

Child Nutrition: WIC

Definition

WIC is the average monthly number of infants and children up to age 5 served by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Data in context

All children need a healthy diet for a strong beginning in life. Women have specific needs during pregnancy, and nutrition has a significant impact on the pregnancy and the health of the unborn child.¹ For infants and children, poor nutrition is linked to negative health outcomes and psychological issues.²

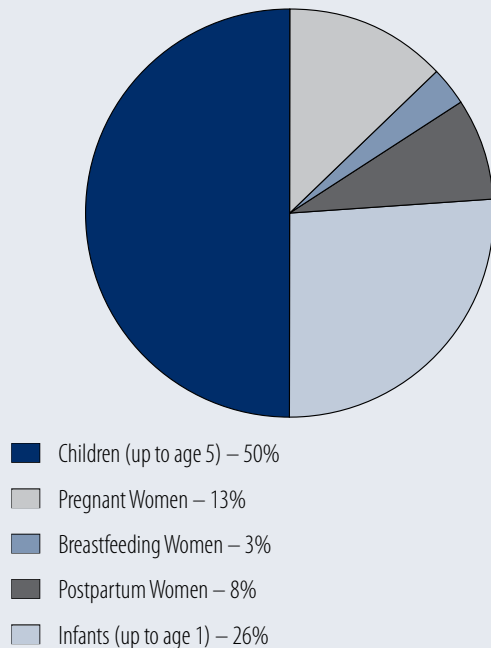
WIC serves pregnant women, postpartum women, breastfeeding women, infants, and children under five years old living in households at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line. Currently, WIC serves 45 percent of all infants (children under the age of one) born in the United States.³

All children benefit from access to adequate nutrition, especially in utero and during infancy. However, low-income neighborhoods often have limited options for parents to obtain healthy, affordable food. WIC participation can increase opportunities for healthy eating for all young children, their mothers, and pregnant women.

In Kentucky, 80 percent of all WIC participants are non-Hispanic White. Though total numbers of participation are much smaller, participation rates are slightly higher among Black/African-American and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders and substantially higher among Hispanic/Latinos than participation for other racial or ethnic groups.⁴ Outreach efforts can help all families obtain adequate nutrition.

Participation in WIC provides mothers with healthy foods, educational materials on the best ways to care for and feed their new babies, and screening and referrals to other health and social services. WIC also encourages breastfeeding as the optimal means of feeding infants up to one year.⁵ In addition to nutrition services, participation increases the chance of mothers accessing services like

Women, Infants & Children Receiving WIC in Kentucky, 2007



Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

regular medical treatment and immunizations for their children.

WIC participation is linked to improved birth outcomes, including reduced risk of low-weight birth. The costs of WIC are minimal: for less than \$600, WIC provides the nutritious food needed during pregnancy to participating women.⁶ However, it costs nearly \$22,000 per pound to help low-birthweight babies achieve a normal weight.⁷ WIC participation can also reduce infant mortality; one study found a significant reduction in rates among Medicaid recipients who participated in the program.⁸

A 2002 study of WIC participation found that the probability of women participating in WIC increased during the first 4 months of pregnancy.⁹ Women who have participated in WIC during a previous pregnancy

and women who are receiving Medicaid are more likely to participate in WIC.¹⁰

Between 2000 and 2007 in Kentucky, WIC participation grew by 15,724 children, an increase of 19 percent. Participation grew in 99 of Kentucky's counties since 2000. Martin County saw the largest percentage decline (19 percent), while participation in Scott County grew by 101 percent during this seven-year period.

Data Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Public Health.

- 1 National Women's Health Information Center (2005). *Frequently Asked Questions About Pregnancy and a Healthy Diet*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health.
- 2 The Center on Hunger and Poverty, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University (2002). *The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children: Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies*. Available at <http://www.centeronhunger.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 3 USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *WIC at a Glance*. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 4 Data obtained from Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Public Health.
- 5 USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *How WIC Helps*. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 6 Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (2006). *History of WIC in Kentucky*. Available at <http://chfs.ky.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Food Research and Action Center (2005). *WIC in the States: Thirty-One Years of Building a Healthier America*. Available at <http://www.frac.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 9 Swann, C. (2003). *The Dynamics of Prenatal WIC Participation and the Role of Past Participation*. New York: State University of New York at Stony Brook.
- 10 Ibid.

Infants and children receiving WIC (average monthly number)

	2000	2007
Kentucky	84,399	100,123
Adair	341	422
Allen	417	553
Anderson	277	342
Ballard	181	172
Barren	716	1,108
Bath	353	379
Bell	1,243	1,336
Boone	1,195	1,679
Bourbon	342	427
Boyd	956	1,040
Boyle	399	564
Bracken	156	215
Breathitt	600	592
Breckinridge	341	457
Bullitt	736	1,069
Butler	335	393
Caldwell	296	351
Calloway	621	728
Campbell	1,081	1,404
Carlisle	160	152
Carroll	268	374
Carter	945	1,050
Casey	395	444
Christian	3,301	3,217
Clark	627	782
Clay	907	926
Clinton	381	457
Crittenden	216	236
Cumberland	233	265
Daviess	1,880	2,241
Edmonson	269	308
Elliott	237	295
Estill	496	506
Fayette	3,069	4,747
Fleming	487	461
Floyd	1,361	1,558
Franklin	716	882
Fulton	282	292
Gallatin	178	302
Garrard	343	447

	2000	2007
Grant	707	836
Graves	819	1,024
Grayson	611	847
Green	245	352
Greenup	637	769
Hancock	175	195
Hardin	2,451	2,407
Harlan	1,332	1,252
Harrison	341	486
Hart	427	493
Henderson	776	988
Henry	276	307
Hickman	121	116
Hopkins	1,000	1,190
Jackson	461	491
Jefferson	10,358	12,754
Jessamine	680	1,099
Johnson	758	822
Kenton	1,745	2,014
Knott	619	528
Knox	1,229	1,223
LaRue	283	406
Laurel	1,210	1,371
Lawrence	434	492
Lee	280	271
Leslie	558	477
Letcher	700	652
Lewis	345	459
Lincoln	591	663
Livingston	200	233
Logan	475	613
Lyon	138	149
McCracken	1,411	1,370
McCreary	707	793
McLean	306	260
Madison	1,333	1,554
Magoffin	614	611
Marion	539	580
Marshall	579	680
Martin	599	483
Mason	407	436

	2000	2007
Meade	533	526
Menifee	222	278
Mercer	418	524
Metcalfe	261	291
Monroe	285	334
Montgomery	567	846
Morgan	441	474
Muhlenberg	744	754
Nelson	775	933
Nicholas	231	231
Ohio	625	770
Oldham	369	611
Owen	166	233
Owsley	215	220
Pendleton	240	278
Perry	950	918
Pike	1,787	1,633
Powell	466	513
Pulaski	1,334	1,714
Robertson	66	96
Rockcastle	429	583
Rowan	499	593
Russell	424	537
Scott	378	760
Shelby	469	790
Simpson	267	392
Spencer	170	285
Taylor	538	599
Todd	308	399
Trigg	249	318
Trimble	142	191
Union	313	370
Warren	1,406	2,107
Washington	261	308
Wayne	689	768
Webster	268	354
Whitley	1,443	1,788
Wolfe	339	429
Woodford	307	460