

WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study-2: Ninth Year Report

The [*WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study-2*](#) (WIC ITFPS-2), also known as the "Feeding My Baby Study," is the only national study to analyze the long-term impact of WIC by gathering information on caregivers and children over the first nine years of the child's life after enrollment in WIC, regardless of their continued participation in the program.

Key Findings

Why

How

WIC Participation Is Associated With Declining Rates of Hunger

- Over the course of the nine-year study, household hunger among study participants declined dramatically from baseline (during pregnancy or shortly after birth) to age 6 (from 48% to 22%) and then rose slightly to 26% at age 9 (Figure 1).
- Although the study children were no longer eligible to receive WIC at age 9, nearly 20% of their caregivers received WIC for themselves or another child or both.
- Households with at least one WIC participant when the study child was 9 years old were less likely to report experiencing household hunger, as well as child hunger, compared to those not participating in WIC (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of Study Households With Food Insecurity From Study Baseline Through Age 9

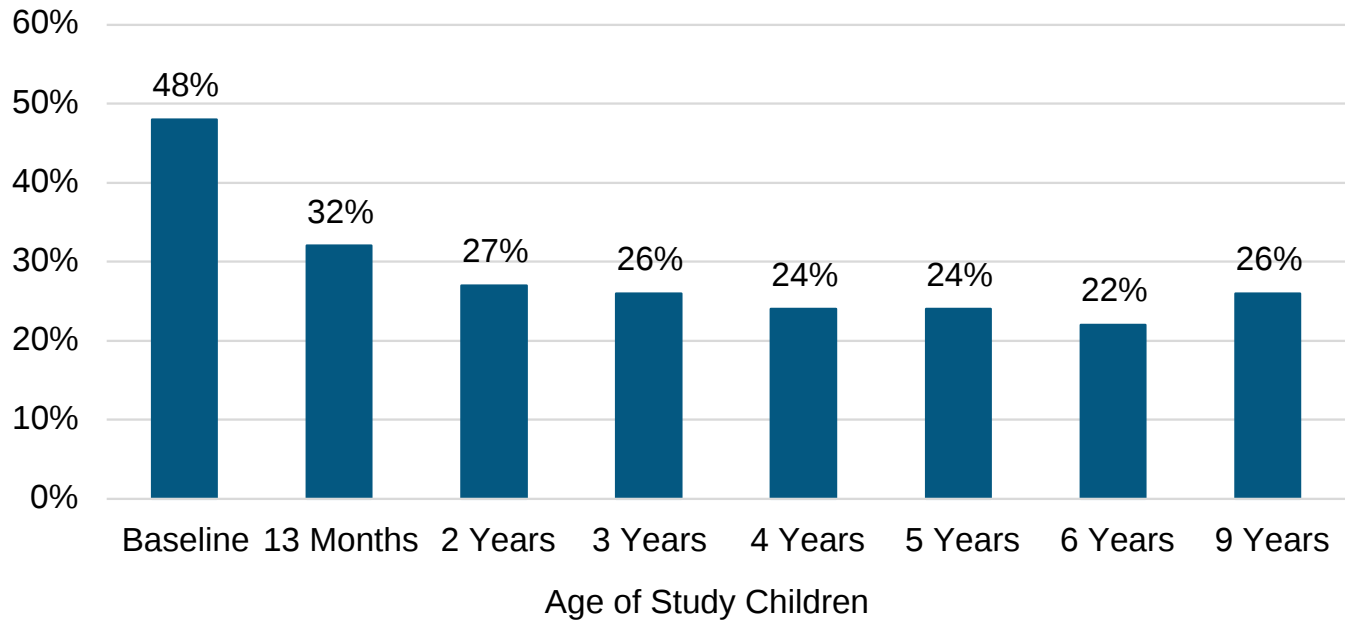
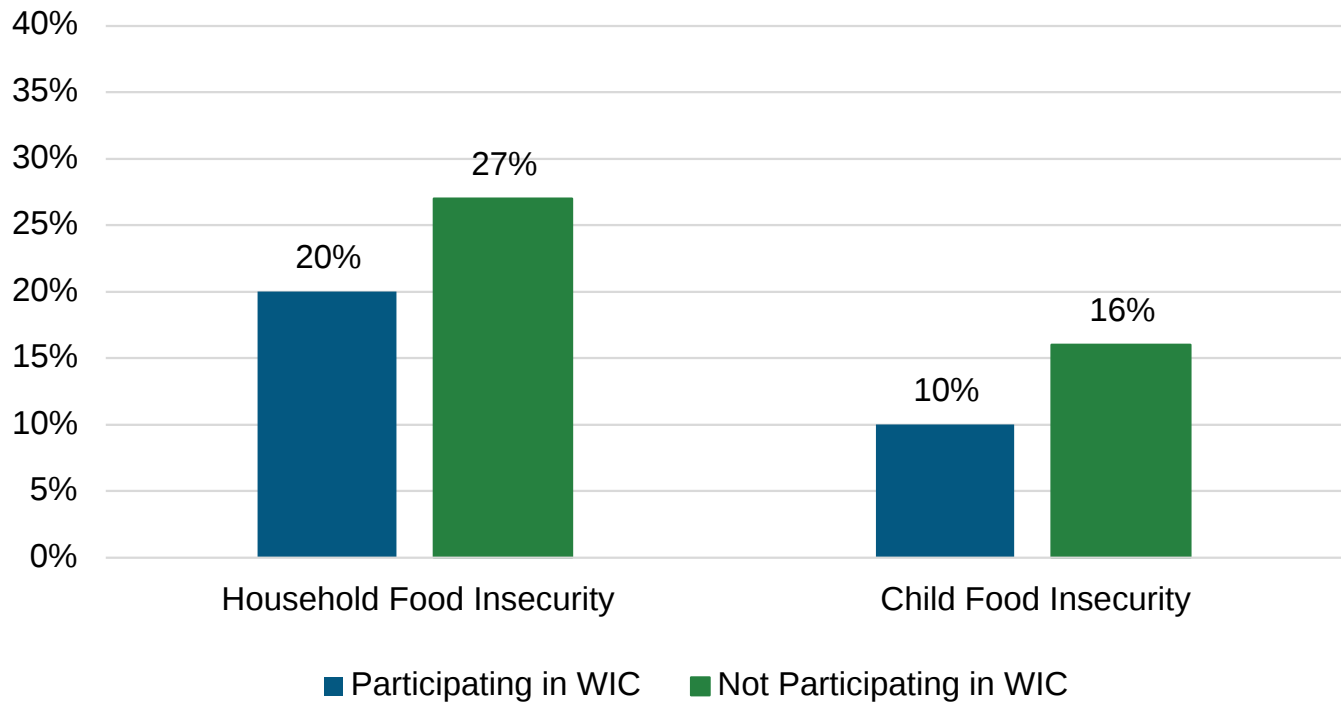


