent. Most of the remaining women in 2014 (36 percent) enrolled in their second trimester, and 9.2 percent enrolled in their third trimester.

**Figure 4 – Trimester of WIC Enrollment**



**Health Conditions and Behaviors**

**Breastfeeding initiation increased.** Among the 83 WIC State agencies that reported breastfeeding data for 2014, 69.8 percent of all 6- to 13-month-old infants and children participating in WIC were ever or are currently breastfed, compared with 67.1 percent in 2012.

Seventy WIC State agencies were able to provide breastfeeding duration data on at least 75 percent of infants. The median duration of breastfeeding was 13 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 23.3 percent and an upper bound estimate of 30.6 percent.

**In 2014, anemia rates were slightly lower, reversing the trend from 2002 to 2012.** Anemia rates of postpartum women increased from 2002 (35.3 percent) to 2012 (38.5 percent), but decreased in 2014 to 38 percent. Similarly, anemia rates of breastfeeding women increased from 2002 (24.5 percent) to 2012 (34.2 percent), but in 2014 decreased to 33.4 percent.

**Obesity in children has continued to decline among WIC participants.** The proportion of 1-year-old children at or above the 97th percentile for weight-for-length decreased to 10.2 percent, compared with 12 percent in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of children ages 2-4 who are considered obese (classified as “overweight” in prior WIC Participant and Program Characteristics (WIC PC) reports using the same metric) decreased from 14.6 percent in 2010 to 13.7 percent in 2014.

The PC 2014 report also includes State-level tabulations for breastfeeding, migrant populations, and other variables.

WIC PC reports for 1996-2014 can be downloaded at [www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis](http://www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).

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