



NATIONAL- AND STATE-LEVEL ESTIMATES OF SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) ELIGIBLES AND PROGRAM REACH IN 2014, AND UPDATED ESTIMATES FOR 2005–2013 (SUMMARY)

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides food, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care and social services to nutritionally at-risk, low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to age 5.

This report offers 2014 national and State estimates of the number of people eligible for WIC benefits and the percent of the eligible population covered by the program, including estimates by participant category. The report also provides estimates by region, U.S. territory, and race and ethnicity, as well as updated estimates for years 2005–2013.

Methodology

The national estimates 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 and other sources.

The estimates of program eligibility consider poverty level, adjunctive income eligibility (e.g., due to participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), national estimates of nutritional risk, and national- and State-level estimates of duration of breastfeeding. The estimates of program coverage are derived using Food and Nutrition (FNS) administrative data on the average monthly number of program participants divided by the average monthly number of individuals estimated to be eligible for the program. Standard errors are included to estimate precision.

Due to the cumulative effects of incremental changes in the estimation methodology over the past several years making current estimates less and less comparable with past estimates, FNS re-estimated the historical series of estimates from 2005-2013 using the same methodology as the 2014 estimates, providing a consistent 10-year series of WIC eligibles estimates in this report.

In addition, for the first time in this series of reports, State-level estimates of coverage rates by subgroup for all subgroups including children by single year of age are presented, as well as national-level estimates by race and ethnicity.

Results: WIC-Eligible Population

FNS estimates that the average monthly WIC-eligible population totaled 15.01 million in 2014, a slight but statistically significant increase from the now-revised estimate of 14.41 million in 2013.

WIC Eligibles and Coverage by WIC Subgroup, CY* 2014				
WIC Participant Category (PC)	# Eligible (Millions)	% of All Eligibles	# Participating (Millions)	Coverage Rate
Infants	2.45	16.3%	1.96	80.0%
Total Children	9.35	62.3%	4.30	46.0%
Children Age 1 ^a	2.31	15.4%	1.58	68.2%
Children Age 2 ^a	2.32	15.5%	1.11	48.1%
Children Age 3 ^a	2.36	15.7%	0.99	42.2%
Children Age 4 ^a	2.36	15.7%	0.61	25.9%
Pregnant Women	1.60	10.7%	0.80	50.2%
Postpartum Women	1.61	10.7%	1.17	72.6%
Breastfeeding	1.00	6.7%	0.59	59.5%
Nonbreastfeeding	0.61	4.1%	0.57	94.1%
All Participants	15.01	100.0%	8.23	54.8%

^a These figures are derived from the total number of children participating in CY 2014 using the ratio of child enrollees by single year of age to the total number of children enrolled as reported in WIC PC 2014.