Figure 2: Prevalence of Household and Child Food Insecurity Among Study Participants at Age 9 by Household WIC Participation Status

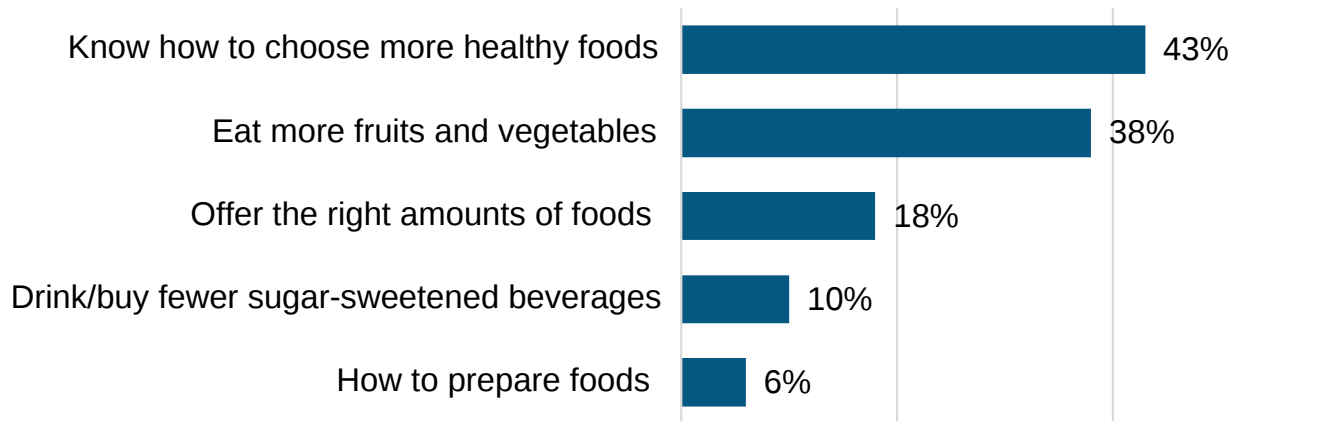


WIC=Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

WIC Caregivers Choose Healthier Foods for Their Families

- Four out of every five study caregivers reported that they learned something from WIC that helps them make decisions about what foods to offer their 9-year-old child.
- Around 40% of study caregivers said they learned how to choose healthier foods for their 9-year-old child and 38% of caregivers indicated their families eat more fruits and vegetables because of something they learned from WIC (Figure 3).
