

Background

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services to nutritionally at-risk low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children through age 4.

This report offers updated estimates of the population that met these criteria and was eligible for WIC benefits in 2010. This report includes (1) estimates of the number of eligibles (including children by single year of age) and coverage rates; (2) updated estimates in U.S. territories; and (3) confidence intervals.

Methodology

The national estimates presented below are based on a methodology developed in 2003 by the Committee on National Statistics of the National Research Council (CNSTAT). The report's State-level estimates use a methodology developed by the Urban Institute that apportions the national figures using data from the American Community Survey.

The estimates consider poverty level, adjunctive income eligibility (e.g., due to participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Medicaid), national estimates of nutritional risk, and State-level estimates of duration of breastfeeding.

The estimates presented in this report are the first estimates that reflect the results from the 2010 Census, which show fewer infants and young children in the U.S. population than the previous Census estimates. Previous estimates were

extrapolated from the 2000 Census.¹ Therefore, the estimates in this report are not directly comparable to previously published estimates in this series.

Results: WIC Eligible Population

- FNS estimates that the average monthly WIC-eligible population totaled 14.55 million in 2010.
- Children ages 1 to 4 made up more than 60 percent of the eligible population.

Participant Group	# Eligible (Millions)	% of All Eligibles	# Participating	Coverage Rate
Infants	2.54	17.4%	2.15	84.8%
Total Children Ages 1-4	9.22	63.4%	4.84	52.4%
Children Age 1 ^a	2.21	15.2%		
Children Age 2 ^a	2.34	16.1%		
Children Age 3 ^a	2.40	16.5%		
Children Age 4 ^a	2.27	15.6%		
Pregnant Women	1.30	9.0%	0.92	70.8%
Postpartum Women	1.49	10.2%	1.20	80.6%
Breastfeeding Women	0.66	4.6%	0.57	85.1%
Nonbreastfeeding Women	0.82	5.6%	0.63	76.9%
All Participant Groups	14.55	100.0%	9.11	62.6%

^a WIC coverage rates for children by single year of age are not provided because participation data are not available by single year of age.

*Calendar Year

Results: WIC Coverage Rates

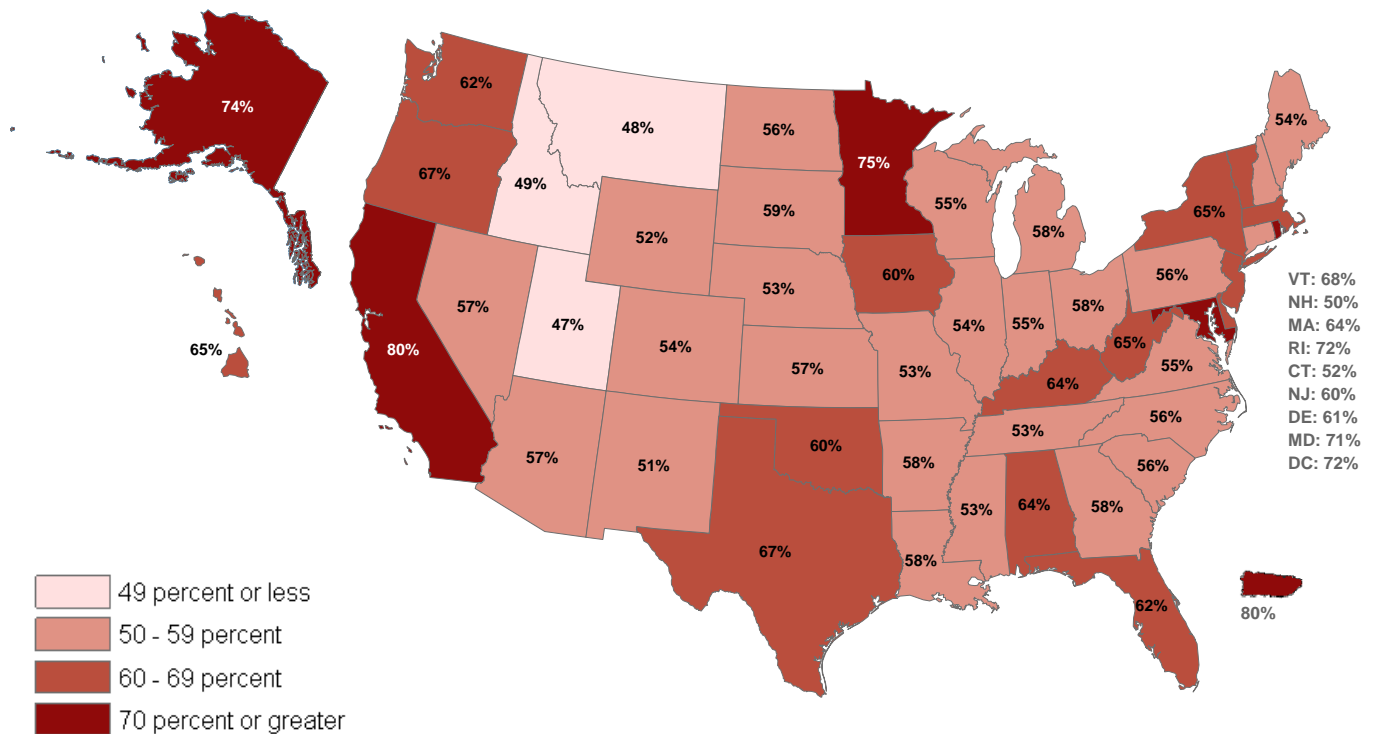
The percentage of the eligible population that receives WIC benefits is the program's "coverage rate."

- In 2010, WIC served an estimated 62.6 percent of those eligible for WIC.

¹ See U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *National and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligibles and Program Reach, 2000-2009*, Betson, et al, December 2011, <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/WIC/WIC.htm>>.

- For more than a decade, WIC’s overall estimated coverage rate has fluctuated in a narrow range from 56 to 63 percent.
- Regional coverage rates have also remained relatively stable over time, with Mountain Plains states having the lowest coverage rates (between 50 and 54 percent) and Western states having the highest (between 63 and 73 percent).
- Coverage of WIC-eligible infants reached almost 85 percent in 2010, while coverage of WIC-eligible children continued to lag behind all other participant groups, having a coverage rate of just above 52 percent.
- Coverage rates vary substantially by State, as demonstrated by the map below. (Note: Care must be taken in interpreting State eligibles estimates, especially for States with small populations, as there is less confidence in the findings for these States.)

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
Coverage Rates for All Participants by State, CY 2010**



U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis. *National and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligibles and Program Reach, 2010*, by Michael Martinez-Schiferl, Linda Giannarelli, and Sheila Zedlewski. Project Officer: Grant Lovellette. Alexandria, VA: January 2013.

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