

Background

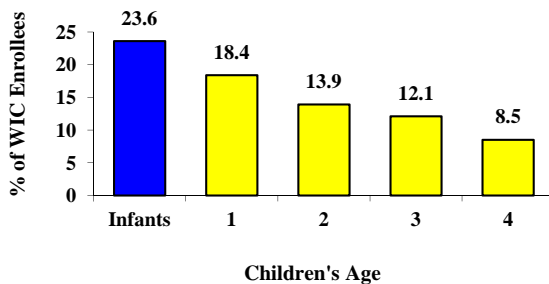
WIC Participant and Program Characteristics (PC2010) summarizes the demographic characteristics of participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nationwide in April 2010. It includes information on participant income and nutrition risk characteristics, estimates breastfeeding initiation rates for WIC infants, and describes WIC members of migrant farm-worker families. PC2010 is the most recent in a series of reports that have been generated from WIC State management information systems biennially since 1992. It is the first in the series since the major changes in the WIC food packages in 2009.

Findings

In April 2010, there were 10.0 million women, infants, and children enrolled in WIC. The number of enrollees includes individuals who did not pick up food instruments. Approximately 91 percent of WIC enrollees actually picked up their food instruments for April 2010 and were counted according to WIC regulations as participants for WIC food and administrative funding purposes. Among WIC enrollees, over half (52.9 percent) are children. Infants account for 23.6 percent, and women are 23.5 percent of those enrolled in WIC.

Slightly over three-fourths of WIC enrollees were under age 5, and child enrollment was weighted toward younger children (Figure 1).

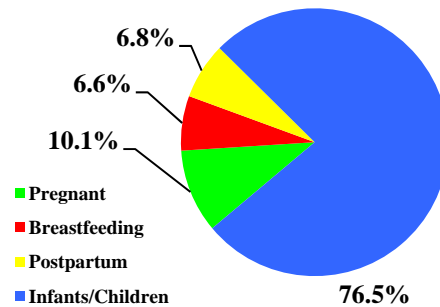
Figure 1
Age of Children Enrollees



Women, as a percent of all participants, were divided into pregnant (10.1 percent), breastfeeding (6.6 percent), and postpartum (6.8 percent) (Figure 2). The percentage

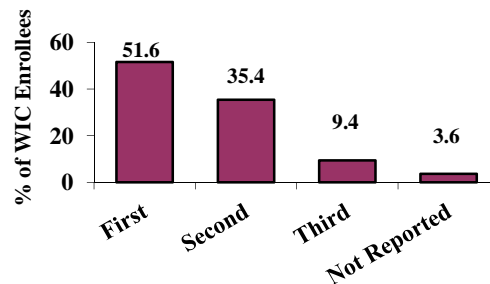
of women classified as breastfeeding rose steadily from 3.6 percent in 1992 to 6.9 percent in 2008, but has slightly declined to 6.6 percent in 2010, which may in part have been affected by the changes in the WIC food packages.

Figure 2
Status of Women



In 2010, more pregnant WIC participants enrolled in the program during their first trimester than during their second trimester, with 51.6 percent in the first trimester and 35.4 in the second. Only 9.4 percent enrolled in the third trimester (Figure 3). Between 1992 and 2006, enrollment in the first trimester increased steadily, but has since stabilized at about 51 percent.

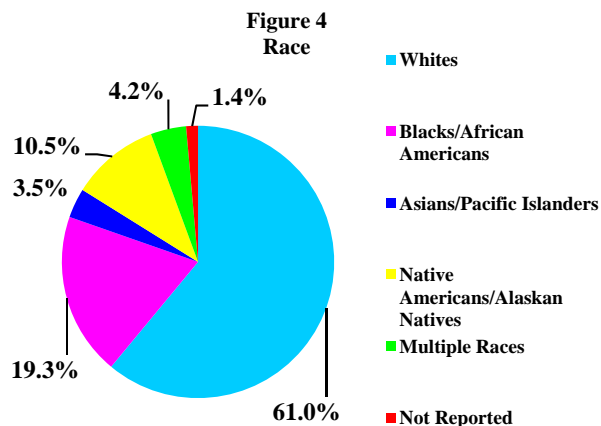
Figure 3
Trimester of WIC Enrollment



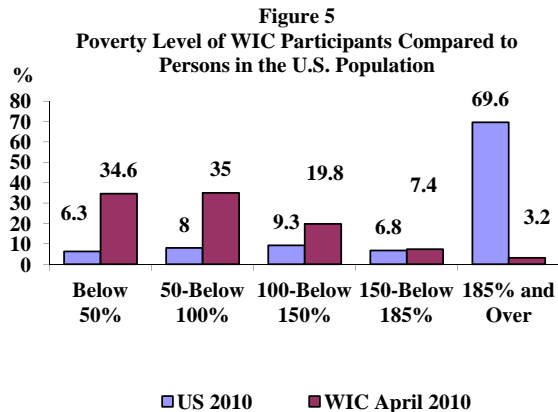
Under the Office of Management and Budget's definitions, ethnicity (i.e., Hispanic or non-Hispanic) and race are reported separately. In 2010:

- Hispanics made up 42.0 percent of WIC participants.
- Race data were reported by the States for 98.6 percent of WIC participants. Whites are the largest group (60.9 percent), followed by Blacks/African Americans (19.3 percent), American Indians/Alaskan Natives (10.5 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islanders (3.5 percent) (Figure 4).

- While the race of most Hispanics was identified by themselves and/or WIC staff as White, many were identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native.



The distribution of participants by poverty level shows about 70 percent of WIC participants (69.6) at or below the poverty line (Figure 5) with 34.6 percent falling below the 50 percent level. This compares to 14.3 percent in the U.S. general population below the poverty line with 6.3 percent falling below the 50-percent level and is substantially below the WIC income-eligibility limit.

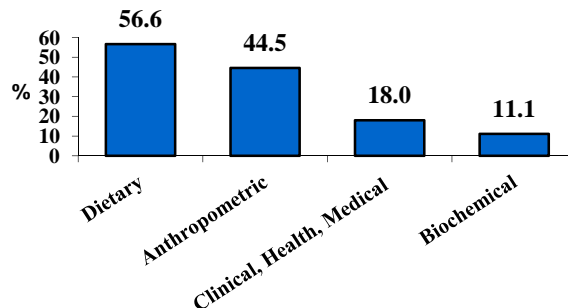


Predominant risks reported for women were high

weight-for-height and inappropriate weight gain.

Children showed dietary and the anthropometric risk of high weight-for-height as their most frequently reported risks (Figure 6). Eighty-two percent of WIC infants were recorded at risk due, at least in part, to the WIC eligibility of their mothers or because their mothers were at risk during pregnancy.

Figure 6
WIC Participants With Specific Nutritional Risks at Certification



In PC2010, 63.1 percent of WIC mothers initiated breastfeeding, up from 41.3 percent in PC1998. Across the 67 State WIC Agencies reporting breastfeeding duration data, 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 an estimated lower bound estimate of 21.2 percent and an upper bound estimate of 29.2 percent.

In April 2010, there were 40,304 individuals identified on State WIC enrollment files as being from migrant farmworker families, making up less than half of 1 percent of the population receiving WIC services.

The PC2010 report includes State-level tabulations for breastfeeding, migrant populations, and other variables.

Download full report for WIC PC 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 or 2010 at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2010, WIC-10-PC*, by Patty Connor, Susan Bartlett, Michele Mendelson, Kelly Lawrence, David Bell-Feins, Katherine Wen, et al. Project Officer, Fred Lesnett. Alexandria, VA: December 2011.

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