- Caregivers who reported at year nine that they learned something from WIC that helped them make decisions about the foods they offer to the study child were more likely to say they often or very often had fruits, dark green vegetables, and reduced fat milks available in their home compared to caregivers who said they didn't learn something from WIC.

Figure 3: Knowledge Gained From WIC Being Used by Caregivers at Year Nine



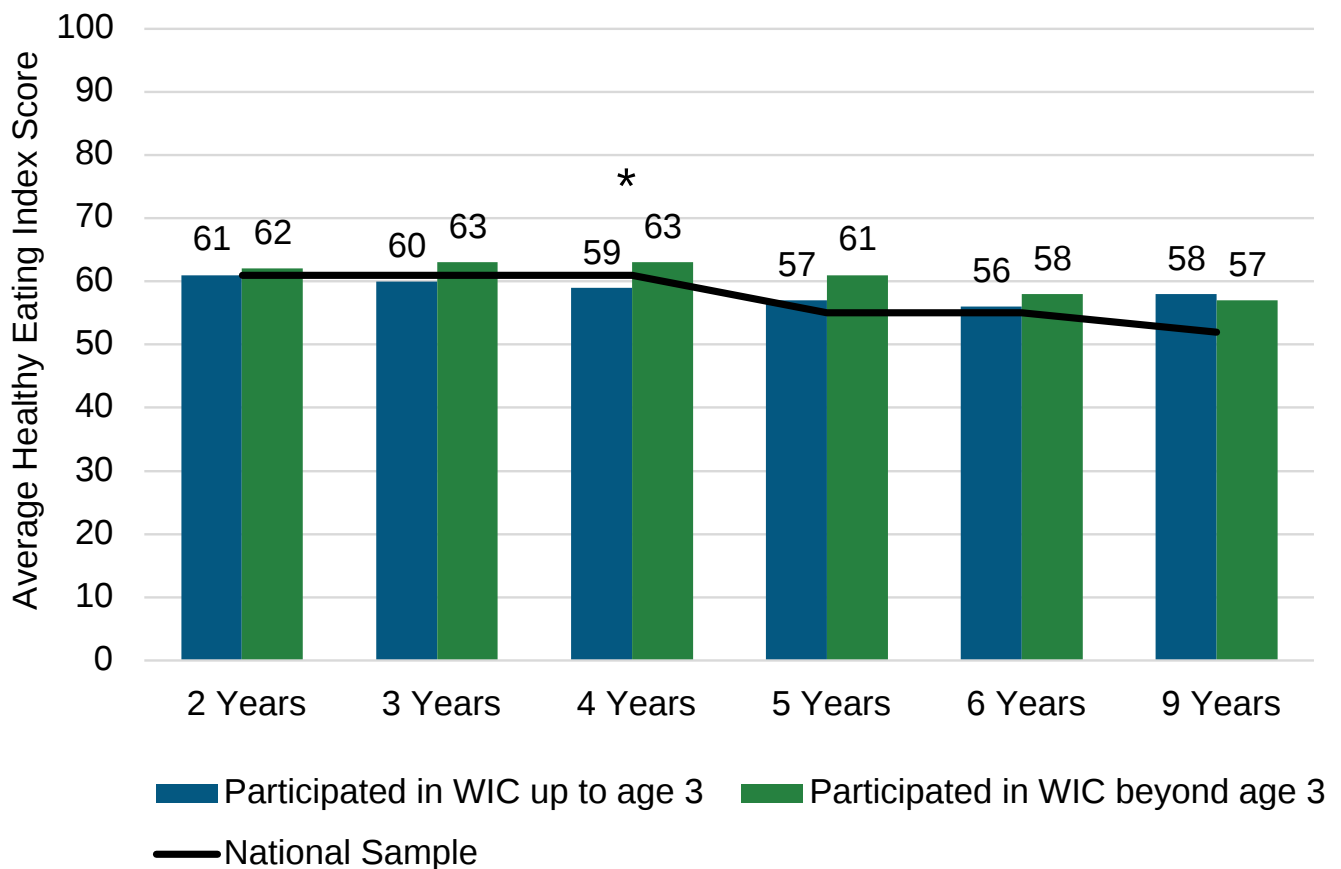
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Caregivers who indicated they had learned information from WIC that they were using when the study child was age 9 were asked, "What did you learn at WIC that you use now when you make decisions about what foods to offer [your child]." Respondents could mention more than one type of knowledge gained from WIC. All responses were recorded and coded to create thematically consistent groups.