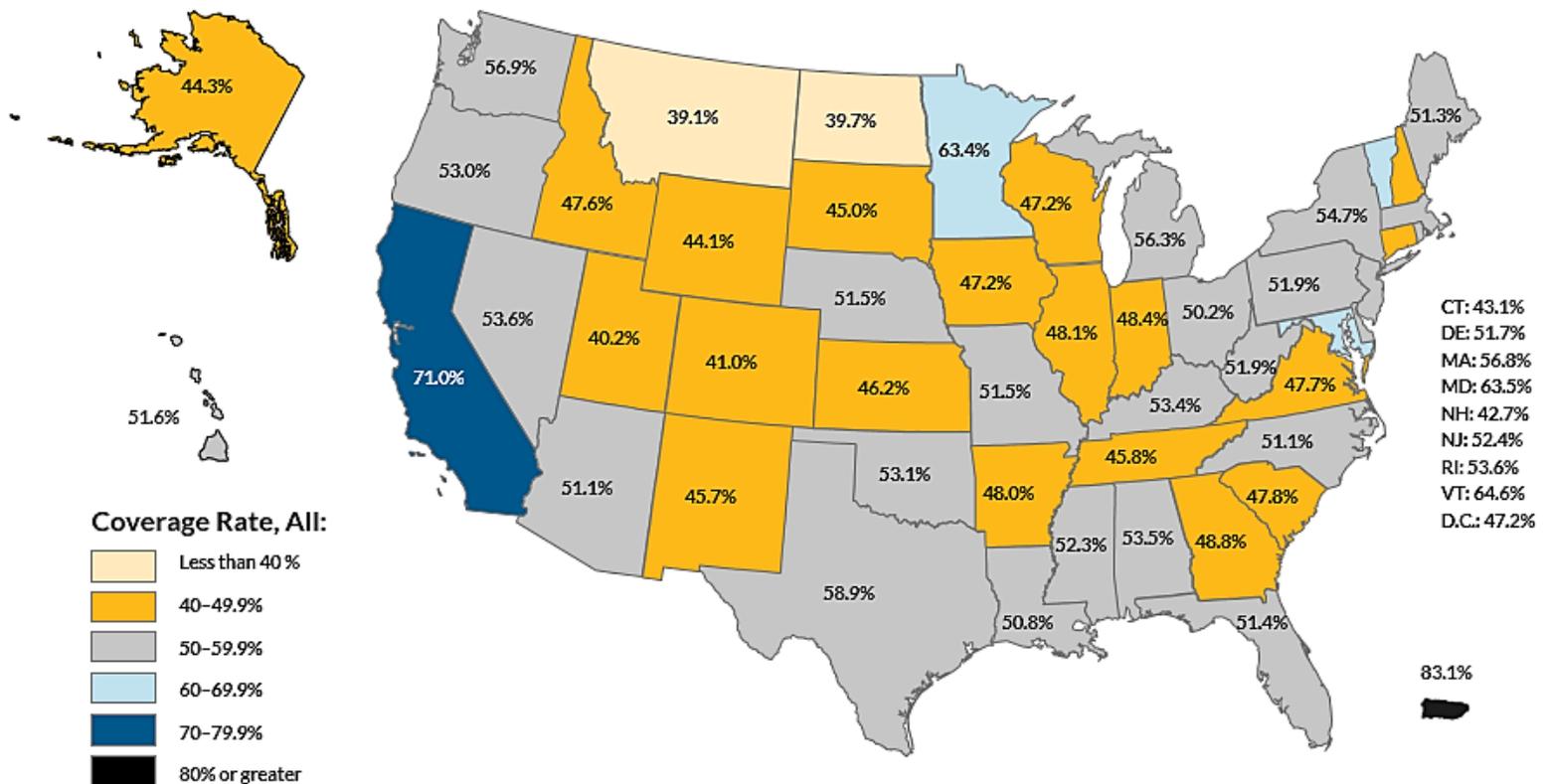
* Calendar Year

Results: WIC Coverage Rates

The percentage of the eligible population that receives WIC benefits is the program’s “coverage rate.”

- In the average month of 2014, WIC served an estimated 54.8 percent of those eligible for WIC, a decrease of about 4.5 percentage points from the revised estimate for 2013.
- This decrease was caused primarily by a 3.7-percent decrease in the number of WIC participants from 2013 to 2014, combined with a small increase in the estimated number of WIC eligibles.
- For more than a decade, WIC's overall estimated coverage rate has fluctuated in a narrow range from 55 to 64 percent. The estimated coverage rate peaked in 2011 after increasing since 2005 and has since decreased due to lower participation and increased numbers of eligibles.
- Regional coverage rates have also remained relatively stable over time, with the Mountain Plains region generally having the lowest coverage rate and the Western region generally having the highest coverage rate.
- Similar to recent years, the coverage rates for WIC-eligible infants (80 percent) and non-breastfeeding postpartum women (94 percent) were highest among WIC participant subgroups in 2014, while the coverage rate for WIC-eligible children (46 percent) continued to lag behind other groups.
- Coverage rates vary substantially by State, as demonstrated by the map below. (Note: confidence intervals for States with small populations are larger than for other States, so differences between States and year-to-year may be less pronounced than they appear.)

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
Coverage Rates for All Participants by State, Calendar Year 2014**



U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support. *National- and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligibles and Program Reach in 2014, and Updated Estimates for 2005–2013*, by Paul Johnson, David Betson, Lorraine Blatt, and Linda Giannarelli. Project Officer: Grant Lovellette. Alexandria, VA: September 2017.

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