WIC Participation Beyond Age 3 is Linked to Higher Diet Quality¹ in Young Children

- Looking at duration of WIC participation up to age 9, diet quality scores were higher for children who participated in WIC beyond age 3 compared to children who stopped participating before age 3 (Figure 4).
- This study found that 9-year-old children who previously participated in WIC had similar diet quality scores as the national average at ages 2, 3, 4, and 6 and significantly higher scores at ages 5 and 9, regardless of the duration of WIC participation.
- Consumption of nutrients of concern like saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium among study children was also similar to the general U.S. population at age 9.

Figure 4: Average Healthy Eating Index 2020 Scores From Ages 2 Through 9 by Duration of WIC Participation



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* Difference between 59 and 63 is statistically significant.

National average scores are from the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as reported for children ages 2 through 4 (page 77), 5 through 8 (page 79), and 9 through 13 (page 82).

Why FNS Did This Study

WIC is one of USDA, FNS's nutrition assistance programs. WIC safeguards the health of pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children from households with low incomes who are at nutritional risk. The *WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study-2 (WIC ITFPS-2)*, also known as the "Feeding My Baby Study," is the only national study to capture information about caregivers and their children over the first nine years of the child's life after enrollment in WIC, regardless of their continued participation in the program.

Little is known about the long-term impact of WIC participation on the health and diets of children who participate early in life. In 2024, we published the [WIC ITFPS-2 Sixth Year Report](#) showing that WIC participation is positively linked to diet quality among children. We extended *WIC ITFPS-2* until the study children turned 9 years old. Continuing the study helped us better understand the longer-term diet, health, and food security status of children who participated in WIC as infants and young children.

How FNS Did This Study

Starting in July 2013, we enrolled 3,775 caregiver-child pairs in the study who were certified to participate in WIC during the caregiver's pregnancy or shortly after the child's birth. Caregivers and their children were enrolled in the study if the caregiver was at least 16 years old, spoke English or Spanish, and were certified at a WIC agency that enrolled at least 30 new pregnant women or infants per month.

Throughout the study, caregivers were interviewed every 2 to 6 months through the child's fifth birthday, with follow-up interviews at ages 6 and 9 years. While many caregivers stayed in the study up to age 9, the analysis for the *WIC ITFPS-2* Ninth Year report was made up of the 683 caregivers who completed every interview in the study – that is “the longitudinal sample”.

During the year 9 interview, caregivers completed a survey over the phone and a 24-hour dietary recall. To analyze the information provided by caregivers, we used statistical weights to inflate the sample to represent a national population of study-eligible caregivers and their children.

The interview questionnaires and recruitment materials for this study are available at [RegInfo.gov](#). Publicly available data from pregnancy through age 5 can be found on [Ag Data Commons](#).

Suggested Citation

Borger, C., Zimmerman, T. P., DeMatteis, J., Gollapudi, B., Thorn, B., Whaley, S.E., & Ritchie, L. (2025). *WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study-2: Year 9 report*. Westat. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. This report was conducted by Westat under Contract No. GS-00F-009DA.

¹ Overall diet quality was measured using the Healthy Eating Index Score (HEI). On a scale of 0 to 100, an HEI score of 100 means that the diet meets all the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations.

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